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TO: John Miller
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WIAA

Brian Smith
Assistant Executive Director
WIAA

FROM: Carl Blackstone
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DATE: May 18, 2016

RE: WIAA Response to Bellevue School District Violation Report dated May 11, 2016

On March 22, 2016, Carl Blackstone and Robert Westinghouse submitted an Investigative report to the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association (“WIAA”) relating to the Bellevue High School (“BHS”) football program. The WIAA Investigative Report (“Investigative Report”) contained findings that BHS and the Bellevue School District (“BSD”) had violated a number of WIAA rules. WIAA provided the Investigative Report to BSD on April 1, 2016. On May 11, 2016, BSD/BHS presented a WIAA Violation Report (“Violation Report” or “District’s Report”) to the KingCo League during a self-report hearing. On May 13, 2016, George Crowder, KingCo League President, requested that WIAA and its investigators evaluate the information contained in the BSD/BHS Violation Report.

The Violation Report identifies 10 allegations in the Investigative Report. The Violation Report provides substantive responses to only six of the allegations. BSD reports that it is continuing to investigate the remaining four violations and represented that it would respond by May 16, 2016. To our knowledge, BSD did not respond by that date.

In this memorandum the WIAA investigators will respond to the six allegations addressed in the Violation Report. The investigators will submit a supplemental response after BSD provides a substantive response to the four remaining allegations.

note that the Investigative Report did not rely on anonymous complaints. Rather, the investigators received information from identifiable individuals, some of whom asked that their identities be protected because of fear of retaliation. Given the culture of fear and intimidation addressed in the Investigative Report, it is not surprising that such a request was made. Thus, the information provided by these individuals may be meritorious even if the complainant has been unwilling to identify himself/herself. If any member school is seeking full compliance with WIAA rules and regulations, it is axiomatic that it should aggressively pursue all reasonable leads that suggest non-compliance. Here the evidence establishes that the Booster Club has been paying student tuitions at AI, coupled with the large number of athletically-skilled transferees to the Bellevue High School program in past years, provides a strong basis for further inquiry. Because the District is in the best position to carry out such an inquiry, it should stop protesting and start investigating. A thorough investigation that disproves this allegation would be as beneficial to the program as an investigation that establishes wrong doing and prompts discipline.

Allegation #5 – Whether coaches coordinated tuition payments for athletes

BSD claims that it is still investigating this allegation and that the “hearing panel can expect a response to this allegation by May 16, 2016.” To our knowledge BSD did not respond by May 16. Once BSD submits a response to this allegation, the WIAA investigators will respond.

Allegation #6 – Whether players used the Academic Institute to maintain eligibility.

The Investigative Report acknowledged that it could not reach a conclusion regarding this allegation. Although it recited evidence of stark improvements in grades of at least some of the Bellevue High School football players who attended the Academic Institute (“AI”), it did not find a violation of WIAA rules in this regard. The WIAA addendum does not reference this allegation at all.

BSD vehemently denies this allegation but offers no facts in support of its denial. The Investigative Report does contain the following facts which support the allegation:

1. A large number of BHS football players who were struggling academically attended AI. No players from any other high school in the District attended AI. A review of transcripts indicate that several player grades improved greatly after attending AI thereby making them eligible to play football. (Exhibit 115). The Investigative Report identifies one player who had four F’s at BHS. He then went to AI, at the direction of Coach Goncharoff and received three B’s and one A in these same classes. (Investigative Report at 44-46, Exhibit 103).