

Banks board struggles with language of student athletic/activity contract

Banks School Board held a lengthy discussion, February 9, on changes proposed in the extracurricular athletic/activity contract that are meant to help students abstain from alcohol, tobacco and drugs. Superintendent Marilyn McGlasson intro-

duced Banks High School Athletic Director Jim Smith, who served as chairman of the committee that has worked for months on the proposed changes.

The committee's task was to review the existing contract, compare it with similar schools

and other schools in the league to determine if it was effective, and to ensure that the process is consistent across all district activities and athletics. The committee includes parents, coaches, teachers and students, in an attempt to repre-

sent as many sports and activities as possible, although no representative of football or boys basketball participated.

Two issues dominated discussion: First, can a single contract adequately address both athletics and activities such as band, drama and FFA? Second, at what point are the consequences invoked sufficient to serve as a deterrent while also offering students an opportunity for growth?

Smith explained that the changes include consolidation and clarification of language in the current contract. Additions include a definition for athletic and activity participants, and require students to "agree not to possess, use, sell, or provide alcohol, tobacco, or illegal/unauthorized drugs or related paraphernalia at any time."

Consequences for violating the contract are set out as:

– First Offense: Suspension from participation in athletic contests for twenty-eight (28) days, or a minimum of three contests.

– Second Offense: Loss of participation privileges for one calendar year.

– Third Offense: Forfeit participation privileges for the remainder of the student's attendance at Banks High School.

Reinstatement requires participation in assessment, a course on substance abuse, and follow-up.

The proposed contract carries the consequences over from one athletic season to the next, i.e., if the violation occurs at the end of baseball season, the 28 day period, three missed contests and reinstatement re-

quirements would have to be completed during the following football season. Students must continue to practice during the 28 days or they are considered to have quit, and the carry-over clause would apply to future participation. Finally, the committee added a statement that the contract would be enforced "AS WRITTEN," and that advisors and coaches could not alter the consequences.

The current contract requires only a ten-day suspension regardless of contests missed, Smith explained, and "has no teeth for spring coaches," since students are allowed full participation in the fall. Annie Schlegel, a sophomore who served on the committee, told the board unequivocally that students count the days so they will not miss competition and that the proposed policy would be an incentive, especially for at-risk students.

Dialogue between the board and committee members focused on whether the three-contest rule would be equitable across sports and activities. Smith explained that the committee had discussed the same issues, but that he was asked to develop a single contract. Particularly troubling for all were activities like band and FFA, which have both classroom and competitive components. Board members expressed concern that the punishment inflicted not be so severe that students are driven away. Suzanne Alley, a parent and volleyball coach, said that the committee struggled to develop a contract with a "balance

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