



WEST FARGO HIGH SCHOOL



Dr. Jennifer Fremstad
Principal

Dr. Kelly Peters
Asst. Principal

Dr. Wayne Samson
Asst. Principal

Mrs. Tera Sistad
Asst. Principal

Mr. Jay DeCann
Activities Director

Ms. Rachel Baughman
Dean of Students

West Fargo High School
801 9th Street East
West Fargo, ND
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(701)356-2050

To: Robin Hill, Director of Human Resources

From: Jennifer Fremstad, Principal

Date: September 18, 2018

Re: Swim Coach Investigation

Timeline of Events: Girls' Swimming/Diving

Wednesday, September 12, 2018:

Around 10:00 pm, Activities Director Jay DeCann received an email that contained a link to a video that was shared in a closed group on Facebook. The video was a student manager for the Packer Swim Team strapping a series of weights around his waist and attempting to swim 25 yards. As the video plays the caption "brutal" is displayed. The video was filmed by the head coach, Ronnie Hehn and was posted to the group by Mr. Hehn as well.

Mr. DeCann received an email message from a coach and administrator from Pennsylvania that addressed the health and safety concern of this practice and believed it would be deemed criminal if it were used as part of our student training. Mr. DeCann assured her that it is not used or supported practice by our district and we would be investigating the event.

Mr. DeCann was in contact with staff from the HAC regarding the video and it was successfully removed from the Facebook group.

Thursday, September 13, 2018:

At 8:00 am, Mr. DeCann met with HR Director Robin Hill and reviewed the video and discuss how the process of investigation should progress. Once a process was established, Mr. DeCann returned to WFHS to begin the investigation.

After the meeting with Mr. DeCann, Mrs. Hill met with Supt. Slette to share information about the incident and the process that would be used in conducting the investigation. Supt. Slette and HR Director Hill placed a call to Officer Jason Balvik to share with him general information regarding the video

Mr. DeCann immediately after returning to the school, met with Officer Jason Balvik to review the video. It was determined that an interview with the student could provide additional information. Mr. DeCann and Officer Balvik met with the student from the video and he indicated he volunteered to take this challenge as he wanted to do what the girls had done in practice that day. Mr. DeCann then received the names of four girls from with swim team that had attempted this technique.

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Throughout the interviews, several themes emerged that were concerning to administration:

- The equipment used was not issued by the WFPS
- When the girls asked to stop, the coach continued the technique
- There was no instruction or rationale provided to the swimmers
- Lifeguards stopped the practice because it appeared dangerous
- Girls were afraid during several of the tasks

After the interviews with swim team members, administration met with parents to share information and answer any questions they may have had about the practice. Several parents met with administration throughout the day and meetings were concluded prior to the team meeting at the HAC.

At 4:15 pm, Athletic Director DeCann and Principal Fremstad had a team meeting at the HAC to discuss the issue and provide the team with information regarding a change in staffing. Five parents attended this meeting in addition to the three assistant coaches.

At 6:00 pm, Athletic Director DeCann, Principal Fremstad, and Officer Balvik met with swim parents to share the outcome of the initial investigation and the changes to the coaching staff. Parents were encouraged to ask questions and share any additional information with administration.

Monday, September 17, 2018

Administration followed-up with student athletes to ensure that they were doing well and that any questions they had about the event or the process.

Tuesday, September 18, 2018

Administration conducted a follow-up meeting with parents as per their request. Additional questions were answered and information was provided.

Administration is gathering additional statements from assistant coaches.

Cc: Mr. DeCann

Supt. Slette

Officer Balvik