

Mercer Island School District Title IX Compliance

Report to the School Board

Title IX Compliance Committee:

●	Student, Senior Class Secretary, Football Team
Traci Brandon	Staff, Cheer Advisor
Brian Emanuels	Parent, Football Booster
●	Student, Boys Swim and Dive Team, Band
Carol Gullstad	Parent, Girls Basketball Booster
Michele Haas	Parent, Girls Soccer Booster
Creighton Laughary	Staff, Wrestling Coach
Jeff Lowell	Staff, Dean of Students/Student Activities
●	Girls & Boys Swim Coach
●	Student, Girls Lacrosse Team
Marion Mohler	Staff, District Public Relations Specialist
Kathy Morrison	Staff, Associate Superintendent, Title IX Officer
Craig Olson	Staff, Associate Principal, Athletic Director
Jim Pearman	Parent, City of Mercer Island Mayor
Jamie Prescott	Staff, Dean of Athletics & Activities
●	Girls Basketball Coach
Blair Rasmussen	Parent, Director of Mercer Island Boys and Girls Club
●	Student, Girls Gymnastics and Cheerleader
Jessica Steinle	Staff, Softball Coach
Kelly Sterling	Parent, Mercer Island Water Polo Board Member
●	Student, Girls Tennis

September 25, 2008

● Student Names are not published

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Background Information

On March 13, 2008 the Education Equity Group presented an athletic equity evaluation report to the Mercer Island School District pursuant to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and Washington State gender laws. These laws require school districts to provide girls and boys with equal athletic opportunities. The report shows that the population of students participating in the athletic program is 55% boys and 46% girls. This disparity translates into 118 fewer athletic opportunities for girls. The report recommends improvements in the eight program areas that guide federal evaluations of secondary school athletic programs: students' interest and abilities; provision and maintenance of equipment and supplies; scheduling of games and practice times; practice and competitive training facilities; coaching; publicity; medical and training support services; and travel and per diem.

Superintendent Gary Plano appointed Kathy Morrison, Associate Superintendent, to take on the responsibility of the new Title IX Officer charged with overseeing the implementation of recommendations found in the report. A Steering Committee consisting of parents, students, athletic staff and other stakeholders met four times (April 11, May 2, May 29 and August 26, 2008) to provide input and guidance on Title IX compliance. This report represents recommendations from the committee and steps taken to address compliance concerns over the next two years (2008-2009 and 2009-2010).

Annually, as required by OSPI, the eight program areas will be comprehensively reviewed and evaluated by the MISD Athletic Director to ensure Title IX Compliance. The Title IX Compliance Committee will meet on a quarterly basis to provide oversight throughout the year.

I. Interest and Abilities

The evaluation report recommended that the district conduct a new survey of athletic interests to further refine the information it collected in the 2006-2007 survey. The new survey conducted in the spring of 2008 was designed to identify gaps in existing programs and assess interest. The survey generated over 1,000 responses. Overall the data shows that many MIHS students are involved in sports. Some who don't play indicated that schedule conflicts prevented them from participating. Students expressed interest in gymnastics, tennis, competitive dance, crew, bowling, badminton, intramural basketball, golf, ultimate Frisbee, volleyball and tennis.

2008-2009

Recommendations that will be implemented

- Encourage participation in girls' x-country and lacrosse. There is more room on these existing teams. We will accomplish this by having a Sports Fair prior to each season where captains and coaches of all sports are available during lunches to promote their sport.
- Depending on turn-out, identify funding source to add Freshman/Sophomore girls' soccer team.
- Identify funding source to hire a 3rd coach to support more than 107 girls interested in gymnastics.
- Research the feasibility of adding girls' badminton and bowling teams for possible implementation in 2009-2010. 79 girls indicated an interest in badminton; 58 in bowling. Bowling would require funds for a coach and facility rental. Badminton would require a coach and the use of a facility.
- Add interest survey at IMS to analyze current programs and identify gaps.
- Encourage high school students to spend time with younger students with adult help. One idea is a "mini-skills camp" – this could be a Culminating Project as well as a fundraiser for teams. Include St. Monica's as well as IMS.
- Explore the possibility of adding intramural sports at IMS. Intramural programs build "good faith" in addressing compliance issues, but Title IX is more interested in gender equity in inter-school athletic teams. However, these programs do provide the balance as noted below.
- Create balance between middle school programs as feeders and to provide greater athletic exposure to students before they get to high school.

2009-2010

- Based on results of 2008-2009 feasibility study, add girls' badminton and bowling teams.
- Based on "exploration" in 2008-2009, add intramural sports, particularly basketball and volleyball.
- Based on interest survey at IMS, add more organized sports. Analyze cost, efficiency and feasibility.
- Conduct "mini-skills" camps for elementary students.

II. Equipment and Supplies

2008-2009

Recommendations that will be implemented

- Provide Title IX training for coaches and administrators so everyone understands the requirements pertaining to equipment and supplies.

- The athletic department has standard procedures for purchasing and replacing equipment. These procedures will be updated to address questions pertaining to personal safety gear and to maintain consistent quality, quantity and suitability of equipment between and among all of the district sport teams.
- The Coaches' Handbook and training will underscore the requirement for coaches to bring requests to the athletic department administration when there is a need to replace equipment.
- Booster clubs will donate all funds for purchases to the district and flow through the MIHS ASB account to ensure equity and transparency.
- Annually, send to the Title IX Compliance Officer a master inventory list for all teams, including booster clubs' purchases.
- Create guidelines for booster club purchases.
- As a cost savings measure and when appropriate, approach vendors for boys and girls as one entity rather than for a single gender.
- Support Title IX Compliance Oversight Committee's recommendation to create the Master Mercer Island Sports Foundation Booster Club. The first meeting will be September 30, 2008. The purpose is to create one vehicle to work together for equity and the common good of all sports teams.
 - Individual booster clubs would still exist, but each one would send a representative to serve on the Master Booster Club. Islander Middle School will also be represented.
- Broadcast specific equipment needs to the wider community.

III. Scheduling

2008-2009

Recommendations that will be implemented

- There are no significant concerns with scheduling; however the athletic director will check in with coaches and players prior to the season each year.
- The athletic department administration will continue working with coaches to ensure equitable scheduling of practice and game times. The process takes into consideration coaches' needs, KingCo Conference regulations and scheduling, community use, and availability of the school facilities. (The volleyball schedule is determined by the number of officials available. The league sets the schedule and alternates days and times from year to year.)

IV. Facilities

2008-2009

Recommendations that will be implemented

- Create opportunities for off season use of current facilities that do not violate WIAA rules.
- Improve the suitability of the lacrosse fields for the girls' teams by adding permanent well-marked and well-maintained lines for regulation play. (Lines will be added in summer 2009.)
- Create plan for facility access during inclement weather. Provide covered batting cages for the girls' softball team as funding becomes available.
- Provide the girls' volleyball team with a facility that allows regulation play without interference from basketball hoops.

2009-2010

- Improve girls' softball facilities by adding batting cage, dugouts, scoreboard, lights, drainage, etc. as funding permits through City of Mercer Island Bond/Levy and/or MISD funding as appropriate.
- Provide suitable vaulting facilities or pay the rental fees for the gymnastics team to use a private facility suitable for vaulting. Currently the participants pay the fees for the vaulting facility at Gymnastics East. (There will be room for a vaulting facility at the North Mercer gym.)

V. Coaching

2008-2009

Recommendations that will be implemented

- Booster Clubs (including Club Sports) will gift all funds for hiring purposes above what the district provides to the district prior to hiring. The district will then hire the coaches using standard hiring procedures.
- Create common standards and hiring policies for boys' and girls' coaches, both paid and volunteer coaches. All volunteer coaches will be reported by name to the Athletic Director by the second week of each sport's practice or risk losing having those volunteers be part of the sport's program.
 - There are standards for volunteers in the Volunteer Coach Application. All applicants undergo a Washington State Patrol background check.
- Compensation of coaches: The district will develop and communicate clear rules for coaches, volunteers and parents regarding the reporting and tracking of gifts and payments to coaches by booster clubs. Consistent with WIAA rules, gifts of \$500 and above must be approved by the School Board.

- All booster clubs will gift funds to the Mercer Island School District and flow through ASB accounts to provide reporting and tracking of gifts above \$500 and payments to coaches and volunteers.
- A formal process for coaches and assistant coaches to request support and resources for their teams will be outlined in the Coaches' Handbook and covered in training.
- The district will develop written job descriptions for coaches which specifically identify their authority to manage their programs. These guidelines will be published in the Coaches' Handbook by September 30, 2008.
- Research the option of the district hiring additional coaches or paid assistants when a program is still building.
- Create a formula for a required number of team coaches.
 - Confer with coaches to provide a recommendation for their sport.
- Use Public Relations efforts to encourage more coach applications for girls' teams. The Athletic Director will identify an explicit plan to correct imbalance of volunteer coaches by December 1, 2008.
 - Place ads in the MI Reporter, Lacrosse Team web page and through the MISD listserv.

VI. Publicity

2008-2009

Recommendations that will be implemented

- When possible, schedule girls' and boys' sports events on the same night. (This is already in place for Friday night basketball games.)
- Work with directors to make sure that all sports are attended by school bands.
- Provide support to cheerleaders to promote attendance at girls' games (goody bags, posters etc.)
- Encourage members of the Drill Team and ASB officers to attend more girls' games than in the past.
- Add Sports Information Director position to leadership team to make sure that communication for all sports is addressed. (The athletic director has appointed a student to take this responsibility.)
- Show video clips during morning announcements and lunch for all sports to help promote attendance.
- Ensure that the support provided by spirit groups is comparable. Develop rules for student formed spirit groups to ensure they do not create compliance concerns under Title IX.
- Develop formal district rules for scheduling of cheerleaders so as to ensure comparable attendance at girls' and boys' games.
- Develop formal school guidelines for the school newspaper and the yearbook to ensure that comparable coverage continues to be provided to girls' and boys' teams.

- Consider the possibility of offering bus transportation for a small fee for fans to attend girls' and boy's playoff games.
- Hold a Sports Fair at IMS annually in the spring. Every sport will be represented and students will sign up for the following year in advance.
- Reconcile how to keep enthusiasm and support for sports with heritage and how to build support for sports that were not a part of parents' school experience.
 - Provide information about each sport on the high school web site and encourage the MI Reporter to write articles on a wide variety of sports, with special emphasis on girls' sports.
- Consider creating a Pep Club so that more students are available to provide support for girls' games.

VII. Medical and Training Services

2008-2009

Recommendations that will be implemented

- A trainer will be available to both girls' and boy's basketball teams during their winter holiday tournaments.
- The athletic director will meet annually with trainers and coaches to address Title IX compliance issues, as well as WIAA rules etc. Certification of the meeting will be provided to the Title IX Compliance Officer prior to the first day of the season.

VIII. Travel and per diem

* There were no compliance concerns in this area.