Final Report of Athletic Ad Hoc Committee

Presented by

Dr. Kenneth R. Hamilton

OVERVIEW

Background

The formation of the Edgemont School District Athletic Ad Hoc Committee, herein referred to as the AAHC, was prompted by a range of factors. Concerns regarding the district's athletic programs emerged during my onboarding in the district. Parents and students consistently echoed the disconnect between the superior educational experiences of our students and the subpar athletic program which has been credited for some of the more competitive and skilled athletes leaving Edgemont.

- **Community Input and Concerns:** Over time, there had been a growing chorus of feedback and concerns voiced by parents, students, alumni, and other community members regarding the state of the Edgemont School District's athletic program. These concerns encompassed areas such as facility maintenance, coaching, transparency, talent recruitment and retention, and the overall athlete experience.

- **Changing Demands and Expectations:** The landscape of high school athletics has evolved considerably, with increasing emphasis on safety, inclusivity, and academic excellence among student-athletes. It became evident that the athletic program needed to adapt, and progress in line with these changing demands and expectations.

- **Mission Alignment:** The Edgemont School District has recognized the importance of ensuring that the athletic program's objectives are aligned with the broader educational mission of the district including achievement of a level of superior distinction in academic outcomes. There was a desire to bridge any existing gaps in this alignment and to make sure that the athletic program contributed to the holistic development of all students, including those who may not be as athletically inclined and students who are differently abled.

These concerns included the following:

Facility and Budget Challenges: The state of the athletic facilities and budget allocation raised concerns within the community. Issues such as inadequate maintenance, insufficient funding, and a lack of prioritization of the athletics in the budget allocation process were central to the formation of the committee.

Competitive Landscape: With the competitive nature of high school athletics, there was a need to not only maintain but enhance the district's competitiveness, both in terms of performance and in providing a positive and engaging athlete and spectator experience.

Inclusivity and Equity: The community expressed concerns about inclusivity and equity in the athletic program, with particular attention to student aptitude, coaching and equitable opportunities for all students to participate and excel in athletics.

This presentation captures:

The essence of the varied voices throughout this process. The committee met over the course of 10 months (January 2023-October 2023). Membership was open to anyone who expressed an interest in joining. With very few exceptions, the membership was consistent throughout the process. Student voices were engaged in the process. A graduated senior athlete provided student views and experiences. Additionally, several agenda topics were discussed with members of the Superintendent's Student Advisory Council, which includes students in grades 5-12. These perspectives are also included in this presentation.

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Committee Members

Introduction

This comprehensive report of the AAHC is a culmination of our efforts to address concerns and challenges within our district's athletic program.

- Informed by extensive feedback collected from community members who play a vital role in our district and community's athletic activities.

- Recognized importance of community input and the need for addressing various issues related to our athletic program.

- Transparency and inclusivity led us to engage with community members who are not only enthusiastic supporters but also valuable stakeholders in the success and well-being of our athletes.

- The feedback gathered from community members has played a pivotal role in shaping our understanding of the challenges and opportunities within our athletic programs.

- Key themes emerged which serves as the focus of the key recommendations of the AAHC.

Key Themes:

- ***Budget and Facilities***
- ***Coaching***
- ***Student talent pipeline***

Executive Summary

Over several months of thorough investigation, analysis, and collaboration the following topics were considered:

Introduction and Objectives: The introduction of the report outlines the committee's origins, objectives, and the need to address specific concerns in our athletic program. The committee was charged with improving the program's effectiveness, transparency, and inclusivity.

Feedback from Community Members: This report is based on feedback collected from community members. Their perspectives, experiences, and concerns have played a vital role in shaping our understanding of the challenges our athletic program faces. The report outlines the importance of community engagement and the invaluable insights gathered.

Findings

- The committee identified the need for dedicated budget allocation for the renovation and maintenance of athletic facilities.

- There is a lack of sustainable initiatives to promote greater partnerships and collaboration with community-based athletic programs. This disconnect may in part be a contributing factor in the concerns that the current program may not be meeting the needs of all students.

- Grounds and facilities are not adequately prioritized. This may be in part why there is a lack of school pride as it relates to athletics and why spectator participation is so low at many of the competitions.

- There is a lack of transparency in budget allocations which may compromise trust and confidence among stakeholders.

- There is no clearly articulated vision for the future of athletics. Consequently, there is a noted decline in community support in comparison to years past according to committee members who have a long-term history with the district.

Budget and Facilities

Coaching

There is not a clear and consistent process for the annual review and evaluation of coaches and assistants.

There is a lack of clarity around standards and expectations for a performance matrix for coaches.

There is a lack of accountability measures, and strategies for recruitment and retention of quality coaching talent.

The hiring process for coaches can be long, and laborious which often leads to qualified coaches taking other offers.

Student Talent Pipeline

There is a disconnect between community-based and privately operated clubs and camps within the community. Consequently, some star athletes are poached by more competitive schools.

There is no system for the early identification and development of underdeveloped athletic talent.

Some exceptional student athletes are looked over for key slots on various teams which they have had a previous, stellar performance record.

Conclusion

The findings presented by the AAHC aim to address the multifaceted challenges within our athletic program. We believe that implementing the proposed recommendations will lead to a more robust and successful program that aligns with the district's mission, fosters transparency, and nurtures the aspirations of our student-athletes while encouraging greater school pride and a boasting athletic program.

The report serves as a roadmap to enhance the program's performance and ensure its long-term success, and we urge the board to consider these recommendations and work collaboratively to bring about these positive changes.

Process

Meeting #1 Establishing goals of the AAHC

Problem Identification and Analysis: Primary goals are to identify, understand, and analyze specific issues, challenges, or opportunities within the realm of athletics.

Recommendations: Well-researched, informed, and practical recommendations for addressing the identified issues. These recommendations should provide potential solutions or courses of action.

Stakeholder Engagement: Ensured engagement with various stakeholders, including athletes, coaches, administrators, students, and the wider athletic community. Input from these stakeholders can be valuable in shaping recommendations.

Transparency and Accountability: Transparency in the committee's activities and decision-making processes is key. This includes keeping stakeholders informed and accountable for their actions.

Group Norms

- Alignment of goals and objectives
- Supportive environment from the top down
- Collaborative, unconditional caring and support
- No putting people down
- Common goals
- Empathy, accountability, communication, and growth mentality

- No people dominating, and no credentials for leaders.
- Be supportive, collaborative, and sharing, encourages personal growth.
- Complimentary skill sets, and check ego at door
- Be collaborative, trustful, respectful of others' views.
- Open-mindedness
- Clear expectations

Establishing the Problem of Practice

✓ Key issues discussed included through subcommittee process:

Facility maintenance and safety

Coaching staff development

Athlete health and safety

Communication and transparency

Community engagement and fan experience

Talent recruitment and retention

Meeting 2

Issues or problems that exists because values/goals/expectations are not fully met.

Gap between the current and preferred situation.

Generally complex and related to overlapping issues.

Problem and cause are not synonymous.

Review of Subcommittee Findings.

The meeting began with each subcommittee providing a summary of their research and findings related to coaching, school spirit, mission alignment, and student participation. It was evident that coaching, school spirit, and student participation are interlinked and have a direct impact on mission alignment.

Discussion on Coaching:

The coaching subcommittee presented its findings, highlighting the need for improved professional development and performance assessments for coaching staff. The committee discussed the importance of setting clear coaching expectations and supporting staff in ongoing growth. It was also shared that some coaches elect to leave the district because of parent confrontations regarding coaches' decisions and athlete's playing time.

School Spirit and Fan Engagement:

The school spirit subcommittee emphasized the role of school spirit and fan engagement in creating a positive and supportive athletic environment. The committee discussed strategies to boost school spirit, including recruitment themed events, community involvement, and marketing efforts.

Mission Alignment:

- The committee discussed mission alignment. There was an agreement that the subcommittee presented which suggested a demonstrated need to ensure the athletic program align with the broader mission and values of the district. There should be a better balance between the emphasis placed on the academic program and the athletic program. The committee discussed the importance of clearly articulating how the athletic program contributes to the district's mission.

Student Participation:

- The student participation subcommittee highlighted the need for increased student involvement in athletic events and activities. The committee discussed ways to incentivize and promote student participation, including student organizations, and incentives. Student voices confirmed that it is reasonable for students to manage the pressure of a superior academic program and being a member of an organized sport. Students also shared that being a part of an organized sport provided the guidance necessary to multitask and taught the skills necessary to help students prioritize their time.

Definition

A problem of practices is an area that identifies an observable, actionable, strategy for improvement. It assumes that if solved, the entity will be better. A conditional statement (also called an if-then statement) is **a statement with a hypothesis followed by a conclusion**. The hypothesis is the first, or "if," part of a conditional statement. The conclusion is the second, or "then," part of a conditional statement.

Meeting 3- Establishing the Problem of Practice

- Issue or problem that exists because values/goals/expectations are not fully met.
- Gap between current situation and preferred
- Generally complex and related to overlapping issues.
- Problem and cause are not synonymous.
- Get to problem not symptom.

Results

Subcommittee Work

Group 1: If we have the resources to hire the best/right coaches, then we can optimize our student athletes' performance and experience. Five characteristics were identified. These included skill/expertise, experience, commitment, tone/attitude, and adaptability.
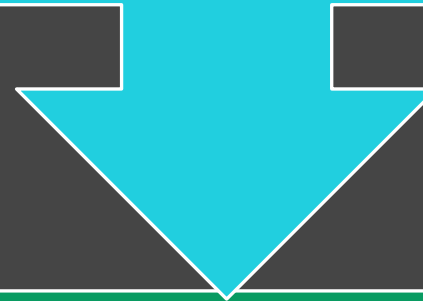
Group 2: If we feed high school programs at all levels and have an aligned mission and vision, then greater continuity between all levels of the program would improve. If coaches are intentional and deliberate in their approach to team building and developing camaraderie among the players, then there will be greater cohesion among the team.

Group 3: If we decide what the mission of Edgemont athletics is, then we can implement appropriate procedures.

Group 4: If we had a clearly understood and articulated mission statement about the role of athletics in student life at Edgemont, then it would be easier to have consistent policies, practices, and expectations about student participation in athletics. If there were collaboration and communication between teachers and coaches, then it would be easier for students to know and manage their overall expectations.

Meeting #4
Strengths,
Weaknesses,
Opportunities, Threats

S W O T

STRENGTHS | **WEAKNESSES** | **OPPORTUNITIES** | **THREATS**

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
• Things your company does well	• Things your company lacks	• Underserved markets for specific products	• Emerging competitors
• Qualities that separate you from your competitors	• Things your competitors do better than you	• Few competitors in your area	• Changing regulatory environment
• Internal resources such as skilled, knowledgeable staff	• Resource limitations	• Emerging need for your products or services	• Negative press/ media coverage
• Tangible assets such as intellectual property, capital, proprietary technologies etc.	• Unclear unique selling proposition	• Press/media coverage of your company	• Changing customer attitudes toward your company

WordStream

Getting to Solutions

Step 1: Define the Problem. What is the problem? ...

Step 2: Clarify the Problem. ...

Step 3: Define the Goals. ...

Step 4: Identify Root Cause of the Problem. ...

Step 5: Develop Action Plan. ...

Step 6: Execute Action Plan. ...

Step 7: Evaluate the Results. ...

Step 8: Continuous Improvement

Establishing an opportunity for communication and collaboration with all coaches and advisors to help create a pipeline for identifying student talent and access.

Bringing some students voices into the conversation to help understand the perceived burden students face when trying to be a good athlete and good student. There is a perception that the pressure for students to be so academically astute sometimes compromises their ability to devote consistent effort to their sport.

We should establish a program philosophy and expectations that serves as the barometer for how we recruit, support, retain, and evaluate coaching staff. Starting with top leadership.

There was some discussion about contemplating two teams, like (A/B), for those who want to participate in a sport versus those who want to commit to becoming a star athlete. It is understood that there are some barriers regarding the size of the district, and the availability of space.

Bring all coaches together (school/community) to share the final findings of the Ad Hoc and next steps.

Meeting # 5

Budget

The need for the district to establish budgetary commitment to the athletic program to ensure it is supported in a way that provides the resources.

Collaboration

Establishing an opportunity for communication and collaboration with all coaches and advisors to help create a pipeline for identifying student talent and access.

Student Voice
Bringing some students voices into the conversation to help understand the perceived burden students face when trying to be a good athlete and good student. There is a perception that the pressure for students to be so academically astute sometimes compromises their ability to devote consistent effort to their sport.

Expectations
We should establish a program philosophy and expectations that serves as the barometer for how we recruit, support, retain, and evaluate coaching staff. Starting with top leadership.

Philosophy
There was some discussion about contemplating two teams, like (A/B), for those who want to participate in a sport versus those who want to commit to becoming a star athlete. It is understood that there are some barriers regarding the size of the district, and the availability of space.

Coaches- Bring all coaches together (school/community) to share the final findings of the Ad Hoc and next steps.

Pros of a "Cut" Sports Program

Higher Skill Level: "Cut" teams tend to have higher levels of skill and competitiveness, which can lead to better overall performance and growth for players.

Focused Coaching: Coaches can provide more tailored training to a smaller group of players, helping them develop their skills and strategies more effectively.

Increased Competition: Players on "cut" teams are often more motivated to improve, leading to a more competitive atmosphere that pushes everyone to excel.

Resource Efficiency: With fewer players, resources can be allocated more effectively, leading to better coaching, practice facilities, and equipment.

Team Cohesion: Smaller teams can foster stronger bonds among players, as they work closely together and rely on each other's strengths.

Cons of a "Cut" Sports Program

Exclusion: A cut program can lead to the exclusion of students who may have a passion for the sport but may not meet the required skill level. This could create feelings of disappointment and discourage students from participating in sports altogether.

Limited Participation: A cut program limits the number of students who can be part of the team, reducing opportunities for students to experience teamwork, physical activity, and the benefits of sports.

Pressure and Stress: The competitive environment in a cut program can lead to higher levels of stress and pressure for athletes, potentially affecting their mental well-being.

Pros of a "No Cut" Sports Program

Inclusivity: All students who want to participate are given the opportunity to do so, regardless of their skill level. This promotes a more inclusive and diverse sports community.

Increased Participation: A "no cut" program allows for a larger number of students to be involved in sports, which can promote physical activity and healthy lifestyles.

Skill Development: Students who are less experienced have the chance to improve their skills and learn from more skilled teammates, creating a positive learning environment.

Team Building: A diverse team can foster a strong sense of camaraderie and teamwork, as students learn to work together despite differences in skill levels.

Reduced Pressure: Without the stress of being cut, students might feel more relaxed and enjoy the sport without the fear of rejection.

Cons of a "No Cut" Sports Program

Skill Level Variability: In a non-cut program, there may be a wide range of skill levels among the athletes. This can impact the overall competitiveness of the team, as well as the ability to compete effectively against other schools with more skilled players.

Limited Playing Time: With a larger number of participants, each athlete might have less playing time during games. This can lead to frustration among those who feel they aren't getting a fair opportunity to showcase their abilities.

Team Dynamics: A diverse skill level within the team can sometimes lead to challenges in team dynamics. More skilled players might become frustrated with less experienced players, and it could affect the overall cohesion of the team.

Performance Impact: The overall performance of the team might be affected by the presence of players with varying skill levels. This can lead to lower win-loss ratios and potentially less recognition for the team.

Disinterest or Disengagement: Athletes who are more experienced or passionate about the sport might become disinterested or disengaged if they feel the program isn't challenging enough or doesn't meet their skill level.

Selection Challenges: In some cases, coaches might struggle with selecting starting lineups or assigning positions due to the wide skill range, which can lead to difficult decisions and potential conflicts.

Top 10 Characteristics we want in our coaches

Passion: A dedicated coach is passionate about their sport and coaching. This enthusiasm is contagious and helps motivate athletes to work hard and improve.

Expertise: While not all coaches need to be elite athletes, they should have a strong understanding of the game's rules, strategies, and techniques. This expertise helps them guide players effectively.

Leadership: Coaches must be strong leaders who can inspire, guide, and motivate their players. They set the tone for the team's culture and behavior both on and off the field.

Communication: Effective communication is crucial. Coaches should be able to convey instructions clearly, provide constructive feedback, and listen to athletes' concerns and ideas.

Teaching Skills: Coaching is a form of teaching. The ability to break down complex skills and concepts into understandable parts and then help players develop those skills is essential.

Adaptability: Athletes vary in skill level, personality, and learning style. A good coach adapts their coaching approach to suit each individual, fostering development in all players.

Mentoring: Coaches often serve as mentors to their athletes. They provide guidance not only in sports but also in life skills, character development, and decision-making.

Patience: Progress and improvement take time. A patient coach understands this and is willing to work with athletes through the challenges they face.

Motivation: Coaches should inspire their players to give their best effort and reach their potential. Motivation can come from setting goals, acknowledging achievements, and providing a supportive environment.

Positive Attitude: A positive coach creates a positive team culture. This attitude helps players deal with setbacks, fosters resilience, and encourages a healthy perspective on competition.

Empathy: Understanding athletes' emotions and challenges helps coaches provide appropriate support and guidance. Empathy builds trust and a sense of community within the team.

Common Themes

- Budget/Facilities
- Coaches
- Student Talent Pipeline/Feeder Programs

Recommendations

Facility Upgrades and Maintenance

Allocate a dedicated budget for the renovation, maintenance, and enhancement of athletic facilities to ensure safety, functionality, and a positive athlete and spectator experience.

Prioritize improvements based on immediate needs, including repairing infrastructure, addressing safety concerns, and modernizing outdated equipment and facilities. Such maintenance efforts should be implemented during the summer seasons as well.

Sustainability Initiatives:

Explore sustainable practices to reduce the long-term environmental impact of our athletic facilities and operations. Implement energy-efficient technologies and waste reduction measures.

Budget and Facilities

Transparency in Budget Allocations

Implement a transparent process for budget allocation within the athletic program, ensuring that funds are distributed fairly and in alignment with program goals.

Provide regular financial updates to the public and stakeholders to foster trust and understanding of the financial management of the athletic program.

Include allocation of resources to support installing a dugout and fences for baseball and softball to bring them closer to applicable standards similar to the football /soccer field and continue to upgrade facilities.

Develop a field maintenance schedule that include summer which will allow for ongoing training (off season) and community access.

Having pristine and update to date facilities will enhance student and community pride in programs and ultimately encourage participation for athletes and spectators alike.

Professional Development and Evaluation:

Establish a comprehensive professional development program for coaching staff, which includes opportunities for ongoing education, certifications, and mentorship.

Conduct regular performance evaluations for coaching staff to assess their impact on athlete development, teamwork, and program success.

Implement a process that consistently compares compensation packages to other coaches to ensure the rates are competitive and in alignment with other comparable districts, including perks and incentives.

There should also be an assessment to determine the ideal athlete to coach ratio.

Good Coaches

Clearly define coaching expectations, including sportsmanship, ethical conduct, and academic support for student-athletes.

Implement a system of accountability that ensures coaching staff adhere to these expectations.

Recruitment and Retention

Prioritize the recruitment and retention of high-quality coaching talent by offering competitive compensation, benefits, and career advancement opportunities.

Create a positive coaching environment that fosters collaboration, professional growth, and a shared commitment to athletes' success.

Clear Expectations

Recruitment and Retention

Prioritize the recruitment and retention of high-quality coaching talent by offering competitive compensation, benefits, and career advancement opportunities

Create a positive coaching environment that fosters collaboration, professional growth, and a shared commitment to athletes' success.

Adopt job requirements for all coaches including requirement for experience of the sport including having played or coached previously.

Such requirements should include management skills and proven communication skills.

Implement a mentoring program for coaches for ongoing training and development.

Implement a clearly defined process for ensuring that all players complete an annual evaluation and exit interview for exiting students.

Implement a comprehensive professional development program for coaching staff and regular performance evaluations.

Student Talent Pipeline

Early Identification and Development:

Develop programs that identify and nurture athletic talent at an early age, both within the organization and the local community.

Collaborate with local schools and youth sports organizations to create a seamless talent pipeline.

Academic Support and Scholarships:

Offer academic support services for student-athletes to ensure they can excel academically while pursuing their athletic dreams.

Explore how scholarship opportunities may support both talented athletes and those who excel academically, promoting inclusivity and diversity.

Post Meeting Considerations

Appointment of an Executive Board