

# **The Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference**



## **Athletic Program Evaluation**

**Simsbury High School**

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# **THE CONNECTICUT INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC CONFERENCE**

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The CIAC believes that interscholastic athletic programs and competition are an integral part of students' academic, social, emotional and physical development. The CIAC promotes the academic mission of schools and honorable competition. As such, the CIAC serves as the regulatory agency for high school interscholastic athletic programs and exists to assure quality experiences that reflect high ethical standards and expectations for fairness, equity and sportsmanship for all student-athletes and coaches. The CIAC provides leadership and support for member schools through the voluntary services of dedicated school administrators, athletic directors, coaches and consultants.

# EDUCATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC PROGRAMS



## INTRODUCTION

There is a greater need today than ever before in the history of interscholastic athletics to develop an educational framework which will promote the value and importance of high school athletic programs. The Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference Board of Control has expressed the need to identify educational expectations for school-based athletics and believes that it is incumbent upon CIAC and its member schools to be able to successfully advance and accomplish those expectations. The establishment of an assessment and technical assistance program that will enhance the quality of high school athletics through the teaching of character education, sportsmanship, ethical and socially responsible behaviors will elevate the value and importance of high school interscholastic athletics well above other athletic experiences now available to high school age athletes. In the final analysis, it is the responsibility of educational leaders to prove the educational worth of high school sports and to show that the lessons learned by young people participating in athletic activities will reinforce and supplement the same goals of the classroom teachers. Therefore, the goal of this initiative is to develop a set of standards for an exemplary interscholastic high school athletic program, implement those standards, and then assess and evaluate the program successes.

## THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The intent of the CIAC Board of Control in moving forward on this initiative is to encourage each member school to periodically conduct a formal review of its athletic program to determine the programs successes and areas in need of improvement. This review will be measured against a set of defined standards of an exemplary interscholastic athletic program and indicators for each of the defined standards.

Schools undertaking a program review will begin by conducting a self-study in which the school/athletic department measures its progress in meeting each of the standards and indicators. The school will utilize self-study materials developed by the CIAC. Additionally, athletic departments will be expected to survey student-athletes, parents, and coaches to solicit feedback on the quality of the athletic program. The school's self-study (along with information provided from the surveys) will allow the school/athletic program to determine their strengths and areas in need of improvement. It is expected

that the athletic department will develop improvement plans based on the findings of the self-study.

Following completion of the self-study a visiting team consisting of two school administrators and two athletic administrators will conduct a two-day site visit to the school. The visiting team will review the self-study findings, the athletic department improvement plans as well as meet with all stakeholders in the program. Additionally, the visiting team will determine the athletic department's success in meeting its mission and expectations and to what extent the standards of an exemplary high school athletic program are being met. The visiting team will be charged with the responsibility of completing a comprehensive report delineating the strengths of the program and the areas in need of improvement. Appropriate commendations and recommendations will be detailed in a final report that will be provided to the school principal and athletic administration. Schools will be charged with implementing the recommendations found in the final report in a timely manner and reporting their progress to CIAC in a follow-up report.

The evaluation process is clearly intended to be a program improvement model designed to assist athletic and school administrators in providing an exemplary interscholastic athletic program to all their students while linking it to the academic mission of the school. It is recommended that each member high school athletic program be evaluated once every ten years.

The CIAC wishes to thank the principal and athletic director of Simsbury High School, the Superintendent of Schools and the Simsbury Board of Education for their willingness to be one of the initial groups of schools in the state of Connecticut to undergo an athletic program evaluation using the standards of an exemplary interscholastic athletic program. The commitment of the school and district to conduct a meaningful evaluation of their program is a clear indication of their belief that athletic is an integral part of the educational program in Simsbury. The school is to be commended for their self-study. The open and straightforward self-assessment completed by the school/athletic department, along with recommendations in this report, will form the basis for continued improvement in the athletic program at Simsbury High School.

## **OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS**

Five standards form the foundation of the CIAC Athletic Program Evaluation: *Guiding Principles, Curriculum, Resources and Equity, Administration, and Program and Player Evaluation*. The thirty-nine indicators embedded in these standards describe practices that are exemplars for schools to aspire to in their athletic programs. The overall findings from a comprehensive overview of the Simsbury High School district athletic program provide evidence of its excellence in many aspects and serves to congratulate the district for having attained compliance with these high expectations. These findings also provide some insights and suggestions for the district in the spirit of support for its commitment to continuous growth and the on-going pursuit of excellence.

The Simsbury High School Athletic program has developed a mission statement that is based on the beliefs and core values of the school and the greater community. All stakeholders were represented in the process used to develop the mission statement and the core values through the work of the Athletic Advisory Council. Through their work with student-athletes the coaches and administrators strive to achieve the mission. A section of the *Simsbury High School Student Handbook* outlines the rules and requirements for students, but currently does not include the mission and core values. The mission and goals of the athletic program emphasize the importance of keeping a balance between academic and athletic progress and SHS coaches encourage student-athletes to pursue more than one sport. The mission provides guidance for the decision-making process and the program is consistent in putting the needs of athletes before all others. A bi-annual review of the mission based on surveys and focus groups as well as data collected concerning the overall performance of the program will ensure that the mission continues to align with the mission of the school/district and continues to serve the student-athletes of Simsbury High School effectively. While the mission statement is posted on the athletic department web site, its inclusion in the student handbook and on athletic department documents would emphasize its importance.

The Simsbury High School Athletic Department promotes a program that is safe, positive, respectful and supportive of athletes. Sportsmanship and respect are emphasized in all activities as is evident in the conduct of athletes and the other students who support the department. The proper behavior of coaches, students, parents, and spectators is emphasized throughout the program and the school has guidelines for spectators that are announced before competitions, but would benefit the program if posted at all venues. Although the program is comprehensive and well-defined and the efforts of coaches and teams are successful, the SHS athletic program has not developed a comprehensive curriculum containing training units or teaching modules that would fit “teachable moments” related to specific aspects of sportsmanship, healthy lifestyles, and leadership. Sport specific training, skill development and conditioning manuals would help promote consistency within each program and ensure that coaches of sub varsity level teams are able to coordinate their efforts in preparing student-athletes for the next level of competition. The program would also benefit from consistency afforded by mandatory pre-season meetings that involve a plenary session with the athletic director and principal and break-out sessions that pertain to each sport conducted by the varsity coach and assistants. Simsbury High coaches also are diligent about monitoring the academic performance of their student-athletes and they maintain contact with teachers concerning attendance, discipline, and student progress. The SHS guidance department and the athletic department coordinate their efforts to ensure that all student-athletes have positive experiences in the classroom and the playing fields.

Simsbury High School has promoted and supported athletic activities throughout the district and provides a very large program with many offerings in both traditional and unique sports. These programs have brought pride and recognition to the community while teaching students about healthy lifestyles and life time activities. The program is supported through the district budget, participation fees, gate receipts, and booster club

fund-raisers. The participation fees provide for the needs of the operating budget and many members of the school community are concerned about the degree of dependence on those fees. Some parents and faculty members also expressed their concern that parents actually pay more than the \$150.00 per athlete during the season because of additional costs for dinners and fund-raisers. The athletic director has created both practice and games schedules that provide for equity between boys' and girls' teams and provides the same level of resources concerning the provision of transportation and equipment. SHS conducts a Title IX review yearly and meets the requirements of the law. The only concern that arose during the visit was the question of how to provide balance for the co-ed team swim team that competes during the boys' season, resulting in the girls being unable to compete in the state level meets at the conclusion of the girls' season. However, female swimmers who were interviewed during the visit expressed their satisfaction with the co-ed team and did not feel that they would prefer a girls' team.

The Simsbury High School athletic director and his secretary are responsible for administering and managing one of the largest programs in the state without additional assistance. Both the athletic director and his secretary assume responsibilities well beyond their position descriptions and work days. Supervision and management of all aspects of the program, including budget development and oversight, supervision and evaluation of coaches, checking on student eligibility, scheduling of events, provision of transportation, maintenance of facilities and equipment, inventory of uniforms, equipment and supplies, and the purchase and replacement of supplies are normal responsibilities of an athletic program. In Simsbury the two people who support program coaches and athletes are also responsible for assuring the participation fees are collected and tabulated, that uniforms are laundered, that equipment is set-up, taken down, and stored appropriately, and that events are covered by department staff. Also, assistant coaches currently supporting some of teams with high subscription rates are unpaid volunteers.

The policies and procedures developed to support the athletic program are clearly defined and promulgated through handbook for coaches and the *Simsbury High School Student Handbook*. The student handbook, that includes four pages dedicated to policies and procedures for Simsbury athletes and its cover sheet that requires parent and student signatures attesting to receipt and responsibility for abiding by the rules therein, ensures that the athletic department successfully informs students and parents about expectations; however, the breadth of information that could be provided through a more comprehensive booklet or a larger portion of the student handbook would help to improve communication. Simsbury has a process for the evaluation of varsity coaches to be conducted by the athletic director. Sub varsity coaches are evaluated by the varsity coaches. Several coaches expressed their desire to attend professional development activities that would be offered on site and believed that such professional development would be of greater benefit than the coaching evaluation. More work should be conducted to develop in concert with coaches an evaluation process that is more comprehensive and that would have relevant connections to a well-designed professional development program. Coaches, students, and parents have opportunities to provide input regarding the athletic program, but would like more information and clarification about

how the Athletic Advisory Council represents them, and greater clarification and communication concerning the budget and the allocation of funds derived from the participation fees.

The overall success of the SHS program is the focus for the athletic director both during and at the close of the school year. However, there is no formal evaluation process to collect and review data and report the results to the public. A formal process that reviews data related to the achievement of the mission would provide a focus for an improvement plan and would help to garner support from the community. Currently there is no formal process for the evaluation of players although some coaches do conduct an end of season evaluation for each athlete. A formal process developed and employed consistently by coaches would enable them to emphasize that they are teachers who work with a curriculum, set goals for individuals and teams, make suggestions for skill development, and assess student athletes' performance. The process could be modified through mutual agreement between the athletic director and the coach for those teams that have a very large number of participants.

The Simsbury High School athletic department and the school as a whole are justifiably proud of the achievement of its student-athletes and the history of the program noted for both sportsmanship and competitiveness. The department is working to achieve its mission while providing a viable and engaging program for students. It is well on its way to becoming an exemplary program that is aligned with the five standards that provided the focus of its self-study—*Guiding Principles, Curriculum, Resources and Equity, Administration, and Program and Player Evaluation*. Through its many sports teams and opportunities to participate and through its policies and procedures, it has created a well-structured and well-managed program that continues to keep the welfare of student-athletes as its primary focus. It emphasizes a balance between academics and sports, the values of good sportsmanship and leadership, and pride in the school. We thank Simsbury High School for its participation in this program evaluation and improvement process. We hope that the suggestions that arose from Simsbury High School's self-study and our recommendations will provide a focus for continuous improvement.



## **STANDARD I** **PROGRAM GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

**The athletic program has developed a mission statement that clearly defines what the school/program is seeking to achieve and delineates the expectations of the program for student-athletes, coaches, school administration, parents, and the community. The expectations of the athletic program are the fundamental goals by which the school assesses the effectiveness of the athletic program and services provided.**

1. The athletic program mission statement and expectations shall be developed by all stakeholders in the program including, but not limited to, coaches, student-athletes, parents, board of education, community members, teachers and school administrators. The mission is to be clearly linked to the academic mission of the school and district.
2. The mission shall reflect the core values, beliefs, and goals of the athletic program.
3. The athletic program shall define expectations as they relate to the athletic program for coaches, student-athletes, school administrators, parents, board of education, and the community.
4. The mission and expectations of the athletic program shall be the basis upon which all decisions are made relative to the program.
5. The athletic mission and expectations shall be reviewed, revised/reaffirmed bi-annually to assure it reflects the needs of the student-athlete, the school and the community.
6. The athletic mission and expectations shall be published and distributed throughout the school community in a manner that ensures that all stakeholders are aware of athletic department's goals.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Simsbury High School Athletic Advisory Council assumed responsibility for developing the Athletic Mission statement and core values. The advisory council, which consists of representatives from all stakeholder groups, represents the many diverse perspectives in the school community. The advisory council has been active for the last four years and regularly discusses a wide range of issues concerning athletics. Its members are familiar with the goals, policies, and needs of the program and developed the mission statement four years ago. All the members of the council have volunteered to represent the many groups that are involved with athletics at Simsbury High School.

The Athletic Council also developed the core values of the program by discussing the characteristics and traditions of the program. After conducting surveys of student-athletes, parents, and coaches, the council discussed the opinions of those surveyed along with the individual comments provided by the respondents. After review and discussion, the committee determined that the identified values of “teamwork, sportsmanship, striving for success, enjoyment, and variety” were suitable core values of the Simsbury Athletic program.

The mission and core values of the Simsbury High School Athletic Program are aligned with the mission statements of the high school and the district. The core values of the SHS mission are “continuous improvement, respect, character, teamwork, and passionate learners.” In their review of various surveys, the members of the Athletic Advisory Council found that most members of the school community believe that participation in the interscholastic program fosters and supports the development of the intellectual, creative, social, emotional, and physical skills that the school’s mission addresses. The core beliefs of the Athletic Mission Statement are similar: “striving for success, sportsmanship, and teamwork, enjoyment, and variety.” Coaches, parents and students who responded to survey questions regarding a balance between academics and athletics, development of character and values, and an overall positive experience with the athletic program expressed favorable opinions about the program and the opportunities it affords to students for growth and development.

The SHS athletic program defines expectations for coaches, student-athletes, school administrators, parents, the board of education, and the community through a number of policies, regulations, and guidelines. Coaches work within the guidelines of a negotiated contract and specific board of education policies. They are also updated on policies, procedures and expectations at pre-season meetings conducted by the athletic director who helps them keep current regarding league and CIAC regulations throughout the year.

The expectations for students and parents are delineated in a specific section of the Simsbury High School Student Handbook which is distributed and must be signed by all students and parents and returned to the main office through the homeroom teacher. Parents and student athletes may find information concerning the program and its expectations on the department's web page as well. However, there is no separate student-athlete-parent handbook that deals exclusively with the procedures, policies and expectations of the athletic program. Some student-athletes and their parents are also informed about procedures by coaches who require attendance at pre-season meetings, however, not all coaches conduct pre-season meetings which the athletic department encourages, but does not require. Student-athletes and their parents must read and sign a contract concerning expected behavior as a means of acknowledging their understanding of the rules and consequences. Also, the principal holds a meeting with athletes to review expectations and responsibilities for athletes during the season.

Members of the community are informed before athletic events of the expectations of fans through the reading of an acceptable code of conduct which was created by the Athletic Advisory Committee. Simsbury High School is proud of its record of sportsmanship and the high level of community support the program has enjoyed over the years.

The Simsbury High School Athletic Department Mission Statement states that the school is "...committed to encourage all students ...to participate in our interscholastic program...and (to have) the opportunity for participation in a wide variety of student-selected activities is a vital part of a student's total educational experience." The level of

student participation in the athletic program, which is greater than 70 percent, indicates how well the core values of the mission are being embraced and supported by the school community. Of the 60 coaches involved in the program, 31 are teachers in the district, a much higher percentage than in most schools nationally. The participation of teachers contributes to a sense of pride and ownership of the program throughout the school community. Traditionally, the program has sought ways to offer new opportunities and to increase and maintain high levels of participation. Such endeavors have been successful, thus Simsbury High School is able to offer students a variety of opportunities in both traditional and unique sports, however, it has also created challenges in terms of facilities, supplies, and funding. Participation fees and parent-supported fund raisers in support of many of the teams have become common place in the school's efforts to sustain a broad and comprehensive program. While all members of the community believe in the breadth of the program, there are differing opinions concerning the effects of the participation fees and various fund-raisers on families. Over the past ten years the participation fees have increased, and many parents, coaches, and administrators are concerned that fees will continue to rise. While the department has a process for parents to arrange for installment payments or for those with financial difficulties to receive a waiver, it remains unclear how many students do not participate because they are unable to pay the fees and do not wish to request a waiver. Therefore, SHS cannot be certain that, in its efforts to expand opportunities for all it is, in fact, limiting opportunities for some.

Interviews with students, coaches, parents, and administrators reveal that the core values of teamwork, sportsmanship, striving for success, enjoyment, and variety are essential to the athletic program. Student-athletes appreciate the instruction and guidance that coaches provide and coaches take pride in the success of their athletes. Parents appreciate the opportunities provided for their children and are aware of the successes of many of the teams, but they are less clear about how decisions are made concerning playing time, player evaluation, the work of the Advisory Council, and the budgetary process.

Everyone in the school community is aware that Simsbury High School has received awards for sportsmanship and recognition from the league and other regional organizations for its sportsmanship and success. Better communication among all the

stakeholders would clarify not only the success of the program, but also how decisions are made and would underscore for everyone that they, in fact, share the same core beliefs.

The Athletic Advisory Council formulated the Mission Statement four years ago. Currently, it has not established a process to review, confirm, reaffirm or update the mission on a regular basis. In order to keep the mission well-aligned with the school's mission statement and responsive to the needs of student-athletes, a regular review based on surveys and focus groups is warranted. In the context of such a review the dilemma of providing the broadest program possible and the burden of supporting such a program may be resolved.

The Simsbury High School Mission Statement, core values, program philosophy, goals and principles are posted on the school website. In addition to the posting on the website coaches and administrators also discuss the mission and expectations during the season. The recent athletic program surveys reveal that parents, coaches, and students agree that the expectations for athletes are fair and equitable and that policies and procedures are effective. Our interviews with students and parents, however, indicate that the athletic department needs to do more to publish and clarify the mission. While some members of the community knew there is a mission, others are unaware of its existence. Among those who knew that there is a mission for the athletic program, most could not name any of its key concepts. There are many venues for bringing the core beliefs and mission to members of the school community, including its addition to documents and stationery, a review at mandatory pre-season meeting with athletes and parents, its posting in areas of competition, and its inclusion in the student-athlete contracts.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The athletic advisory council's work in creating the Mission and core values with input from students, parents, coaches and teachers
2. The alignment of the athletic mission and core values with mission statements of the school and the district

3. The athletic department's success in creating a successful program that members of the school community agree is balanced with academics, provides students with opportunities to develop character and values, and offers an overall positive experience for student-athletes
4. The broad range of sports offered each season that provide many opportunities for students
5. The high percentage of Simsbury High School coaches who teach in Simsbury schools
6. The well-deserved recognition Simsbury has received for athletic accomplishment and sportsmanship
7. The efforts that the athletic department has made to assist parents and student-athletes in learning about the program goals through postings of the mission statement on the web site

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Ensure that all student-athletes are informed about the mission and core values of the athletic program through mandatory pre-season meetings
2. Publish and post the mission and core values through department documents, publications, posting, stationery and other means so that students and parents and student-athletes become familiar with the mission and its goals
3. In light of the mission's goal of providing a variety of sports opportunities and the engagement of as many students as possible, research the effects of participation fees and fund-raising on the participation of all students
4. Create methods of communication with parents to assist them in understanding how decisions are made in the athletic department based on the mission and core values
5. Develop a schedule and process for the regular review of the athletic department's mission and core values based on data derived from surveys and focus group responses



## **STANDARD II** **PROGRAM CURRICULUM**

**The athletic program has developed and implemented programs, activities and curricula that enable the school to achieve its athletic mission and expectations. Embedded in this standard, in addition to sport specific skill development and the promotion of academic achievement, are the teaching and endorsement of sportsmanship, character development, ethics, values, living a healthy and drug free lifestyle and appropriate behavior for all student-athletes, coaches, parents, and spectators.**

1. Curricula shall be developed and instituted that advance sport specific training, conditioning, and skill development in all sports.
2. Curriculum units/modules shall be developed and taught to all student-athletes and coaches in a formal setting on the following topics: Sportsmanship, appropriate behavior, ethics, values, character development, leadership, and development of healthy lifestyles.
3. Specific programs and activities shall be developed and implemented by each school and athletic department to address the proper behavior of all student-athletes, coaches, parents and spectators at athletic contests.
4. The athletic program shall support and monitor the academic achievement of each student-athlete throughout the high school years.
5. The athletic department promotes a program that is safe, positive, respectful, and supportive and fosters the benefits of multi-sports athletics and the disadvantages of sports specialization.
6. The athletic department provides leadership training to all captains and team leaders.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Simsbury High School has one of the most extensive athletic programs in Connecticut, both in number of sports available for its students and in the number of students participating. Simsbury's seventy percent plus participation rate is extraordinarily high and is reflective of the attitude that student-athletes have about the athletic program. The program offers many sports, both traditional and unique, that present opportunities to learn new skills or master familiar one. A sound curriculum that supports the many and varied sports offered at SHS would ensure that there is consistency within and across programs.

The Simsbury High athletic department has not created a process for the development of curriculum guides that advance sport specific training, conditioning, or skill development. Some varsity coaches have individually developed program overviews, playbooks, or team guidelines and while they confer with JV and freshmen coaches at both the beginning and close of the season to ensure consistency of goals for the program. Coaches do not have specific curriculum documents laid out with specific formats that would help them meet program goals. Such curriculum documents developed by the coaching staff would ensure continuity of the program as new coaches are hired and they would support the work of freshman and junior varsity coaches who prepare student-athletes for varsity level play. Currently there is no formal system for introducing all new coaches to the Simsbury High School athletic program. The athletic director and his secretary have an extensive training program for new varsity coaches; however, sub-varsity coaches do not receive training in a systematic manner. Handbooks for each sport made available to each coach that detail what he or she needs to know for a successful coaching experience would benefit coaches and athletes alike. Included should be the criteria for team selection, basic information about styles of play to be employed, conditioning requirements as well as a multitude of other points that are unique to each sport. SHS athletic program would benefit from a consistent curriculum model for each sport in its efforts to ensure that all sports teams support the goals of its athletic mission.

Simsbury conducts pre-season meetings with administrators, coaches, and athletes as well as meetings designed specifically for team captains. The athletic department uses these sessions to discuss various topics relevant to all sports. Meetings with coaches provide for general discussions about sportsmanship, ethics, and character development and distribution of materials to coaches for distribution and discussion with athletes. However, the department has not developed units or modules on topics such as sportsmanship, appropriate behavior, ethics, values, character development, leadership, and development of healthy lifestyles. As part of the development of sport specific curriculum, the Simsbury High School athletic department should create units for these topics for use by every coach and thus ensure that every athlete understands the values that are integral to team sports.

Through the leadership of the athletic director, a positive climate and culture is evident within the athletic department. Student-athletes and their parents learn about expectations for students through the student handbook and the student-athlete contract. Coaches learn about expectations for both athletes and coaches through the coaches' handbook and meetings held with the athletic director. Coaches and student-athletes demonstrate and exemplify good sportsmanship, ethics, values and respect. The athletic department staff has worked diligently to ensure that the program is safe, positive, respectful, and fosters the benefits of participation in many sports. The school and athletic department also devote considerable attention to ensuring that coaches, athletes, students and parents exhibit proper behavior at all athletic contests. Behavioral expectations for all spectators should be visible at each venue and announced prior to all home contests. Captains may also play a major role in the effort to clarify behavioral expectations. To assure that captains have a clear understanding of their role and the responsibilities attendant to that position, the Director of Athletics and the High School Principal meet with all captains at the start of a season.

The academic progress of student-athletes is regularly monitored by the athletic department to assure continued eligibility. Most, if not all, coaches review progress reports and end-of-marking period report cards. The athletic director also supplies

coaches with mid-term reports. The restriction of practices to 2.5 hours sends a clear message to student-athletes that academics must come first and, therefore, adequate time for studying is provided. Coaches also cooperate and support teachers who request that students be excused when late for practice because they need to make up work or receive extra help after school. Efforts of this nature clearly demonstrate that the athletic department and its coaches are committed to assisting classroom teachers in assuring that their student-athletes are meeting academic expectations and that the student-athletes clearly understand their academic programs come first. The importance of focusing on scholarship was made very clear in interviews with student-athletes, coaches and non-coaching teachers. It was also apparent that a strong and positive relationship exists between the guidance department and the athletic department. The guidance department capably assists student-athletes with Clearinghouse questions as well as other topics related to participation in intercollegiate athletics. Simsbury High School student-athletes find answers to questions regarding playing at the collegiate level at a college night devoted to that topic. The guidance department sponsors the program and works cooperatively with the athletic department to support the academic and athletic needs of SHS students.

Student-athletes and their parents/guardians are introduced to the athletic program in a number of ways. Freshman and their parents may attend an orientation in May of each year that provides information on the various clubs, activities and sports available to ninth-graders. Information about those offerings is also available in a booklet published by the guidance department – “What’s Happening at Simsbury High School.” The booklet features a listing of all the sports offered in each of the three seasons as well as the coaches of those sports. Additional means by which the athletic department communicates to all constituents include the school web-site, cable access television, Listserv and via the information distributed by coaches at their pre-season meetings. The Simsbury High School Student Handbook contains four pages of information related to participation in the interscholastic athletics program. Despite the manifold ways in which athletics department information is disseminated, a significant number of parents expressed a desire to learn more about department policies and procedures.

There is substantial evidence that the coaching staff and the athletic department encourage student athletes to participate in multiple sports and discourage sports specialization. The athletic department and coaches are commended for the number of male and female athletes who participate in two or three sports each year. For those student-athletes who choose not to participate in more than one sport, out of season conditioning programs are often designed for them by their coaches.

The success of the athletics department in promoting an all-encompassing, high quality program is demonstrated by the many times it has been awarded the Michael's Cup. It was readily apparent that student-athletes as well as students who did not participate in the athletic program had a high level of respect for each other, and it was also obvious that Simsbury High School students take great pride in their school and its athletic program. Coaches and student-athletes stated that it was a common practice for teams to support each other. Simsbury High's success in the athletic arena is noteworthy. Fifteen state championships during the past three years and many conference championships are indicative of the success teams have enjoyed.

At the beginning of each season, coaches meet with team members and their parents; these meetings are well attended by both groups. Pre-season meetings are important because they provide an opportunity to present important topics, e.g. hazing, the criteria for team selection, drug and alcohol policies, conflict resolution, etc. However, there is no assurance that all key areas are covered by each coach. A "Sports Night" for student-athletes and their parents conducted by the Athletic Director prior to each season during which the A.D. introduces coaches and trainers, explains changes to regulations of the CIAC or league, and clarifies department procedures will assure that all important rules and regulations are covered in a thorough and consistent fashion. A common theme in the parents' survey and the comments they offered was a need for greater communication from the athletics department and their children's coaches. Mandatory Pre-season meetings with the athletic director in a plenary session and with individual coaches in break-out sessions could address these concerns and improve communication between coaches and parents.

During interviews with coaches, several expressed a desire to have more on-site professional development and to have more opportunities to explore programs that are relevant to their coaching efforts. Professional development time offered on-site would provide time for curriculum development as well as the study of contemporary topics such as functional training, periodization, diversity, effective communication with parents, etc. could be of benefit to all coaches, and ultimately to their student-athletes.

The management of a program as large as Simsbury High School's is extremely challenging. A program of this magnitude requires a leader capable of organizing and supporting approximately 900 contests per year, an ability to deal with many people with widely divergent views, the willingness to work in long hours, and the vision to keep the program moving forward. Simsbury High School is commended for having such a person in place. An important asset to the athletic program is the athletic department secretary who provides valuable assistance to the athletic director.

### **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The leadership training provided to captains by the high school principal and athletic director
2. The efforts to promote multi-sport athletes as evidenced by the number of two and three sport athletes
3. The efforts of an excellent coaching staff to provide an athletic experience to Simsbury High School's student-athletes that is of the highest caliber
4. The number of students participating in the athletic program
5. The number of sports offered by Simsbury High School.
6. The efforts of coaches to monitor student-athletes' academic progress and the cooperation between the athletic department and the guidance department
7. The efforts of the athletic and guidance departments to provide a welcoming and informative orientation to ninth-grade students

8. The climate and culture created by the athletic director and his staff that endorses good sportsmanship, ethics, values, respect and a perspective that acknowledges that academics success supercedes athletics endeavors

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Design and implement a plan to provide written documents that articulate sport specific skill development as well as other information that is pertinent to each sport
2. Develop curriculum modules to be taught to all student-athletes in a formal setting on the topics such as: sportsmanship, values, character development, leadership, and healthy lifestyles
3. Provide written coaching manuals that are developed by the athletic director and head coaches and that support the needs of sub-varsity coaches, new coaches and the head coach
4. Post and/or distribute spectator expectations at all venues to reinforce the school district and athletic department expectations for appropriate behavior



### **STANDARD III** **PROGRAM RESOURCES AND EQUITY**

**The athletic program is provided sufficient support and resources by its governing body and the community to assure the achievement of the athletic mission and expectations. Equitable resources, facilities, and opportunities are afforded to all student-athletes and sports programs including intramural programs for students not involved in interscholastic sports. The athletic program is in compliance with all state and federal mandates.**

1. The athletic program shall be provided sufficient funding to assure the program provides and maintains quality athletic opportunities, personnel, services, facilities, equipment, transportation, uniforms, teaching materials and supplies to support each sport offering.
2. All athletic equipment including uniforms shall be adequate, properly maintained, refurbished or replaced on a prescribed schedule for all teams.
3. The athletic program shall allocate resources, programs and services for all sports equitably.
4. The athletic program shall be in compliance with all state and federal mandates including coaching certification and Title IX.
5. The athletic program provides athletic opportunities to all interested students including special needs students.
6. The athletic program provides equal opportunities for male and female athletes.
7. Athletic programs and activities exist for those students not involved in competitive interscholastic athletics.
8. Funding parity shall exist among all sports programs and support from sources such as booster clubs is considered when allocations are determined.
9. All athletic facilities are properly maintained to ensure the safety of student-athletes and the school shall have a long-range facilities plan to upgrade, improve and to add to existing facilities as necessary.

## CONCLUSIONS

Simsbury High School offers a comprehensive athletic program that includes a wide range of sports offered during each of the three seasons. The high school program affords students the opportunity to become involved in twenty-seven varsity level sports, thirteen for the women and fourteen for the men as well as five coeducational programs. The entire athletic program (freshman, junior varsity and varsity) consists of seventy-two teams and is one of the largest programs in the State. Current data indicate that the student athlete population participating at the varsity, junior varsity and freshman levels totals 1,608 participants. There are 770 females participating (48 percent) and 838 male participants (52 percent). There were 1076 individual athletes, approximately 70 percent of the student population with 516 being female and 560 being males. Of the student-athletes involved in the athletic program, 40 percent plays a second sport with 10 percent of the students participating in a third sport. Participation for males and females is within 1 to 2 percent of each other.

Revenues used to support the athletic program come from several sources. The board of education provides funds to cover coach's salaries (approximately \$350,000) and \$45,000 for operating costs, however, an additional \$275,000 is still needed for direct operating costs. These funds are generated through the student-athlete participation fee (approximately \$225,000) and through gate revenue and assessments (estimated \$50,000). The board of education funds 60 percent and the athletic department must fund 40 percent of the athletic budget. The 40 percent to be raised by the athletic department constitutes approximately 85 percent of the operating budget. The participation fee is of concern to several of the groups that were interviewed. During the interview process that involved meetings with parents, teachers, guidance counselors, students, coaches, and administrators, it became evident that many constituents believe that participation fees, often referred to as "pay to play" should be reduced and eventually phased out.

There is a good balance between academics and athletics both of which are high priorities for Simsbury student athletes, coaches and staff. Over the years, Simsbury has demonstrated a great deal of success in both areas. Numerous banners displayed in the

gymnasium are evidence of athletic success. Members of the school community agreed that there is positive interaction between the athlete and non-athlete as well as good support from the student body for the athletic program. In addition, all parties interviewed also displayed a strong sense of pride for the program and school district.

The athletic budget is developed by the athletic director with input from the coaching staff regarding new equipment, equipment maintenance and additional coaching positions. The athletic director then develops a budget based upon anticipated costs of transportation, rental fees, officials, support services, and other program expenses. A three to five year uniform replacement plan is in place and included in the budget as determined by the current inventory submitted by the coaches. The athletic director develops a final budget that distributes the funds across all teams as equitably as possible and presents it to the board of education in December. A cost analysis of the interscholastic program is included and is a helpful tool for understanding the program expenditures and cost per athlete. The approved board of education budget meets the financial needs for the absolute necessities of running the athletic program, however, it does not provide for additional funding that is needed to expand or make any necessary improvements. The participation fees are therefore necessary to close the budget gap. Funding for additional assistant coaches is a necessity and a priority as expressed by the coaches interviewed. The athletic director has been able to meet the budget requests of the coaches through his ability to manage participation fees and gate receipts successfully. There is some confusion regarding the budget process and the use of participation fees expressed by parents interviewed during the evaluation process. Consequently, a mandatory preseason parent meeting would be a beneficial way to communicate to all stakeholders the budget process and the function of participation fees.

Athletic equipment is adequate, properly maintained, and replaced as needed. There is also a uniform replacement schedule that includes all school teams. Coaches are responsible for submitting an updated inventory at the conclusion of the season. In addition, coaches complete an updated supply request and submit ideas for program improvement. The department secretary voluntarily works beyond the parameters of her

job description in maintaining and laundering uniforms and playing a major role in the inventory process. Funds are available for the reconditioning of equipment as is outlined in the cost analysis. Additional assistance with managerial tasks as well as with coverage at events would certainly be an asset to the department and ensure the smooth running of each team's activities.

Resources to support the high school athletic program are allocated based on a purposeful annual review by sport, the number of contests and the specific nature of the sport relative to materials, supplies, equipment, and coaching. Survey results indicate that coaches and athletes feel that equity exists in term of access to facilities and other resources, and the interview process conducted throughout the program review validated that sentiment.

The Simsbury Public Schools monitors Title IX compliance very carefully and reviews it on a yearly basis. The program offers a good balance of opportunities for males and females. Resources, including coaches are equitably allocated and funded. There is however, a need to increase the number of assistant coaches at the varsity level for teams with a high ratio of student-athletes to coaches. Both the boys and girls programs share the same game and practice facilities; in addition, there are an equal number of night events for both genders. The athletic director and coaches develop a plan for cooperative use of the outdoor and indoor facilities. An equitable plan is also in place for use of the Henry James Middle School facilities. The fitness area is a great asset to the department and allows for equitable access to all students however, not all coaches have received training in optimum use of the equipment provided in the center (which students referred to as the weight room). Over all, there is consistent and clear evidence that scheduling of all venues is conducted without bias for any particular sport. Storage areas are limited and access to these facilities is difficult due to their location in the boys' and girls' locker rooms. Additional space can be gained by relocating some of the supplies currently stored in the large area located off of the gymnasium. In addition, the washer and dryer could be moved to that location to allow for easier accessibility. There are ample locker room facilities and an adequate training room. The certification of coaches is closely

monitored through the athletic department. Records include coaching permits, first aid and CPR certifications.

Students with disabilities are welcome to try out for interscholastic teams. Students are also encouraged to participate in the unified sports program offered during the fall and winter seasons. Approximately 100 students continue to participate in these programs.

There are many athletic opportunities available for students at the high school level. The high participation rate is evidence of the schools ability to develop attractive programs. There are a number of freshman level teams as well as intramural programs which provide good opportunities for students to learn about a sport and develop the skills necessary for competition at higher levels. Of the ninth grade students involved in the program approximately eighty-five percent plays at least one sport, and over 1100 of 1550 students in grades 9-12 participate in the athletic program. There is some concern regarding the equity within the swimming program. The swim program (which is coed) is only offered in the winter (or during the boys' season) and therefore the girls are unable to compete in the State Tournament at the end of the season, as most would not qualify to compete against male athletes. Some members of the school community feel that greater opportunity and equality would result from the addition of a girls' swim team to the SHS program. However, some female members of the co-ed. swim team stated that they believed that the program should remain as is. They seemed to enjoy the coeducational environment and did participate in an unofficial girls' championship meet at the conclusion of the season. If a girl's program were to be added it would provide for opportunities for a greater number of participants (which is a goal expressed in the mission statement), however additional funds would be required in the current budget. Procedures are also in place for club sports to achieve varsity status. The club program needs to be in existence for three years, be able to produce a viable schedule and maintain significant participation numbers in order to become a varsity level sport.

There are several athletic opportunities for students who are not members of an athletic team. The high school has seven club sports which include rugby, indoor track, fencing,

hiking, outdoor club, ballroom dancing and weight training. In addition there are two intramural offerings: ultimate frisbee and dodge ball. Students interviewed felt that these programs were appropriate and satisfied their needs.

Funding from outside sources comes from two formal booster clubs, The Gridiron Club and the Friends of Crew. There are also numerous parent groups that provide financial support to many programs. The Gridiron Club is a town-wide club that contributes enhancement items for the high school football program. The Friends of Crew offset 50 percent of operating expenses for the entire crew program. The parent groups are involved in fund raising programs to provide money for the end of season banquets and to purchase other enhancement items for their specific sports team. Fund raising efforts need to be streamlined as was voiced by many who were interviewed. There is also no way to determine that there is equity among all of the parent groups. Guidelines for Booster Clubs and parent groups are in place and well defined. A sport financial report is also required at the completion of the season and has been beneficial for record keeping of all funds raised.

The facilities at Simsbury High School are properly maintained with no evidence of any unsafe conditions. The Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for maintaining and lining the athletic fields and gives the high school programs priority concerning requests for field use. There is an excellent working relationship between this department and the athletic staff. Capital improvement funds have been provided and used recently for major renovations and extensive additions to the facility. Currently there are no plans for further renovations or additions. Plans should be put in place to provide visitor bleachers and perhaps an additional turf field on site to eliminate the use of off campus facilities. An additional turf field also would alleviate over use of other fields. The swim and ice hockey teams practice and compete at off-site facilities. These arrangements seem to serve the needs of the three programs.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The comprehensive athletic program in male and female sports offered by the Simsbury High School Athletic Program
2. The Simsbury school community's strong support of an athletic program that engages a large percentage of the student population
3. The overall equity in the athletic program (including facilities, equipment, coaches, awards, etc.)
4. The guidelines that the athletic department has developed for booster clubs and parent groups
5. The athletic director for his ability to successfully meet all of the financial needs of the athletic program with declining resources
6. The athletic director, district staff and town personnel for ensuring that facilities are well-maintained and available to serve the demands of the program
7. The modern, well-designed athletic facilities that serve both indoor and outdoor sports

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Review the dependence on participation fees to support a significant portion of the athletic department's operating budget, the continuous increase in fee assessments, and the effects they have on families to determine whether fees should be eliminated, phased out or retained
2. Implement procedures to decrease the amount of fund raising conducted by booster groups
3. Inform and educate all constituents about the costs of the athletic programs and the current allocation of participation fees
4. Review the feasibility of creating a girls' swim team
5. Provide training for all coaches in the proper use of the training equipment in the fitness center
6. Develop a plan to relocate the laundry facility and to allow for easier accessibility to uniform storage areas

7. Ensure that the district's capital improvement plan addresses additions to the school's facilities, such as visitor's bleachers and a second turf field
8. Evaluate the need for a faculty manager to assist the athletic director with program operations



#### **STANDARD IV** **PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION**

**The athletic program has the administrative structure, policies, procedures, and personnel in place to allow for the attainment of the athletic mission and expectations. The program encourages the active involvement of coaches, student-athletes, parents, booster clubs, and the community in decision making to promote an atmosphere of participation and ownership. The accomplishments of the program, the student-athletes and coaches are regularly acknowledged and celebrated. The program has a clearly defined formative and summative personnel evaluation plan in place which is designed to enhance the professional growth of all coaches. The athletic program promotes and supports all CIAC regulations and by-laws including those of the National Federation of State High Schools and is in compliance with all state and federal statutes.**

1. The school/district shall provide appropriate personnel with adequate time and resources to assure the effective administration of the athletic program.
2. The athletic program has clearly defined policies and procedures in place for the effective administration of the program.
3. The athletic program has a student-athlete/parent handbook and contract that clearly defines all expectations for student-athletes including, but not limited to, policies on sportsmanship, hazing, taunting, substance use and abuse, and is provided to all student-athletes and their parents.
4. The athletic department provides to all coaches, including volunteer coaches, a handbook which outlines all expectations and procedures including CIAC rules and regulations and the responsibility of the coach to promote and model good sportsmanship.
5. The athletic program shall have written guidelines for all booster clubs explaining their role in the program.
6. The athletic program shall have written guidelines and procedures for all athletic events including emergency evacuation measures in line with the CIAC Manual for Tournament Operations and Guidelines for Crowd Control and Security.
7. The athletic program shall have programs in place to educate players, coaches, students, parents and spectators on sportsmanship and proper behavior at all sporting events.

8. The athletic program shall have a formal evaluation plan for all coaches including assistant and volunteer coaches that promote the professional growth and competence of all coaches.
9. The school/athletic department shall provide staff development programs for coaches designed to enhance and improve their professional growth and competence.
10. The athletic department provides an induction program for new coaches as well as coaches who are not employed as faculty or staff in the district.
11. The athletic department allows for the meaningful input from student-athletes, parents, booster clubs, and the community into decisions impacting the athletic program.
12. The athletic program complies with all CIAC and National Federation of State High School rules, regulations and by-laws and all state and federal statutes.
13. The athletic program regularly acknowledges, celebrates, and displays the accomplishments of the student-athlete, teams and coaches.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Simsbury High School athletic program is managed through the efforts of a full-time athletic director and a full-time department secretary. The athletic director and his secretary share office space at the high school and are responsible for overseeing the staffing and supervision of 85 coaches and two athletic trainers as well as the scheduling of over 900 games, 450 bus trips and over 1,000 game officials. They are responsible for overseeing the ordering of supplies and equipment, the repair and refurbishing of uniforms, the coordination of facilities both on and off site, and the preparation and implementation of the athletic budget. .

At present, the athletic program consists of 72 varsity, junior varsity and freshman programs in addition to seven club sports including rugby, indoor track, hiking, fencing, outdoor club, ballroom dancing and weight training. Through the school's intramural program, students also may participate in ultimate Frisbee and dodge ball. Because of the size and scope of the program the athletic department has a need for additional support and assistance in managing the many responsibilities that ensure a safe, orderly, and enjoyable experience for all athletes. Several varsity teams, especially those that serve a large number of athletes, currently depend upon volunteers to serve as assistant coaches. A comprehensive review of the role of assistant coaches, the needs of teams with high ratios of athletes to coaches, and the continued viability of the use of volunteers would provide a response to the requests that have been raised by members of the school community for paid assistant coaches.

The policies and procedures of the athletic department are clearly written, defined and articulated to all involved. They are written to align with those required by the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC). The Athletic Advisory Council undertook a complete review and streamlining of the athletic department policies and procedures two years ago. Since then all policies are reviewed annually and updated when necessary. Updates and changes are communicated to coaches, players and parents at the beginning of each season at coaches' meetings, captains' meetings, seasonal athletes' meetings and team parent meetings, although not all coaches hold pre-season

mandatory meetings for students and parents. The updates and changes are also available on the school district website and in the principal's newsletter. The policies and procedures of the athletic department were updated with the athletic mission and expectations and the mission of Simsbury High School in mind.

The athletic department has a four-page student-athlete/parent section in the school's student handbook that outlines the rules, regulations and procedures for the interscholastic program. This handbook is distributed to all students the first day of school and both the parent and the student sign and return a cover page that indicates they have received the handbook and that they are responsible for understanding and adhering to its contents which include, among others, very detailed policies regarding hazing and substance use and abuse. In addition, each athlete and his/her parent must sign a sports contract at the beginning of each sport season. While the school does not allow an athlete to practice or play until the signed contract is returned, there are individuals in the school community who believe that the contract is too lenient relative to the penalties imposed when an athlete breaks it.

The athletic department provides to all coaches, including volunteer coaches, a handbook which outlines coaching duties, requirements, and procedures including CIAC rules and regulations and the responsibility of the coach to promote and model good sportsmanship. Included in this handbook are sections on pre and post season responsibilities, guidelines for budget preparation, and policies on issues such as hazing and bullying. The coaches' handbook is updated seasonally and handed out to be reviewed and discussed at each pre-season coaches' meeting.

The athletic director at Simsbury High School oversees two booster clubs (football and crew) and a parent group for each of the other sports. The school has on its website written guidelines for fundraising events along with how to use the funds collected. These guidelines are sent home with a financial statement to each team captain and his/her parents at the beginning of each sport season. This information is sent only to the parents of the captains because traditionally it is the responsibility of the captain's parents

to organize and oversee the fundraisers, team dinners and the end-of-season banquet for the particular sport. The results of the CIAC parent opinion survey administered prior to the team visit indicate that a number of parents believe that fundraisers and team banquets vary greatly from sport to sport.

The athletic program has written guidelines and procedures for all athletic events in line with the CIAC Manual for Tournament Operations and Guidelines for Crowd Control and Security. Also, the athletic department, through signage and public address announcements, encourages proper spectator behavior. Except for the absence of emergency evacuation measures, the athletic program complies with all CIAC and National Federation of State High School rules, regulations, and by-laws and all state and federal statutes.

The subject of proper sportsmanship and behavior at sporting events is discussed during coaches' meetings, captains' meetings, seasonal athletes' meetings, school class meetings and team parent meetings. The school administration's strong support of the athletic program is demonstrated in part by its members' presence at high-profile events. This presence has proven effective in maintaining proper behavior and positive sportsmanship at all sporting events. As proof, during the last five years, the football, boys' and girls' soccer, boys' and girls' ice hockey, wrestling and boys' lacrosse teams have been honored by their respective game officials' organizations and given state sportsmanship awards by these groups.

The athletic director evaluates the performance of head coaches through a written review at the conclusion of each season. The head coaches evaluate the assistant coaches and volunteers. The evaluations are a means of identifying and discussing areas of concern with each coach. The department's self-study indicates that "it is difficult to truly measure whether or not the evaluation leads to enhanced teaching and learning." Members of the self study committee reflected the beliefs of coaches that greater enhancement of teaching and learning would result from professional development opportunities. The superintendent of schools would like the athletic department to create

and implement a more effective evaluation instrument for determining the needs of various coaches and then providing them with the resources to promote growth and competence.

The athletic department at present does not offer specific staff development or in-service programs to enhance the skill and ability of the coaches based upon the data collected through coaching evaluations. The department does advertise and encourage coaches to attend the professional development activities offered by the CIAC, the Connecticut Association of Athletic Directors (CAAD) and the Connecticut High School Coaches Association (CHSCA). Discussions with selected coaches during the visit revealed that they and other coaches would be more than willing to attend in-house professional development programs related to coaching and specific to their needs and interests.

The athletic director provides support and induction resources for new varsity coaches, but the provisions made for new sub-varsity coaches and volunteer assistant coaches depend upon the assistance provided by the varsity coach for the specific sport. New coaches who are faculty members have the benefit of being in the same facility with the athletic department and, in many instances, with the varsity coach who is also a Simsbury High School teacher. However, those who are not members of the faculty or are not teachers need greater support provided through a formal induction program along with written materials that clarify the policies and regulations as well as the resources available to student-athletes such as the guidance department, athletic trainer, and administrators.

Student-athletes, parents, booster clubs and the community have input into decisions that impact the program through the Athletic Advisory Council. Currently, there are sixteen members on this council which meets at least four times a year: four coaches, three parents, two students, a teacher, a board of education member, a selectman, a central office administrator, the principal, an assistant principal and the athletic director. In meetings with parents during the visit, it became clear that many parents and others in the school community are not aware of the existence or functioning of the Athletic Advisory

Council. This is perhaps due to the fact that the meetings' agendas and minutes are sent to committee members only. Better communication regarding Advisory Council membership, its responsibilities, and how community members may contact council members to make suggestions for council discussions would benefit the program and the athletes it serves.

The Simsbury athletic program complies with all CIAC and National Federation of State High School rules, regulations and by-laws and all state and federal statutes to ensure the rights and safety of all student-athletes.

At Simsbury High School individual and team successes are celebrated through announcements by the principal, during the daily "Chris and Chris show", and in the local news media. The athletic program equitably acknowledges, celebrates and displays the accomplishments of the student-athletes, teams and coaches through school announcements, newsletters, the local newspaper, displays in trophy cases and end-of-season team banquets. Recently, beautiful new banners have been hung in the gymnasium depicting the athletic teams' league and state championships in each sport over the years.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The athletic director and his secretary's efforts to manage a very large and comprehensive sports program in the most efficient manner possible
2. The members of the Athletic Advisory Council for their commitment to student- athletes and the athletic program of Simsbury High School
3. The school administrators' strong support of the athletic program
4. The clearly defined policies and procedures created to ensure a smooth-running program for student-athletes and coaches
5. The numerous state sportsmanship awards from the game officials' organizations that acknowledge Simsbury High athletes and their respective coaches
6. The numerous ways the athletic program acknowledges the accomplishments of student-athletes, teams and coaches

7. The athletic participation contract that requires all student-athletes and their parents to acknowledge commitment to the rules and expectations for athletes

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Evaluate the need for additional support to the athletic department to assist the athletic director and his secretary in providing comprehensive management of Simsbury's large athletic program
2. Evaluate the need for paid assistant coaches for those teams with a high ratio of student-athletes to coaches
3. Review the effectiveness of the sports contract in ensuring proper behavior of student-athletes and make appropriate changes if warranted
4. Conduct a review of fundraisers and end-of-season banquets for all teams to ensure that there is balance among the various sports and that all groups follow the established guidelines
5. Create and publicize emergency evacuation measures for athletic events
6. Create and implement a more effective coach's evaluation process that will provide for the needs of both varsity and sub-varsity coaches
7. Provide in-house professional development opportunities for the coaches that is designed to meet identified needs
8. Develop and implement methods to ensure that the membership and work of the athletic advisory council is better known and understood in the school community, especially with students and parents
9. Post the agendas and minutes of the Athletic Advisory Council on the school website and clarify for all members of the school community how they may suggest topics for discussion
10. Schedule an athletic director's pre-season "sports night" program and make it a mandatory meeting for student-athletes, parents and coaches of that season
11. Develop and implement a communication plan that will provide more information for parents concerning points of confusion or areas of concern that have surfaced through recent surveys



## **STANDARD V** **PROGRAM AND PLAYER EVALUATION**

**The athletic program has an ongoing program evaluation procedure in place designed to measure the department's success in achieving its mission and expectations and the developmental skill growth of each student-athlete. The skill growth of athletes is formally assessed at the end of each season and improvement plans are co-developed by the coach and athlete. The athletic department reports its progress in meeting its mission and expectations to the school administration and develops action plans for improvement.**

1. The athletic program shall have a formalized process in place to assess the achievement of its mission and expectations. Data collection and review procedures shall be in place to support the department's findings.
2. The athletic department shall periodically employ surveys and focus groups to garner information from parents, students, and coaches regarding the success of the athletic department in meeting its mission.
3. The athletic department shall report the results of its efforts to meet the mission and expectations annually.
4. The athletic department shall develop action plans for improvement or enhancement of the program on an annual basis.
5. The athletic department shall develop and implement a player assessment program that is designed to set and evaluate individual performance goals for each student-athlete on a seasonal basis.

## CONCLUSIONS

The athletic department does not currently have a formalized process in place to assess whether or not they are meeting the goals and expectations outlined in their mission statement. The self study report clearly states that, as a result of this evaluation, they “...will be required to periodically re-evaluate all aspects of the program including the mission, core values and expectations,” an opinion shared by the athletic director and the principal. The athletic department is achieving a high level of success in meeting its mission, as evidenced by their high participation rate, the many times they have been awarded the Michael’s Achievement Cup, and the fact that their academic failure rate is almost non-existent. However, the fact that the department is planning to do a formalized, periodic review of the progress they are making in meeting the goals of the mission and core values statement is appropriate and commendable.

The athletic director is responsible for reviewing the status of the athletic department and reporting it to the principal and, usually during budget hearings, to the board of education. However, there is no formalized data collection process that includes all stakeholders that would help to ensure the department’s success in meeting its mission and core values. Such data could be used to address concerns and questions from parents, and students, and would also provide the administration with an opportunity to share the many positive aspects of the program with the board of education and the community at large.

The mission statement was written four years ago by a twenty three member athletic advisory board and reviewed as part of the self-study process. This representative group which includes a cross section of school personnel and community members can and should play a major role in collecting and reporting program data and it should annually use the many avenues available to the school to communicate to all stakeholders the areas of strength and areas of need for future improvement.

The department does not periodically survey its constituents or seek assistance from focus groups in order to synthesize or analyze data. As was mentioned previously, there

is an advisory group that, according to the director of athletics, is “used as a sounding board.” However, most of the parents who were interviewed were either vaguely familiar with the advisory committee or had never heard of the group. One parent stated that while he had heard of the committee, he had no idea what its function was. An advisory committee that is actively involved in creating and revising the department’s action plan would receive much more recognition by parents and students alike and would give the athletic department an avenue to increase its level of communication with the community, a need that was expressed by both the parents and the athletic director. Periodic surveys and scheduled meetings with parents, students and coaches would give the athletic director an abundance of information that he could use to assess how constituents feel about the department’s level of success in relation to their mission statement and core values. This data could be reviewed by the advisory committee on a regular basis and used by the athletic department as an instrument of growth.

The athletic director reports to the principal on a regular basis and makes an annual budget presentation to the board of education on the status of the athletic program. In addition, the superintendent meets with the principal and athletic director several times during the school year to address issues and to receive department updates, and to plan for the future. However, the attainment of the goals of the mission statement is not used as a measure of success during these and other meetings. Discussing data that reflects on the success and challenges of the athletic department in meeting the department’s mission and core values and progress made on the developmental growth of the athletes on a regular basis would benefit the program and the school as a whole.

Many of the constituent groups that were interviewed, including parents, coaches and athletes, were either unaware of the mission statement or vaguely aware of the fact that the athletic department had a mission, but were unable to identify its ideas or values. A better awareness of the department’s mission by all stake holders, as well as a concerted effort on the part of school personnel to report the results of its efforts will lead to a better understanding of the department’s integral role in this comprehensive high school and, hopefully, even more support ( including financial), by the community.

While pre-season player assessments are regularly completed by the coaches, post-season assessments are not. Athletes who belong to teams with coaches that do conduct post-season assessments say that they were not involved in developing an improvement plan in concert with the coach. However, these athletes felt that the post season evaluations were very helpful in helping them set goals and improve their skills. Students who do not benefit from a post-season assessment unanimously felt that evaluation information about their progress one would be very helpful to them. Parents also strongly expressed the same sentiment. Both groups felt that an assessment would improve player skill development by helping the student-athletes prepare for the next season with a specific focus on their individual needs.

The coaches expressed mixed feelings about post season assessments. Some felt that player evaluation is helpful while others feel that end of season player evaluation could be misunderstood if the athlete were cut at the beginning of the following year. Some coaches are concerned because of the number of athletes involved in their programs. According to them, doing a post-assessment for every player would be too difficult for them to complete. Although the concerns of the coaches are understandable, they should not create barriers to implementing this process. Pre and post-season assessments will help the coaches have a better understanding of where the athletes are in relation to the coaches' expectations. The addition of assistant coaches to these large teams would allow for player evaluation to be more manageable. The athletic advisory council would be a perfect venue to conduct a candid discussion about player evaluation.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The commitment to develop a formalized process to monitor the success of the athletic program in relation to its mission statement and core values
2. An athletic advisory committee that consists of a broad array of representatives from the Simsbury athletic community

3. The commitment of the principal, athletic director and coaches to the spirit and intent of the mission and core values that has resulted in an athletic program that has achieved a high level of success in meeting the goals of the mission
4. The high degree of parent and student satisfaction with those coaches who offer individualized plans designed to assist athletes in skills improvement during the off-season

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Implement plans for determining the athletic department's level of success in achieving its mission and core value through a formalized process that allows for the regular collection and review of data, including parent and student surveys
2. Engage the athletic advisory committee in data driven dialogue and include them as part of the athletic department's action plan to improve the department's programs and services
3. Publicize via the student/parent handbook, pre-season meetings, letters home, and the web page, the composition and purpose of the athletic advisory committee
4. Develop and implement a mandatory pre and post-season assessment of all athletes that includes the use of an individualized, sport specific instrument designed to establish and evaluate player performance goals on an annual basis

## **FOLLOW-UP PROCESS**

The Simsbury High School follow-up program evaluation report reflects the findings of the athletic department's self-study and those of the visiting committee. The recommendations in the report and those in the self-study will serve to guide the school's athletic department in the improvement of programs and services provided the student-athletes, coaches, parents, and spectators. The athletic department is charged with the responsibility of implementing the recommendations found in the final report in a timely manner. The school will be asked to report its progress in meeting the recommendations to the CIAC after a two-year period. The CIAC is committed to assisting the school/athletic department in addressing the recommendations and to providing technical assistance as necessary.

## **VISITING TEAM MEMBERS**

Elaine Bessette – Chairperson	Retired Principal, Greenwich High School
Joseph Guay	Retired Principal, Stratford High School
Vincent Iezzi	Retired Principal, Hamden High School
Robert Lehr	Retired Director of Athletics / CIAC Staff Southington High School
Barbara Startup	Retired Director of Athletics Glastonbury High School