

No-cut policy upheld for middle school sports

Written by CAROL POMEDAY
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Athletic coordinator says being on a team is more important than wins

Cedar Grove-Belgium Middle School officials recently reiterated its no-cut policy for athletics and desire for all students to get playing time.

With a growing number of students involved in a variety of sports, including basketball, track, cross-country and volleyball, additional paid and volunteer assistant coaches have been added to help coaches.

Various methods are being used or studied to help young athletes improve their skills and receive adequate playing time, said Leslie Mundt, physical-education teacher and middle school athletic coordinator.

Following a recent meeting of middle school athletic coordinators in the Central Lakeshore Conference, Mundt spoke to coaches and researched the role of middle level athletic programs.

Her report to the School Board on April 11 was endorsed by Principal Jeanne Courneene and Supt. Steve Shaw.

"I strongly support the continuation of practices that include implementing measures that allow participation by all students who have a desire to gain more knowledge about a sport, wish to develop skills and aspire to be a member of a team," Courneene said.

In her report, Mundt stated, "For some it is more than just the sport. It is that feeling of being part of a team. The middle school athletic experience allows student participants to learn how to work with others through various situations, something that can be carried throughout life."

Shaw noted that students at this age develop at different rates and to deny a student a chance to play a sport could turn him or her off to athletics.

"At the middle school level, the primary priorities are not winning or being responsible for feeding a high school program," Mundt wrote.

"It is about exposure and opportunity, providing opportunities for participants to develop skills, contribute to a team and develop strong sportsmanship attributes while having fun. Too often fun is omitted from the athletic experience at the middle level."

There are numerous AAU and other outside teams that are based on skill levels for athletes who are more competitive, she noted.

The athletic coordinators offered several options for boys' and girls' basketball teams that

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have a large number of participants. Playing a fifth quarter that will not affect the outcome of the game would give those who haven't had much playing time to play in a competitive situation

A second option is to add more games either within or outside the conference.

"With a very large number of smaller schools close to our school district, I am consistently being asked if I would like to play other teams," Mundt said.

A third option would be to add two minutes to each quarter, thus making more playing time available for all athletes.

This year in volleyball, orange and black teams with equal skill levels were formed, Mundt said.

"Each team plays an hour at a time, which gives the girls ample playing time," she said. "With a large number of girls participating, assigning them to a specific team promotes team collaboration, cooperation and contribution."

The school added a third volleyball net so three matches were held instead of two, giving the girls more playing time. Additional nonconference games were scheduled.

In February, School Board President Jim Lautenschlaeger said it may be time to consider intramural sports to accommodate the large number of middle school students who want to join a team.

Mundt said she prefers accommodating young athletes on regular school teams.