



washington local schools

STATEMENT TO THE PRESS / OHSAA INVESTIGATION

September 7, 2011

Good Afternoon,

We are here today to address an investigation by the Ohio High School Athletic Association. On August 10th, the OHSAA halted the approval of 3 transfers into our district and stated, "We are calling a halt to processing any more requests for transfer into Whitmer High School as we proceed with an investigation into how so many of these transfer students are ending up in your district." Those students are still waiting for a determination and are not participating in athletics but are practicing and going to school and waiting patiently for a determination on their eligibility. This investigation coincides with a court case held on August 22nd into the eligibility of Leroy Alexander who was determined ineligible by the OHSAA but won an injunction to play when Judge McDonald ruled and also determined that "there is.....no evidence of any deliberate action by Whitmer to improperly make Mr. Alexander eligible for sports at Whitmer."

The Washington Local School District has had over 3,000 students transfer into the district in the last 3 years. Whitmer High School is the largest high school in Northwest Ohio with over 2,100 students. The OHSAA is investigating 6 or 7 of the 1,000 transfers we have had in the last year. Unlike most districts, we are not an open enrollment district and must verify the residency and custody of every student. When students come to the district, they register here at our central office and we enforce Ohio Revised Code and our policies by verifying residency and custody. We do home visits if there is a concern or if we receive a complaint about the residence of a student. We have removed many students over the last several years when we can prove that they do not live in the district.

Families are seeking out Whitmer for what we offer which includes 200 course offerings including college prep and AP courses, 15 career training programs, 22 varsity sports, 50 clubs and activities, free college education at UT and Owens for our eligible graduates, being the first public high school in 26 years to win the all sports trophy, we were voted the best high school in Toledo last year and we have an unwavering commitment to arts and music. Close to half of our kids live in poverty yet our performance index score continues to rise and was at its highest mark ever this year. We have been rated Excellent by the Ohio Department of Education three times. We have an amazing community that supports us and demands excellence. I will not apologize that so many people want to come to our district and we do our due diligence to insure that they are here legally. We, in partnership with our community, have built a district that people desire and seek.

It appears this investigation was sparked in part by emails sent to the Ohio High School Athletic Association by Dick Crowell (former basketball coach at Bowsler High School). These emails were introduced as evidence in the Leroy Alexander court case. Mr. Crowell sent several emails to the OHSAA in May which are potentially libelous and which make broad accusations regarding Whitmer as well as Southview, Waite, Start, Rogers, and the City League office. These emails came to light during the recent trial and I responded to them on August 23rd.

There was a confusing statistic listed today about our football roster intimating a high number of transfers. In fact, approximately 90% of the kids on our roster attended junior high school in the Washington Local district. I also think it's important to point out that while 5 players have transferred into Whitmer since last football season, 5 have also exited and are playing at area schools. This is a normal occurrence that happens every year. 22% of our Whitmer student population have transferred into Whitmer High School during their high school career as compared to less than 10% in the football program.

We are cooperating with the OHSAA and hoping to conclude soon so that kids can participate and we can get back to giving our full attention to our primary and overriding mission of educating young people.

individual attention. infinite opportunities.