

WESTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Honoring Tradition, Inspiring Excellence, Shaping the Future

Principal
SEAN BEVAN

Assistant Principal
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September 11, 2014

Dear Parents,

Westwood High School held its first home football game of the year this past Friday night. Decked out in white, our student cheering section was the largest it's ever been. The crowd was notable for another reason, though: we believe that many students consumed alcohol - disguised in water bottles - in the stands during the game. And, while we identified a few isolated incidents that evening, anecdotal reports from concerned parents and students lead us to understand that the problem was more widespread. We also understand that the majority of our students did not participate in drinking and that those students share our concerns.

Of course, keeping students safe and healthy is my top priority at all times, during school and at after-school events. I am writing today to enlist your support, to invite you to participate in an important conversation about alcohol, and to share with you some of the strategies that we have employed (and continue to refine) to ensure that our events are safe and fun for all involved.

As you may know, we began the evening with a school-sponsored, Boosters-supported tailgate event that we designed *specifically to prevent students from engaging in unsafe behavior before the game*. More than 240 students bought tickets, and the event was a big success. After an hour of pregame activities with me, Dr. Antonucci, and several other staff members, the students were escorted directly to the stands. Simultaneously, we employed the protocols that we have developed over time to prevent alcohol from entering the site: students were required to enter through the student entrance gate staffed by an administrator checking bags, and no outside beverages were allowed in. Unfortunately, some students found ways around these systems, and we are working actively to improve our site security to prevent alcohol from entering in the future.

While managing the site more effectively is an important step to ensure that the venue is alcohol-free, it is equally important to work with students and families to respond to the challenge of organizing, promoting, and celebrating school-community events that are safe and healthy. To that end, we have conducted multiple meetings with student leaders across this week. We hope you will join the discussion by attending a "Parent Forum" on Monday, September 15 at 6:30 p.m. in the WHS Professional Development Room (A133). This event will offer parents a chance to express their concerns and to partner with WHS staff to address this issue.

We hope that refining our practices and working with parents and students will have the desired result: ensuring that our football games are alcohol-free. As parents, you play a critical role in this endeavor. Please take a moment soon to underscore for your son or daughter what your parental expectations are for them when attending events like our football games. Working together, we can ensure that our football games are positive and alcohol-free.

Sincerely,



Sean Bevan
Principal