

Omak School District
KEY COMMUNICATOR BULLETIN
Aug. 26, 2009

1. Omak joins Washington Virtual Academy, providing on-line course instruction
2. New law requires vigorous protection of student athletes from head injury

NOTE: School opens Tuesday, Sept. 8. Back-To-School-Night, the annual gathering at Civic League Park with buses and teachers on-hand will be from 5-7 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 2.

1. WASHINGTON VIRTUAL ACADEMY

The Omak School Board opened the door to greater on-line learning opportunities for a wide range of students by approving a five-year contract with K12 Virtual Schools at the board's Aug. 25 meeting.

Under the agreement, Omak will join two other Washington school districts, Steilacoom and Monroe, as participants in the Washington Virtual Academy (WAVA), providing course work through the Internet for students in kindergarten through 12th grade. K12, the largest provider of online learning in the country, has similar programs in many other states.

"They are making a strong commitment," superintendent Arthur Himmler told the board. "It will become a larger program than you can imagine before long." Himmler had initiated the program at his previous post as Steilacoom superintendent.

The board has been considering the program for several months, ever since a presentation by Himmler and K12 representatives in May. K12 provides curriculum, books, materials management and technology services. Students anywhere in the state can enroll in WAVA at no cost. Omak will receive state funding for those students who enroll through the district.

The contract describes the program as "a new, innovative model of public school education choice adapted to the needs of elementary, middle and high school students statewide in Washington."

Himmler indicated there is still paperwork to be completed before Omak's participation in WAVA is fully operational – probably a matter of weeks. The district is responsible for overseeing the program's quality, operational and financial performance. But Himmler noted that two key elements of the contract protect the district financially: K12 has agreed to cover any year-end deficits and indemnifies the district from any liabilities.

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2. ATHLETIC BRAIN INJURY PROTECTION

A new state law requires that the district adopt a policy and procedures to protect student athletes from concussions and brain injuries, athletic director Joe LaGrou advised the board.

The law includes a "return-to-play" protocol for any athlete suspected of having a concussion or brain injury. The athlete must be removed from practice or competition and not returned to play until cleared in writing by a licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussions.

“That’s always been my policy,” said LaGrou. “Now it’s law. It’s a good law, because it takes the burden off the coach.”

All coaches are required to take a training course on the nature and risk of concussions and head injuries. Also, before any turnouts or competition, all athletes and their parents or guardians must receive training and provide the school with a signed statement indicating they’ve taken the training.

The policy also applies to non-profit youth organizations using school facilities and will require training for and proof of insurance from those groups. The new policy will be addressed again by the board at its Sept. 22 meeting.

- *Mary Koch*
District Communications