



For Immediate Release: May 13, 2009

Contact: Nora Carr (336) 370-8106
Haley Miller (336) 370-3200
Guilford County Schools

GCS Releases Results of Athletics Investigation at Northern High

Five athletes at the school in five different sports were declared ineligible

Greensboro, N.C. – Guilford County Schools (GCS) announced today that the Northern High School varsity boys basketball team must forfeit its state championship.

The decision was made after two basketball players were declared ineligible and after the district determined that school officials had not properly monitored the program.

GCS also announced that the school's varsity wrestling, baseball, junior varsity (JV) softball and JV cheerleading teams had also played ineligible athletes.

As a result, the varsity baseball team must forfeit its season and won't be allowed to advance to the state tournament this weekend.

The varsity wrestling team will forfeit every match in which an ineligible athlete competed, and the team score will be recalculated to determine whether the match will be recorded as a loss or a win. The junior varsity softball team will forfeit every game in which an ineligible athlete participated. Junior varsity cheerleading did not compete in any events sanctioned by the North Carolina High School Athletic Association, which governs high school sports.

In all, five athletes at the school in five different sports were declared ineligible as a result of the investigation, which district officials say will now look at football and other sports at Northern. The NCHSAA is placing the entire athletic program at Northern on probation for one year.

The announcements were made today at the request of the NCHSAA because team notifications for the state baseball and softball tournaments were due yesterday.

GCS reported the violations to the NCHSAA Tuesday. The state association agreed with the district's findings and will assess any penalties against the school and the athletes.

According to the state association, falsifying residency in order to meet eligibility requirements carries a 365-day penalty for student athletes. If school officials fail to manage eligibility requirements properly, teams are also penalized.

The state association penalty for using an ineligible player is \$500 per team. Since Northern reported the violations, the penalty has been reduced to \$250 per team or \$1,250. Northern must also return any playoff revenue from gate receipts for basketball – about \$7,828, according to the NCHSAA. Any awards, plaques or medals awarded to the team or players will have to be returned.

-more-

GCS Releases Results of Athletics Investigation at Northern High – page 2

The investigation began shortly after Superintendent Maurice “Mo” Green’s arrival in August in Greensboro, when allegations of impropriety at Northern began surfacing during his “listening and learning” tour of the community.

At a parent meeting held last week at Northern, Green said the investigation was simply a “search for the truth.”

“Sadly, the search for the truth led us to where we are today,” said Green. “It’s deeply unfortunate that young people are being hurt in this process, including the vast majority of student athletes and their families at Northern who are playing by the rules and have done nothing wrong.”

Green said he plans to overhaul athletics at Northern and district-wide. “This kind of behavior simply won’t be tolerated,” said Green. “We want our student athletes to demonstrate excellence in character as well as excellence on the field or on the court. We want all of our programs to be above reproach.”

Students and staff at the school should continue to “hold their heads high,” according to Green. “Northern is an excellent school with tremendous community support. While this is a difficult blow, my hope is that the students, families, staff and community will rally around the new principal and work through the healing process together.”

William “Will” Laine was named principal of Northern yesterday. Laine currently is principal of Kernodle Middle School, where his collaborative leadership style and strong focus on academic excellence has earned accolades from teachers and parents. Laine will remain at Kernodle through June 15, although he will begin meeting with Northern students, staff and parents later this month.

GCS will not disclose or confirm the names of the athletes declared ineligible because student records are considered confidential under state and federal law. Personnel records are also confidential.

To read the letter from the NCHSAA, visit http://www.gcsnc.com/08_09news/letter.pdf.

About Guilford County Schools

Guilford County Schools is the third largest school district in North Carolina serving more than 71,000 students at 120 schools. With approximately 10,000 employees, the district’s mission is to graduate responsible citizens prepared to succeed in higher education or the career of their choice.

Guilford County Schools is a national leader in providing specialized schools and instructional programs designed to meet the educational needs of a culturally diverse citizenship. For more information, visit the district’s Web site at www.gcsnc.com.