

## Follow-Up on Liberty Bell

Saturday, 01 December 2007

BVSDWatch.org asked BVSD administration specific questions to evaluate BVSD's decision to participate in this fall's Liberty Bell cross country meet which was scheduled by a school in another district on the Jewish religious day of observance Rosh Hashanah.

BVSD found that a total of 355 BVSD student athletes from five high schools participated in the event. Three students, or 0.85% of the total, opted out of the event for religious reasons. Another two families complained about the reversal decision but chose for their children to participate in the meet nonetheless. Five student athletes, representing 1.4% of the total, were adversely impacted which allowed the remaining 98.6% to participate in the event. Interestingly, all five who were adversely impacted were from Boulder High which had 99 runners at the event.

We'll let the reader decide how to interpret this data with respect to how the district should deal with religious days of observance, but wish to make the following observations:

- When BVSDWatch.org asked for this data six weeks after the sports event, BVSD administration had to poll the individual school's coaches to get the information. Why was there no follow-up by BVSD sooner? Remember that this is an issue that prompted many hours of parent and student effort including appearances at public BVSD Board meetings, lobbying of Board members and administrators, email campaigns and other time-consuming efforts. BVSD administration spent hours involving legal counsel, the outgoing superintendent who reviewed the ban and decided to maintain it, and the new superintendent who again evaluated the decision and reversed it. The Daily Camera ran the results in a front page headlines story. Why was there no follow-up by BVSD after all that effort?

- This Liberty Bell incident exemplifies the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of our massive school district. Given the number of students and families involved in this sport, the district had no way of really understanding the impact of a ban when a decision was made. The administrators are too far removed from BVSD students and their families to understand what is important to them. Also, four of the five schools had no families adversely impacted by the decision to allow participation. Dictating mandates across a district the size of ours is clearly problematic.

The Liberty Bell ban was a poor decision and BVSD's failure to evaluate the consequences of the decision is troubling. Given that our school district has one of the largest and most expensive administrations in the state, we should see more professionalism in decision-making and follow-up.

By the way, we are not aware of any recent effort on the part of BVSD administration to better assist teachers and coaches in applying Board policies with respect to managing the scheduling of school events on the myriad of religious days of observance that fill our communities' calendars. Undoubtedly, we'll see such issues arise again.