

ATHLETIC DIRECTOR'S PERCEPTIONS OF EVALUATION AND  
SUPERVISION PRACTICES IN NORTH DAKOTA

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**Title**

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to better understand the process of supervision and evaluation of coaches in North Dakota schools. This study also examined the current practices of evaluation and supervision used in North Dakota schools, and how that practice compares with school enrollment size. Professional development for coaches and athletic directors was examined within this study.

A survey consisting of 13 quantitative questions was used to collect data. The survey contained closed-ended questions to obtain quantitative data vital to the study. One hundred and seventy-one athletic directors were invited to participate through e-mail notification on the North Dakota High School Activities Association website.

This analysis consisted of descriptive statistics, primarily frequencies and percentages. Results showed that North Dakota athletic directors are evaluating and supervising coaches at different levels in school. They are using different forms of evaluation and supervising coaches during games and practices.

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Today's athletic directors need to be many things to many people. They need to be organized and resourceful. They need to make sure their department runs smoothly. They need to answer an array of questions. They need to see eye-to-eye with the upper level administrators. Above all they need to be leaders to their coaches. Athletic directors need to put coaches in the right positions that will benefit athletes. It's also the athletic directors job to supervise, evaluate, and provide professional development opportunities that will benefit the coaches. How does today's athletic director be a successful supervisor and evaluator to those in the trenches?

As discussed in *Leadership training 501 athletic administration: Philosophy, Leadership Organizations and professional development* (2009, p. 4) to achieve goals, employee evaluation and other data gathered has been used to justify promotions, develop plans, fire and hire, and put on improvement plans. Marzano (2011) insisted, "In school systems, the purpose of supervision should be the enhancement of teachers' pedagogical skills, with the ultimate goal of enhancing student achievement" (p.1). Extra-curricular programs have not always used a supervision and evaluation process or model in determining the success or failure in programs or coaches; rather, they use wins and losses and reactions from parents, alumni, or the athletes toward the team. Success of extra-curricular programs is more than wins and losses and definitely more than the feelings of someone with a personal interest in the organization. To truly assess the effectiveness of an extra-curricular program and its coach, a system of supervision and evaluation needs to be in place (*Leadership training 501 athletic administration: Philosophy, Leadership Organizations and professional development*, 2009, p.4).



## **Supervisor's Expectations**

There are many qualities in an effective supervision and evaluation system. One of those qualities is for the coach to have a clear view of the supervisor's expectations. How can a coach be effective if (s)he isn't clear as to what is expected? Coaches are expected to clearly communicate the expectations they have to their players. This same clear communication should be expected from supervisors to coaches. Unclear performance expectations are a key contributing factor to unhappiness at work (Heathfield, 2012). In a poll evaluating what makes a superior ineffective, the majority of respondents said that their manager did not provide clear direction (Heathfield, 2012). To help coaches understand what is expected of them, superiors must provide coaches with a job description. Paling (2012) stated all coaches need job descriptions as part of the criteria for evaluation. He also said job descriptions were a great way to get all coaches "rowing in the same direction" (p. 23).

## **Communication**

Part of having clear expectations is making sure the supervisee has an opportunity for communication. Communication must be available both ways. The supervisee must be able to approach the supervisor with problems. The supervisor must give feedback in a timely manner.

Marzano (2011) stated, "In the absence of feedback, efficient learning is impossible and improvement only minimal even for highly motivated subjects. Hence, mere repetition of an activity will not automatically lead to improvement" (p. 6).

## **Retention/Dismissal**

A coach's deficiencies need to be well documented with a probationary period to provide time for improvement of skills. Dismissals should only occur if no improvement is apparent after the probationary period expires. In Nebraska, four decades of studies were performed to

see why coaches have been dismissed from the coaching profession. Coaches can be dismissed from their positions for a variety of reasons, including poor relationships with players, improper conduct, failure to win, lack of technical coaching skills, poor public relations, and failure to motivate. The study showed that poor player-coach relations ranked first in the reasons for dismissal of coaches (Lackey, 2005). However, another study implied that poor management and ineffective communication appear to be the primary reason for coach dismissal (Miller, 2006). Both studies agreed that coaches are at the mercy of the parents of the athletes they are coaching. They also agreed that in the majority of cases, coaches are not given the opportunity to improve on their weaknesses before they are dismissed (Lackey, 2005; Miller, 2006).

### **Evaluation**

The evaluation process of a coach's performance is the job of the athletic director, which can be a challenge. The difficulty is pointing out a coach's weaknesses. Most of the time people get defensive because someone is criticizing their work. Bryant (2012) stated, "Unwillingness to be evaluated shouts to stakeholders that we are above it all" (p. 42).

Evaluation and supervision are very important to the development, recruitment, and retention of coaches. Supervision is critical to ensure that the process for achieving the organizational mission is efficient, the staff has the necessary support to carry out specific tasks, and people are held accountable for their job responsibilities (Massanari, 2001). Supervision and evaluation activities are performed to improve the coach's abilities and to determine whether or not to renew contracts. Evaluations provide a concrete recommendation as a blueprint for improvement for a coach (Hoch, 1999). Once the coach becomes aware of his/her inefficiencies or weaknesses, professional development is needed to aid them in the improvement process.

## **Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this study was to better understand the process of supervision and evaluation of coaches in North Dakota schools. This study also examined the current practices of evaluation and supervision used in North Dakota schools, and how that practice compares with school enrollment size. Professional development for coaches and athletic directors was examined within this study.

## **Research Questions**

1. Do North Dakota high school athletic directors evaluate coaches?
2. What forms of evaluation are used for the coaches?
3. Do North Dakota high school athletic directors supervise coaches?
4. When are athletic directors supervising coaches in North Dakota?
5. What differences exist with evaluation and supervision of coaches related to school size?
6. What professional development opportunities do athletic directors use to improve their knowledge of supervision and evaluation practices?
7. What professional development opportunities does the school pay coaches to attend?

## **Significance of the Study**

Examining current practices and surveying athletic administrators at the high school level can develop perceptions of supervision and evaluation of coaches in North Dakota. Components of evaluation and supervision practices could include the process, procedures, instruments, policies, and professional development. The anticipated result would be to better understand the supervision and evaluation process, practice, and instruments for coaches to be implemented at all levels in public schools. This study will investigate the processes and procedures of

supervision and evaluation in sports. In addition it will also compare how the evaluation and supervision process differs from school to school depending on their student enrollment.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The research study was conducted during the fall of 2014 beginning in October and ending in November. Of the 171 athletic directors who were sent the survey 107 (62.5%) completed it. Additionally, this time of year for athletic directors is typically a busy one with fall sports tournaments and winter sports just getting underway. They may not have had the time to get to the survey. Lastly, by sending the invitation to take the survey through the North Dakota High School Activities Association website some of the athletic directors may have not read the full message and deleted the notification. Despite these limitations, the results are still notable.

### **Definition of Terms**

AD: Athletic Director (NDHSAA, 2013)

Coach: a person who trains an athlete or a team of athletes (Merriam-Webster, 2014)

Evaluation: to judge the value or condition of someone (Merriam-Webster, 2015)

Supervision: the action or process of watching and directing what someone does or how something is done (Merriam-Webster, 2015)

Class “A”: NDHSAA defines high schools with an enrollment greater than 325 students (NDHSAA, 2013)

Class “B”: NDHSAA defines high schools with enrollment less than 326 students (NDHSAA, 2013)

NDHSAA: North Dakota High School Activities Association (NDHSAA, 2013)

NFHS: National Federation of State High School Associations – Serves all 50 states in the development of rules for competition in education-based sports and activities

NDIAAA: North Dakota Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NDIAAA, 2004)

Professional Development: an opportunity to develop skills and acquire experience to assist in assuming coaching duties (Sisley & Delaney, 1990).

### **Assumptions**

1. The researcher assumes that most athletic directors in North Dakota will respond to the survey.
2. The researcher assumes that all respondents will answer all survey questions honestly and based on their current situation.

### **Organization of the Study**

Chapter 1 presents the introduction, statement of the problem, research questions, significance for the study, definition of terms, and assumptions of the study. Chapter 2 contains the review of literature and research related to the problem being investigated. The review of literature contains research on the history of supervision and evaluation, best practices for evaluating high school coaches, a guide to evaluating coaches, athletic director's leadership of coaches, research on meeting with coaches, best practices for coaches, research on job descriptions and expectations, research on challenges of smaller schools, and professional development. The methodology and procedures used to gather data for the study is presented in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 contains results and findings that emerge from the survey. Chapter 5 contains a summary of the study, conclusions drawn from the findings, discussion, and recommendations for further study.

## CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Organizations have conducted evaluations to improve their effectiveness and their profitability. In school systems, the purpose of supervision is the enhancement of teachers' pedagogical skills, with the ultimate goal of enhancing student achievement. This is no different in extra-curricular activities with coaches or advisors. Extra-curricular programs, especially in smaller schools, have not always used a supervision and evaluation process in determining the successes or failures in programs or coaches; rather they use wins and losses or the opinions of parents toward the coach. Success of extra-curricular programs is more than wins and losses and definitely more than what someone with a personal interest in the organization feels. To assess the effectiveness of an extra-curricular program a system of supervision and evaluation needs to be in place (*Leadership training 501 athletic administration: Philosophy, Leadership Organizations and professional development*, 2009, p. 4).

### **History of Supervision and Evaluation**

Since the early days in education, teachers have been supervised and evaluated on the content they taught and their performance. However, the reasons and focus of the supervision and evaluation have greatly changed. For example, in the 1700s a teacher was actually hired and supervised by local government or town clergy. These "supervisors" had unlimited power to establish criteria of effective instruction, yet had very little expertise on teaching pedagogy. Teachers were considered a servant of the community. In the 1800s with schools becoming more complex, the demand for teachers with more expertise in specific disciplines grew and with that grew the need for someone to take on the duties to oversee teachers. An expert teacher within the building was often selected for this duty. This position ultimately grew into what is now referred to as the principal.

From the late 1800s to before World War II, there were two individuals that dominated educational ideals. John Dewey argued for the promotion of democratic ideals, while Frederick Taylor believed that schools functioned best when they approached evaluations from the perspective of scientific management. After World War II the focus was the development of the teacher as an individual, which focused on the responsibilities of the supervisor. Through all of these eras none had as big of an impact on supervision and evaluation as the phenomenon of clinical supervision in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Marzano, 2011). One of the leaders in clinical supervision is Madelyn Hunter. According to Haggerson (1987), Hunter believed that clinical supervision was a model to be used for improving instruction for all the teachers in the school.

Schools continue to adapt to the changing needs of society, with it the way we supervise and evaluate extra-curricular programs adapt as well. Trends in education and leadership are changing every day because our culture is always changing (Krzyewski, 2012). Twenty-five years ago parents did not attend practices, nor did they stand in the corner and yell instructions to their child as they participated in practice or games, but today over-bearing parents seem to be the trend. As the culture changes, the methods and practices of coaches change. As coaching changes, the process and standards of the supervision and evaluation of coaches should change. In other words, coaches need to adapt to the changing times of society through the appropriate supervision, evaluation, and improvement of coaches (Tufte, 2012).

### **Best Practices for Evaluating High School Coaches**

Evaluation of coaches is an important responsibility of high school athletic directors. It's essential that they regularly provide coaches with both supervision and evaluation in order to monitor whether they are conducting themselves in a competent, professional and caring manner.

Evaluations help coaches to formulate strategies that will help them to improve the various parts of their program that are considered weak (DiColo, 2013).

In 2005, a questionnaire was designed by a panel of three retired, two current athletic directors, and ten high school coaches in order to identify specific criteria to include in a coaching evaluation form. The survey was mailed to athletic directors at 374 public schools in Southern California with 210 being returned. According to Hill & Pluschke, more than 88 percent of the respondents rated the following criteria as either somewhat or very important

- holds current CPR/First Aid card,
- exemplifies high moral and ethical qualities,
- maintains appropriate discipline and control of athletes,
- follows correct procedures in regard to safety, injury prevention, care of injuries and injury reporting,
- complies with administrative directives,
- properly supervises facilities,
- makes decisions that are in compliance with established policies and procedures,
- systematically plans practices and games,
- demonstrates support for entire athletic program,
- works efficiently within the adopted school budget process,
- clearly defines expectations of assistant coaches,
- provides proper care of equipment,
- utilizes appropriate and effective motivational strategies for players,
- provides accurate inventories of equipment and supplies,
- communicates appropriately with the media to promote their sport, athletic department and school,



- able to articulate a philosophy that is consistent with athletic department goals,
- and attends clinics and seminars to increase knowledge of current coaching practices (Hill & Pluschke, 2005).

At Jefferson Township in Oak Ridge, New Jersey the school district established a Coaching Framework for all coaches. The Coaching Framework established a clear definition and model of effective coaching within the district. The Coaching Framework contains five sections: Athletic Sport Administration Expectations, Planning and Preparation Expectations, In-Season Expectations, Postseason Expectations and Professional Responsibilities. Once approved, the Coaching Evaluation Instrument was modeled after the individual sections of the Coaching Framework. Both documents are used to evaluate coaches in the district (DiColo, 2013).

Athletic directors distribute copies of their evaluation form to coaches at the beginning of the year or season. Prior to a coach's evaluation, written feedback may be solicited from players, parents and other community members. In addition to providing a formal evaluation of coaches, athletic directors have coaches evaluate themselves. Athletic directors view evaluation as a process that helps coaches to be more successful with their teams. Athletic directors should support coaches in their efforts to achieve higher evaluation by helping them secure important resources (Hill & Pluschke 2005).

DiColo (2013) stated, "It is important to note that the evaluation process does not rely solely on these documents but also incorporates informal observations, walk-through observations, meetings and many conversations throughout the season between coaches and the athletic administrator" (p. 22). Athletic directors also provide ongoing informal evaluation to both encourage coaches and to help them make timely corrections (Hill & Pluschke, 2005).

Supervision and evaluation processes are meant to be a tool for personal growth and allow support within a collaborative environment. At Rapid City Area School District in South Dakota they provide the following rationale for their athletic evaluation system

- to communicate philosophy,
- to improve instruction to student athletes,
- to improve personal coaching skills,
- to recognize and foster outstanding coaching performances,
- to recognize and improve deficiencies,
- and to provide a tool for removal of coaches who are deficient (Rapid City Area School District, 2012).

### **A Guide to Evaluating Coaches**

The Pennsylvania State Athletic Directors Association created a guide to evaluating coaches. It covers seven component parts of a valid and reliable performance evaluation system. The first component in establishing a performance evaluation system is to state a basic school philosophy or mission. This philosophy or mission explains the purpose of athletics and coaching.

The second component in establishing a performance evaluation system is to provide a goal statement. A goal will serve as a guideline for specific behaviors to achieve. It is important then to come up with valid and reliable behaviors, which constitute the supervisory and evaluative acts.

The third component in establishing a performance evaluation system is criteria selection. Much of the effort, when devising an evaluation system, centers on the selection of performance criteria. Various approaches have been used to identify and select criteria for evaluating coaching

performance. One approach is to develop a general job description. Another is to list successful performance indicators. Yet, another might be to develop a list of criteria which best describes a successful or effective coach.

The fourth component in establishing a performance evaluation system is setting standards. Good appraisal procedures, well-designed forms and explicit standards are essential to evaluating performance. Standards are benchmarks of achievement. Legal safeguards should be considered when setting standards for the evaluation of coaching performance.

The fifth component in establishing a performance evaluation system is performance reviews. The process of observing, monitoring, reporting and measuring coaching performance will vary depending upon the ratio of coaches to the athletic director. A performance review is a personal conference between athletic director and coach whereby the athletic director reviews the performance of the coach. The athletic director should carefully check the facts before giving a criticism and carefully prepare what to do and what to say during the review session.

The sixth component in establishing a performance evaluation system is documentation. This is a skill needed by every athletic director. Documentation serves many purposes: justification for salary increases; merit raises; dismissal; transfers; promotion; job improvement. Documentation should be specific to avoid being accused of being arbitrary and capricious. It also should be accurate, behavioral, and consistent.

The seventh and final component in establishing a performance evaluation system is dismissal procedures. The athletic director should know every category of employment in the school district. Typically coaches are given supplemental contracts that specify a termination agreement allowing dismissal without a hearing. The following are suggested best practices for termination of coaches: make sure procedures are consistent, make sure proper documentation is

used, allow coach to tell his/her side of the story, maintain coaches confidentiality, and always remain calm and respectful (PSADA, 2008).

### **Athletic Director’s Leadership of Coaches**

Every organization can make improvements. Athletic directors act as managers of their programs rather than leaders. They spend too many hours on daily management tasks and not enough time on program improvement and development. Leadership is available to anyone in any position who is willing to accept the mantle (Massanari, 2001).

Table 1 shows Massanari’s (2001) research describing managing and leading in leadership roles.

Table 1

<b>Contrasting Managing &amp; Leading</b>	
Managing is	Leading is
Working within boundaries	Expanding boundaries
Controlling resources	Influencing others
Planning to reach goals	Creating a vision of a possible future
Contracting how and when work will be done	Committing to get the work done no matter what
Emphasizing reason and logic supported by intuition	Emphasizing intuition and feelings supported by reason
Deciding present actions based on the past and precedent	Deciding present actions based on the future
Waiting for all relevant data before deciding	Pursuing enough data to decide now
Measuring performance against plans	Assessing accomplishment against vision

In a leadership training course, LTC 502, Principles, Strategies, and Methods provided by the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association, leadership styles were broke down into five categories. They are autocratic, democratic, laissez faire, benevolent, and eclectic.

The first category is the autocratic leadership style. It's described as an individual with the need for control. An individual is time constrained, financial constrained, and safety is a priority. This type of individual is in a military setting or athletic setting.

The second category is the democratic leadership style. An individual who likes consensus in all things, individual likes to be a team builder, individual likes to take large volumes of input to reduce error or image of arbitrariness.

The third category is the laissez faire style of leadership. If the leader believes one or more individuals are competent to function independently or is an expert who functions well without structure then these individuals may be allowed to function independently. These may also be creative individuals at the forefront of new knowledge, or may also be someone who is difficult to work with and near the end of a career.

The fourth category is the benevolent leadership style. An individual who has an historic overview of values, foundations and precedents within an organization or community falls into the benevolent style. They are valued for their historic perspective. The leader may be valuable when trying to effect change because of the respect this individual commands. They may also be difficult to change because of their traditional view.

The final category is the eclectic leadership style. This category is a comprehensive and changing leadership style that responds to the situation. It also responds to the needs of the individuals that need to be led (*Leadership training 502 athletic administration: Principles, strategies, and methods*, 2008, p. 3-4).

### **Meeting with Coaches**

It's up to the athletic director to see that coaches are in compliance and accountable for regulations and their responsibilities. Meeting with coaches can help accomplish this task of the

athletic director. Meetings prior to the season starting and at the end of the season have equal significance. The meetings are not an open discussion, but a meeting in which all objectives will be discussed. The reasons for meeting are to present new material and information, emphasize points of potential problems, provide reminders for areas in which improvement is needed, put the entire staff on the same page, and provide a basis for and help with accountability (Hoch, 2014).

### **Best Practices of Coaches**

The New York State Association of Independent Schools lays out principles of best practices for coaches and athletic staff. The following are the principles: first and foremost they are teachers, have an understanding of the developmental needs of the children they work with, design and implement activities that improve knowledge and skills, establish clear lines of communication, aware of the physical abilities of the athletes and do their best to keep them safe, maintain appropriate skills to teach their sport, identify physical conditions that predispose student-athletes to injury, role models for the behavior expected of all spectators and participants, and maintain a well-developed coaching philosophy (New York State Association of Independent Schools, 2011).

Hoch (2011) presents best practices of coaching in the form of education-based athletics. He believes young people should learn life-long values and qualities, develop and grow as a person, and understand and embrace sportsmanship. All are much more important than winning. With that he feels coaches should prepare well-thought out and comprehensive practice plans, provide simple, clear and consistent instructions to correct mistakes, keep instruction as positive and encouraging as possible, use video for instructional purposes, and scout opponents when

possible to prepare athletes for competition. He also feels coaches need to continue to learn more about their sport and avoid becoming negative after a loss.

### **Job Descriptions and Expectations**

In a poll about what makes a bad boss, the majority of respondents said that their manager did not provide clear direction (Heathfield, 2012). Coaches are expected to clearly communicate their expectations to their players. The same standards apply for supervisors to coaches. To become clear on what is expected; supervisors must outline specific tasks and behaviors, and then inform their employees that they will be evaluated on those tasks and behaviors. Supervisors must tell employees their organization's precise expectations and why the employees adhere to them. Doing this sets employees up for success rather than failure (Newell-Legner, 2000).

Paling (2012) stated all coaches need job descriptions as part of the criteria for evaluation. He also said job descriptions were a great way to get all coaches "rowing in the same direction" (p. 23).

According to the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA), job descriptions are an important item to have in your handbooks (*Leadership training 502 athletic administration: Principles, strategies, and methods*, 2008). An effective job description details the duties of the job, how the tasks are carried out, and the necessary skills needed to perform the job.

### **Challenges of a Small School**

Smaller schools operate more like a community than a corporation. They frequently have a greater sense of unity because in most cases they personally know everyone in their school and invest an interest in the school beyond the classroom. Higher student participation numbers are

common in small schools because of the lack of competition for spots on the team or program. With that, students and their families in smaller schools feel they have more of a stake in their school (Gordon, 2010).

There are also many disadvantages that face small schools. Many small schools in North Dakota have to count on volunteers or parents to coach athletic teams. Even though these volunteers or parents have usually participated in sports at the high school level, they are often unprepared for the coaching profession. When you have parents or volunteers coaching there is an extremely high turnover rate (Stewart, 2012).

Another disadvantage facing small schools is the lack of human resources. Many employees have to perform two or three jobs to get through daily activities.

The amount of time that an athletic director is allotted to perform their duties varies widely from school to school. Some Class “A” school systems view the position of athletic director as a full-time position, while in other school systems (especially in less populated districts), the athletic director receives one hour of release time each day to perform their duties (Judge & Judge, 2009). The time allotted and human resources seem to be the biggest problem facing small schools. Larger schools have the ability to delegate and share in management tasks, which is not a luxury small rural schools have. Most athletic directors in rural schools get very little administrative support, ancillary personnel, and ground staff (Starr & White, 2008). Class “A” schools in North Dakota have the luxury of at least one administrative assistant and others to share in management tasks so they can focus on the improvement, recruitment and retention of personal, rather than the daily tasks of hosting events, managing of schedules, etc.



## **Professional Development**

Another important quality of a supervision and evaluation system is for the coach to have an opportunity for improvement. Whether it is through simply making the coach aware of his/her shortcomings, or providing professional development options for growth, school systems should provide coaches with the opportunity to improve. Professional development occurs in all professions and in many, is mandatory in order to retain a license with continuing education credits. Professional development is the skills and knowledge an employee gains to optimize personal development and job growth. It includes opportunities such as college degrees and coursework, or attending conferences or training sessions (WiseGeek, 2012).

Professional development is important in any profession. “Quality professional development has the power to increase educators’ content knowledge and teaching skills, while changing what educators believe about student learning and how they interact with students” (Vermont Department of Education). This is the key component for retention of a struggling coach.

Best practices for coaches and athletic directors, just like other professions, are to keep learning and to surround themselves with talented people who challenge and push them. In 1999, 36 states in the United States required coaches to complete some type of continuing education. That number has risen to 46 in 2012, with the remaining four states trying to implement a continuing education system as well (Geanty, 2012).

## CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

### **Population of the Study**

The target population of the study was athletic directors of schools belonging to the North Dakota High School Activities Association. A total of 171 athletic directors in the North Dakota High School Activities Association received the survey. The complete list of participants was obtained through the North Dakota High School Activities Association directory of athletic administrators on their website. The response rate for the study was 62.5% or 107 respondents.

### **Instrumentation**

A survey consisting of 13 quantitative questions was used to collect data. The survey contained closed-ended questions to obtain quantitative data vital to the study. The questions were asked to collect data concerning demographics of the participants as well as their personal feelings toward the topic (See Appendix A).

The questions for the survey were developed through research, conferences, and conversations the researcher has had with other high school athletic directors over the past few years. The survey questions include the demographics of the athletic director and his/her school. The athletic directors were asked how many positions they hold at their school (Athletic Director, Principal, Superintendent, Teacher, and Coach). Athletic directors were also asked what professional development opportunities they themselves take part in. The survey requested information regarding the current evaluation process and procedure and how supervision is conducted in their schools.

Two former athletic directors in North Dakota and one athletic director in Minnesota and South Dakota as a pilot test reviewed the survey. Responses from this pilot test served as

feedback relative to the clarity of the questions asked so that appropriate change could be made prior to sending it out to the 171 athletic directors who made up the studies population.

### **Data Collection**

One hundred and seventy-one athletic directors were invited to participate through e-mail notification on the North Dakota High School Activities Association website. They were directed to the survey, which was created on Qualtrics. Participants were informed that participation in the study was completely voluntary. They were also informed that their responses would be anonymous. The initial email notification was sent out October 9, 2014, with a follow-up survey sent to all non-respondents three weeks later. Data collection began as soon as the first response came in and ended approximately November 19, 2014.

### **Data Analysis**

Analysis was conducted using SPSS version 22. This analysis consisted of descriptive statistics, primarily frequencies and percentages.

## CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

### **Statement of the Problem & Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to better understand the process of supervision and evaluation of coaches in North Dakota schools. This study also examined the current practices of evaluation and supervision used in North Dakota schools, and how that practice compares with school enrollment size. Professional development for coaches and athletic directors was examined within this study.

To address this problem, the following research questions were analyzed and discussed:

1. Do North Dakota high school athletic directors evaluate coaches?
2. What forms of evaluation are used for the coaches?
3. Do North Dakota high school athletic directors supervise coaches?
4. When are athletic directors supervising coaches in North Dakota?
5. What differences exist with evaluation and supervision of coaches with school size?
6. What professional development opportunities do athletic directors use to improve their knowledge of supervision and evaluation practices?
7. What professional development opportunities does the school pay coaches to attend?

A total of 171 athletic directors in the North Dakota High School Activities Association received the survey. The response rate for the study was 62.5%. The target population of the study was athletic directors of schools belonging to the North Dakota High School Activities Association.

## Findings

Table 2 shows that there were athletic directors responding whose student enrollment ranged from 19-3200.

Table 2

School Enrollment	Range	Minimum	Maximum
Enrollment	2115	19	2134

Table 3 shows the number of schools and percentage from each classification group in the state of ND that responded to the survey. Athletic directors from 19 of 21 Class A schools responded for a 90% response rate. For Class B schools, athletic directors from 88 of 150 schools responded for a 59% response rate.

Table 3

School Classification	Class A	Class B
Respondents	19	88
Percentage	90%	59%

Table 4 shows the positions held by the respondents in the schools in which they work. All 107 respondents held the position of athletic director. Thirty-one respondents indicated they were also principals in the school. Twelve indicated they held the position of superintendent. Thirty-one declared they were also teachers. Thirty-eight of the respondents indicated they held a coaching position as well as being the athletic director. Seven respondents indicated they held another position in the school. The reason for an increased number of respondents is that some held three positions at their school.

Table 4

Positions Held						
	Athletic Director	Principal	Superintendent	Teacher	Coach	Guidance Counselor
Respondents	107	31	12	31	38	7

Table 5 shows that over fifty percent of the respondents have a written job description for their coaches.

Table 5

Job Description		
	Yes	No
Frequency	57	50
Percent	53%	46%

Table 6 shows that over three fourths of the respondents have an evaluation process for their coaches.

Table 6

Evaluation Process		
	Yes	No
Frequency	82	25
Percent	77%	23%

Table 7 shows that almost three fourths (73%) of the respondents evaluate their head coaches; however, less than a fourth of the respondents do the evaluations for the assistant coaches, junior high coaches, and elementary coaches.

Table 7

Coaches Evaluated				
	Head Coach	Assistant Coach	Junior High Coach	Elementary Coach
Frequency	78	25	22	14
Percent	73%	23%	21%	13%

When surveyed, all 19 (100%) Class A athletic directors indicated they have an evaluation process in place for their coaches. The Class B athletic directors showed that 65 out of the 88 (74%) have an evaluation process for their coaches.

In Class A, all 16 schools evaluate their head coaches. Only 1 Class A school indicated that the athletic director evaluates the assistant and junior high coaches as well. None of the Class A athletic directors evaluate elementary coaches. The Class B schools indicated that 62 out of the 88 athletic directors (70%) evaluate their head coaches. They also show that 23 out of the 88 (27%) evaluate assistant and junior high coaches. Less than a quarter of the schools indicated that they evaluate their elementary coaches.

Table 8 shows that the common type of evaluation being used by the athletic directors is one that is completed by the athletic directors themselves. A small number of the respondents have coaches that do a self-evaluation and have the athletes do an evaluation of the coach.

Table 8

Forms of Evaluations Used					
	Coaches evaluated by Athletic Director	Coaches who do a Self Evaluation	Coaches evaluated by Athletes	Coaches evaluated by Parents	Other Type of Evaluation
Frequency	76	30	16	0	10
Percent	71%	28%	15%	0%	9%

Table 9 shows that the respondents typically complete their evaluations of coaches during the post season. A small number of athletic directors do a mid season evaluation or they evaluate when needed.

Table 9

Evaluation Time	Mid Season	Post Season	Other
Frequency	12	75	5
Percent	11%	70%	5%

Table 10 shows that head coaches are supervised the most by their athletic director. Over half of the athletic directors also supervise their assistant, junior high, and elementary coaches.

Table 10

Coaches Supervised	Head Coach	Assistant Coach	JH Coach	Elem. Coach
Frequency	98	90	75	61
Percent	92%	84%	70%	57%

Table 11 shows that coaches are supervised the most during games and during practices. Only a small percentage of athletic directors said they never supervise their coaches.

Table 11

When Coaches Supervised	During Practice	During Games	Never	Other
Frequency	82	97	2	11
Percent	77%	91%	2%	10%



When surveyed, all 19 Class A athletic directors indicated they supervise the head coaches; 15 out of the 19 (79%) supervise their assistant coaches; 5 (26%) of them supervise junior high coaches; and 1 (0.05%) supervises in the elementary level. The Class B athletic directors responded that 77 out of 88 (88%) supervise their head coaches; 75 out of 88 (85%) supervise their assistant coaches; 70 out of 88 (80%) supervise their junior high coaches; and 60 out of 88 (68%) supervise their elementary coaches.

In Class A all 19 (100%) athletic directors indicated they supervise their coaches during games and 17 out of the 19 (89%) supervise during practices. Other times Class A athletic directors indicated they supervise are during school hours and at away games. In Class B 78 out of 88 (89%) athletic directors supervise during games and 65 out of 88 (74%) supervise during practice. Two indicated that they never supervise their coaches at any point during the year. Other times Class B athletic directors indicated they supervise are during school hours, at away games, and at tournaments.

When surveyed, 101 of the 107 athletic directors (94%) indicated that they have a pre-season meeting with their coaches.

Table 12 shows the most popular topic that is discussed at the pre-season meeting is the best practices the coach should be using. Athletic directors also talked to them about goals and the job description. Other topics that were brought up are equipment needs, travel schedules, and budgets.

Table 12

Pre-Season Meeting Topics				
	Goal Setting	Best Practices	Job Description	Other
Frequency	52	65	50	39
Percent	49%	61%	47%	36%

When surveyed, 102 of the 107 athletic directors (95%) indicated that they have a post-season meeting with their coaches.

Table 13 shows the most popular topic discussed at the post-season meeting is the evaluation of the coach. Athletic directors also visited with the coaches about off-season plans and professional development opportunities. Other topics that athletic directors indicated they talked about were budgets, equipment needs, and inventory of equipment.

Table 13

Post-Season Meeting Topics				
	Evaluation	Off-Season Plan	Professional Development	Other
Frequency	77	54	53	23
Percent	72%	50%	50%	21%

Table 14 shows the number and percentage of respondents that participate in professional development available to athletic directors in North Dakota. The highest attended professional development opportunities are provided by the North Dakota Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (80) conferences held in the fall and spring of the school year. However, over half of the respondents took advantage of Leadership Training Courses (54) and National Federation of State High School Association Learn courses (69) to improve their knowledge in the profession. Forty-nine attend the North Dakota State Coaches Conventional held in the summer.

Table 14

Professional Development Participation					
	NDSCC	NDIAAAA Conferences	LTC Courses	NFHS Learn Courses	Other
Frequency	49	80	54	69	14
Percentage	46%	75%	50%	64%	13%

Table 15 shows 78 out of the 107 athletic directors (73%) indicated that their school will pay for their coaches to attend the North Dakota State Coaches Convention in the summer. More than three quarters of the athletic directors also indicated that they pay coaches to attend any other coaching clinics that are available. However, only 37 out of the 107 athletic directors (35%) indicated that their school district would pay for coaches to take National Federation of State High School Association coaching permit courses that lead to receiving a coaching permit. A coaching permit is now required by the NDHSAA for coaches who work with athletes in grades 9-12. This question is suppose to reflect what professional development opportunities coaches were reimbursed for attending or completing, however it may have been interpreted as to what coaches got paid to attend or complete these opportunities.

Table 15

Professional Development for Coaches Paid by the School				
	NDSCC	NFHS Coaches Permit	Coaching Clinics	Other
Frequency	78	37	79	10
Percent	73%	35%	74%	9%

## CHAPTER 5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Summary**

The purpose of the study was to better understand the process of supervision and evaluation of coaches in North Dakota schools. This study examined the current practices of evaluation and supervision used in North Dakota schools, and how that practice compares with school enrollment size. Professional development for coaches and athletic directors was also examined within this study.

To address this problem, the following research questions were analyzed and discussed:

1. Do North Dakota high school athletic directors evaluate coaches?
2. What forms of evaluation are used for the coaches?
3. Do North Dakota high school athletic directors supervise coaches?
4. When are athletic directors supervising coaches in North Dakota?
5. What differences exist with evaluation and supervision of coaches with school size?
6. What professional development opportunities do athletic directors use to improve their knowledge of supervision and evaluation practices?
7. What professional development opportunities does the school pay coaches to attend?

### **Limitations of the Study**

The research study was conducted during the fall of 2014 beginning in October and ending in November. Of the 171 athletic directors only 107 (62.5%) completed the survey. Additionally, this time of year for athletic directors is typically a busy one with fall sports tournaments and winter sports just getting underway. They may not have had the time to get to the survey. Lastly, by sending the invitation to take the survey through the North Dakota High School Activities Association website some of the athletic directors may have not read the full message and deleted the notification. Despite these limitations, the results are still notable.

## Conclusions

Each respondent indicated they were athletic directors at their school; however, some showed that they held other positions within the school as well. Many of the respondents held other leadership positions or were teachers. The leadership positions were principals, superintendents, or guidance counselors.

Do North Dakota high school athletic directors evaluate coaches? The results show in Table 7 that 77% of athletic directors in North Dakota evaluate their coaches. The athletic directors evaluate coaches at all levels. As shown in Table 8, the head coach was the position that was most commonly evaluated (73%); however, assistant coaches, junior high coaches, and elementary coaches were also evaluated by a lesser number of athletic directors. Table 10 shows that the athletic directors evaluated the coaches typically at the end of their season (70%). Coaches in North Dakota are being evaluated; however, there are still 23% of schools that don't evaluate their coaches.

What forms of evaluation are used for the coaches? The results in Table 9 indicate athletic directors are evaluating coaches by using their own form (71%). It also shows coaches were asked to evaluate themselves (28%) or would be evaluated by the athletes (15%) that were coached by them.

Do North Dakota high school athletic directors supervise coaches? The results in Table 11 show that athletic directors supervise head coaches (92%), assistant coaches (84%), junior high coaches (70%), and elementary coaches (57%).

When are athletic directors supervising coaches in North Dakota? The results in Table 12 indicate that athletic directors in North Dakota are supervising their coaches; however, 2% of the athletic directors say they never supervise their coaches. The most common times when these

coaches are being supervised are during games (91%). Athletic directors will also supervise their coaches during practice (77%).

What differences exist with evaluation and supervision of coaches with school size? At the Class A level all the athletic directors evaluate their head coaches, one indicated they evaluate assistant and junior high coaches, and none evaluate elementary coaches. At the Class B level 70% of the athletic directors evaluate head coaches, 27% evaluate assistant and junior high coaches, and 20% evaluate elementary coaches. Both Class A and Class B athletic directors choose to use self-evaluation forms and evaluation by the athletes. When it comes to supervision at the Class A level all 19 athletic directors supervise head coaches, 79% supervise assistant coaches, 26% supervise junior high coaches, and 0.05% supervise elementary coaches. All Class A athletic directors indicated they supervise during games and 89% supervise practices. At the Class B level 88% of athletic directors supervise head coaches, 85% supervise assistant coaches, 80% supervise junior high coaches, and 68% supervise elementary coaches. Class B athletic directors supervise during games (89%) and 74% supervise during practices. At the Class A level sixty-two percent of the athletic directors provided their coaches with a job description. Unlike the Class A athletic directors, 51% of Class B athletic directors provided a job description for coaches. Paling (2012) stated all coaches need job descriptions as part of the criteria for evaluation. He also said job descriptions were a great way to get all coaches “rowing in the same direction” (p. 23). Athletic directors at the Class B level are not using the importance of a job description and using it as a benefit for their evaluation process. The Class A athletic directors are showing the importance of job descriptions by providing them for their coaches.

What professional development opportunities do athletic directors use to improve their knowledge of supervision and evaluation practices? The findings in Table 14 show that North Dakota athletic directors seek out and participate in professional development opportunities that

are available to them. They use the North Dakota Coaches Convention (46%), North Dakota Interscholastic Athletic Administrator Association conferences (75%), leadership training courses (50%), and NFHS Learn courses (64%) to develop their skills and knowledge in the profession.

What professional development opportunities does the school pay coaches to attend? The results in Table 15 show that most schools will pay for their coaches to attend the North Dakota State Coaches Convention (73%) and any other coaching clinics (74%) that are available to attend although some schools require the coaches to pay out of their own pocket. In 1999, thirty-six states in the United States required coaches to complete some type of continuing education. That number has risen to forty-six in 2012, with the remaining four states trying to implement a continuing education system as well (Geanty, 2012). North Dakota does require coaches who work with athletes in grades 9-12 to obtain a coaching permit and continue to educate themselves over periods of time. However, only thirty-five percent of the schools will pay for their coach to complete this permit.

### **Discussion**

At the start of this research project, the researcher set out to determine whether athletic directors are evaluating and supervising their coaches in the state of North Dakota. The researcher also set out to determine what professional development opportunities athletic directors were using to enhance their knowledge of evaluation and supervision procedures.

After reviewing the data a majority of North Dakota athletic directors are taking the time to evaluate their coaches. Head coaches were evaluated by 77% of the athletic directors, where as assistant coaches were at 23%, junior high coaches at 21%, and elementary coaches at 13%. Thus, it could be concluded that coaches are being evaluated based on the aforementioned data.

However, it does show that more of an emphasis on evaluating the coaches below the head coach could be warranted. Also, the data concludes that there are still athletic directors who choose not to evaluate their coaches. This leads to the next question what forms of evaluation are being used for the coaches who are being evaluated?

Research question two examined the forms of evaluation being used for the coaches who are being evaluated. When reviewing the data the results showed that athletic directors used their own form of evaluation with the coaches. However, many athletic directors have their coaches self evaluate and/or have the athletes under that particular coach do an evaluation. The data concludes that different forms of evaluation are being used for the coaches.

The supervision of coaches was another aspect of the research project. Research question number three examined whether or not athletic directors were supervising coaches. The data shows that 92% of head coaches are supervised, 84% of assistant coaches, 70% of junior high coaches, and 57% elementary coaches. Based on the data, it can be concluded that coaches are being supervised. In fact a higher percentage of athletic directors supervise their coaches than they evaluate. However, similar to the evaluating coaches not all athletic directors are supervising their coaches.

When are these coaches being supervised? Research question four asked when coaches were being supervised. When reviewing the data 91% supervised during games and 77% supervised during practices. However, there were 2% of athletic directors who indicated that they never supervise their coaches.

Research question five examined the differences with evaluation and supervision of coaches with school size. The results show that Class A athletic directors put more of an emphasis on evaluating and supervising their head coaches as all of them responded to having an evaluation and supervision process in place. However, when evaluating only one athletic director



indicated evaluating past the head coach. Class A athletic directors do supervise the head and assistant coaches, but stop there. At the Class B level the athletic directors that do have an evaluation and supervision process in place are working with coaches from the varsity level down to the elementary level. Athletic directors at the Class B level are not taking the importance of a job description and using it as a benefit for their evaluation process. The Class A athletic directors are showing the importance of job descriptions by providing them for their coaches. Based on the data there are differences between Class A and Class B schools when it comes to supervision and evaluation of coaches. The major difference being the number of coaches that are being supervised and evaluated.

Research question six examined what professional development opportunities athletic directors were taking advantage of to improve their knowledge of supervision and evaluation practices. After reviewing the data 75% of athletic directors are attending NDIAAA conferences, 50% are taking LTC courses, 64% are taking NFHS Learn courses, and 46% are attending the North Dakota Coaches Convention. Other professional development opportunities mentioned were the National Athletic Directors conference and graduate level leadership courses. Based on the data it can be concluded that athletic directors are using professional development opportunities. However, there are still athletic directors that need to take advantage of the opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills as an athletic director.

Research question seven examined what professional development opportunities schools were willing to pay their coaches to attend. This question is suppose to reflect what professional development opportunities coaches were reimbursed for attending or completing, however it may have been interpreted as to what coaches got paid to attend or complete these opportunities. The results showed school districts are willing to pay for their coaches to attend the North Dakota Coaches Convention and other clinics that are offered. However, there are still many schools that

do not pay for their coaches coaching permit that is now required by the North Dakota High School Activities Association for grades 9-12.

It's up to the athletic director to see that coaches are in compliance and accountable for regulations and their responsibilities. Meetings prior to the season starting and at the end of the season have equal significance (Hoch, 2014). Results show that 61% of athletic directors in North Dakota meet with their coaches prior to the season starting and at the end of the season. The results also show that valuable topics such as goal setting, best practices, job descriptions, evaluation, professional development, and plans for the off season are discussed during these meetings.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on the findings and conclusions of this research study, the following areas are recommended for further study:

1. Further research should be conducted in qualitative focus groups to see why athletic directors are not evaluating or supervising their coaches.
2. This study focused on North Dakota athletic directors. Further studies may include surrounding states or different regions of the country.
3. Further research should be conducted to determine why schools don't pay coaches for coaches' permit.
4. Further research should be conducted to determine how the job description is directly connected to the evaluation process.
5. Further qualitative research should be done to see how much time is devoted specifically to athletic director duties.

6. This study was done quantitatively with descriptive statistics other qualitative research could be done to get a better understanding of why athletic directors take on other duties in schools.

The purpose of this study was to better understand the process of supervision and evaluation of coaches in North Dakota schools. The researcher was able to accomplish this with the results of a survey that was sent to North Dakota athletic directors. The studies results showed significant data to satisfy the research questions asked. The study examined the areas of evaluation and supervision of coaches, professional development, and differences in evaluation and supervision processes in schools with different enrollment sizes. As the culture of athletics is changing how will athletic directors continue to help their coaches adjust to these changes? Will they continue to improve their evaluation and supervision processes or begin to utilize one if they aren't already?

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## APPENDIX A. SURVEY

My name is Brett Thielges and I am a graduate student at North Dakota State University in Fargo, ND. I am conducting this research in hopes of completing my masters in Educational Leadership. The goal of this survey is to get a better understanding of what the current supervision and evaluation processes of coaches in North Dakota are. This data will not be used to affect anyone's current position, but to possibly help athletic directors become more aware of the current trend in supervision and evaluation of coaches in North Dakota. The survey will be completely anonymous and your participation is completely voluntary. The attached letter is from the Institutional Review Board at North Dakota State University, which has approved the survey. The survey will only take approximately five minutes to complete.

To access the survey please click on the link that will take you to the online survey. Please be sure to submit at the end.

Thank you for your help.

1. What is your school's enrollment in grades 9-12?
  - 325 or higher
  - 324 or below
  
2. Please check all that apply regarding your current position(s).
  - Athletic Director
  - Principal
  - Superintendent
  - Teacher
  - Coach
  
3. What professional development opportunities do you participate in?
  - North Dakota Coaches Convention
  - North Dakota Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association Conferences
  - Leadership Training Courses (LTC)
  - National Federation of State High School Association Online Courses (NFHS Learn)
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Is there a written job description for your coaching positions?
  - Yes, if so when is it given to coaches?
    - When hired
    - Pre-season meeting
    - Start of season
  - No





10. When do you supervise your coaches? Click all that apply.

- During practice
  - During games or contests
  - Never
  - Other, if other please specify when you supervise your coaches.
- 

11. Do you have a pre-season meeting with your coaches?

- Yes, if yes what is discussed? Click all that apply.
  - Goal Setting
  - Best Practices
  - Job Description
  - Other

No \_\_\_\_\_

12. Do you have a post-season meeting with your coaches?

- Yes, if yes what is discussed? Click all that apply.
  - Evaluation
  - Off Season Plan
  - Professional Development
  - Other

No \_\_\_\_\_

13. What professional development opportunities does the school pay coaches to attend?

- North Dakota State Coaches Convention
- National Federation of State High School Coaches Education
- Coaching Clinics
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B. IRB



September 24, 2014

Denise Lajimodiere  
School of Education

Re: Your submission to the IRB: "Athletic Directors Perceptions of Supervision and Evaluation of Coaches in ND"

Research Team: Brett Thielges

Thank you for your inquiry regarding your project. At this time, the IRB office has determined that the above-referenced protocol does not require Institutional Review Board approval or certification of exempt status because it does not fit the regulatory definition of 'research involving human subjects'.

Dept. of Health & Human Services regulations governing human subjects research (45CFR46, Protection of Human Subjects), defines 'research' as "...a systematic investigation, research development, testing and evaluation, designed to contribute to generalizable knowledge." These regulations also define a 'human subject' as "...a living individual about whom an investigator conducting research obtains (1) data through intervention or interaction with the individual, or (2) identifiable private information."

It was determined that your project does not require IRB approval (or certification of exempt status) because the project does not seek information about an individual person, but the policies and procedures of their school and/or school district.

We appreciate your intention to abide by NDSU IRB policies and procedures, and thank you for your patience as the IRB Office has reviewed your study. Best wishes for a successful project!

Sincerely,

**Kristy Shirley**

Digitally signed by Kristy Shirley  
DN: cn=Kristy Shirley, o=NDSU, ou=SPA,  
email=kristy.shirley@ndsu.edu, c=US  
Date: 2014.09.24 08:45:35 -0500

Kristy Shirley, CIP; Research Compliance Administrator

For more information regarding IRB Office submissions and guidelines, please consult [www.ndsu.edu/irb](http://www.ndsu.edu/irb). This Institution has an approved FederalWide Assurance with the Department of Health and Human Services: FWA00002439.

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