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October 8, 2021

Good afternoon,

With the end of the fall sports season in sight, we're already looking ahead to winter sports.

Interscholastic athletics help foster important character traits such as work ethic, perseverance, preparation, commitment, interpersonal skills. Participation in athletics also allows for benefits like physical fitness and the development of communication skills and social relationships.

As you know, Unadilla Valley CSD and Gilbertsville-Mount Upton CSD have fielded combined teams for sports in the past. This arrangement has been on a season-by-season and team-by-team team basis. Joint UV-GMU teams have included track and field, softball, boys' soccer, boys' modified basketball, boys' baseball, and cross country.

Around our region and elsewhere in the state, we have seen schools struggle to field sports teams due to lack of player interest and, occasionally, difficulty finding coaches.

In some cases, school districts have been able to participate after combining teams with another school. In some schools, particularly at the modified level, student-athletes have not been able to play because there was no team.

The pandemic has only made this situation worse. Shortages of bus drivers, COVID restrictions, quarantines and a drop in player participation have made it even more difficult to field athletics teams.

At this time, a final decision has not been made on whether UV and GMU student athletes will be on combined teams for winter sports.

We hope to have this decision soon. Because we recognize our school communities both value their unique identities, we are trying to keep our athletic programs viable and independent whenever possible. However, COVID and the fact that basketball teams, by their nature, have fewer players are complicating the situation.

What can you do to help us?

We need to know what your thoughts are as parents regarding this situation. Please complete the [Google Form linked here](#).

If your student-athlete is planning on participating in winter sports, it's important that they let us know as soon as possible.

While the two districts have an informal agreement to field joint teams when it is beneficial for both districts and have explored opening up other shared opportunities for students, at no time has either district discussed an actual district merger. This continues to be the case. An actual merger between GMU and UV is not on the table.

Our two districts plan to continue discussing shared opportunities for students, both academic and extracurricular. Because we know that school sports may not be for everyone, we anticipate these discussions may involve other areas, such as fine arts.

Please know we are committed to offering the best educational experience possible and to do that, we need your input. As we continue to look at ways to serve students in both of our communities, we plan to have more joint communications as we move forward.

Sincerely,



Annette D. Hammond
Superintendent of Schools
Gilbertsville-Mount Upton Central School

Sincerely,



Brenton S. Taylor
Superintendent of Schools
Unadilla Valley Central School

AH/BT/vld