



Nicole Blodgett <nblodgett@panaschools.com>

Fwd: Remedy for football concussions: helmetless play?

1 message

Jason Bauer <jbauer@panaschools.com>
To: Nicole Blodgett <nblodgett@panaschools.com>

Tue, Oct 15, 2019 at 7:39 AM

October board meeting

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **State School News Service** <j.m.broadway74@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Oct 14, 2019 at 2:03 AM
Subject: Remedy for football concussions: helmetless play?
To: <jbauer@panaschools.com>

Subscribe to ISNS



Volume 25, Number 59, October 14, 2019 --- [Education bills signed into law - or vetoed - [at this link.](#)]

To view the web version, [click here.](#)

Remedy for football concussions: no helmets?

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

In recent years, Illinois policymakers have made it increasingly difficult for children and youths who are suspected to have suffered head injuries - concussions - to return to a game in which they had been injured, or even to return to school work that might delay their recovery or even worsen their injury.

No longer may a coach merely admonish the player to "shake it off" and go back out on the field. It now takes a team of professionals, headed up by a physician or a medical technician who is trained to understand head injuries and how to deal with them, [to sign off on a return play or to study](#) for the student.

Simultaneously, schools and coaches have followed closely the development of improved headgear for athletes, especially for football players - who seem to be the victims of the most serious head traumas. Meanwhile, the National Football League, which resisted for years, has now implemented a [seemingly rational protocol](#).

So after all of this effort to shield the head from trauma - and to respond in medically sound ways when the adults on hand fail to achieve that goal - it may seem strange to have some academic researchers suggest that a better way to protect a student's skull might be to have him *play without a helmet on at all*.

I know. It sounds counterintuitive. But there's science and a precedent to support this notion. Understand that there's a limit to the protection a helmet can provide. The

three-pound brain is not anchored to anything in there; it sloshes around inside a thin-walled sac, and it is bumped or bruised when the skull gets a hit.

A very big jolt can inflict life-changing damage to the brain. But so can a succession of lesser hits. It's not easy to know, often, if an injury has occurred. Symptoms - a severe headache, maybe, or nausea - can be delayed. So the sense of safety a helmet provides *can be largely an illusion*. Now [consider the crazy alternative](#).

As University of Massachussets kinesiology professor Erik Swartz explains, the somewhat illusory sense of safety that a helmet confers can encourage a player to take risks he otherwise would avoid. The concept is "risk compensation." (See [how it is applied to a variety of sports](#) and other activities.)

I remember (but you don't) that one of the arguments auto makers used to resist the requirement that they install seat belts in all new cars was that the belts would make drivers feel so much safer that they would drive in riskier ways and endanger the lives of themselves and others. [Swartz references that](#).

Studies? Yes, there've been studies. Swartz links us to two of them. A helmetless training experiment at the [college level](#) seemed to reduce "head impacts" by 30%. A larger study, involving [players aged 14 to 17](#), also documented reduced head impacts. The reason: tackling helmetless must be done very carefully.

When there's no helmet, Swartz wrote, football players initiate contact mostly with their shoulders, like rugby players do, not with the head. It is a kind of *reflex action*, one that players do not need to be taught. "Keeping the head out of the way simply develops naturally as an anticipatory reflex to protect the head," he asserts.

Aside from safety in sports, there's a larger issue involved in all of this. The seatbelt issue illustrates it well. Forcing the auto makers to install them was just the first step. Forcing drivers to wear them seemed to be even harder. Current state Senate President John Cullerton worked toward that legislative goal for years.

Opponents objected to "being told by a nanny state how to live." But as Cullerton argued (he also sponsored motorcycle helmet laws), when someone's brains are scattered along the highway - *but they still don't die* - the rest of us may have to pay for their care (higher insurance rates, taxes to cover Medicaid) until they do die.

So we all have an interest in each other's well-being. What a nice thought, even though it serves as justification for when governmental regulation must be imposed on us "freedom-loving" citizens "for our own good."

This applies to the well-being of children especially. That is one of the reasons why, of the bills of concern to educators and school districts that were passed by the legislature and signed into law by the governor this year, so many (25%) of them are categorized [at the ISNS web site](#) as student health or safety bills.

The bills tell educators and school boards how they must deal with everything from making sure students are able to take medications (including medical marijuana) that are prescribed for them, to how they may (or must) maintain the security of their buildings and protect students from dangers such as sexual abuse.

In a risk-management seminar that I used to present years ago, I pointed out that society is especially protective of two constituencies that we deem most "vulnerable." The first, and foremost among the vulnerable, is children. The second, of course, is us old folks. Fail either of us conspicuously and you'll *never be forgiven*.

Although this admonition applies most generally to the policymakers, those who must write all the rules in this (or most any other) regard, but it applies most specifically to educators with regard to the children who are, 180 days each year, in their custody. *Do not let their brains be hurt* on the football field.

I got a letter from Joe Biden last week. I'm guessing that he missed the ISNS issue that arrived just the day before, the one in which I asserted, and then linked you to examples of how, he is "[almost as big a liar as Trump](#)." I believe his letter was an effort to boost his campaign's notoriously [slim base of "small donors](#)."

He asked me for a donation *even as small as \$15*. (Still too much.)

It was clearly a personal letter to me. Biden emphasized his participation in the "Obama Administration"; he knows I still respect Barack [even though he didn't follow through](#) on his implied promise to curtail high-stakes testing of students as a tool for holding teachers "accountable" (among other shortcomings).

Why is Biden running? He says it is "because we are in a battle for the soul of the nation ... a battle to determine whether our nation chooses hope over fear ... unity over division ... and, most importantly, truth over lies." Truth-over-lies? Give me a break, Joe. If truth wins the battle over lies, [your campaign is doomed](#).

In an urgent and emotional (Joe is always emotional) postscript, Biden asserted: "I cannot win this nomination or beat Donald Trump without your backing and support." Aside from the redundancy of "backing" and "support," I look favorably on this statement. *I get to decide the outcome?* What an honor!

It amuses me how young reporters hasten to stress a lack of "evidence" that Biden has taken any actions as a senator or as vice president to benefit his son or his brother in their transparent efforts to monetize their relationship with him. No other "evidence" is required. All his kin needed was *his tacit permission*.

Here's a respectable investigative journalism entity's [backgrounder on Biden nepotism](#). Although a former business partner of Hunter Biden's backed away from him because of his clear and shallow opportunism, neither the senator nor the vice president (yeah, same guy) apparently posted any objections.

What is "The Intercept" - some sort of right-wing scandal sheet, an arm of the Trump-ruled Republican Party? Perhaps this will reveal something. It's an [in-depth analysis concluding](#) that penalties for federal laws Trump clearly has broken would subject him to *at least a decade in prison* if he is charged and convicted.

I know it's a drag, that studying the issues and arguments and arriving at your own informed conclusions can be a chore. Ordinarily, I'd just say that's what citizenship means. But in this case, my advice is not to bother. After all, Biden himself has declared he can't be nominated without *my help - which he will not get*.

Disclaimer: I did not receive talking points on this from the White House.

Snippets:

Pension "reform" may have been a costly mistake, according to the [report released this month](#) by the Illinois Pension Consolidation Feasibility Task Force that Gov. JB Pritzker appointed after taking office. How costly? Hundreds of millions of dollars costly. The commission is urging action soon, this veto session.

Much more will follow on this as the veto session (starting [in two weeks](#)) approaches, but the gist of it is that the benefits of "Tier II" apparently do not meet federal standards for a system whose members do not receive Social Security benefits. Greg Hinz at Crain's Chicago Business [introduces the subject well](#).

There's an emphasis on computer science instruction these days. Most states allow such a course [as a substitute](#) for a math course. An Ohio State professor raises the question - but does not give an answer - of [whether that's a good idea](#). Illinois is one of the allowing states, *despite an effort to the contrary*.

[HB 2165](#), as filed, would have stricken the School Code's permission to substitute computer science for a math course as a condition of graduation, but that permission was restored in the Senate and the House concurred 116-0. (It appears to me that ISBE's [report on tracked legislation](#) is thus incorrect about PA 101-0464.)

Today is Columbus day. Yes, celebrations of the "discovery" of America is yet another of the nation's psychological treasures to which I have taken a rhetorical axe, joined in that endeavor, perhaps, by what remains of the Native American community in this hemisphere. The omelet of truth imperils many eggs.

Last week I linked you to a couple of good sources for credible instruction about Columbus and the consequences of his visit to the Caribbean. A reader linked me to a book telling that history [from the indigenous people's perspective](#) - a book written for young people. Authors [Debbie Reese](#) and [Jean Mendoza](#) are education professionals who earned their PhDs at University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana.

Their work is highly recommended.

Can't you just ignore Columbus Day, not talk about it and, therefore, not be responsible for students getting the mistaken idea that Columbus was a hero or even honorable? Credible voices [do not recommend it](#). Although Martin Luther King Day is a bit far off, [talking about race in the classroom](#) may similarly be unavoidable.

Thursday is likely to be strike day at Chicago schools. Apparently the negotiations are ongoing, but there's no sign of a breakthrough at this time. Pay is the ostensible issue, but CTU has called for supports within the schools. Another voice blames recent strikes on [underfunded pension systems](#).

Chalkbeat posted an interesting article likening the CTU strategy in Chicago with that of Los Angeles teachers who, also, employed the concept of "[bargaining for the common good](#)." Hopes for a pre-strike settlement seem fragile now. At least a brief strike seems likely. Stay tuned to [Raise Your Hand](#) for updates and advice.

The only way to contact me: Use the link below. As soon as you "submit" your message, it is sent to me by email. Your message may be complex and "attached" to a document, or it may be as simple as "call me."

IF YOU NEED TO SPEAK WITH ME directly, leave a phone number for me to call and tell me what would be a good time to converse. I am always connected to my email, and I promise to respond to you as soon as possible.

Invoice Reminder: All invoices are *emailed* via the PNC Bank. ISNS is *now paperless*. If you need me to resend an invoice, use the contact link to tell me. I deeply appreciate your support of ISNS. This service cannot exist without you.

Your input - questions, comments, suggestions - are valued. For twenty-four years ISNS has been guided by wisdom "from the field." To contribute in this way, just [click this link to my contact form](#).

State School News Service (C) 2019

Subscribe to ISNS

DO NOT CLICK THE 'UNSUBSCRIBE' LINK! That would automatically drop you from the ISNS subscriber list. The "unsubscribe" link is required so we cannot remove it. But to continue receiving the ISNS newsletter, DO NOT CLICK IT. If you wish to update your account, including choosing your email preference (HTML or text-only) please [submit this form](#). Otherwise, use the "contact form" link in the last paragraph of today's newsletter to contact Jim Broadway for any reason. Thank you.

State School News Service, [347 S Durkin Dr, Springfield, IL 62704](#)

SafeUnsubscribe™ jbauer@panaschools.com

[Forward this email](#) | [About our service provider](#)

Sent by j.m.broadway74@gmail.com in collaboration with



Try email marketing for free today!

--

Mr. Jason Bauer
Superintendent - Pana CUSD #8
14 E. Main Street
Pana, IL 62557
Phone: (217) 562-1500
Fax: (217) 562-1501