



Blueprint for Success: Baltimore County Public Schools

How one school district is leading the field in PE and athletic fitness



When you think about outstanding sport programs, undoubtedly you think about the state championship titles, exceptional athletes and passionate coaches motivating their athletes to do their best. In the area of physical education, you think about dedicated instructors teaching their students important movement skills and exercise theories they can use their entire lives. What probably doesn't come to mind, in either of these cases, are administrators. But they should, especially when it comes to the athletic and

physical education programs that are being conducted in Baltimore County Public School District (BCPS).

Located in Baltimore County, Maryland, BCPS is the 25th largest school system in the country. It has 172 schools, 24 of them high schools, and services 107,000 students. This school district has taken a “pay it forward” approach to improving the quality and safety of their athletic and PE programs. They have taken the steps necessary to create a unified system that streamlines organization so that all their staff is on the same

page, especially in how they run their fitness programs. And BFS is proud to be instrumental in this development by providing certifications and educational materials.



Michelle L. Proser



Ronald Belinko

Two key administrators in the Baltimore County Public School District are Michelle L. Proser and Ronald Belinko. Belinko works primarily with the athletic departments and Proser with the physical education departments. In this exclusive interview for *BFS* magazine,

Proser and Belinko discuss the exciting developments that are happening in their school district.

***BFS:** Do your athletic and physical education departments work together, or are they considered separate programs such as math and social studies?*

Belinko: I've been in this profession for 44 years, and I've always believed that schools should avoid duplicating resources. During the school day our weightrooms are used for physical education, after school

we have athletic programs using the weightrooms, and in the evening we may have a recreational program using them. So there you have three programs using the same facilities, using the same equipment. Franklin High School in our school district is a great example of what can be done when you combine resources. Not only have they upgraded their weightroom into a first-class facility that has the students excited, but they have a program with a purpose to it – they just don't open the doors and turn on the music. The result is that there has been a big increase in the students' interest in weight training programs, especially with female athletes.

BFS: How did you find the financing to implement BFS?

Proser: Operating budget funds were used as well as receiving some funding through a grant. Some schools held fundraising events or the athletic booster clubs were involved.

BFS: A recent study in a scientific journal discussed the dramatic increase



in injuries that have been occurring in physical education classes. What do you believe is responsible for this?

Belinko: If there is an increase in participation, injuries are going to go up. And I hate to say this, but the number of injuries also depends upon the qualifications of the instructors, with some instructors not teaching proper skill progression but instead just taking the kids out for what is best described as “recess.”

BFS: Is it a problem that overweight kids, or kids who did not come from good programs that taught basic movement skills, could be more susceptible to injuries?

Belinko: Yes, but we are very fortunate in Baltimore County to have a strong physical education program at the K through 9 level, so we have not seen those types of injury numbers that other physical education programs are reporting. On the other end of the spectrum, which is athletics, what I've seen is a lot of injuries caused by overuse. For example, a high school soccer player may join outside soccer programs and as such be playing all year long, rather than playing other sports and focusing on other muscle groups. This type of specialization can lead to injuries.

BFS: Are some athletes participating in these outside programs because of pressure to train more to increase their chances of earning a college scholarship?

Belinko: Yes, and this pressure often comes from parents who do not understand the scholarship situation. I always tell the parents, “Do you know how many Division I scholarships there are in soccer? 9.5 total – and



that's not every year.” We have 24 high schools, and we may only get one soccer scholarship a year.

BFS: How did you first learn about BFS?

Belinko: As a football coach and through the magazine and by hearing about the program from other coaches who have been successful using BFS. I've also seen that many programs that use BFS have increased participation in their weight training programs.

BFS: Have you looked at other conditioning programs for your athletes and physical education students?

Belinko: I've attended many clinics over the years. When I go to these clinics, I try to keep an open mind and see if I can put up one thing to add to my program – not starting with something new altogether. What impresses me about the BFS program is that it trains the teachers and coaches about how to monitor progress, keep records and motivate kids – and they have continuing education resources available. This is why when Michelle and I were

BFS SUCCESS STORY

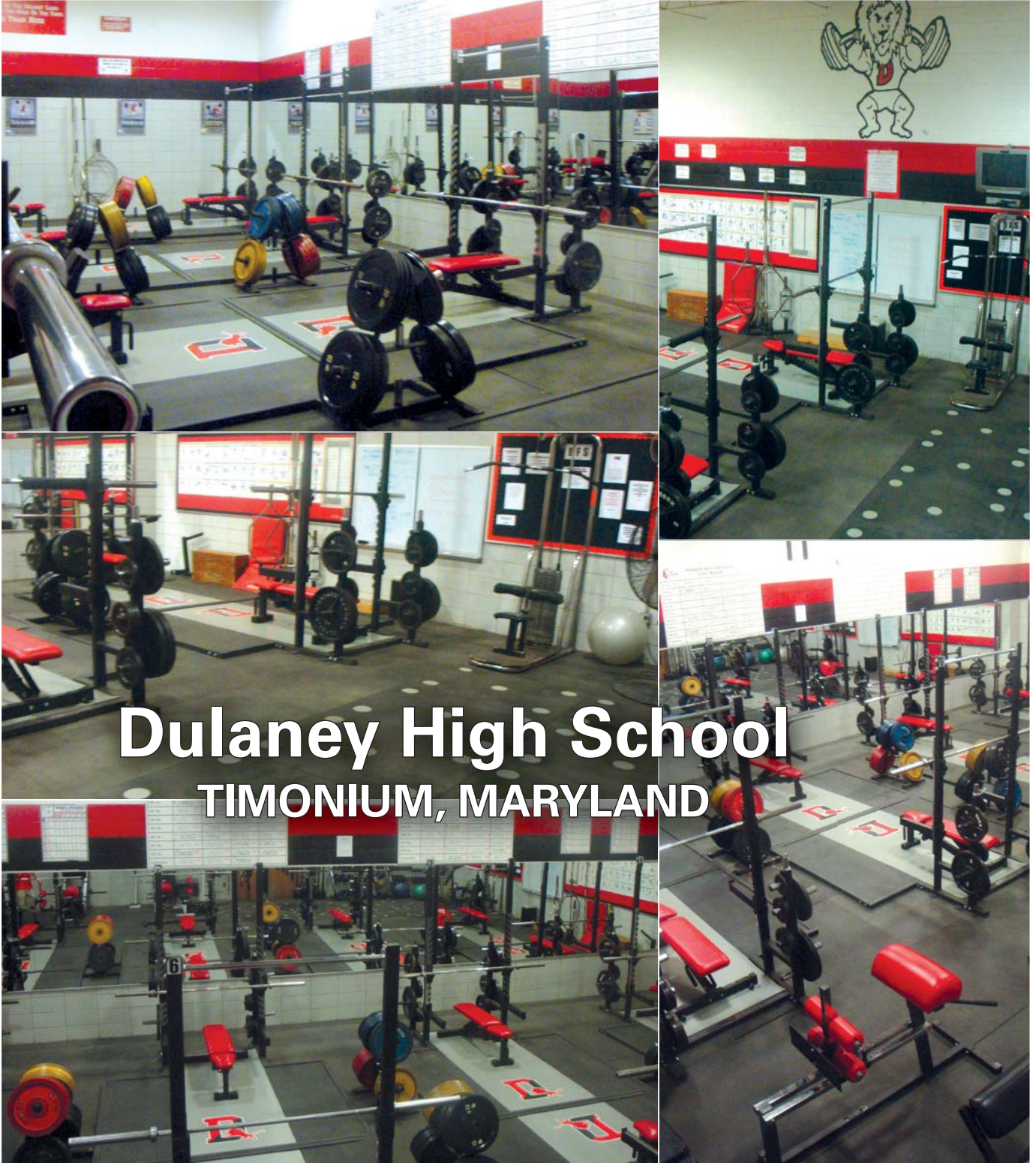
talking about what we could do to make our weightrooms more attractive to students and safer, I suggested the BFS program.

BFS: What was your overall plan

for implementing BFS into your school district?

Proser: It is the goal of the Office of Physical Education and Athletics to collaborate in order to ensure that each physical education teacher

teaching weight training and each coach using the weightroom will be certified. We are committed to having every weightroom evaluated and increasing the number of certified instructors.



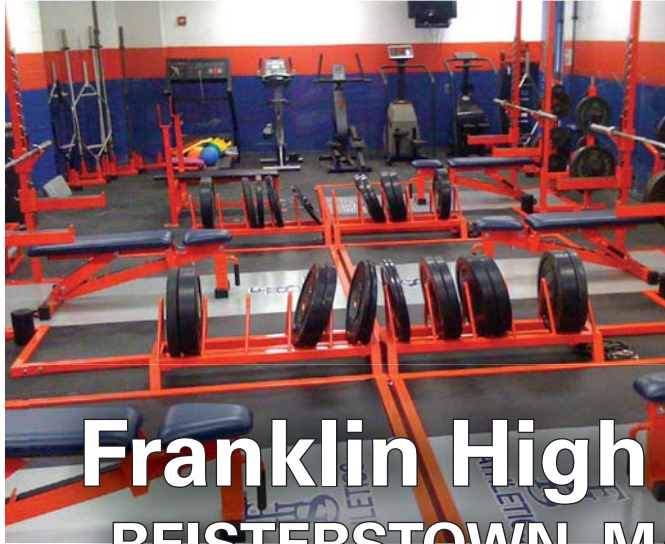
Dulaney High School TIMONIUM, MARYLAND

BFS: What has been the initial response to the BFS program among your teachers and students?

Proser: From the physical education teacher's standpoint, the initial response was that BFS only dealt with

football. After having the opportunity to have John Rowbotham provide professional development sessions stressing the proper techniques for using the weightroom for safe activity for all students, not just football

players, the teachers have responded very positively. We have incorporated BFS resources such as safety rules and posters, Olympic collars, and books in an effort to support safety in the weightrooms. Also, after holding the



Franklin High School REISTERSTOWN, MARYLAND



"It has been an honor to work with the administrators and teachers in BCPS. They truly have a passion for their students' success and safety. During my visits to Baltimore, it has been amazing to see the teamwork between Athletics and PE, in such a big county. If I were to teach in a high school setting, I would pack my bags for BCPS; it is a great place to be if you're a teacher or a student. Thank you, BCPS, for all that you do for today's youth – you are Elevens!"

—John Rowbotham
Vice President of BFS, Inc.



weightroom evaluations/assessments with John and Rick, our department chairs and teachers have been very motivated to improve their facility layout and their instructional programs for all students.

BFS: *Is there one specific aspect of the BFS weight training program that stands out to you?*

Proser: The main feature that stood out for me was the quality instruction that focused on proper techniques and safety in the weightroom. In the instruction this focus was with all students, not just the athletes.

Belinko: For me, it was the idea that in the off season it focuses on general conditioning weight training exercises that will help prevent overuse injuries.

BFS: *Has implementing the concept of unification increased the efficiency of conducting classes?*

Proser: Yes, each student is getting the same information during physical education class, intramurals or athletic participation. Dulaney High School has set the standard in our county as far as unifying their program.

BFS: *Is the BFS program being used in the physical education curriculum?*

Belinko: Michelle has implement-

ed parts of the BFS program in our PE curriculum. That's what got us all started with BFS – we wanted to have a curriculum that we could put into the hands of teachers and coaches to make a meaningful program.

BFS: *Was it easy to include BFS into the curriculum?*

Proser: Yes, we were able to incorporate the Six Absolutes in each high school and use the Greg Shepard book as a resource.

BFS: *Is there anything you would like to see BFS add to its program?*

Proser: I'd like to have more weightlifting technique and the Six Absolutes segments in teaching video clips for teacher use.

BFS: *Do you emphasize having older athletes become involved in the coaching process?*

Belinko: Yes. If all the athletes in the program become more involved in the coaching process, learning to work together, and are taught how to spot correctly, you can avoid most accidents. This is why it is so important to have a structured program to follow and a sound curriculum – if you don't have this in place, you're at a tremendous risk from a liability standpoint.

BFS: *What is your next step with BFS?*

Proser: Our next step is to complete the weightroom evaluations in every high school and increase the number of BFS-certified teachers.

BFS: *Is the idea that we live in such a litigious society the primary reason you were interested in BFS's weightroom safety evaluations?*

Proser: No! Safety is our number-one goal in Baltimore County Public Schools, so Ron and I decided to be proactive in an effort to increase the safety of the weightrooms and decrease student injuries prior to any occurrences.

BFS: *Do you believe that teachers are not being taught how to administer sound weight training programs in the degree programs?*

Belinko: This has been my impression – many of these programs give the PE majors little instruction in weight training. In fact, before deciding on BFS, at one time we had thought about having our own certification program in order to teach weight training to our coaches and instructors. That's why I recommended BFS – there is not much out there that has the type of total training program that your organization offers. **BFS**



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| ▶ MD Timonium | 2/27/2010 | ▶ MS Jackson | 3/27/2010 |
| ▶ OH Louisville | 3/06/2010 | ▶ MA Fitchburg | 5/01/2010 |
| ▶ CA San Diego | 3/13/2010 | ▶ BFS has more clinics planned for 2010, including KY, CO, and GA. Check the BFS Calendar online for dates! | |
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