

On September 27, 2019, Battle High School traveled to Jackson R-2 School District for a scheduled varsity football game. Post-game reports and social media allegations were made regarding the climate at the game and the state of the Battle locker room during the game. As a result, and with the complete cooperation of Jackson R-2, Columbia Public Schools conducted a thorough investigation into the matter.

Columbia Public Schools administrators reviewed approximately 7 hours of video footage from 14 different video camera angles multiple times, including views from multiple locker room entry points, the football field, the stands, the concession area and parking lot and road entry points. In the absence of video audio, the district also conducted interviews and took statements from coaches, cheerleaders, players, parents and administrators present at the game.

Based on the evidence gathered and a complete investigation, Columbia Public Schools is not able to substantiate the accounts or allegations made regarding the events that reportedly took place during the game.

The following information details what Columbia Public Schools observed:

Locker Room

Immediately following half-time and the departure of the Battle High School team from the locker room, the Jackson custodian enters the locker room for a period of two minutes, then leaves. Seventeen minutes later, a Battle High School administrator, Jackson High School administrator and the custodian return to the locker room. During the 9-minute time frame when the locker room was reportedly vandalized, no unauthorized individuals entered or exited the locker room. The district reviewed video footage from not only the main entrance, but also the rear alternate entrances.

The district is in possession of several photos of the locker room taken by a Battle administrator, including photos of player duffle bags and a photo of a locker door that appeared to have come off the hinges. In the photo, the screws for the locker door are placed neatly on the edge of the locker and the items in the locker are folded and appear to be undisturbed.

The district is also in possession of a video of the locker room and locker room restrooms post game, and it shows, upon departure of the Battle football team, a clean locker room and in good condition.

Approximately 8 law enforcement officers were present in proximity to the locker room post game. A Jackson administrator and the custodian are also present outside the locker room. As players pack up and get food provided to them by Jackson outside the locker room, there are some limited and short interactions between individual officers and Battle High School coaches, players and a Battle administrator. A small group of parents and children gathered outside the locker room post game. There is no visible interaction between the officers and the parents. An officer does assist Battle High School in directing traffic and positioning the bus and the equipment truck and trailer for loading and departure.

Once Battle players have boarded the bus, and prior to the departure of the team, a Jackson administrator and a Battle administrator both enter and exit the locker room multiple times over a period of 8 minutes. The last time administrators exit the locker room, the Battle team bus departs at 10:37 p.m.

Cheerleaders

In the absence of audio, the district is unable to substantiate reports regarding comments made by Jackson fans toward cheerleaders. Review of footage involving the cheerleaders only showed two interactions taking place. In one instance, a young boy touches the bow of a cheerleader while walking past. The other a young boy accidentally bumps in to a cheerleader while he is walking backward. He turns and appears to apologize for bumping in to her. During the game cheerleaders visited the concession stand, the restroom, but otherwise remained on the field, separated by a fence from the stands.

Field

The video does not contain audio, however Battle High School coaches have communicated directly with the officiating crew from the game to gain a better understanding of what occurred on the field and have resolved the matter.

No official reports have been filed with MSHSAA regarding player, coach, referee or fan conduct during the game.

Columbia Public Schools appreciates the cooperation and patience of the Jackson R-2 School District while the district thoroughly investigated the reported incidents. The completed investigation has now been turned over to the school district's Human Resources Department as a personnel matter.