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Roswell High coach adds tradition to school's football games

Students learn empathy and establish friendships on game day and beyond

Roswell High School football coach and Special Education teacher Scott Hamilton has a unique tradition with his teams. Each week, one of his Community-Based Instruction (CBI) students is chosen to wear a team jersey and join the team for the run onto the field before the game. CBI is a program for students with intellectual disabilities that teaches real-life skills in the classroom and also allows for practice in the community.

"The kids in my program get to do something that they may never have a chance to accomplish," said Coach Hamilton. "They become part of the school's fabric."

What may be an ordinary weekly football game for some, is an empathy-building opportunity for players. "This tradition helps students put themselves in other people's shoes, while also allowing them to build caring relationships with their peers," said Coach Hamilton, adding that the friendships extend beyond game day. "You can come into my classroom, and I will have up to 10-12 football players talking to the kids in the CBI program. It shows the world that a player can be a tough guy, but still be a caring and empathetic man."

The idea for introducing students to this new tradition stems from a similar practice Coach Hamilton started in Paulding County, where parents and students praised CBI students' participation in athletic activities.

Roswell High School's leadership and community also appreciate Coach Hamilton's thoughtfulness. "Our community gets to see kids at a regular school event on the big stage that they otherwise may never get to see," said Roswell High Principal Dr. Robert Shaw. "It's not uncommon for students to share that this experience has been one of the best they've had."

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About the Fulton County School System. The Fulton County School System is the fourth largest school system in Georgia. Approximately 95,000 students attend 106 schools in the cities of Alpharetta, Chattahoochee Hills, College Park, East Point, Fairburn, Hapeville, Johns Creek, Milton, Mountain Park, Palmetto, Roswell, Sandy Springs, South Fulton and Union City.