

MICHIGAN HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION, INC.

CLASSIFICATION COMMITTEE MEETING

East Lansing, January 8, 2020

Members Present:

Craig Carmoney, Sanford
Hugh Clarke, Brimley
Curt Copeland, Grand Rapids
Aaron Crouse, Pontiac
Rob Dilday, Utica
Sean Jacques, Calumet
Sophia Jordan, Saginaw
Karen Leinaar, Bear Lake
Jody McKean, DeWitt
Jason Mensing, Ottawa Lake

Vic Michaels, Detroit
Mike Roy, Vicksburg (MIAAA)
Zac Stevenson, Traverse City
John Thompson, Brighton
Kevin Wolma, Hudsonville

Staff Members Present:

Cody Inglis
Tom Rashid
Mark Uyl (Recorder)

INTRODUCTION

The Classification Committee began in the 1980s as a forum to discuss relationships between public and non-public schools. Eventually, two additional purposes were established: (1) to perform intermediate review (between sport committees and the Representative Council) of proposals related to MHSAA tournament classification for a sport; and (2) to review proposals related to the policies and procedures of counting students and collecting enrollment figures for school classification purposes as well as proposals affecting tournament classification generally. The Classification Committee is also asked to respond to subjects that are not directly related to classification. The Classification Committee has become the principal forum for reviewing policies and procedures related to cooperative programs.

Minutes of the 2019 meeting of the Classification Committee were reviewed.

SPORTS SPONSORSHIP UPDATE

An update was provided on current MHSAA membership demographics, which included current numbers of traditional public high schools, public school academies and non-public high schools. Statistics on school sponsorship by sport were provided, along with information on current opt-ups and classification ranges. It was noted that traditional public high schools comprise 78 percent of the membership and 77 percent of all 2018-19 MHSAA championships were won by those traditional public high schools when including all championships – statewide, LP and UP tournaments.

FOOTBALL

Information was provided on the recently approved Strength of Schedule playoff qualification formula that will be used in both 11-player and 8-player tournaments starting in the fall of 2020. Some short-term and long-term challenges were identified in this transition to the new playoff formula, including the determination of playoff divisions in March along with not allowing schools to opt up into a larger division. Consideration was given to a future possibility of allowing a school to opt up in football and possibly other sports by providing cause to the Executive Committee. Many of these topics will garner further observation, study and discussion moving forward.

COOPERATIVE PROGRAMS

For the purposes of reviewing MHSAA regulations and the approach to cooperative programs, a full report was given on all elements of cooperative programs – philosophy, the six types of programs, deadlines, student enrollment limits, renewals, dissolutions and current issues. Specifically, the committee focused on cooperative program challenges in ice hockey and a possible cooperative remedy for boys and girls tennis.

Ice hockey has a number of classification challenges, given the high number of cooperative programs that often are formed or renewed after divisions are established each March, along with teams that choose to opt up one or two divisions. This creates a disparity in the number of teams in each of the three divisions that is cause for concern among many hockey schools. The Classification Committee directed staff to convene an ice hockey study group comprised of hockey coaches and hockey-minded administrators to meet and study this issue further with a possible recommendation to follow.

The change of sports seasons nearly a decade ago negatively affected tennis participation, specifically the reduction in the number of teams and schools sponsoring boys tennis. The committee reviewed current regulations and allowances for cooperative programs to be formed with enrollments under 3,500 students in the sports of girls gymnastics, lacrosse, swimming & diving, alpine skiing and ice hockey, and the group discussed the pros and cons of tennis being added to this group of sports.

ELIGIBILITY ISSUES

Discussion took place on the Enrollment Declaration Form and how schools should complete the February student count process in light of students who have exceeded the maximum number of semesters or trimesters. The committee received information and insight on current middle and early college programs with special attention to fifth-year students earning college credit. After much conversation and a recommendation to the Representative Council, it was noted that the Executive Committee was meeting later in the day on Jan. 8 and the issues and concerns identified during this Classification Committee meeting would be shared that afternoon with the Executive Committee for guidance and direction in the 2020-21 enrollment data collection process which begins this month.

Further discussion centered on *MHSAA Handbook* Interpretation 24 related to how schools classify 8th-grade students who are also earning high school credits with advanced course work. The committee directed MHSAA staff to prepare *Handbook* language to provide more clear direction regarding when a student is to be considered a 9th-grade, first-time freshman student. This will be presented to the Representative Council at its May 2020 meeting.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

Committee members reviewed correspondence from a member school with a request for a "Class E" or "Division 5" basketball tournament. The committee did not support this concept and took no action.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

1. Add boys and girls tennis to the group of sports whose combined enrollment does not exceed 3,500 students to allow cooperative agreements with Executive Committee approval. In the Executive Committee request under Regulation I, Section 1(F), a recent history of low participation numbers must be demonstrated. The tennis addition to Section 1(F) would allow a team to operate for a period of four school years. This allowance would be reexamined by the Representative Council after the first two years. (15-0)
2. Revise *MHSAA Handbook* Classification Item #10 to state that students enrolled in a high school and taking classes at the college level shall be counted by the high school for classification purposes excluding those students whose eligibility is exhausted under Regulation I, Section 5 (eight-semester rule). (15-0)