

JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
MHSAA, January 22, 2016

Members

Steve Babbitt, Blissfield
Dave Beyer, Gladwin
Jeff Dassance, Eaton Rapids
Ken Dietz, Watervliet
Brian Masi, Northville
Cheri Meier, Ionia

Jim Okler, Grosse Ile
Michael Porco, Grand Rapids
Scott Robertson, Grand Haven
Matthew Verley, Grand Rapids

Staff Members

Cody Inglis, Recorder

The MHSAA Junior High/Middle School Committee met in the MHSAA office to review topics identified for discussion by the MHSAA staff, Representative Council and member schools.

REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL ACTION

The JH/MS committee reviewed MHSAA update meeting survey topics and results, 2015 minutes of the JH/MS committee, as well as the approval of the 6th grade amendment to the MHSAA constitution which will allow schools to join the MHSAA at the 6th grade level starting in the 2016-17 school year.

HANDBOOK REGULATIONS

The committee discussed topics related to JH/MS. This included the staff's recommendation to Interpretation #8 in the Handbook regarding transfers to or from the MHSAA's smallest member schools. (those below 50 or 100 students in grades 9-12) The committee supported the following clarifying language for Handbook Interpretation #8: *"Students of the 8th grade or 7th and 8th grades who are allowed to participate in the 9-12 grade program under Section 1 (D) may also participate at the junior high/middle school level; however, once the student has reached the maximum contests or days of competition for junior high/middle school eligibility, he/she can continue only at the senior high school and only up to the limitation for that particular sport at the high school level. This total includes competition at a former school during the same school year for students who transfer between MHSAA member schools."*

There was also consensus to match the required number of days between games in football between JH/MS games and HS games. Currently the Handbook language states, "A student or a team shall not participate in more than one game of interscholastic football in six consecutive calendar days." Committee supported a staff recommendation to match that minimum number to the HS rule, which is a minimum of five consecutive calendar days between games.

FALL PRACTICE START DATE

Discussion also took place over the fall season start dates which are the 14th Monday before Thanksgiving. Some committee members expressed concern that the date does not allow schools to meet minimum practice requirements prior to their first football game without weekend or holiday practices. Additionally, many leagues and conferences who work in a four season JH/MS calendar desire to get their winter sports season #1 concluded prior to the holiday break in the winter. Giving schools and/or leagues the flexibility to start 2-3 days earlier would allow schools or leagues the option to get practices in and not have to practice over the Labor Day holiday weekend to meet practice minimums while fitting in current league dates. Health and safety was also brought up as a factor by committee members wanting to make sure that student-athletes had a break between seasons. Finally, the matching of the number of days to the high school calendar could also be done, where schools are allowed to start 3 school days earlier than the rest of the fall sports because of the additional minimum number of practice days regulated in football and in no other fall sport. A recommendation to the Representative Council was approved after much discussion.

MHSAA COMMUNICATION WITH MHSAA JH/MS MEMBER SCHOOLS

Communication topics with JH/MS member schools were discussed by the committee in an effort to increase the amount of accurate information that the MHSAA gets from its member schools. Additionally, the connection to schools with emails, mailings and important documents needs to reach all member schools. Topics for improving this included having a list of MHSAA JH/MS schools on the website along with JH/MS leagues and conferences. Additionally, allowing HS AD's to have access to their JH/MS in their school district would help with getting accurate information. All agreed that current efforts have faced difficulty at the JH/MS level because there is no MHSAA tournament play. MHSAA information could be required by JH/MS member schools at MHSAA.com by only covering the MHSAA JH/MS schools with both catastrophic and concussion care insurance if they update their MHSAA information when asked. MHSAA staff took notes and will continue to strive for the most accurate information from its member schools on MHSAA.com.

JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL 6th GRADE DISCUSSION

Much discussion took place regarding the recently passed amendment that will change regulations governing 6th grade participation at the grade 7-8 level. The history of the 6th grade Constitutional amendment was presented and committee members were asked for additional thoughts about allowing MHSAA member schools the option to include 6th graders with and against 7th and 8th graders in track, cross country, swimming, bowling, golf, tennis and wrestling.

Committee members reviewed updates and proposed changes to the MHSAA Handbook. Some clarifying language was suggested along with some questions about why certain wording was used. With the addition of 6th graders in the MHSAA, it is important to make sure that consistent language fits with the amendment throughout the entire Handbook.

Additionally, with league or conference approval, schools may include 6th graders in team competition at their junior high/middle school. Discussion upon some ramifications of this amendment passing included league and conference decisions upon 6th graders involvement with and against 7th and 8th graders. Some of these questions include: Can a conference allow 6th grade participation for some schools or some sports while not allowing it for other schools or sports? How are schools going to handle 6th graders academics when 6th graders are not in the same building as 7th and 8th graders? What if a conference votes to not allow 6th graders to participate in individual sports? The topic generated much discussion, but the committee agreed that having the league and conference involved was the best safeguard to have in place regarding the involvement of 6th graders. The committee started to complete a list of frequently asked questions to communicate with MHSAA membership on the 6th grade issue.

HEALTH & SAFETY

The committee discussed recent changes and updates relative to coaches education, CPR/first Aid and making these requirements streamlined and focusing on the ease of use for JH/MS coaches. Discussion about other options for JH/MS coaches and future CAP requirements for JH/MS were discussed. At this time, the committee felt that requiring CAP at the JH/MS level would be tough to do without some lead in time much like was done with HS coaches starting next school year. Additionally, MHSAA CAP and JH/MS coaching education should continue to be promoted as a way to increase MHSAA philosophy on JH/MS sports and school based athletics. This promotion would include continuing to look at ways to increase JH/MS coaches getting the valuable material that CAP provides which in turn will help all educational athletics.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

Allow JH/MS football practice to start on the Wednesday prior to the 4th Monday in August. (10-0)

(Also note Committee support of two Handbook changes that are being proposed to the Representative Council.)

