

MICHIGAN HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION, INC.

CLASSIFICATION COMMITTEE MEETING

East Lansing, January 14, 2015

Members Present:

Cole Andrews, Frankenmuth
Jeri Christie, AuGres
TG Cook, Pittsford
Robin Dilday, Utica
Tim Donnan, Southfield
Mike Garvey, Kalamazoo
Barry Hobrla, Pewamo
Daniel Hutcheson, Howell
Ryan Knudsen, Leland
Kevin Langs, Climax
Vic Michaels, Detroit
Pete Ryan, Saginaw

Members Absent:

Kathy Bondsteel, Jonesville
Al Unger, Kingsford

Staff Members Present:

Nate Hampton
Cody Inglis
Camala Kinder
Gina Mazzolini
Tom Rashid
Jack Roberts

INTRODUCTION

Participants introduced themselves and all shared something good about 2014.

Origins of the Classification Committee trace back to the 1980s when a forum was created to discuss relationships between public and nonpublic schools, which resulted in some policy changes, especially related to the transfer rule. When the ad hoc committee was made a standing committee, 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.

Because the makeup of this committee usually reflects broader diversity than MHSAA sport committees in that its makeup has fewer coaches and often includes school board members, superintendents and principals as well as athletic directors, and there is usually strong representation of diverse school size, location and demographics, 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.

2014 MEETING MINUTES

Topics of the 2014 meeting of the Classification Committee included the format of MHSAA Football, Basketball and Girls Volleyball tournaments, for which the committee made no recommendations for change. However, staff was asked to show the Representative Council what equal divisions would look like compared to traditional classifications in basketball and volleyball. (This topic is addressed further in these 2015 minutes.)

In 2014, the Classification Committee continued its multi-year discussion of accommodating very small schools which struggle to maintain the 15-student minimum required of MHSAA member schools. This not only adversely affects opportunities for the students at these schools but also affects opportunities for students at other schools who need them to be members in order to complete cooperative agreements and to fulfill competition schedules. The result of the committee's discussion was a recommendation to the Representative Council to amend the MHSAA Constitution to provide some flexibility for these very small schools. (This topic is addressed further in these 2015 minutes.)

CLASSIFICATION OVERVIEW

“MHSAA Classification by Sport for 2014-15” as of 3/24/14 was reviewed. This provides the number of schools and the enrollment range of each statewide and Upper Peninsula tournament conducted by the MHSAA.

The sports with the greatest decline in sponsorship for 2014-15 (as reported to the MHSAA as of 3/13/14) are boys golf (-18), boys soccer (-13), boys basketball (-13), girls basketball (-12) and wrestling (-11).

The sport with the greatest increase in sponsorship is boys lacrosse (+5), and the following sports each added three schools: girls competitive cheer, girls golf and girls lacrosse.

EQUAL DIVISION OVERVIEW

Pursuant to the Classification Committee’s request, the MHSAA Representative Council was provided at its May 2014 meeting a document to demonstrate what would occur if the MHSAA Basketball and Girls Volleyball Tournaments had been changed from traditional classes (A, B, C, D) to four equal divisions (1, 2, 3, 4) for 2014-15.

Class A and D tournaments would have been most affected.

- There would be seven fewer schools in both Class A boys and Class A girls basketball, with the enrollment range reduced by 33 students; while in Class A girls volleyball there would be ten fewer schools and the enrollment range reduced by 32 students.
- There would be nine more schools in the Class D Boys Basketball Tournament with a ten-student increase in the enrollment range. In Class D girls basketball there would be 13 more schools with an 18-student increase in the enrollment range. In Class D girls volleyball there would be 17 more schools with a 19-student increase in the enrollment range.

While some committee members supported the change to equal divisions in all sports (and labeling them A, B, C and D), there were also concerns that adverse consequences for the smallest schools neutralized some advantages of the change. There was no action proposed.

FOOTBALL PLAYOFFS

At its May 2014 meeting, the Representative Council did not approve the Football Committee recommendation to implement a tournament format that utilizes the strength of schedule with enhanced playoff and bonus points, identifies the eight divisions prior to the start of the season and does not include an automatic qualifier. Nate Hampton reported regarding more recent discussions related to this topic. Committee discussion showed no consensus for change.

BASKETBALL AND GIRLS VOLLEYBALL TOURNAMENTS

At its May 2014 meeting, the Representative Council did not approve recommendations from the Basketball and Girls Volleyball Committees to conduct those MHSAA tournaments in five equal divisions. Nate Hampton and Gina Mazzolini reported regarding more recent discussions related to these topics.

Provided for the committee’s review were documents tracing the past 25 years of enrollment trends in Classes A, B, C and D that demonstrate the shrinking difference between the largest and smallest school in each class over this period of years.

- The enrollment range for Classes B and C is the smallest of any time in the past 25 years,
- The Class A enrollment range is 145 students more than years ago but 832 students fewer than nine years ago.

Practical problems related to conducting Basketball and Girls Volleyball Tournaments in five equal divisions were described, and political concerns for providing a fifth division to these sports but not others were discussed. There was no consensus for change.

UPPER PENINSULA GOLF TOURNAMENTS

At its September 2014 meeting, the UP Athletic Committee advanced the following to the Representative Council: **Create four equal divisions in boys and girls golf by placing the current 41 (to 43) schools into four equal divisions of approximately 10 schools (7-1 in favor).**

Cody Inglis and Nate Hampton reported regarding more recent discussions related to this topic from the Golf Committee and UP Athletic Committee, respectively. At its Jan. 11, 2015 meeting, the Upper Peninsula Athletic Committee considered several alternatives to its September recommendation, which the committee has withdrawn while all ideas are discussed by all UP athletic directors.

MINIMUM ENROLLMENT

At its May 2014 meeting, the Representative Council approved the Classification Committee recommendation that the Council prepare and distribute to the membership the following proposed amendment to the MHSAA Constitution and, while the proposal is pending, that the Executive Committee actions be consistent with this proposal:

“Sec. 2 – If, after two full years of membership in good standing, a member school's enrollment declines below the 15-student requirement for membership, its MHSAA membership may continue if that school conducts on its own (not in a cooperative program) an interscholastic program that allows participation opportunities for each gender enrolled in that school. In other cases, if a member school in good standing drops below 15 students on what it believes to be a temporary basis, it can request of the Executive Committee to maintain its MHSAA membership for a period of time approved by the Executive Committee.”

Staff reported that the membership vote was 498 in favor and 29 opposed. The amendment is effective Aug. 1, 2015.

SEEDING

The responses to two questions on the 2014 Update Meeting Opinion Poll results are as follows:

- Do you support the seeding of MHSAA tournaments in those team sports in which there is actual head-to-head competition at those levels for which the current format has all schools assigned to that level of the tournament to be playing at the same site, thus requiring no additional travel (e.g., Team Wrestling Districts, Team Wrestling Regionals, Girls Volleyball Semifinals and Finals, Girls and Boys Basketball Semifinals and Finals, Baseball and Softball Semifinals and Finals, Ice Hockey Semifinals and Finals)?
437 Yes (68.71%) 199 No (31.29%)

- Do you support seeding within each geographic district and region in team sports – District and Regional tournaments in soccer, basketball, girls volleyball, baseball and girls softball and Preregional and Regional tournaments in ice hockey – where the best records go on top and bottom of bracket as determined by the coaches in that district or region?
417 Yes (65.57%) 219 No (34.43%)

These results were discussed by the Representative Council which has the sense that these ideas should receive general discussion by the Classification Committee and specific discussion by any MHSAA sport committee that wishes to apply one or both concepts to its MHSAA tournament, anticipating that some sport committees may advance specific plans for seeding within these concepts while the constituents of other sports will oppose such changes for their tournaments.

It is intended that proposals for seeding will address either the entry level or final level of the tournament, or both; and that proposals will be very specific and detailed as well as fully vetted within a sport community before the proposal is submitted to the Representative Council.

A long discussion by the Classification Committee revealed both support for and opposition to seeding MHSAA tournaments.

COOPERATIVE PROGRAMS

The Classification Committee reviewed two ideas which MIAAA Region 11 is advancing related to the maximum allowed enrollment for cooperative programs:

- a. Increase the maximum school enrollment number for cooperative agreements to a 1.5 multiplier in relation to the largest school in the state (i.e., Dakota = 2,814 x 1.5 = max cooperative agreement of 4,221).
- b. Allow MHSAA approval of a cooperative agreement if in the previous year a sport is dissolved because of low participation numbers. The MHSAA would allow for a two-year cooperative agreement in which the host school would not be held to the 3,500-student enrollment cap.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

Authorize the MHSAA Executive Committee to approve a cooperative program agreement in excess of the 3,500-student enrollment maximum for up to three years in sports sponsored by 250 or fewer schools if, during the previous school year, the school or the cooperative program in which the school was a part dropped the sport because of a demonstrated lack of participation. (13-0)