HIGH SCHOOL COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT REGULATIONS, PROCEDURES AND ADVANCE PREPARATION MATERIAL TO ASSIST SCHOOLS

I. *MHSAA HANDBOOK* REGULATION I

SECTION 1(E) – In any sport, two or more member high schools whose combined enrollment does not exceed 1,000 students may conduct, with the approval of the Executive Committee, a Cooperative Program in the specific sports for which application has been made and approval has been granted.

1. The Executive Committee may approve a cooperative program agreement at the subvarsity level only in any sport for two or more member high schools, regardless of student enrollment. There must be a demonstrated history of inadequate numbers of participants and will not be approved based on financial concerns. Students who participate in these programs would have varsity eligibility only with their school of actual enrollment should they be brought up to a varsity team during the regular season or MHSAA Tournament. A student who participates in a subvarsity cooperative program and transfers into another school involved in that program may not be subject of a waiver request under Regulation I, Section 9(C.) Deadlines for high school cooperative programs and the two year minimum length for operating do not apply. The usual approvals from the boards of education, league or four future opponents, if there is no league, and the MHSAA Executive Committee are required.

2. The Executive Committee may approve a cooperative program agreement regardless of the combined student enrollment maximum in the sports of baseball, bowling, competitive cheer, cross country, field hockey, golf, boys and girls lacrosse, soccer, softball, tennis, boys volleyball and wrestling for two or more schools of the same public school district (same governing board). There must be a demonstrated history of low participation numbers of participants and will not be approved based on financial concerns. This allowance does not apply to public school academies. Approval by the Executive Committee is on a case-by-case basis and as with all cooperative program applications, re-quires league or conference approval. Deadlines for high school cooperative programs apply.

SECTION 1(F) –

1. Two or more member high schools whose combined enrollment does not exceed 3,500 students may conduct, with the approval of the Executive Committee, a Cooperative Program in the following specific sports (sponsored by 250 or fewer schools) for which application has been made and approval has been granted: field hockey, gymnastics, boys lacrosse, girls lacrosse, boys alpine skiing, girls alpine skiing, boys swimming & diving, girls swimming & diving, boys tennis, girls tennis and boys volleyball.

2. Two or more member high schools whose combined enrollment does not exceed 5,500 students may conduct, with the approval of the Executive Committee, a Cooperative Program in ice hockey.

3. For the 12 sports listed in No. 1 and 2, if none of the schools involved in a proposed Cooperative Program sponsored the sport at any level on an interscholastic basis during the previous school year, then the 3,500 or 5,500 (ice hockey only) maximum enrollment may be waived by the Executive Committee. However, the cooperative agreement may not exist beyond four school years.

4. The Executive Committee may approve a cooperative program agreement in excess of the 3,500 or 5,500 (ice hockey only) student enrollment maximum for up to four years in sports sponsored by 250 or fewer schools if, during the previous year, the school or the cooperative program in which a school was a part dropped the sport because of a demonstrated lack of participation. The cooperative agreement in excess of 3,500 or 5,500 (ice hockey only) students may not exist beyond four school years.

12. a. Cooperative Programs are arrangements made for a **minimum of two years** but may be voided at any time by resolutions of any cooperating board of education. If the agreement is voided before completion of the second year of the cooperative program, the school or schools that terminated the agreement may not enter into another cooperative program in the sports involved in the initial agreement until another two-year period has transpired. Deadlines for dissolution of cooperative programs are May 1 for fall sports, Aug.15 for winter sports and Oct. 15 for spring sports. When programs are dissolved after the above deadlines, it may not be possible to reflect changes to tournament divisions or assignments.

    b. Cooperative agreements established under Section 1 (E) (combined enrollments not exceeding 1,000 students) which eventually rise above 1,000 students as established each February will be dissolved prior to the start of the school year in which the new enrollment is effective.

    c. If the combined enrollment of a Cooperative Program exceeds the original Division in the second year of an agreement, the schools will play in the higher Division of MHSAA tournaments in the sports for which there are cooperative teams.

    d. A new MHSAA member school which would not be eligible for MHSAA tournaments until its second full year of MHSAA membership may participate in MHSAA tournaments sooner if that school becomes part of a Cooperative Program with a tournament-eligible member school.

    e. Should the MHSAA Membership Resolution for a school which is a part of a cooperative agreement not be submitted on or before the fourth Friday after Labor Day, students of that school may not participate in any MHSAA tournament including those sports for which the school is part of a cooperative program.

f. Agreements which include a Class A or B school, or three or more schools, must submit a renewal form every two years prior to May 1. This renewal form will be emailed to the primary school in March and will require league approval and statistics on participation levels and win/loss records. Agreements involving only two Class C or D schools will not be required to submit renewal forms and will continue as established until the MHSAA is notified that a program is dissolving or a league has determined it will no longer support the agreement. After the initial two years of operation, a league in which a cooperative team participates (regardless of classification) may by vote of its membership void an agreement at the time of the renewal process by notification to all schools and the MHSAA prior to April 1 of the previous school year Adding new schools to an agreement requires a new application process involving all approvals and procedures. Programs being started in newly sponsored sports as under Section 1 (F) (over the 3,500 student limit for four years) will complete the two year renewal process and will automatically be dissolved after the fourth year.

13. a. Cooperative Programs formed by schools of any class in sports sponsored by 250 or fewer schools will be assigned tournament classification corresponding to the total enrollment of the cooperating schools.

    b. When removing a sport from those listed in Section 1(F), existing Cooperative Programs in those sports are grandfathered; however, each renewal is to be subject to Executive Committee review and approval.

    c. For classification purposes, cooperative programs established under Section 1 (F) (newly sponsored sports in excess of 3,500/5,500 students allowed to operate for four years) must report their plans to the MHSAA by February 1 of the final school year of operation as to how the schools and team(s) will be operating under 3,500/5,500 students in subsequent years.

    d. Cooperative programs whose schools' combined enrollment as declared on the Enrollment Declaration Form in February exceeds 3,500/5,500 students or the enrollment limit of Section 1 (E) will not be allowed to operate in the coming school year.

14. Deadlines for newly forming Cooperative Programs are **May 1** for fall sports, **Aug. 15** for winter sports and **Oct. 15** for spring sports. When one or more of the schools making application for a Cooperative Program is established and opened after the fall and winter deadlines, application may be made until MHSAA tournament assignments are made for the sport(s) involved or **Oct. 15**, whichever occurs first.

II. PROCEDURES

A. Application for a cooperative relationship must be made on MHSAA forms by the administration of the cooperating MHSAA member schools and **must** be received (even if partially completed) by the deadline stated above. Subvarsity only and middle school applications do not have the established deadline but must have board, league and Executive Committee approval prior to operating. The application must be accompanied by the following:

1. A resolution of authorization by each board of education of the cooperating schools describing the purpose for sponsoring the cooperative program, the Advance Preparation Materials and shall indicate which school or district will be responsible for overseeing its administration locally.

2. A resolution of support from each league or conference in which the cooperating schools belong, if any. If the applying schools do not belong to a league, then support from at least four future opponents must be submitted.

B. One school must be designated as the primary host school on the application and will be considered the official team name. All signatures must be provided, as well as enrollment figures, as submitted on the most recent Enrollment Declaration Form.

C. Applications for cooperative programs will be submitted to the MHSAA Executive Committee for approval. Among the criteria to be considered are:

1. Lack of numbers of students to support a program.
2. Lack of qualified staff to coach.
3. Lack of facilities.
4. Evidence of a desire to increase opportunities for participation in new programs, not win/loss records of existing programs.

D. **Cooperative program agreements will be effective for two years**. No other cooperative agreement in the same sports may be made with another school until the original two-year agreement period lapses. The agreements may be voided by informing the MHSAA in writing or using the Cooperative Program Dissolution Form. Deadlines for dissolution of cooperative programs are May 1 for fall sports, Aug. 15 for winter sports and Oct. 15 for spring sports. When programs are dissolved after the above deadlines, it may not be possible to reflect changes to tournament divisions or classifications.

E. **Renewing (extending) cooperative program agreements**: Agreements which include a Class A or B school, or three or more schools, **must** submit the renewal form every two years prior to May 1. This renewal form will be emailed to the primary school each April and will require league approval and statistics on participation levels and win/loss records. Agreements involving only two Class C or D schools will not be required to submit renewal forms and will continue as established until the MHSAA is notified that a program is dissolving. Adding new schools to an agreement requires a new application process involving all approvals and procedures.

NOTE: The MHSAA Representative Council reaffirms its preference that Class A and B schools sponsor separate teams rather than continue to renew cooperative programs over a period of years without careful evaluation. Schools should review participation numbers annually and consider the feasibility of separate teams in order to maximize opportunities for students at each school involved in the cooperative program.

III. ADVANCE PREPARATION MATERIALS: QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOLS TO CONSIDER

Schools should consider the following before initiating the application for cooperative programs.

A. If you have an existing program, will students from another school replace students from your community and deny the sons and daughters of your local taxpayers the opportunity to participate in that activity?

B. If two or more schools are cooperating to create a program where none has existed,

1. Who will pay for and maintain/launder uniforms and equipment, facility maintenance?
2. Who will pay for travel to practices, to contests?
3. Who will select, supervise, and pay coaches?
4. If applicable, whose cheerleaders will cheer?
5. Whose training rules, letter award guidelines, etc., will be followed?
6. Whose local academic and other regulations will be followed?
7. Can daily class schedules be coordinated?
8. How will gate receipts be handled?
9. Where will practices and games be held, and who will pay those expenses?
10. Who will host and supervise events?
11. Is athletic accident insurance coverage provided, and who pays for it? Have liability insurers been notified?
12. Whose school identity, mascot, colors, etc., will be used?

C. Will an existing sport suffer because of the creation of a cooperative program in another sport that season?

IV. GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOLS TO CONSIDER

A. All issues should be addressed in writing in advance of the application and submitted with the application for possible future reference. Over time, many schools have sought a written historical record of the original arrangement.

B. A “Cooperative Program Board of Control” should be appointed to oversee the cooperative program. It should consist of at least an administrator and the athletic director of each cooperating school. It should convene to initiate the program and to resolve disputes which may arise throughout the life of the program.

C. Though not required, cooperating school districts should be adjacent. Travel distance between schools should be reasonable.

D. Cooperative arrangements should be sought only in sports where opportunities are limited and it is not anticipated that students will be “cut” from the squad.

E. Cooperative agreements are not intended for a single participant for a year or two but for a significant group of students for several years.

F. While there is no limit to the number of schools joining a cooperative agreement, programs comprised of several schools tend to resemble non-school sports and may blur the philosophy of school sports.

SENIOR HIGH APPLICATION TO FORM AND SUPPORT A COOPERATIVE TEAM

(Page 1 of 2 – Complete All Sections and All Signatures. Board of Education Resolution on Page 2)

1. It is requested that the Michigan High School Athletic Association, Inc. receive and accept this application to form a cooperative team in the sport(s) of ☐ boys ☐ girls _____
   ☐ boys ☐ girls _____
   ☐ boys ☐ girls _____

2. The sponsors of this proposed cooperative team are members in good standing of the Michigan High School Athletic Association, Inc. and are identified as:

			Enrollment	Class
(Primary)_____	High School of _____	City	_____	_____
(Secondary)_____	High School of _____	City	_____	_____
(Secondary)_____	High School of _____	City	_____	_____
(Secondary)_____	High School of _____	City	_____	_____
(Secondary)_____	High School of _____	City	_____	_____
(Secondary)_____	High School of _____	City	_____	_____

3. This agreement is being formed under the following *MHSAA Handbook* Regulation: (**Check one only**)
   ☐ Combined enrollment under 1,000 (Sect. 1[E]) ☐ Subvarsity ONLY (Sect. 1[E-1])
   ☐ Multi-School District in named sports – four-year experiment (Sect. 1 [E-2])
   ☐ Combined enrollment under 3,500 in specific sports (f. hockey, gym, lax, ski, swim, tennis, boys volleyball) (Sect. 1[F-1])
   ☐ Combined enrollment under 5,500 in ice hockey (Sect. 1[F-2])
   ☐ Four-year startup program in above seven sports in excess of 3,500 – first time sponsoring (Sect. 1[F-3])
   ☐ Four-year lifeline in above seven sports if school or coop dropped the sport previously (Sect. 1[F-4])

4. Indicate all levels of teams that you intend to sponsor in the coop: Sport: _____ V ☐ JV ☐ Fresh ☐
   Sport: _____ V ☐ JV ☐ Fresh ☐
   Sport: _____ V ☐ JV ☐ Fresh ☐
   Sport: _____ V ☐ JV ☐ Fresh ☐

5. Did any of the schools sponsor the sport(s) last year? If so, indicate the school(s) and sport(s):
   Schools_____ Sports _____

6. The schools in this application have a current agreement in another sport: Yes ☐ or No ☐
   If yes, in what sport(s) is an agreement currently operating?

7. This cooperative agreement shall commence _____ and continue for a minimum of two years.

8. Written support from the applicable league, **or from four future opponents if there is no league**, is attached. Name of league or conference (if applicable): _____

9. The applicants seeking cooperative team approval certify by **their signatures on page two (2)** that all approvals, required study, planning and review have been completed.

10. Will this team be known or named something other than a school name? Yes ☐ or No ☐

If Yes, what will the name be? _____

(Note: Generally, the MHSAA uses the primary school as the designated title of the team.)

Each Board of Education should review the advance preparation material included with this Resolution.

COOPERATIVE PROGRAM BOARD OF CONTROL
(Submit with Application and Letter of League Support)

We, the undersigned, agree to the conditions and content of this Resolution and will work cooperatively for the success of the program and benefit of our children.

Representing _____School

_____
Superintendent Signature

_____
Board of Education Signature

_____
Principal Signature

_____
Athletic Director Signature

_____
Date

Representing _____School

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Superintendent Signature

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Board of Education Signature

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Principal Signature

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Athletic Director Signature

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Principal Signature

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Principal Signature

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Athletic Director Signature

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Date

Representing _____School

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Superintendent Signature

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Board of Education Signature

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Principal Signature

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Athletic Director Signature

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Date

Representing _____School

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Superintendent Signature

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Board of Education Signature

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Principal Signature

_____
Athletic Director Signature

_____
Date

Arrangements detailed in the “Advance Preparation Materials: Questions and Guidelines for Schools to Consider,” plus those unique to the cooperating schools on a separate sheet, should be addressed by the boards of education when considering this Resolution. The MHSAA will file the advance preparation material if the school submits it with the application.

Name of Person Completing this Application: _____

Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

Email completed forms to: coops@mhsaa.com