

## **2025-26 MHSAA JUNIOR HIGH / MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Thursday, February 12, 2026, 9:30 a.m. – East Lansing

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Miysam Bazzi, Dearborn

Jeff Dassance, Dansville

Michael Johnston, Jenison

Jolinda Lucas, Grand Rapids (MIAAA)

Jesse Brown, Jackson

Brandon Wheeler, Jonesville

Jeff Bell, Freeland

### **MHSAA STAFF**

Brad Bush (Recorder)

The MHSAA Junior High/Middle School Committee met to review topics identified for discussion by the MHSAA staff, Representative Council, and member schools. The committee reviewed the minutes from the first 2025-26 Junior High / Middle School Committee meeting. A review of changes in regulations over the past five to seven years related to middle school athletics was discussed. There was very positive feedback on the first meeting's discussion and content.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### **UNIFIED FALL START DATE OF MIDDLE SCHOOL ATHLETICS**

There was good discussion of the impact of the new common fall start date for middle school athletics. This new date was enacted for the 2025-26 school year and was positively received around the state. This was seen as a positive change to the calendar to put schools on the same page.

### **MIDDLE SCHOOL LIMITED TEAM MEMBERSHIP RULE**

There was a discussion of the limited team membership rule at the middle school level. Students are allowed two outside events during their season in the same sport. There has been some discussion among coaches and administrators of allowing additional outside events at the middle school level to encourage students to play middle school sports as well as club/AAU. Many on the committee felt the current rule is a good one based on the academic and health needs of students. Limiting outside activities during a very short middle school season is also seen as a positive thing. The committee is committed to continuing the conversation in future meetings.

### **FIFTH QUARTER RULE**

Middle schools must currently provide a rationale to the MHSAA for the use of the fifth quarter rule. There was discussion on if the fifth quarter rule should be a permanent part of all middle school sports that are allowing this at the high school level. The committee believes the fifth quarter rule should only be allowed when requested with rationale. The concern for the rule is, if not used properly, it could discourage students from participating. The committee's goal is to encourage participation from all students. The rule should be limited to only those schools that cannot field a team without the use of the rule.

### **EIGHTH GRADE LINKS RULE**

The committee requests that MHSAA staff continue to survey athletic directors regarding the inclusion of 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students in the current links rule. There is a feeling among the committee that most enrollment decisions are made in the eighth grade before entering high school, where choices exist. The committee feels that this rule should be examined to possibly include 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students, as a link may be the most relevant to choosing a school. The survey would be included in the annual fall survey of people attending the fall Update meetings.

### **MIDDLE SCHOOL WRESTLING REGIONAL PROPOSAL**

The committee was presented with a proposal from the wrestling committee and will go before the Representative Council in May. The proposal would create Regional wrestling tournaments for the Winter 1 and Winter 2 seasons. The tournaments would mirror the current Cross Country and Track & Field Regionals currently offered for middle school students. The committee supported this proposal.

### **MIAAA CONFERENCE MIDDLE SCHOOL SPECIFIC TOPICS**

The committee developed a list of potential speakers for the 2027 MIAAA spring conference. The goal is to assist the MIAAA in providing middle school-specific content for the conference.

### **RECOMMENDATION TO MHSAA STAFF**

1. The committee recommends that the MHSAA staff develop a middle school-specific fall Update meeting. This meeting would be held via Zoom to address middle school-specific MHSAA topics. (7-0)

### **RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL**

None.