2026-27 MHSAA JUNIOR HIGH / MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
Wednesday, October 21, 2026, 9:30 a.m. – East Lansing

MEMBERS PRESENT
Miysam Bazzi, Dearborn
Jeff Bell, Freeland
Ryan Casey, Lawrence
Jeff Dassance, Dansville
Chris Dunham, Portage
Dave Engbers, Holland
Karyn Furlong, Richland
Ashley Howes, Saline (MIAAA)
Jolinda Lucas, Grand Rapids, (MIAAA)

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 2025-26 Junior High / Middle School Committee meeting. In addition, new regulations passed by the Representative Council in May were reviewed and discussed. An overview of changes in regulations over the past five to seven years related to middle school athletics was shared. There was positive and engaging discussion related to all topics.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

COMMON 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.

LIMITED TEAM MEMBERSHIP RULE
There was a discussion of the limited team membership rule at the middle school level. Students are allowed two non-school events during their school season in the same sport. There has been discussion among coaches and administrators about allowing additional outside events at the middle school level to encourage students to play middle school sports as well as in non-school programs. Many committee members wanted to explore this topic further as there was significant interest in the potential of eliminating the rule at the middle school level only. There is a belief this would be better managed at the local level for middle school students. The committee requested the MHSAA survey athletic directors on the potential of eliminating the rule.

FIFTH QUARTER RULE
Middle schools must currently provide a rationale to the MHSAA for the use of the fifth quarter rule. The committee believes the fifth quarter rule should only be allowed when requested with rationale. The concern is, if not used properly, it could discourage students from participating, which defeats the purpose. 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 requested that MHSAA staff continue to survey athletic directors regarding the inclusion of 8th-grade students in the current links rule. There is a feeling amongst the committee that many enrollment decisions are made in the eighth grade before entering high school, where choices exist. The committee believes that this rule should be examined to possibly include 8th-grade students, as a link may be the most relevant to choosing a school. There is a concern that enforcing such a change could be very difficult for schools and MHSAA staff.

MIDDLE SCHOOL WRESTLING REGIONAL
The committee was presented with the format of the middle school wrestling Regional events which is sponsored by the wrestling coaches association. This was approved by the Representative Council in May. The tournaments will run in both 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. Members discussed the details and logistics of the tournaments and a report will be provided to the committee next year on how year one progressed.

FUTURE OF MIDDLE SCHOOL REGIONAL AND STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS
The committee discussed the philosophy behind both regional and state championships at the middle school level. The committee believes that it is not appropriate for state championships at this level. The length of season, number of competitions, and providing opportunities for all students is important to the middle school philosophy. The committee encourages careful consideration before expanding postseason competition.

ADJUSTMENT OF COMMITTEE STRUCTURE
The committee agreed to meet one time per year moving forward. This adjusted structure matches other committees at the MHSAA.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO MHSAA STAFF

1. Add two survey topics related to middle school for next year's fall survey. (9-0)
    a. Would you favor eliminating the limited team membership rule at the middle school level only?
    b. Would you favor adding 8th grade to the current links rule?

2. Conduct a virtual AD Update Meeting for all middle school athletic directors to be held in December. (9-0)

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

None.