

# **MICHIGAN HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION, INC.**

## **CLASSIFICATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

East Lansing, January 9, 2013

### **Committee Members**

David Chrisinske, Middleville  
Jeff Cooke, North Muskegon  
Ken Dietz, Watervliet  
Terry Evanish, Flint  
Tom Hardy, Traverse City  
Sean McNatt, Breckenridge  
Vic Michaels, Detroit  
Rich Okoniewski, Martin  
Mike Quinn, Gibraltar  
Mike Roberts, Hillsdale  
Brad Robinson, Fraser  
Cheri Smith, Adrian  
Jeffrey Thoenes, Williamston  
Lee Turner, Clare  
Al Unger, Kingsford

### **Staff Members:**

Jack Roberts  
Tom Rashid  
Andy Frushour  
Nate Hampton

## **INTRODUCTION**

Participants introduced themselves and each shared something positive about school sports in their communities.

The Classification Committee's primary two purposes were reviewed: (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 make-up of this committee usually reflects broader diversity than MHSAA sport committees in that its make-up 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.

## **COOPERATIVE PROGRAMS**

Mr. Roberts reviewed the initiation of cooperative programs during 1987-88, the first approvals for 13 Class D schools during 1988-89, and the expansion of cooperative programs to larger schools over the past two dozen years. A change in 1992 allowed

schools of any size to coop in sports sponsored by fewer than 250 schools. That led to coops of schools with combined enrollments in excess of 6,000 students, which led to a change in 2002 to limit coops to schools whose combined enrollment was 3500 students maximum. The committee was asked to discuss two issues.

First, the committee was asked to consider if the MHSAA Executive Committee should be authorized to waive the 1000 student enrollment limit (but not beyond 3500) for cooperative programs in the sports of golf and tennis for the public schools of multi-high school districts. After good discussion, there was consensus that staff continue to develop a more detailed proposal for future action by this committee and/or by the Representative Council.

Second, the committee was asked to consider if there should be a limit on the number of schools permitted in a cooperative program. The committee was nearly unanimous that there should not be such a limit and, in fact, that this current flexibility is important for small schools to retain and serve students.

### **CLASSIFICATION OVERVIEW**

The MHSAA was the first state high school association in the U.S. to divide its member schools into enrollment groups for season-ending tournament play. Over the years, in one form or another, all other statewide associations have done the same; and in more recent years, some have tweaked their systems to facilitate practical considerations of tournament administration or to address demographic or political shifts among their memberships. The executive director reviewed what is occurring across the country, noting that there is much talk among the various states, some action to change classification systems and little consensus on how to address schools which are “chronically successful.”

A vote for separate tournaments for public and non-public schools is pending in one state; a vote to separate select enrollment schools (nonpublic, charter and magnet) from non-select schools is pending in another; a third state was threatened with a takeover by its legislature for considering a proposal to separate non-public schools from public schools in its statewide tournaments.

The use of an automatic enrollment multiplier for nonpublic schools is now in use in about ten states. Acknowledging the inherent flaws of a multiplier that is applied only to certain schools, two states have been working with a formula that reduces the enrollment figures used for tournament play based on factors that may tend to reduce the percentage of a school’s enrollment likely to participate in sports. For example, there is limited evidence that students who are on free and reduced lunch participate at a rate 10 to 14 percent lower than other students; so this is a factor reducing schools’ tournament enrollments in two states. A third state association looked at this and decided that the data didn’t justify the effort. Schools of a fourth state have twice rejected a proposal to reduce enrollments based on socio-economic factors.

Two other states have recently implemented a system that places schools in a classification for larger schools after they achieve a certain level of tournament success in the classification in which they would normally be placed. Critics of this type of system point out that this does nothing for the school which is successful in the largest classification and tends to “penalize” next year’s students for the success of the previous years’ teams.

### **FOOTBALL PLAYOFFS**

The Committee was provided data that demonstrates that the initiation of an eight-player division of the football playoffs has increased the percentage of Class D schools that achieve a football playoff experience to the highest ever (44%). However, there are concerns that the Class D schools which continue eleven-player football now must travel further for regular season games and are matched against larger schools in Division 8 of the MHSAA’s eleven-player football playoffs and, ultimately, this makes it more difficult for small schools to sustain the eleven-player game. Several committee members expressed concern for the future of eleven-player football among the MHSAA’s smallest member schools.

While consensus is wide-spread that the football playoffs make regular season scheduling difficult and add stress to league affiliations, sentiment for revising the eleven-player tournament has not rallied around a single idea.

The committee reviewed the major elements of the OK Conference proposal for reformatting the eleven-player tournament whose primary features are a doubling of the number of qualifiers and a reduction of the regular season from a maximum of nine to a maximum of eight games. This has not gained wide support outside that conference.

The Committee was also apprised of discussions which MHSAA staff have had with leadership of the Michigan High School Football Coaches Association whose membership has not supported the OK Conference proposal. An alternative being explored is to revise the playoff point system so schools with mediocre records, but strong schedules, benefit more than schools that simply win six games over weaker opponents. Because of their research into this concept, MHSAA staff members Nate Hampton and Andy Frushour participated in this discussion which revealed significant support, but also some reservations for the concept presented which goes next to the MHSAA Football Committee.

### **ONLINE EDUCATION**

The Committee reviewed results of voting on two questions of the 2012 Update Meeting Opinion Poll which indicates the MHSAA membership is evenly divided regarding the idea of limiting the number of online courses which a student may use to establish athletic eligibility or to make up for deficiencies in the academic record to regain eligibility. Committee members pointed out that online education will be increasing and that it may be most appropriate for the MHSAA to continue to permit local school boards determine what is and is not an acceptable, credit-worthy course of study for athletic eligibility.