

# MICHIGAN HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION, INC.

## CLASSIFICATION COMMITTEE MEETING

East Lansing, January 10, 2024

### Members Present:

Pat Bennin, Sault Ste. Marie  
Aaron Crouse, Pontiac  
Jeff Engbers, Hudsonville  
Ben Farkas, Hudsonville  
Nick Herblet, Sturgis  
Mike Kapolka, Chelsea  
Vic Michaels, Detroit  
Matt Moffett, Cedar Springs  
Ryan Portenga, Pewamo

David Pratt, Hillsdale  
Mike Quinn, Lake Odessa  
Anna Rigby, Harbor Springs  
Mike Roy, Vicksburg (MIAAA)  
Chris Schultz, Dearborn  
Brian Southworth, Decatur

### Staff Members Present:

Brad Bush  
Camala Gillette  
Mark Uyl (Recorder)

## INTRODUCTION

The Classification Committee began in the 1980s as a forum to discuss relationships between public and non-public schools. Eventually, two additional purposes were established: (1) to perform an intermediate review (between MHSAA 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. 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.

Minutes of the 2023 meeting of the Classification Committee were reviewed and it was noted that the Representative Council approved one recommendation. The approved change now allows small schools (less than 125 and 75 students) to request Executive Committee approval to use middle school students on some high school teams.

## SPORTS SPONSORSHIP UPDATE

An update was provided on current MHSAA membership demographics, which included current numbers of traditional public high schools, public school academies and non-public high schools. Statistics on school sponsorship by sport were provided, along with information on championships and runner-up schools, along with top 5 finalists in individual sports, based on the type of school (public and non-public).

## UPDATE SURVEY RESPONSES & DIVISION STRUCTURE

Results from the Fall 2023 Update Meeting survey were shared with committee members, with special attention being given to areas with strong support. Staff also provided updated school size demographics that were discussed by school personnel who attended one of the seven fall tour sessions.

Good discussion took place on the concept of divisions, specifically the consideration of an additional division in sports sponsored by at least 550-member high schools. Committee members provided solid input and guidance, recognizing the importance of opportunities for kids while balancing the real challenges that additional divisions would create in those sports. It was shared that discussion of this concept is taking place in the sport committees of those sports sponsored by at least 550 schools (baseball, basketball, cross country, softball, track

& field and volleyball). The input provided by the Classification Committee will be shared with Council, along with feedback received from the various involved sport committees, when the issue is discussed again in the future.

## COOPERATIVE PROGRAMS

Discussion took place on *the MHSAA Handbook*, Regulation I, Section 1 E (2), which allows cooperative programs, regardless of size, for two or more schools of the same public school district (same governing board). The committee discussed the current list of allowed sports under Section 1E(2) and considered a request from the lacrosse community to add this to the current list.

## EMERGING SPORTS AND MHSAA SPONSORSHIP

A lengthy conversation took place about emerging sports and MHSAA sponsorship. The group reviewed current guidance from the *MHSAA Handbook* on page 82 and the history of adding MHSAA sports over the past 20 years. It was reported that the MHSAA Representative Council had a long discussion on the proposals received from the emerging sport communities of girls field hockey and boys and girls water polo at the December 2023 meeting. In addition, the MHSAA volleyball committee recently reviewed a proposal for boys volleyball. Staff and board members continue to consider these proposals, along with additional options for girls flag football, girls ice hockey, and the most recent addition to the group of clay targets.

Staff provided the committee with a list of 14 questions that are used internally regarding new and emerging sports. The critical question for the Representative Council and MHSAA membership at large includes whether or not to add additional sports. More importantly, if additional sports are to be added, which sports should be offered and when? All committee members were active participants in discussing the current rule of 64 and considerations for which emerging sports should be considered first along with the challenges that any new sport could create for existing sports and opportunities. Financial considerations at the school level were discussed along with small schools' concerns about adding new opportunities.

The input provided by committee members will be summarized and shared with the Representative Council in March 2024 as this topic continues to receive consideration, debate, and discussion.

## RECOMMENDATION TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

Add **boys and girls lacrosse** to the list of sports in *MHSAA Handbook*, Regulation I, Section 3 E (2):

2. The Executive Committee may approve a cooperative program agreement regardless of the combined student enrollment maximum in the sports of baseball, bowling, girls competitive cheer, cross country, golf, **boys and girls lacrosse**, soccer, girls softball, tennis 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, requires league or conference approval. Deadlines for high school cooperative programs apply (15-0).