

**CLASSIFICATION COMMITTEE
MHSAA Office – East Lansing**

Wednesday, January 11, 2012 – 1 p.m.

Committee Members:

Jeff Cooke, North Muskegon
Ken Dietz, Watervliet
Jerry Jennex, Capac (MASA)
Orlando Medina, Harrison Township
Vic Michaels, Detroit
Sharon Miller, Lapeer
Rich Okoniewski, Martin
Jack Postma, Hudsonville
Mike Quinn, Gibraltar (MIAAA)
Brad Robinson, Fraser
Mike Shibler, Rockford (MASA)

Lee Turner, Clare
Al Unger, Kingsford

Members Absent

Brad Jacobs, Scottville
Ronald Stoneman, Dansville
John Tafelski, Dearborn Heights (MASSP)
Justin Terry, Lansing

MHSAA Staff Members:

Jack Roberts
Tom Rashid

INTRODUCTION

The Classification Committee's primary purposes are two: (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.

Participants introduced themselves, and minutes of the committee's 2011 meeting were reviewed. Both of the committee's recommendations to the Representative Council last year were approved by the Council.

MINIMUM ENROLLMENT

A new member school submitted a proposal to reduce or to make two exceptions to the minimum requirement for MHSAA membership, which is 15 students in on-site attendance, pursuant to Article II, Sec. 1 of the *MHSAA Constitution* as adopted by MHSAA member schools in 1995. One exception would be if a school offers the ACT/MME at their location; the other would be if the school is in a cooperative agreement with another member school that meets the minimum enrollment requirement.

Committee members reviewed the history and rationale of the minimum enrollment requirement which tends to permit membership only for those schools that have sufficient on-site attendance to actually sponsor one or more sports teams and provide appropriate support to and supervision of students and teams.

Of many ideas raised through the committee's discussion the one that had most support was to examine this constitutional requirement at some time in the future when a package of proposals is being prepared for a membership vote, and to consider permitting membership to schools with less than 15 students in grades 7 and 8, or grades 7 through 9, or grades 10 through 12, or grades 9 through 12, if the school building's total enrollment exceeded some higher number (perhaps 40, 60 or 80 students).

NINTH-GRADER ELIGIBILITY AT NON-TRADITIONAL PROGRAMS

One of the topics that has had the Classification Committee's attention on multiple occasions has been the eligibility and counting of students who are taking classes in non-traditional programs. The committee reviewed previous and recently revised policies regarding the eligibility of first-time ninth graders pursuant to Handbook Interpretation #47-d and Note #2.

Previous to the 2011-12 school year it was possible under MHSAA rules that some students in non-traditional schools could never become eligible in any traditional school, even if it allowed eligibility to non-traditional students, because the student had not established enrollment in a traditional school first. The change for 2011-12 eliminated that situation, but now allows first time 9th graders to participate in sports at a school for which they have never had an enrollment or residential connection.

The committee's lengthy discussion ended with the consensus that first time ninth graders whose first enrollment in grades 9 through 12 is in a non-traditional school should only be eligible immediately for interscholastic athletics at the high school that serves his residence and only if it lists that non-traditional program on its Enrollment Declaration Form. MHSAA staff will discuss and refine such a proposal for the Council's consideration as the 2012-13 *MHSAA Handbook* is being approved.

TOURNAMENT OPT-OUTS

The Classification Committee reviewed the problems created by schools which regularly list sponsorship of a sport, but routinely fail to enter a full team or any individuals in the MHSAA tournament in that sport. This is most frequent in cross country, golf, swimming and diving, and tennis and skews "equal divisions" for those sports. This occurs less frequently in team sports than individual sports; but when it does it has a greater negative impact on tournament structures and competition in team tournaments.

The committee reviewed current MHSAA policies regarding the number of team members required to enter an MHSAA tournament in individual sports, noting that in seven sports (bowling, cross country, golf, girls gymnastics, swimming and diving, track and field, and wrestling) a single participant is all that is necessary to enter the individual competition of the MHSAA tournament.

Consideration was given to not including in the determination of the "equal divisions" a school that has failed for two consecutive years to enter a team or any individuals in the MHSAA tournament for that sport. This would introduce another variable at the time equal divisions are created and it would still be necessary to accommodate that school in the tournament if it subsequently confirmed its sponsorship of a team, which would require the establishment of policies and procedures for opting back into the MHSAA tournament.

There was consensus that, if possible, a paper study should be done in 2012 to see how this policy of deleting schools after two years of no participation in a sport would affect the classifications of other schools.

CLASSIFICATION COMPARISONS

To help the Classification Committee have a larger view of tournament classification systems, a document was provided that compared the volleyball, football and basketball tournament classifications in the two states most like Michigan in terms of the number of schools, climate and demographics: Illinois and Ohio.

All three states have four classifications in both volleyball and basketball; and only Ohio equalizes the number of schools in each class/division, as Michigan does in all sports except basketball and volleyball. The enrollment ranges between the largest and smallest schools in the classification for the largest schools and the classification for the smallest schools (Classes A and D in Michigan) are much smaller in Michigan than in either Illinois or Ohio.

In football, Ohio's playoffs accommodate 192 football schools in six divisions determined prior to the season, while both Illinois and Michigan's 11-player playoffs accommodate 256 schools in eight divisions determined at the end of the regular season.

Ideas for "modernizing" the enrollment/classification process were discussed. For example, Minnesota uses a "reverse multiplier" that reduces each school's enrollment by 40% of its free or reduced lunch numbers. Oklahoma invokes this among four factors that can alter a school's enrollment (the other three factors are (1) whether a school can deny enrollment to students within its boundaries; (2) whether a school is within 15 miles of a school of the two highest of Oklahoma's six classifications; and (3) whether the school's enrollment has increased more than 50% over the previous three years). In 2011, Ohio schools defeated a proposal to allow three factors to alter a school's enrollment: (1) whether the school had open enrollment; (2) how many students were on free or reduced lunch; and (3) the school's recent record of tournament success.

There is no data available that links a high free or reduced lunch population with a lack of tournament success; however, a study soon to be released in Kansas does suggest that an 11.5% reduction in participation can be predicted in schools with a high percentage of students on free or reduced lunch.

Committee members cautioned that there has recently been great inflation in the number of students on free or reduced lunch which may make this factor less reliable as a prediction of anything than it may have been in the past.

FOOTBALL PLAYOFFS

Normally, proposals to modify tournament classifications go through the respective sport committee prior to review by the Classification Committee; but for expediency, a revised proposal of the OK Conference to add at least one more division and one more week to the MHSAA Football Playoffs was presented for discussion prior to the Football Committee's meeting on Feb. 2, 2012.

It was noted that the Michigan High School Football Coaches Association may be working on a proposal that does not expand the size or length of the Playoffs, but modifies the point system.

There was consensus that the focus and goal of proposals should not be to help schools make the Football Playoffs, but rather to help schools to schedule regular season contests. Historically, expansion of the Playoffs has hurt more than helped local scheduling and should not automatically be considered the solution to current scheduling problems.