

## JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMITTEE #2 MINUTES

MHSAA, March 12, 2019, 9:30 a.m.

### Members

Steve Graf, Bloomfield Hills  
James Hogan, Allendale  
Jason Kemler, Brethren  
Craig Kueffner, Mason  
Jolinda Lucas, Grand Rapids

Brian Masi, Northville  
Jay Mulder, Montague  
Steve Newkirk, Clare  
Kevin Sankey, Big Rapids  
Brian Southworth, Decatur

### MHSAA Staff

Cody Inglis

The MHSAA Junior High/Middle School Committee met for its' second 2018-19 meeting to review topics identified for discussion by the MHSAA staff, Representative Council and member schools.

The Junior High/Middle School Committee began by reviewing committee responsibilities and purpose including a thorough review of first meeting of the JH/MS committee meeting from October. There were many changes this school year to MHSAA JH/MS rules and regulations. This included an increase or a change in contest limits in many JH/MS sports including baseball, basketball, competitive cheer, lacrosse and soccer. In addition, the limited team membership rule changes at the JH/MS level was significant for this school year.

The JH/MS committee recognized that the impact of those new rules would not be immediately felt nor able to be studied until schools, leagues and conferences have had a chance to go through them for at least this school year. The committee did discuss at length the impact of the limited team membership rule and some anecdotal evidence that more JH/MS student-athletes are taking advantage of this new rule to play school based sports at an earlier age. The committee will continue to monitor the new rule changes and look for data to see if the rules changes resulted in any changes to JH/MS athletics. The committee's goal in approving these options is to bring non-school athletes into school-based athletics sooner and to include non-school competition in their experience.

In addition, the committee recommended to MHSAA staff that more explanation and publicity of these new rules should be done with MHSAA school AD's, including but not limited to YouTube videos and a written, more clearly defined limited team membership rule for the JH/MS in the MHSAA Handbook.

Contest limits were discussed at the JH/MS level to include real life issues that JH/MS AD's face including gym space limits, season length limitations and financial issues in adding new teams or student-athletes. There are still many misconceptions that exist among parents, especially in those metropolitan or suburban areas that have many options for youth sports. Some of these incorrect perceptions include: that if you pay for something, it must be more valuable for their child, that playing more games is better for my child at the JH/MS level and that specialization in a sport is a good thing. While these notions work against JH/MS sports at the school level, it is still up to schools to provide a valid option for student-athletes to get involved in the sport, learn and develop skills and fundamentals and grow from the positive benefits of being involved in a sport with their peers at the school they attend.

### **MHSAA JH/MS Regional and Statewide tournaments**

The JH/MS committee continued its' discussion on planning for Regional and statewide JH/MS tournaments from the fall meeting. The committee discussed the impact that Regional MHSAA JH/MS events would have on school based sports and the challenges to grow this area in a responsible way so that that it did not get out of control within schools and the scope and perspective of JH/MS sports would not be lost. MHSAA signage and branding was again identified as a key part of the Regional emphasis, including MHSAA JH/MS specific signs and banners. Also branding the MHSAA.com website with a JH/MS tab and including information for parents and coaches is something that the committee would like the MHSAA to pursue. The development of educational resources for parents about youth sports and where to go for help and support in making decisions for their children will be key.

The MHSAA has developed some “pilot” programs in the sports of cross country and track and will be emphasizing these this spring and next fall. This fall, St. Ignace HS/MS held the first MHSAA “area” meet for JH/MS athletes in Northern Michigan and the Eastern UP. The meet was a success done with MHSAA specific medals and trophies for schools and participants as well as money provided to St. Ignace to help offset costs. More of these “area” meets will be done in the spring with track in the areas of SE Michigan, SW Michigan and the West Michigan area. Feedback received from these meets will help the committee and the MHSAA determine best practices moving forward. The committee also felt very strongly about including wrestling in these “pilot” JH/MS programs in the fall and winter of the 2019-20 school year.

### **MHSAA Presenting Sponsorship**

An update of the current MHSAA pilot program on “Presenting Sponsorship of JH/MS events” was completed for the committee in which, “money and messaging” were provided for these existing events. The events have continued to be well-received by leagues, conferences, administrators, coaches and the student-athletes themselves. The JH/MS recommendation supported by the MHSAA Representative Council was to continue to develop and expand opportunities for the Presenting Sponsorship concept of existing JH/MS meets, invitationals and tournaments conducted by leagues, conferences and schools around the state. The JH/MS committee reviewed the Presenting Sponsorship list and saw the increase in competitions being sponsored by the MHSAA in the spring. While the Presenting Sponsorship concept will continue to be used, the transition from these existing meets into the Regional and Final concept will be key over the course of the next several years.

The committee had a strong desire to gather more information regarding other states activities for JH/MS sports at the statewide level. The committee recommended to MHSAA staff that invitations be sent out to other states like Illinois and Ohio to be a part of the fall MHSAA JH/MS committee either in person or via video conference so that the committee could start to work on a plan for the MHSAA and Michigan as it relates to JH/MS Regional and/or state meets.

The JH/MS committee also requested that more data be requested from schools regarding JH/MS including a sport season survey and possible Update Meeting questions and topics to determine how schools are currently conducting JH/MS sports in their areas. This would include what sports are conducted when in JH/MS athletics as well as whether the school uses the three or four season model of conducting their athletic seasons.

### **General JH/MS Discussion Topics**

The committee ended the full agenda with discussion items on flag football. The committee strongly recommended to MHSAA staff and the MHSAA Football committee to start an emphasis on flag football competition at the JH/MS level. This could include a task force to determine if this concept is something that schools would like the MHSAA to sponsor in the future and how many schools would be a part of it. MHSAA staff discussion will occur to determine next best steps on this important topic.

Other general JH/MS topics of discussion included updates on Competitive Cheer rounds, tennis seasons occurring in both the fall and the spring, JH/MS football league changes in the Lansing area and several schools switching from the community-based model to a school based model of JH/MS football.

The committee adjourned at 12:44 p.m.

### **Recommendations to MHSAA staff from the MHSAA JH/MS committee**

- Develop and publicize information and education pieces on the new MS MHSAA Limited Team Membership rule via clearer language in the MHSAA Handbook and potential other education pieces for JH/MS AD's and parents.
- Place more JH/MS specific resources on MHSAA.com for parents, coaches and schools.
- Continue to emphasize the MHSAA JH/MS "pilot programs" in Regional events such as Cross Country, Track and Wrestling.
- Invite other state associations to be a part of the MHSAA JH/MS committee and share their experiences in administering JH/MS events at a statewide level, to share best practices and give their perspective on where the MHSAA should start in this area of JH/MS sports.
- Request data from schools regarding JH/MS sports via survey on JH/MS sport seasons.
- Request MHSAA involvement in discussion and emphasis on JH/MS flag football and the future of this emerging sport in the MHSAA through staff and the MHSAA football committee.