

JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMITTEE #1 MINUTES

MHSAA, October 17, 2018, 9:30 a.m.

Members

Jordan Ackerman, Oxford
Steve Graf, Bloomfield Hills
Don Gustafson, St. Ignace
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 the first of two 2018-19 meetings to review topics identified for discussion by the MHSAA staff, Representative Council and member schools.

The Junior High/Middle School Committee started its meeting reviewing committee responsibilities and purpose including the uniqueness of an MHSAA committee meeting twice in a school year. A thorough review of 2017-18 JH/MS meeting minutes as well as the Representative Council changes from last school year were completed. These changes included an increase or a change in contest limits in many JH/MS sports including baseball, basketball, competitive cheer, lacrosse and soccer. The Limited Team Membership rule changing at the JH/MS level was also a significant change that came out of this committee last year. Finally, a review of the Presenting Sponsorship program at the JH/MS level was done to allow the committee to see how this concept has grown from an idea into a full program of the MHSAA.

While some of the changes that came out of the JH/MS committee will be implemented this school year, the 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 will continue to monitor the new rule changes, specifically the contest limit increases and the Limited Team Membership rule change to allow JH/MS student-athletes up to 2 outside or non-school events in all sports except football. The committee's goal in approving this option is to bring non-school athletes into school-based athletics sooner and as an option to include non-school competition in their experience.

MHSAA JH/MS Regional and Statewide tournaments

MHSAA survey data shows there is some support for regional and statewide competition in individual sports like cross country, track, swimming and wrestling. There is little support for team sport regional and state competition and is outright rejected by most surveyed. The JH/MS committee last school year recommended that specific sport coaches associations as well as MHSAA sport committees be approached about providing details, specifics and timeframe of conducting JH/MS regional or state competitions in the sports of cross country, track, wrestling and swimming. The swim coaches association, MISCA, has determined that at this time, they are comfortable in keeping what they have, a state wide non-school and individual competition for JH/MS student-athletes while cross country, track and wrestling would be more open to this concept. Much discussion was done on the details of such competition. Questions to consider include:

- Regional or statewide competition?
- How do we classify JH/MS schools?
- Do we use an enrollment declaration for JH/MS and to find out accurate counts of member schools?
- Would having an "all-comers" sign up in cross country and track serve member schools better?
- Could you have two sites for a meet or run the competitions by gender?
- Would there be qualifying standards?
- Would there be a site selection process?
- Does the MHSAA create its own medals and trophy?

- How does the MHSAA financial form fit into the competition?
- How would an MHSAA Regional or Final meet in JH/MS effect contest limits? Should the Regional or Final meet be counted in schools contest limits?
- Do all participating schools need to be MHSAA members?
- When do you hold the competition? At already existing sites for Regionals? On separate days?
- How do we reach more schools?
- What is the “right” size of these competitions?

To help with some of these questions, the MHSAA has developed some “pilot” programs in the sports of cross country and track. 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 “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.

MHSAA Presenting Sponsorship

An update of the current MHSAA pilot program on “Presenting Sponsorship of JH/MS events” was completed. “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 already 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 this fall. There have already been nine sponsored MHSAA JH/MS meets or tournaments done this fall, a doubling of the number from last fall. One of the big takeaways was the power of the MHSAA brand. Continuing to develop the power and positivity of the MHSAA brand at the JH/MS level is something that is important in this concept and helps ease the transition for parents and student-athletes as they move to the HS level. The committee also discussed the need to provide education as to what the MHSAA is and why are we at these events with signage and announcements and help for schools. This education piece can be developed with the help of the Multi-Sport Task Force and could include educational pieces for JH/MS parents and others about benefits as well as who the MHSAA is and what we provide. The MHSAA ambassador program needs to be developed as a resource for the Presenting Sponsorship concept. This will help bridge the gap between the MHSAA and schools hosting these meets. The committee will continue to explore and define the role of the MHSAA Ambassador.

The JH/MS committee will meet again on February 6, 2019 to continue discussions and present recommendations to enhance JH/MS athletics in the MHSAA and beyond.