



MONTANA HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATION  
2019 ANNUAL MEETING

Monday, January 21, 2019  
Clarion Inn Copper King Hotel & Convention Center  
Butte, Montana

**PROPOSALS**

1. Proposal to Amend Executive Board By-Law-----1  
*Presented by: MHSAA Executive Board*
2. Proposal to Amend Eligibility By-Law-----1-2  
*Presented by: Conrad High School*
3. Proposal to Amend Eligibility By-Law Interpretation-----2-3  
*Presented by: Conrad High School*
4. Proposal to Amend Eighth Grade Participation/Transfer By-Laws-----3-4  
*Presented by: Lambert High School*
5. Proposal to Amend General Penalties By-Law-----5-6  
*Presented by: Conrad High School*
6. Proposal to Amend Contests Prohibited Rule-----6  
*Presented by: Conrad High School*
7. Proposal to Appoint a Committee to Add Girls Wrestling as a MHSAA Sanctioned Sport -----7  
*Presented by: Conrad High School*
8. Proposal to Increase Number of Allowable Basketball Games to 20 for All Classes-----7-8  
*Presented by: Conrad High School*

## 1. PROPOSAL TO AMEND EXECUTIVE BOARD BY-LAW

The MHSА Executive Board proposes the following amendment to By-Law, Article I, Section (5) Executive Board on page 9 of the current MHSА Handbook:

### Section (5) EXECUTIVE BOARD

5.5 Conference telephone calls necessary for the operation of the Montana High School Association shall be conducted in the same manner and with the same restrictions as regular or special meetings. Conference telephone calls will be charged to a specific school or to an appropriate individual who requested the conference telephone call. Conference telephone calls will be held only when necessary for immediate action for an interpretation of a rule, for a violation or protest which needs immediate action, or for an appeal on student eligibility when it is necessary. The Board may hold conference telephone calls for any of the above items as well as litigation, legislative, **proposed rule changes**, and other emergency matters which could affect the operation of the Association. ~~The Montana High School Association cannot make any proposed rule changes by conference telephone calls.~~

Executive Board members must be given a 48 hour advance written notice of the call.

#### Rationale:

With each classification holding summer meetings now, requests for rules and regulation changes can be submitted from those meetings for the Executive Board to consider during their June conference call instead of waiting another year for implementation of an approved rules change. The Board will still notify affected schools for the required two-week notice before taking final action.

## 2. PROPOSAL TO AMEND ELIGIBILITY BY-LAW

Conrad High School proposes the following amendment to By-Law, Article II, Section (2) Eligibility on page 10 of the current MHSА Handbook:

### Section (2) ELIGIBILITY

2.1 A student must be enrolled in twenty hours per week and in regular attendance in ten hours per week at the school where the student participates. Regular attendance is defined as actual physical presence in an **approved learning setting as determined by local school boards. (e.g. – internships, OJT, dual enrollment, MTDA, homebound placement for a variety of reasons, experiential learning, overseas experiences, etc.** ~~in the building (bricks and mortar).~~

A home school student is not eligible to participate for an MHSА member school.

#### Rationale:

Students learn better from real-life experience. Ensuring that learning today provides for students to be active learners in contextualized situations without impacting their potential eligibility for MHSА sports, is impeded by “bricks and mortar” requirements.

Furthermore, with our legislature’s passage of Proficiency Based Learning revisions in the 2017, it has opened opportunities for students to learn in a variety of ways by demonstrating proficiency. Attendance in bricks and mortar is not a necessity in today’s educational options for students.

Ensuring that local school district autonomy over when, where, how and why their children learn where they learn should and can be supported by the MHSA.

### 3. PROPOSAL TO AMEND ELIGIBILITY BY-LAW INTERPRETATIONS

Conrad High School proposes the following amendments to By-Law, Article II, Section (2) Eligibility Interpretations on page 11 of the current MHSA Handbook:

#### Section (2) INTERPRETATIONS

5. The scholastic record at the end of the semester shall be final and deficiencies may ~~not~~ be made up in any manner, **deemed appropriate by the local school board**. Deficiencies, including incompletes, conditions and failures for ~~the~~ a previous semester may ~~not~~ be made up during a subsequent semester, summer session, night school, correspondence, or tutoring for the purpose of establishing or maintaining MHSA eligibility.

6. The intent of the rule prohibiting incomplete grades from being made up is not to prohibit incomplete grades which were given in cases of illness, injury or attending school authorized functions, **nor to prevent proficiency based learning as approved by the Montana legislature and implemented by the state board of education to be implemented by school districts. School districts that have implemented proficiency based learning, will be provided the flexibility to ensure that student learning is a continual process for the school year, allowing courses that are begun in a previous semester to conclude in the next semester and be counted towards eligibility, in the semester in which credit is earned. Students who continue their learning into summer school and complete courses during a school district's summer session, would be able to use those courses as a determinant for eligibility in the fall semester.**

#### Rationale:

*"When we look at the attributes that make an individual successful in life – the real, meaningful traits that truly translate to achievement and cannot be measured by standardized tests – we begin to see the true educational value of our athletic programs. Perseverance, a strong work ethic, dedication, resiliency, dealing with adversity – attributes truly needed for achievement and valued by employers – are all characteristics honed and developed by participation in sports... key components of intelligence and analytical thinking that are enhanced by participating in athletics. In fact, when you see a high school game or event for any sport, you are viewing perhaps the most authentic form of assessment that exists in education. The student-athletes are being asked to strategize, think critically, act selflessly and work toward a common goal as part of a team.*

*Quite often these are children who may be dealing with a dysfunctional home situation or have a lack of stability or structure in their home lives. Quite often, school athletic programs become a safe haven for these students and provide them with motivation and positive role models.*

*If a goal of education is to provide students with meaningful and rewarding experiences, giving them memories and life lessons that they will carry with them forever, then scholastic athletics will continue to fulfill a vital role. Sports provide young people a rich tapestry of success and failure, joy and anguish, and perhaps the most unique and important aspect of athletic participation – the opportunity to do something great." Nitti, Michael. Classroom with a Scoreboard: Important Role of Athletics in Education, April 09, 2018. NFHS.org*

Today:

- Montana has the highest suicide rate per capital amongst our youth.
- Anxiety rates among youth are at an all-time high.

- Children living in unusual home circumstances is continually increasing, shifting childhood. Whether it is weekend backpack programs that require children to carry their own food home for the weekend or packing a bag of clothes as they shift from household-to-household or working to earn the income for their own participation in co-curricular activities like school. Each person reading this proposal could add their own items of how home, family, and safety has changed for children today.
- 2018 Gallup Student Poll indicated: Engaged students, are 4.5 times more likely to be hopeful for the future, 2.5 times more likely to say they get excellent grades and 2.5 times more likely to strongly agree they do well in school than do disengaged students.

Athletics and MHSA programs should not be considered extra-curricular. Because of the social-emotional crises that inundate our students, and the increasing knowledge around brain development, motivation, positive psychology, change in how we determine eligibility is appropriate.

If we believe that student participation on co-curricular programs is a vital part of the academic learning in an authentic setting, builds character in youth and offers a safe place to belong, we would all be engaged in ensuring that our eligibility rules are structured for the educational changes that have been implemented, in our State, to benefit our youth. Two examples: (a) Proficiency based learning (b) Graduate in three years remain for a 4<sup>th</sup> as a full dual enrollment year. Current eligibility rules impede student participation. If structured for all students, we would ensure flexibility for continuous progress, as we all know that all kids do not learn at the same pace. Furthermore, we would happily ensure student eligibility through summer school, night school, and other options of eligibility recover through the various credit recover options available, to students.

In visiting with some of our native school leaders, flexibilities would make a big difference, as life happens in a variety of challenging ways and keeping kids engaged in school frequently comes through participation in sports. Being able to recover eligibility through summer school and other credit recovery options is supporting student learning and student co-curricular participation.

It is a simple change that certainly can be accounted for in student information systems of local districts. The impact on MHSA's procedures and routines is negligible since eligibility is handled at the local school setting. These are simple, positive changes that influence student wellness, engagement, happiness, and sense of belonging.

**Fiscal Note:**

There is no fiscal impact on the MHSA. Perhaps there will be some fiscal impact to school districts that do not currently offer credit recovery options for students.

**4. PROPOSAL TO AMEND EIGHTH GRADE PARTICIPATION/TRANSFER BY-LAWS**

Lambert High School propose the following amendments to By-Laws, Article II, Section (5) Students Below Ninth Grade on page 11 and to Section (10) Transfer Rule on page 12 of the current MHSA Handbook:

**Section (5) STUDENTS BELOW NINTH GRADE**

~~5.1 No student who is enrolled in a grade below the ninth shall be eligible to participate in an Association Contest, except as noted in 5.3 or eighth grade students meeting the following requirements:~~

**5.1 A student who is enrolled in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade shall be eligible to participate in an Association contest, but must meet the following requirements and parameters:**

~~a. Eighth grade students may play on a high school volleyball, track relay and/or basketball teams.~~

**a. The eighth grade student is participating in a contest other than football**

~~b. Permission for eighth grade participation must be requested by the school and authorization granted by the Executive Director of the MHSAA. Once granted approval, those eighth grade participants are eligible to participate in varsity and JV competition. **(There is no restriction in place for participation of this 8<sup>th</sup> grade student at his/her middle school and/or high school of which he/she will be participating).**~~

c. Any eighth grade student allowed to participate will have eight semesters of high school eligibility remaining.

d. All eighth grade students participating must meet the academic requirements. The official MHSAA waiver form must be used.

**e. All eighth grade students participating must meet the transfer requirements. The official MHSAA transfer form must be used.**

**f. All eighth grade students participating in a high school contest must adhere to all other MHSAA rules and guidelines. Committed to a contest at the high school level, the eighth grader may not also participate in that same sport at a level under high school.**

5.2 A ninth grade student may not play on a 7th and/or an 8th grade team.

5.3 Any student who is at least fifteen (15) years old on or before midnight August 31 may be declared eligible for participation in Montana High School Association contests by the Executive Director. The Montana high school for which the student will participate must file a request with the Executive Director for consideration. Any student who is declared eligible under this section must participate in athletics at the high school level (grades 9-12) only.

## **Section (10) TRANSFER RULE**

10.1 Any student (**including eighth grade students allowed high school participation**) who transfers from one member high school, home school, or non-member school to a member school is ineligible to participate in a varsity association contest for half the number of P.I. days in the current school year of the school to which he/she transfers from the date of enrollment (first day he/she attends classes) in the school to which he/she transfers. A student and his/her parents or legal guardians must reside in the attendance area of the school in which he/she is enrolled except for a student enrolling in ninth grade for the first time (see Section (12) Record of Transfer.) This rule applies to a student who transfers after twenty (20) days of enrollment or after he/she participates in an athletic contest while enrolled in grades 9, 10, 11 and 12, **EXCEPT** the following students may be declared eligible: ...

### **Rationale:**

1. Now that the 8<sup>th</sup> grade rule has been in place for thirteen years, schools have seen the benefits for student athletes and high school teams outweigh the possible issues it could cause, as a result of more participants eligible to play. When the eighth grade rule was first enacted in 2005-06, 17 eighth graders were used and could play at the varsity level only. In 2011-12 the by-law was amended to allow eighth graders to participate at the junior varsity and varsity levels, and 147 eighth graders participated. By 2017-18, 224 eighth grade athletes participated. It is apparent schools see a need and benefit from eighth grade participation.

2. The last study conducted by the MHSAA a few years ago showed an eight percent drop across the board in Montana's high school's enrollments. According to MHSAA information, 5-6 years ago Montana had 144 co-op teams, and now we have close to 200 co-op teams. Enrollments in Montana, especially in small schools, have been steadily declining. The need to combine/use eighth graders at this point is important for small schools with declining enrollments, but also beneficial to larger schools who are fielding sub-varsity teams, yet do not have enough competitions at those levels.

3. The use of eighth grade students may still be monitored and determined by individual District School Boards, if they choose to do so.

## 5. PROPOSAL TO AMMEND GENERAL PENALTIES BY-LAW

Conrad High School proposes the following amendment to By-Laws, Article VII, Section (2) General Penalties on page 18 of the current MHSA Handbook:

### Section (2) GENERAL PENALTIES

2.6 Ejections. Any student or coach who represents a school holding membership in the MHSA who is ejected from an interscholastic athletic competition for unsportsmanlike conduct involving schools which are members of the MHSA will not participate for the remainder of the event and will be suspended for the next regularly scheduled or rescheduled event at that level of competition and all other games/meets in the interim at any level of competition, ***unless an appeal is filed by the member school to the conference president within 24 hours of the ejection.*** A student cannot be in uniform while suspended.

In post season tournament wrestling the next event is defined as the next session or round depending on tournament format for coaches; and for students the appropriate post season NFHS rules will be applied.

### INTERPRETATIONS

1. A coach/student who is ejected from a regular season contested event in wrestling is suspended from the next regularly scheduled contested event.

2. A coach/student who is ejected from the last contested event of the regular wrestling season is suspended from the first round of the post season tournament (divisional or seeding). If a wrestler would have had a bye in the first round, it must be scored as a forfeit and the wrestler must move to the consolation bracket.

A second violation will result in a four competition suspension in that sport by the offending student/coach.

If penalties are imposed at the end of the sport season and no contests remain, the penalty is imposed the first contests in that particular sport in the next school year. In the case of a senior student, the penalty will continue to the next MHSA sponsored sport or activity.

A third violation will result in the student being suspended for the remainder of that sport season and for an additional ninety (90) P.I. days from the date of the championship event of that classification.

If a coach is ejected from the last scheduled season game, the coach must miss the next highest contest where there are regular duties to perform.

If a head coach is ejected, assistant coach or any other school district personnel authorized to supervise students may assume the head coaching responsibilities for the remainder of the contest. If no other authorized school district personnel is on site, the contest will be terminated, and a forfeiture declared.

Appeal: The president of the conference may appoint a hearing officer/ board to hear any appeals, within 48 hours of the receipt of a complete report of the incident. Appeals may not deal with decisions made by contest officials. ***If a school requests an appeal, the conference will have an appeal team for each sport comprised of the one coach from a neutral school, one athletic director from a neutral school, that will review film from the aggrieved competition.***

***The decision of the appeal review team will be final. All reviews must be completed and rendered before the next scheduled contest of the aggrieved coach/player after receipt of the ejection notice and member school appeal.***

**Rationale:**

Ejection of players and coaches occurs without proper due process rights for players & coaches to dispute the action(s) of an official/officials. By building in a due process procedure for ejections issued, it ensures that due process is available to coaches and players as it is for officials.

1. Charges of conduct unbecoming of an official or of conduct contrary to the best interests of the MOA, may be brought before the Directors, by an MOA member or school administrator. Such charges must be submitted in writing. Each case will be considered individually and on its own merits. The accused official must have an opportunity for a hearing before the Directors. The MHSA or their designee will serve as a non-voting hearings officer. (XX.A)

With the ease of technology resources, the use of HUDL and other online film resources, film is available and can be viewed from various locations. The ability to conference call, web-x or ZOOM meetings, makes this process very doable. It has the ability to improve coaching and officiating which both of these would add another component of sportsmanship, athlete safety, and responsibility to the work of offering competitive sports.

**Fiscal Note:**

There is a time factor involved. With the current use of online film resources, and the ability to look at specific clips vs. entire film, this may be mitigated.

**6. PROPOSAL TO AMEND CONTESTS PROHIBITED RULE**

Conrad High School proposes the following amendment to the Prohibited Contest Rule in Rules and Regulations, Section (12) Policy, page 22 of the current MHSA Handbook:

**Section (12) CONTESTS PROHIBITED**

A. The Association prohibits all interscholastic contests by member schools between ~~December 24~~ **December 23 and December 25** January 4 of any school year, both dates inclusive.

**Rationale:**

The opportunity for local school districts to determine participation in holiday tournaments should be an available option that could support winter sports. By providing this opportunity, it also allows coaches who are already practicing, another avenue for competitive play and family time.

In other states, holiday tournaments are allowed. Holiday tournaments is another way to provide opportunities for more participation and for schools that struggle to have sufficient numbers, it gives the more inexperienced athletes opportunities to participate in competitive situations.

**Fiscal Note:**

There is no fiscal impact on the MHSA. It has the potential to reduce travel costs for school districts as holiday tournaments could replace other games during the school's season of competitive play.

## 7. PROPOSAL TO APPOINT A COMMITTEE TO STUDY GIRLS WRESTLING AS A MHSA SPORT

Conrad High School proposes the following in accordance with the Rules and Regulations, Section (24) Policy, page 24 of the current MHSA Handbook:

### Section (24) POLICY ON INTERSCHOOL ACTIVITIES

When any group which sponsors a high school activity requests consideration by the MHSA which may lead to direct supervision and control of this activity, or when the MHSA feels any activity is presenting a problem serious enough to merit study, then the MHSA, at its annual meeting, should authorize the Executive Board to appoint a special committee to thoroughly study each activity and to present its recommendations concerning this activity at the next annual meeting of the Association for consideration and approval or adoption by the Association.

***That the MHSA possibly recognize and designate girls wrestling as an MHSA sanctioned sport by authorizing the MHSA Executive Board to appoint a special committee to study girls wrestling as a sanctioned sport. Recommendations will be presented by the committee at the 2020 MHSA Annual Meeting.***

#### Rationale:

Girls Wrestling is a growing sport in the United States. Included is data from USA Wrestling showing the growth of participation in women's wrestling. As of 2018 there are twelve states that offer girls wrestling. The number of States doubled in 2018 that offer girls wrestling. Today, the only opportunity for girls to compete is to wrestle against boys, not the most equitable opportunity for young women. With the rise in the number of girls wrestling, and to ensure ongoing equity for our athletes. At the university level, there is also an increase in the number of programs for women's wrestling, providing another avenue for our youth to pursue post-secondary opportunities with financial support.

#### Fiscal Note:

The MHSA would have the cost of additional trophies and medals recognizing girls wrestling and champions. This cost should be negligible as school districts that participate in girls wrestling would be paying an additional fee to MHSA.

For local school districts, girls wrestling can be stacked just like basketball is today. Negligible cost to open this sport in Montana, where there are already collegiate girls wrestling team.

## 8. PROPOSAL TO INCREASE NUMBER OF ALLOWABLE BASKETBALL CONTESTS TO 20 FOR ALL CLASSES

Conrad High School propose an amendment to the General Rules and Regulations for Basketball subsection (5) on page 50 of the current MHSA Handbook:

### Sub-Section (5) MAXIMUM LIMIT FOR BASKETBALL GAMES

~~Eighteen~~ **Twenty** basketball games will be the maximum limit for schools in all classes. These limits include invitational tournaments but are exclusive of Association-sponsored tournaments. ***Invitational tournaments shall be limited to a maximum of three where invitational tournament play counts as one game of the twenty game maximum. Schools are able to participate in tournaments, at locations of their choice. (e.g. Sunburst, may opt to cross the border and compete in Lethbridge***

***in an invitational tournament.***) These game limits apply for each squad - varsity, junior varsity, sophomore, frosh etc. Should a non- varsity contest be played using a variation in the length of quarters or the number of quarters played, one of the approved variations shown on the basketball page of the MHSAs website must be used. The applicable game limit interpretations are also included on the website.

**Rationale:**

Invitational Tournaments provide a way for school districts to be able to participate in invitational tournaments that provide proximity to their home area regardless of school size. The tournament counting as one game versus the current structure would provide greater flexibility in schedule. A school could keep an 18-game schedule and actually provide more opportunities for student participation than the current structure.

It would help schools fill their schedules differently versus distance traveling for non-conference games to fill a schedule. It is anticipated that schools could participate in a pre-season tournament, a holiday-tournament (where most schools hold practice over the holiday season), and tournaments during the season (similar to the current volleyball structure) should a school so choose.

This would also provide for consistent playing opportunities, once the season is underway and ensure that schools who wanted to be able to offer more playing options for their athletes have opportunities to meet needs.

This proposal would not have any impact on schools who choose to keep the existing format as it is a maximum game pay and invitational tournaments are simply an additional option available to each school district.

**Fiscal Note:**

There is no fiscal impact to MHSAs. The fiscal impact to school districts could actually be reduced.