

**MICHIGAN HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION, INC.
JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES**

East Lansing, October 19, 2016

Members Present:

Damon Amey, Saginaw
Steve Babbitt, Blissfield
Jeff Dassance, Eaton Rapids
Ted Davis, Midland
Ken Dietz, Watervliet
Don Gustafson, St. Ignace
Jolinda Lucas, Grand Rapids
Steve Newkirk, Clare
Edward Tomlin, Detroit
Jeff Yorke, Millington

Members Absent:

Bryan Masi, Northville
Matthew Verley, Grand Rapids

Staff Member Present:

Cody Inglis

The MHSAA Junior High/Middle School committee met for the first of two 2016-17 meetings to review topics identified for discussion by the MHSAA staff, Representative Council and member schools.

The uniqueness of this year's Junior High/Middle School committee was discussed in terms of the significance of an MHSAA committee meeting twice during a school year and the important topics and potential decisions and recommendations that would come out of this committee. A thorough review of committee responsibilities was completed. The committee also reviewed the 2016 MHSAA Representative Council actions related to JH/MS and the 2016 JH/MS committee meeting minutes.

Review of the 6th grade amendment for the MHSAA

The JH/MS committee completed a thorough review of the initial data related to schools involving 6th graders in their athletic program in MHSAA sports. Preliminary data suggests that the involvement of 6th graders has increased membership in the MHSAA. In the 2015-16 school year there were 705 MHSAA member schools at the JH/MS level. So far in the 2016-17 school year there have been 757 schools that have become member schools at JH/MS level of the MHSAA.

Additionally, the committee reviewed data on the number of schools that are using 6th graders to compete with and against their 7th and 8th graders and those numbers show that approximately 66% of MHSAA JH/MS member schools or nearly 500 schools are using 6th graders in their athletic programs.

Finally, data reflecting the enrollment or classification (class A, B, C, or D) of schools that involve 6th graders was reviewed. 103 class A schools use 6th graders, 109 in class B, 114 in class C and 123 in class D. These numbers reflect a relatively "even" use of 6th graders regardless of the size of the member high school whose high school is fed by a middle school.

The committee then reflected on raw feedback received from MHSAA athletic director in-services so far in 2016. The questions reviewed included why schools either added or did not add 6th graders this school year?

Some common answers to why JH/MS added 6th graders this year included:

- Lack of numbers across JH/MS sports and to have 6th graders complete 7th or 8th grade teams
- For insurance coverage for 6th graders, just like 7th and 8th graders
- To bring back educational athletics into the school and away from non-school choices
- Because the MHSAA added it and it opens up more participation opportunities for kids
- Our league or conference decided to add and other schools added 6th graders

Some common answers as to why JH/MS did not add 6th graders this year included:

- Increased cost for which there is no budget
- The amount of time, space and money needed to add 6th graders

- 6th graders are not in the same building
- Our league or conference chose not to add 6th graders so we went with that decision
- Transportation issues associated with adding 6th graders

The committee felt that the use of 6th graders among MHSAA member schools in its beginning stages looks to be having the desired effect for member schools. It allows schools the flexibility to include 6th graders on their athletic teams, which many schools are taking advantage of, while not requiring any districts to include the 6th grade athlete on their JH/MS athletic teams.

MHSAA JH/MS game and contest limit discussion

The JH/MS committee had an in-depth discussion regarding contest limitations on games. Data from Athletic Director in services, the preliminary answers from MHSAA Update meeting survey questions and 2016-17 MHSAA boys' lacrosse committee recommendations were used as a starting point. The discussion centered on weighing the number of contests and dates currently allowed for JH/MS competition vs. opening this rule up to allow more contests and/or dates of competition. Committee discussion included practice vs. playing games at the JH/MS level. Finding the right balance was the desire of the committee. There was strong sentiment to not open this option up too far so as to "guard the door" of JH/MS athletics. In order to compete against non-school sports, the desire of the committee was to look at increasing games, dates and/or contests including increasing to 15 contests on 12 dates of competition in the 13 week JH/MS season. No recommendation was made at this time, in order to garner more feedback from other MHSAA sport committees and the Multi-Sport Task Force among others.

The MHSAA limited team membership rule was also reviewed for the JH/MS level and the committee looked at potentially opening up this rule to allow team sport athletes in the same sport and the same season two outside events while playing for their school team. The goal of this would be to bring non-school athletes into school based athletics sooner and as an option to include non-school competition in their experience. No recommendation was made at this time, with more discussion to be done at the second JH/MS committee meeting.

The committee also discussed "regional" or statewide tournaments for JH/MS sports that could be sponsored by the MHSAA. Some of the questions that arose out of this discussion included: Would adding a tournament at the JH/MS level increase the incidents of transfer issues?, Would recruiting sink down to the JH/MS level of school based sports?, Would there be enough officials?, Would the "regional" tournament in sports be more attractive than a state wide tournament given the geography and distance for some of our teams to travel?, Would "individual" sports rather than "team" sports be easier to administer? What would be the extra costs associated with adding a JH/MS tournament? Would schools be able to add this to their schedule given the different timing of when sports schedules are done at the JH/MS level? These questions give the committee a starting point to consider further discussion on this topic at future meetings.

Discussion on "Regional Strike Teams" and "Presenting Sponsor" of JH/MS tournaments

The JH/MS committee focused much of their attention on two new MHSAA concepts - regional strike teams and presenting sponsorship of JH/MS tournaments. The committee was updated as to the proposed purpose of regional strike teams – to extend MHSAA outreach to JH/MS and to recruit officials. These 4 or 5 teams of 4 to 6 people would be comprised of recently retired or part time school personnel who would serve a geographical area and deliver such initiatives as – "Why join the MHSAA?", "Presenting MHSAA Sponsorship" of league meets, "How to be a Good Sport?" student program and "Sports the Right Way" parent program. The committee worked on strategies and concepts related to the regional strike teams in preparation for potential implementation in the 2017-18 school year.

Additionally, the presenting sponsor concept was discussed as a pilot program for later in the 2016-17 school year as a way to raise the MHSAA profile in Junior Highs and Middle Schools. This concept would allow schools, leagues and conferences the opportunity to ask the MHSAA for assistance in off-setting some costs of these meets or tournaments in exchange for an MHSAA “presence” at the event with MHSAA banners, printed materials and PA announcements being onsite and used throughout the event.

The committee was asked for feedback on these two concepts and what strategies they could work on prior to each concept being implemented. Some ideas, thoughts and feedback in this brainstorming session include:

- Would 4-5 strike teams be enough to adequately cover the state for JH/MS?
- Could the use of elementary physical education programs get the message of sportsmanship into youth sport athletes at an earlier age than we are currently getting it out?
- Would the content standards of elementary Physical Education curriculums allow an emphasis on sportsmanship for example “Good sports are Winners.”
- Would the MHSAA consider working with non-school youth sports organizations to “partner” with similar philosophies in order to get the word about “Sports the Right Way?”
- Use guest speakers as role models and potential assemblies for emphasizing school based sports and educational athletics.
- Work on accurate three sport athletes statistics from around the state in High Schools to share publicly.
- Find out the cost of colleges in terms of academic vs. athletic scholarships money that is given out – as a way to focus student-athletes more on the student.
- Find out the accurate data on the percentage of kids who get scholarships at each level of college.
- Getting information for parents about recruiting and education about the process so that they can be prepared and deal with realities and not fallacies.
- Work on getting out the Ten Basic Beliefs of Michigan Interscholastic Athletics out to the masses while potentially working on a JH/MS version of this document.
- Use MHSAA scholar athlete (including past winners) and student leaders as speakers and use them in the Regional Strike teams to talk to elementary and JH/MS kids about educational athletics.
- Could the MHSAA develop an assembly or presentation style program that emphasizes multi-sport participation, sportsmanship, leadership using MHSAA student leaders, MHSAA scholar athlete winners, former MHSAA student-athletes whom have made the next level as guest speakers, and regional strike teams and what cost would be associated with a program like this?
- Could a competition on sportsmanship be developed for Elementary Schools and JH/Middle Schools or the current Battle of the Fans be extended to the Elementary or JH/MS level.
- What resources could be developed by the MHSAA to help with these potential programs?
- Officials recruitment could involve some sort of vouchers for uniforms as an enticement related to their registration.
- Could a banner for MHSAA “member school” be developed and sent to each MHSAA member school as a “perk” of membership?
- How can the MIAAA be involved in this concept?
- Can we work with the MDE and the state superintendent to get this information to the State of Michigan?

Next steps

The JH/MS committee adjourned at 1:00 p.m. Regular communication on JH/MS topics and feedback will be done via email over the next several months to involve the committee on updates from other MHSAA committees as well as prepare for the second JH/MS committee meeting in February.

Next meeting of the JH/MS Committee
Wednesday, February 8, 2017 – 9:30 a.m.