

Executive Director's Update August 2008



Info from Mark Beckman

Greetings from the MHSAA office. We hope your fall activity seasons are off to a great start.

Student Eligibility

It is extremely important that the eligibility of all student activity participants is checked thoroughly before the students participate in any Association Contest. Some of the areas that must be reviewed include academics, age, semesters, physical examination before practice, transfer, foreign exchange approved program etc.

At the 2008 MHSAA Annual Meeting, the Membership adopted a variety of revisions to the eligibility rules of the Association. These revisions were recommended by the Eligibility Rules Review Committee, approved by the MHSAA Executive Board and enacted by the membership. An online presentation regarding the revisions to the eligibility rules is posted on the MHSAA website under News and Announcements on the homepage. I strongly encourage all school personnel who deal with student eligibility to review this presentation as there were many major changes to the eligibility rules.

Also attached is information to assist school activities administrators in ensuring all students are eligible for competition. It would be devastating to an individual participant and to the team he/she participates on if that student was declared ineligible and the team forfeited games because one of the new revisions to the eligibility rules was violated. The MHSAA membership, many years ago, adopted the following provision for the By-Laws - "At times the enforcement of these rules may appear to result in injustice to a student or a school in a situation arising from lack of familiarity with the rules, misunderstanding of the rules, or negligence on the part of some individual. In such a case, it must be recognized that the Executive Director cannot, through sympathy, permit exceptions to the rules. He/she has no such power." Because of this provision, ignorance of the new rules is not a defense for violating any revisions approved by the membership.

Please contact me with any questions you may have in regard to students' eligibility.

MHSAA/MOA Required Rules Clinics

The MHSAA/MOA rules clinics will once again be provided in an online format for coaches and officials. All head coaches are required to view the

clinic. However the MHSAA still encourages all members of the coaching staff and activity administrators to view the clinics. There is an information sheet attached explaining the procedure on accessing these clinics. Please share this information with your coaches of fall sports and with your cheerleading coach.

MHSAA/U.S. Bank Sportsmanship Program

I am excited to announce that U.S. Bank has renewed their title sponsorship for the sportsmanship program we initiated last year beginning with the winter activity season. Dubbed the MHSAA/U.S. Bank Sportsmanship Program, it will continue to provide many resources for member schools to use in promoting good sporting behaviors by players, coaches and spectators at interscholastic activities.

The MHSAA/U.S. Bank Sportsmanship Program includes recognition of players who exhibit good sporting behaviors during regular season contests (medal program), and the U.S. Bank Super Fan Program, which lets schools recognize long-time fans for their positive support of high school activities. In addition, the program includes a mandatory sportsmanship clinic for member schools' administrators, a banner program for schools that participate and a variety of resources for member schools to promote good sporting behaviors by high school players, coaches and fans. A separate mailing with more information on this exciting program will be sent to member schools in the near future.

Check Your Coaches' Status Concerning Completion of the Coaches' Education Program

All coaches (9-12), whether paid or volunteer, coaching at any level must complete this program. The coaches' education certification is good for three years and the MHSAA **strongly recommends** that coaches complete the program before their season actually begins. Spirit (cheerleading) coaches are no longer required to complete the program. Each coach must sign in each time she/he enters the curriculum. The coach will either select or be assigned his/her own password that must be remembered. The testing curriculum will also change with each login. See the coaches' education website for more details. All schools must submit the certification report listing whether coaches have completed the program or not. Schools will be subject to penalties for failure to submit this report.

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OPI renewal units are available if approved locally and if your district is an approved renewal unit provider. MHSA does not certify renewal units.

MOA Items

MOA game fees have increased this year. The last MOA fee increase was in 2002-03 when standardized fees were adopted. Varsity game fees have increased to \$55 per contest from \$50, Sub varsity fees have increased to \$33 per contest from \$30. All regular season invitational tournament fees and post season fees are listed in the MHSA Handbook and a list of the new fees is attached. Also the mileage fee has increased from .485 to .505. The per diem allowance for each official, including the driver remains at \$0.08 per mile.

The first MOA/MCA "Train the Trainer" Mechanics Clinics for football and basketball officials were held in Great Falls during the MCA Clinic and by all reports were extremely successful ventures. The partnership with the MCA not only allowed the MOA to embark on providing these clinics but also the MCA funded these clinics through MOA members joining the MCA as associate members. These mechanics clinics will benefit officials, coaches and players alike. Also on Friday morning before the clinics there were two workshop sessions conducted in a roundtable discussion format for coaches and officials. Both discussions went extremely well opening lines of positive communications between coaches and officials.

Some other additions to the MOA Handbook approved by the MOA Regional Directors and the MHSA Executive Board include:

- MOA officials are required for all varsity games and the MOA recommends that only MOA officials in good standing work sub-varsity games.
- Three officials are required for all varsity soccer contests.

Bingo, Raffles and Public Schools

The MHSA rule regarding fundraising and raffles at Association Contest is as follows: *"The soliciting of voluntary contributions is prohibited at any Association contest. Unless approved by the MHSA*

Executive Board, raffles or similar fund raising are prohibited at playoffs, championship games, post-season tournaments, post-season meets, and/or post-season festivals which are under the direct supervision of the Montana High School Association Executive Board." (Section (9) VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS/RAFFLES)

I have attached a memo from Gene Huntington, Administrator for the Gambling Control Division with information that I hope you will find useful regarding state law on bingo and split the pot (50/50) drawings. Raffles and 50/50 drawings are prohibited at any MHSA post season event but many schools do conduct these during their regular season contests.

MHSA Reference Manuals

Reference manuals were distributed to member schools in binder form at the Annual Meeting a few years ago. If you still have the binder you can download the forms for replacement in your binder or you can download the forms as you need them by visiting www.mhsa.org, clicking on Publications, and navigating to the Reference Manual. This will assure your school has the most current versions of the MHSA forms. The manual on the website is in the same easy to use format as the binder. We will not be mailing out the updated materials, but if you have difficulty accessing any of the material please contact Theresa in our office for assistance.

MHSA Handbooks and Directories

The 2008-09 MHSA Handbooks and Directories will be mailed to schools after Labor Day. The Directories will not be published until every member school has submitted the appropriate information. The MHSA Handbooks are in the process of being printed, but in the interim, the individual chapters of the Handbook are available in PDF format at www.mhsa.org under HANDBOOK.

Other Items of Interest ...

I have attached a handout regarding MHSA Present and Future issues from my presentation at the MCA Clinic. Included is information regarding MHSA staff, MHSA Handbook changes, activity-specific rule changes and possible future issues of the MHSA.

The MHSA office staff is here to serve you!

Please contact the office with any questions, concerns, comments or suggestions.

Have a great fall season!

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Checklist for School Activities Administrators:

√ Submit a Record of Transfer Form

The pink form that must be submitted to our office for any student who transfers to your school (except ninth grade students enrolling for the first time in high school) and desires to participate in athletics at any level. **These forms must be filed before the student is eligible to participate in an Association Contest on any high school athletic team at any level of competition (freshman, sophomore, junior varsity or varsity).**

√ Check Foreign Exchange Programs

Make sure your foreign exchange student's program is approved by CSIET. An approved list will be included with the August Activity News, or call the office for a copy. The list is also on the web at www.csiet.org. Keep in mind that students in these programs must also meet all other eligibility requirements, i.e., age, number of semesters, academic grades, and they cannot have graduated from their high school (some foreign high schools graduate students after three years of school). Also the foreign exchange student must live in the attendance area of the school requesting eligibility for that student.

√ Waiver of Transfer Rule Petition "Hardship Petition"

Waivers must be filed by the school after the student is enrolled at your school. A waiver of the transfer rule is considered if the circumstances are beyond the control of the student applying for the waiver. If the behaviors that caused the extenuating circumstances are "self inflicted" by the student, the petition is usually not considered. The information provided for the waiver is confidential, but please include as much information as possible so a well-informed decision can be made. The student can participate only at the sub varsity level until the petition is approved if they are eligible in every other way. If the petition is approved the student is eligible for varsity competition, but if the petition is not approved he/she can play sub varsity but is ineligible for varsity competition for 90 PI days (or its equivalent in districts with extended school days/four day weeks). All other eligibility requirements must be met such as age, number of semesters, academic grades etc. Any student who is transfer ineligible becomes eligible on the 90th P.I. day (or its equivalent in districts with extended school days/four day weeks) at the end of school that day.

√ Age Rule

A student who turns 19 after midnight August 31st is age eligible. Any 19 year old (who turns 19 on or before midnight August 31st) can file a waiver of the age rule if the following is proved by the student – 1) student does not create a safety risk, 2) student does not skew the overall competitiveness of the activity, 3) participation will not exclude others, and 4) the student meets all necessary criteria to participate in MHSA activities.

√ GED

If a student has earned a GED he/she is considered a high school graduate and is not eligible to compete in any MHSA sanctioned activity.

√ Academically Ineligible Students

Students who are ineligible because of grades cannot participate in any Association contest (varsity or sub varsity) for a period of one semester. They can practice if the school allows but they cannot suit up or participate in any games at any level of competition. They become eligible to compete on the Monday morning following the week in which the semester ends. A student who becomes academically ineligible also becomes ineligible on the Monday morning following the week in which the semester ends. A student must have received a passing grade in at least twenty periods of prepared class work in the last previous semester at the school where the student participates or during the last preceding semester in which he/she was in attendance to be eligible. If a student was enrolled 20 days or more or played in an Association contest he/she has attended a semester and must have received credit and passed 20 periods. If he/she withdrew and didn't receive credit (or even W's) he/she did not receive credit and is ineligible. If a student had not been enrolled in school at all for the semester (less than 20 days and did not participate in a contest) then the grades from the last previous semester enrolled are used.

√ Physical Exams

Physical exams are required for students participating in MHSA sanctioned sports. The exam is valid for one school year and the MHSA form must be used. This examination must be certified by **a licensed medical professional acting within the scope and limitations of his/her practice**. Physicals performed before May 1st are not valid for the next school year.

√ Semester Rule

Students are eligible for eight consecutive semesters and the semesters start to accrue after entering the ninth grade.

New Eligibility Rule Revisions

(Please review the online presentation at mhsa.org under News and Announcements for more detailed information).

Eligibility

2.1 A student must be regularly enrolled **and in regular attendance** in twenty hours per week at the school where the student participates. **A home school student is not eligible to participate for an MHSA member school.**

2.2 A grading period is defined as one semester. A semester is defined as one half of a school year (approximately 18 school weeks or 90 school days). This definition is applicable to all schools regardless of the type of class scheduling format utilized (i.e. block, traditional, trimester etc.).

5. The scholastic record at the end of the semester shall be final and deficiencies may not be made up in any manner. Deficiencies, including incompletes, conditions and failures for the 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.

8.1 A student will be eligible to participate in Association Contests for four (4) consecutive years [eight (8) consecutive semesters] after entering the ninth grade. An **Enrollment** of twenty (20) **pupil instruction** days during a ninth grader's first semester in high school constitutes his/her first semester of attendance. A ninth grader who **is enrolled** fewer than twenty (20) **pupil instruction** days in his/her first semester of high school does not begin his/her eight (8) consecutive semesters unless he/she has participated during this time in an Association contest. Such a period of fewer than twenty (20) **pupil instruction** days is not considered to be "the last previous semester attended" under Section (2).

This change specifies that the days of enrollment, not attendance, will be used in determining eligibility.

Deadline for enrollment

9.1 A student shall have been regularly enrolled and in attendance no later than fifteen (15) school days after the beginning of the semester to be eligible during that semester. This rule shall not apply to transfer students who have met the attendance requirements in the school last attended.

Transfer Rule Amendments

A. Any student who transfers from one **member high school, home school, or non-member school** to another a **member high school** is ineligible to participate in a varsity Association Contest for 90 P.I. days **or its equivalent in districts with extended school days/four day weeks** from the date of enrollment 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 for the following students who may be declared eligible:

1. A student who moves into a new district or school attendance area upon a corresponding change of residence by the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) with whom the student was living during his/her previous school enrollment. **The legal guardianship must have been established at least one calendar year before the transfer. If the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) move to a new location a student must follow within a calendar year of the move to be eligible for varsity competition after proper certification by his/her principal.**

2. A change of residence is the actual physical relocation by the parents or legal guardians of a student at a new residence and termination of all occupancy of a previous residence. The change in residence must be bona fide, include other minor siblings and involve transfer from one school district attendance area to another school district attendance area. For the purpose of eligibility, there can be only one residence.

There have been many changes in the transfer rule and the transfer rule interpretations – please review those changes in the online MHSA Handbook and/or in the online Eligibility Revisions Review.
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