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**To:** Local Superintendent of Schools, MPSSAA Member Schools, MPSSAA Board of Control

**From:** R. Andrew Warner, MPSSAA Executive Director

**Date:** November 19, 2021

**Subject:** MPSSAA Board of Control COMAR 13A.06.03 Proposed Amendments

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**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) Board of Control agenda item is to present proposed amendments submitted by the MPSSAA Executive Council for consideration of the entire membership. The amendments address calendar year opportunities that enable local school systems to administer equitable participation for the benefit of student enrichment.

The proposed amendments focus on the defined sport-season participation opportunities by removing requirements to have athletic schedules set by the first play date to allow greater flexibility in handling cancellations or loss of contests due to varying circumstances.

The proposed amendments address team participation opportunities outside the defined sport season by expanding the ability for school teams and student-athletes to compete in National Federation of State High Schools (NFHS) and MPSSAA sanctioned events. These education-based events are centered on collegiate recruiting opportunities.

The proposed amendments address individual skill development sessions operated by local school systems approved interscholastic camps to provide equity in student access to such camps as well as limit exploitation through local school system operated camps.

The purpose of providing additional coach and student-athlete interaction outside the current defined timeframes focuses on three distinct factors.

1. The ability to provide student-athlete and coach opportunities that benefits the social, emotional, and physical well-being of students while participating with fellow students in educationally-based settings as compared to for-profit camps and events.
2. The NCAA/NFHS sanctioned June Scholastic period provides opportunities for collegiate recruiting exposure that is most beneficial when the coach is involved in the process to ensure the best interests of student-athletes.
3. School-based interscholastic camps provide equal access opportunities for students from diverse communities who may not have the financial means to attend for-profit camps for the purpose of skill development. School-based opportunities open the doors for all students, regardless of financial status, to have access to

educationally-based sport development with qualified coaches who are trained in care and prevention and vetted by the local school system.

#### **REGULATION PROMULGATION PROCESS:**

Under COMAR 13A.06.03.11 Amendments, proposed written amendments to the regulations may be submitted only by a member MPSSAA school, local superintendent of schools, MPSSAA committee, or the MPSSAA Executive Director. Proposed amendments shall be received by the MPSSAA Executive Director at least 45 days before the annual meeting of the MPSSAA Board of Control.

Upon receipt, proposed amendments shall be referred to the Constitution Committee for appropriate action and recommendation. Notice of proposed recommendations shall be sent to each member MPSSAA school, local superintendent of schools, and the State Superintendent of Schools at least 15 days before the annual legislative meeting of the MPSSAA.

Ratification of the proposed amendments shall require a majority vote of the delegates present at the annual legislative meeting of the MPSSAA. Amendments approved by the MPSSAA shall be forwarded to the State Superintendent of Schools, who will receive recommendations from local superintendents of schools before the State Superintendent of Schools submits recommendations to the State Board of Education.

#### **BACKGROUND/HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:**

The current athletic regulation pertaining to the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) limits the participation of students to the defined timeframes of the first available practice date to the last competition date of each school's competitive season.

The proposed amendment to strike the language that requires all school athletic teams to have their schedules set by the first available playdate provides greater flexibility in scheduling options for local school systems to maximize participation opportunities. The current language is designed to ensure equity related to the school's athletic schedule for state tournament participation. This language is better served as part of the state tournament policies and procedures administered by the MPSSAA for varsity teams competing in the state tournament. The current language does not allow any modifications to the season schedule after the first allowable play date. The current language, which has been waived the last two years by the State Board of Education based on rationale of maximizing participation opportunities, adversely affects smaller enrolment schools, junior varsity teams, and sports with low participation numbers who may have temporarily disbanded due to lack of players. Removal of the language, which has been utilized successfully by local school systems within the State Board of Education waivers, allows for local school systems to ensure participation opportunities exist through greater scheduling flexibility.

The proposed amendment to allow for local school systems to approve NFHS and MPSSAA sanctioned events outside the defined sport season provides additional school-based participation opportunities for students. In 2019, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the NFHS developed June Scholastic Events to re-engage the high school coach in the recruiting process of high school basketball players. The success of these events could lead to additional sports engaging in these NFHS sanctioned opportunities. MPSSAA member schools, under the current regulations of COMAR 13A.06.03, would be in violation of out-of-season practice and participation if they entered any of these sanctioned events. The proposed language requires sanctioning oversight of any event outside the defined sport season by the NFHS and MPSSAA, while allowing local school systems to make the final determination on school participation.

During the 2020-21 academic year, the MPSSAA and local school system observed various degrees of skill development and participation opportunities based on students' individual access level to non-school teams, camps, and participation opportunities not available through the local school system. The Maryland State Board of Education approved a request of the MPSSAA for the 2020-2021 academic year to waive out-of-season practice regulations in order to allow schools to maximize participation opportunities within the mitigation efforts of COVID-19 and assist in combating the access issues for underserved students. These opportunities spurred local school system creativity to develop student-athlete

opportunities and skill development sessions with high school coaches which ultimately led to an increase in student athlete participation.

The fundamental rationale behind the MPSSAA's proposed changes is to expand the opportunities of student-athletes under the umbrella of the local school system. The MPSSAA believes the local school system has the ability to oversee these summer camp options, which will provide the following benefits to these interscholastic programs:

- Student-athlete engagement (academic and athletic)
- Access to summer camp instruction for all students regardless of socioeconomic status
- Increased student-athlete participation
- Coaches' ability to supervise and instruct as a program
- Increased opportunity for student recruitment
- Provide clarification and structure under local school system supervision

The MPSSAA Constitution Committee supported the proposed amendments with a unanimous vote of 9-0.

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The regulations that govern interscholastic athletics provide for equity of competition and participation opportunities throughout the state. As such, regulations are the result of a collaborative process between the MPSSAA, local superintendents, the State Superintendent, and the State Board of Education.

The proposed changes are to amend sections of COMAR 13A.06.03 to redefine the opportunities available for student-athlete, school team, and coach interaction for the benefit of providing a valuable educational interscholastic athletic experience. By approving the proposed COMAR regulations, the MPSSAA and local school systems can provide better structured opportunities for student-athletes to participate in athletics; meeting the needs of the student-athlete population.

#### **ACTION:**

The MPSSAA Board of Control shall discuss and determine if action is warranted on the proposed amendments.

#### **ATTACHMENTS:**

COMAR 13A.06.03 *Interscholastic Athletics in the State*

**MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Subtitle 06 SUPPORTING PROGRAMS**  
**13A.06.03 Interscholastic Athletics in the State**  
**Authority: Education Article, SS2-205 and 2-303(j),**  
**Annotated Code of Maryland**

**.03 Sports Season**

The regulations given below are established for all MPSSAA interscholastic sports.

A. The sports seasons shall be defined as follows:

(1) – (4) – Text Unchanged

(5) **NFHS/MPSSAA Sanctioned Events.** Local school systems may approve the participation of member schools to practice and compete in sanctioned NFHS and MPSSAA events outside the defined sport season.

~~(5)~~(6) **Required Practice.** A member MPSSAA School may not participate in a regularly scheduled game until at least 20 calendar days have elapsed after and including the first day of practice. Golf is the only exception to this regulation.

B. Maximum Number of Contests Permitted During a Sports Season.

(1) **Maximum Number of Contests During a Sports Season** – All school athletic schedules shall be established ~~before the first MPSSAA allowable play date of each sport's season~~ according to the following instructions:

(a) - (q) - Text Unchanged.

(2) – (3) Text Unchanged

### 13A.06.03.04 Operational Guidelines

A – B Text Unchanged.

C. Limits of Participation.

(1) – (2) Text Unchanged

(3) School athletic teams may not participate in any contests representing their school **beyond the defined competition opportunities designated in Regulations .03 of this chapter.** ~~before or after the defined sport season.~~

(4) - (9) Text Unchanged

D. Text Unchanged

E. Out-of-Season Practice.

(1) Member MPSSAA schools and coaches of member schools shall confine school practices to: ~~the seasonal limitations as defined in Regulations .03 of this chapter~~

- (a) **The seasonal limitations as defined in Regulation .03 of this chapter; or**
- (b) **Approved local school system sponsored camps.**

(2) A coach may not coach a team representing the coach's school beyond the ~~sports season as defined in Regulation .03 of this chapter~~ **defined competition opportunities designated in Regulation .03 of this chapter unless during approved local school system sponsored camps.**

F. Text Unchanged

G. Summer Camps

(1) Text Unchanged

~~(2) Member MPSSAA schools, member school coaches, school-related organizations, or individuals may not sponsor or conduct a camp in which students who are returning players are involved or participate. A camp composed of several coaches with their respective teams is a violation of this regulation.~~

**Voluntary Participation.**

- (a) **Students and member schools may participate in summer camps that are sponsored by the local school system.**
- (b) **MPSSAA member schools and coaches may not require school personnel or students to participate in a camp.**
- (c) **The participation is strictly voluntary and shall not have any bearing on seasonal participation.**

~~(3) Coaches of member MPSSAA schools, while affiliated with a camp, may not conduct any form of team or group practice involving their school. Such a practice is considered a violation of the out of season practice rule defined in Regulation.03 of this chapter.~~ **It is a violation of the out-of-season practice rule established in Regulation .03 of this chapter for coaches of member MPSSAA schools, while affiliated with a camp that is not sponsored by the local school system, to conduct any form of team or group practice involving their school.**

(4) Text Unchanged

H. Text Unchanged