

# ACTIVITY NEWS

Montana High School Association · 1 South Dakota Ave · Helena, Montana 59601 · 406-442-6010 · [www.mhsa.org](http://www.mhsa.org)

December 2025

## EXECUTIVE CORNER

I hope everyone is gearing up for an enjoyable holiday season. Winter sports and activities are off to a strong start, and it's great to see gyms filled with fans supporting our outstanding student-athletes across the state.

We are pleased to share that the MHSA has officially moved into our new building in Helena, located at 631 N. Last Chance Gulch. This new space enhances our ability to serve member schools and better support all MHSA programs and activities. We invite you to join us for an open house on Sunday during the Annual Meeting, where you can tour the facility and help us celebrate this important milestone. We also encourage you to schedule meetings in our new space or simply stop by whenever you are in the area—our doors are always open, and we look forward to welcoming you.

As we begin another winter season, we are entering our third year of utilizing MHSA-assigned, sport-specific rule interpreters. We appreciate their expertise and commitment to supporting our schools. Below are our key personnel for this year's winter activities:

- Basketball - Greta Buehler, MHSA Basketball Liaison and Rob Tesch, MHSA/MOA Basketball Rules Interpreter
- Swimming - Kip Ryan, MHSA Swimming Liaison and Merle Gunderson, MHSA Swimming Rules Interpreter
- Wrestling - Scott Wilson, MHSA Wrestling Liaison and Joe Sol, MHSA/MOA Wrestling Rules Interpreter

Our staff and rule interpreters work extremely hard each season. Each sport presents its own challenging rules, and our team is committed to providing clear, consistent communication to coaches, administrators, and officials throughout the year. The MHSA is here to support you—please don't hesitate to reach out anytime for information or assistance.

We are excited to introduce the new MHSA website, featuring a fresh, modern look designed to better serve our schools, communities, and fans. The updated platform is fully mobile-friendly, making it easier than ever to access information on the go. Because your school entered into Arbiter, all basketball schedules and scores are now readily available in one convenient location, allowing fans to stay connected throughout the season. We hope you enjoy the improved experience and the enhanced accessibility the new site provides.

We are also pleased to report that the MHSA fall championships went extremely well. I believe this may have been the best weather we've ever experienced for a fall season. On behalf of the MHSA Staff and Executive Board, I want to extend our appreciation to every school and community that hosted postseason events. These championships would not be possible without the dedicated school personnel and community volunteers who work tirelessly to ensure their success. This year marked the eleventh season in which the MHSA, in partnership with the NFHS Network, broadcast most fall state championship events. The Network will continue its coverage during the winter season, including state wrestling and state basketball. Broadcast schedules will be posted on the MHSA website's home page, and all streamed events can be accessed directly through [www.mhsa.org](http://www.mhsa.org).

The MHSA Executive Board just completed their November meeting where they acted on numerous items of importance to the membership. The complete synopsis of those actions is posted on [mhsa.org](http://mhsa.org) and was emailed recently to member schools, including specific items that were tentatively passed pending two-week notice for comments from affected schools. Please review those items for comment and contact me with any remarks, concerns or questions.

For the MHSA Annual Meeting, we have had seven proposals submitted. The proposals this year will create excellent discussion at the annual meeting. I must state once again (even with seven) that the limited number of proposals submitted is a credit to the member schools, to the Executive Board and to the MHSA Staff for being proactive in addressing and resolving issues. Also, included is the MHSA budget for 2026-2027 with a 6% increase. Last year's budget reflected the same increase. **It is very important to note that this budget increase will not add any additional cost for the member schools.** The reason for the increase is because the MHSA has been able to increase our corporate partnerships revenue with our new partnership with Playfly to manage our relationships with the corporate partners. We will use this additional revenue to add many more services to the MHSA Membership, including developing a new MHSA website and many more additional tools. The last dues increase was in 2005 and most of that increase went to establish the legal and technology reserves. We are now able to use the additional corporate partnership revenue and the NFHS Network money for the general fund, which is a better source for supplemental revenue than having to impose dues increases on member schools. If you have any questions regarding the budget, please feel free to contact me.

It is hard to believe that the Holiday Season is here once again. Our most important holiday wish is for you and all your family to have a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year. And, as always, if you have any questions, concerns, comments, or suggestions please contact us.

Brian Michelotti - Executive Director

## IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS

### MHSA OFFICE SCHEDULE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

This is a reminder to the MHSA member schools that the Association office will be closed December 22nd through January 1st. The office will resume regular hours beginning at 8:00 a.m. on Friday, January 2, 2025.

### FALL SPORTS SEASON CHAMPIONS

The MHSA Staff and Executive Board would like to thank those schools that were such gracious hosts for staff and board members who attended or managed state events. The following schools won sport/athletic championships in Fall 2025:

#### **Girls' Golf**

AA Bozeman Hawks  
A Billings Central Rams

#### **Boys' Golf**

AA Missoula Sentinel Spartans  
A Corvallis Blue Devils

#### **Girls' Cross Country**

AA Bozeman Hawks  
A Hardin Bulldogs  
B Jefferson Panthers

#### **Boys' Cross Country**

AA Bozeman Hawks  
A Hardin Bulldogs  
B Harlem Wildcats

C Drummond Trojans            C Cascade Badgers

**Girls' Soccer**

AA Senior Broncs  
A Columbia Falls Wildcats

**Boys' Soccer**

AA Gallatin Raptors  
A Polson Pirates

**Football**

AA Glacier Wolfpack  
A Frenchtown Broncs  
B Manhattan Tigers  
8-Player Scobey Spartans  
C6-Player Chester-Joplin-Inverness Hawks

**Volleyball**

AA Gallatin Raptors            B Shepherd Fillies  
A Billings Central Rams        C Circle Wildcats

**SPORTS EJECTIONS/SPORTSMANSHIP**

To date, there have been forty three (43) ejections, compared to forty-eight (28) at this same time last year.

The Board approved updated language clarifying the MHSAs Ejection Policy. Under these new interpretations, a coach or spectator who is ejected must leave the site immediately and shall not be present on-site or within sight, sound, or communication for the remainder of that day of competition. A student who is ejected may be allowed to remain on the team bench as long as they do not create further disturbance. However, officials may require the student to leave, in which case they must be accompanied by an adult.

Sportsmanship must be a top priority in every school. We encourage every member school to reinforce all of the sportsmanship rules and regulations that have been adopted and to continue to emphasize proper sporting behavior at all levels. As your students continue to view poor examples of sportsmanship which are seen on national television, please share with them how proper sporting behavior can be achieved in Montana high school activities. By working together, we will reduce these ejection numbers for winter sports.

To assist in promoting and recognizing sportsmanship in your school, the MHSAs is pleased that Stockman Bank is continuing as the sponsor of the MHSAs/Stockman Bank Sportsmanship Program. The MHSAs/Stockman Bank Sportsmanship Program provides recognition for good sporting behaviors at regular season games through the medal program for players along with schools being able to recognize longtime fans for their positive support of high school activities as an MHSAs/Stockman Bank Super Fan. Please contact the MHSAs office to participate in these worthwhile programs that are offered at no cost to all MHSAs schools.

**OFFICIALS' BALLOTS FOR TOURNAMENTS - Amy**

Ballot information for wrestling and basketball officials' will be emailed to school contacts from the Association office following the holiday break.

Basketball and Wrestling ballots will be completed through an electronic balloting system and will not require a ballot to be emailed as in previous years. Please follow the directions to complete the ballot process electronically.

To be included in the tabulation process all ballots must be received in the MHSAs office no later than the written deadline. Schools that do not complete the ballot by the deadline date will receive a \$100 fine.

**Reciprocity for officials**

Any Montana High School Association varsity contest (including football games held in Grenora, ND) must be officiated by MOA certified officials or by a member of the North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming and/or Idaho officials' association who has paid reciprocity dues to the MOA.

Also, each MOA or non-MOA official who works MHSAs contests (varsity or sub varsity) must complete the NFHS Concussion in Sports course each year.

**XII. RECIPROCAL MEMBERSHIP IN BORDERING STATES**

Members of the MOA can join as members of the official's association in the bordering states of North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming and/or Idaho by paying dues of \$20.00 per sport to that/those particular state's organization. Dues must be paid before the official works a contest. This five-state agreement entitles members of each respective organization to officiate in any state(s) in which they maintain membership. Reciprocal arrangements with non-bordering states must be approved by the MOA office. Contact Amy Bartels at [abartels@mhsa.org](mailto:abartels@mhsa.org) for more information on how a reciprocal official may register to officiate.

**ANNUAL MEETING PLANS**

**CHECKLIST FOR 2026 ANNUAL MEETING**

The MHSAs Annual Meeting will be held at the Delta Hotel in Helena January 19, 2026.

Here is a checklist of all relevant details to help your school prepare for that event:

- ✓ **ANNUAL MEETING IN HELENA**
- ✓ The next MHSAs Annual Meeting will be held in Helena on January 19, 2026. The Delta Hotels is the host facility: for online registration, you can use the following link to book directly: [Room Reservations](#) The last day to book rooms is Tuesday, January 6, 2026.
- ✓ Reservations can be made by contacting Delta Hotels at 406-443-2100. The block is under MHSAs Annual meeting with a rate of \$139/night plus tax. If you use online registration, you can use the link above to book directly online.
- ✓ **MHSAs Annual Meeting Registration** - Kip
- ✓ [Click Link - 2026 MHSAs Annual Meeting Registration Link](#)
- ✓ The deadline for registration is January 6, 2025.
- ✓ **Proposals:** The proposals for consideration at this year's meeting are enclosed and are also posted at [www.mhsa.org](http://www.mhsa.org). The proposals also will be emailed to schools.
- ✓ **Budget:** The proposed budget for the next fiscal year is included with this publication.
- ✓ **Agenda/Schedule of Activities:** A detailed agenda and a complete schedule will be emailed to member schools after the Christmas break
- ✓ **MIAAA Meeting:** The MIAAA will hold its regular meeting at 7:30 pm on Sunday in conjunction with the Annual Meeting.
- ✓ **Master Basketball Scheduling Committee:** The Master Basketball Scheduling Committee will meet after the conclusion of the Annual Meeting on Monday, January 19. For more information contact Greta Buehler at 442-6010.
- ✓ **Other Meetings:** If there are groups that plan to meet in conjunction with the Annual Meeting and a representative has not notified the MHSAs of those meetings, please contact our office immediately to reserve a meeting room.

**MHSAs EXECUTIVE BOARD ELECTIONS AND APPOINTMENTS**

The term of one MHSAs Executive Board member will expire in the coming year.

John Fitzgerald, Red Lodge Public Schools Superintendent has served as the Class B representative for the past four years and will complete the term of service for which he was elected.

The resulting vacancies will be addressed as follows:

There will be an election of new board member for the Class B representative.

Class B Representative

Dustin Gordon Fairfield, Superintendent has been nominated for the Montana High School Association Board of Directors as the Class B Representative. A veteran educator with 30 years of service, Gordon has spent the last 20 years in the Fairfield School District, beginning his tenure as a high school mathematics teacher before advancing to the role of high school principal for over a decade. Dustin is currently in his 6th year as Superintendent of Schools at Fairfield. Prior to assuming district leadership, Gordon coached multiple athletic programs over a 30-year coaching career, primarily in basketball. His successful commitment to student-athletes in Montana athletics is reflected in his induction into the Montana Coaches Association Hall of Fame.

## **WRESTLING**

### **DEADLINE FOR WRESTLING WEIGHT CERTIFICATION FORMS**

Schools are required to create separate Track Wrestling accounts for boys' and girls' wrestling. Schools need to enter their rosters, schedules and WR1 information online at the Track Wrestling website. WR1 information must be completed and entered into the Track Wrestling System prior to December 23, 2025, for the current season. Schools then will enter weigh-ins after each tournament and then tournament managers will be able to print 50 percent rule forms for each wrestler prior to the divisional tournaments. Do not send the WR#1 card to the MHSAA office.

### **ALUMNI PARTICIPATION**

Alumni participation in practices or scrimmages is not allowed. By MHSAA rules, only students who meet all MHSAA eligibility requirements such as enrollment, age, semesters, academics, physical examinations, etc. are eligible to practice with and participate on member school teams.

## **BASKETBALL**

### **ALLOWABLE NON-VARSITY BASKETBALL CONTEST FORMATS, GAME AND QUARTER LIMITS**

1. Contest is four (4) quarters of eight (8) minutes in length:  
Game limit – Contest counts as one (1) game toward the game limitation for that squad.  
Quarter limit – Each eight-minute quarter in which a student-athlete participates counts as one quarter toward the quarter rule limit.
2. Contest is three (3) quarters of eight (8) minutes in length:  
Game limit – Contest counts as one (1) game toward the game limitation for that squad.  
Quarter limit – Each eight-minute quarter in which a student-athlete participates counts as one quarter toward the quarter rule limit.
3. Contest is two (2) quarters of eight (8) minutes in length:  
Game limit – Contest counts as one-half (1/2) game toward the game limitation for that squad.  
Quarter limit – Each eight-minute quarter in which a student-athlete participates counts as one quarter toward the quarter rule limit.
4. Contest is four (4) quarters of four (4) minutes in length:  
Game limit – Contest counts as one-half (1/2) game toward the game limitation for that squad.  
Quarter limit – Participation in any part of one (1) or two (2) four-minute quarters counts as one (1) quarter toward the quarter rule limit. Participation in any part of three or four four-minute quarters counts as two quarters toward the quarter rule limit.
5. Contest is two (2) quarters of eight (8) minutes in length and two (2) quarters of four (4) minutes in length:  
Game limit – Contest counts as one (1) game toward the game limitation for that squad.  
Quarter limit – Each eight-minute quarter in which a student-athlete participates counts as one (1) quarter toward the quarter rule limit. Participation in any part of one or two four-minute quarters counts as one quarter toward the quarter rule limit.

### **ALLOWABLE UNIFORMS**

Home teams MUST wear white uniforms (NFHS basketball rule 3-4-1c). Gray is not an acceptable "light" uniform. A waiver of this rule can be requested from the MHSAA for special situations such as an overnight trip with back-to-back games.

### **ALUMNI PARTICIPATION**

Alumni participation in practices or scrimmages is not allowed. By MHSAA rules, only students who meet all MHSAA eligibility requirements such as enrollment, age, semesters, academics, physical examinations, etc. are eligible to practice with and participate on member school teams. Exception: students who are eligible in every way except academics may participate in practice if the school allows. Individuals must have a minimum of eight (8) days of practice prior to participating in a MHSAA basketball contest. An alumni scrimmage/game is considered a game and would count toward the 18-game limit for a team.

### **CLUB TEAM PARTICIPATION**

During the MHSAA basketball season, no more than two rostered participant's in a school's program can compete in an outside basketball event on the same team.

## **MHSAA AIM HIGHER WORKSHOP**

### **AIM HIGHER WORKSHOPS**

All schools are invited to send students to come enjoy the fun and interaction offered during the MHSAA AIM Higher workshops. In the morning session leadership, mentoring, mental health, hazing awareness, and vaping prevention are the focus, while the entire afternoon is dedicated to sportsmanship. For lunch, participants are treated to pizza and drinks. New activities are added each year and if you have not been to a workshop in a few years, please consider participating because we know your school, students and faculty will find the day rewarding.

The next workshop will be held in Billings on December 10, 2025. Please submit your registration as soon as possible if you are interested in attending.

## **MOA**

### **REMINDERS**

As we start the winter sports for both girls' and boys' basketball and wrestling, please keep in mind the need to house all your officials in secure places where their safety is ensured. Please escort them off the court to their room and be aware of their need for security as they leave your building. We have had some reports of placing officials with teams in team locker rooms or in classrooms, which would be unacceptable.

Remember, per MHSAA/MOA rules, schools must go through the local officials' pool when hiring MOA officials. Also, all varsity contests require MOA registered officials. Any hiring question may be directed to Amy Bartels at [abartels@mhsaa.org](mailto:abartels@mhsaa.org).

## **SPIRIT - Amy**

### **Administrator's Checklist of Spirit Programs**

With the proper procedures, safety rules, supervision and equipment in place, cheerleading can be a very rewarding, relatively safe activity for young people. The following checklist is provided for administrators to help them provide a safe environment for their cheerleading program. It is recommended that the administrator and the cheer coach meet periodically to discuss needs, objectives, and goals of the program.

- Has your cheer/dance coach completed the mandatory Cheer and Dance Safety Course (only if team stunts), NFHS Concussion Course and MHSAA Rules Clinic? All administrators need to monitor spirit coaches certifications.

- Is there supervision at all official events (practices, games, etc.)?
- Is adequate matting provided?
- Does the squad follow a conditioning and flexibility program?
- Is the coach trained in proper skill development /progression and safety procedures?
- Are there written, oral and posted warnings concerning the risk involved?
- Is there an “emergency plan” in place?

- Spirit participants shall stand outside the free-throw lane lines extended toward the sidelines throughout a basketball game.
- Spirit participants shall remain outside of the playing area during a 30-second or less time-out during a basketball game.
- Participants must not stunt or tumble during a basketball game when the ball is in play, including free throws.

**Spirit Participation at State Events:**

All Spirit participants (cheer & dance) will access the state event via the participants entrance each day with a coach. Beginning for the 2025-2026 school year MHSAs will not issue a state pass for Spirit participants.

**Reminders for Basketball Spirit Participants**

Per rules found in the National Federation Spirit Rules Book specifically pertaining to basketball, please note the following:

**ATTACHMENTS (Links)**

1. [Proposals for the 2026 Meeting](#)
2. [Annual Meeting Registration Information](#)
3. [2026-2027 Proposed Budget \(Link\)](#)



***Enjoy a happy and safe holiday season!***

Staff Members

Brian Michelotti, Executive Director  
 Kip Ryan, Senior Associate Director  
 Scott Wilson, Associate Director  
 Amy Bartels, Assistant Director  
 Greta Buehler, Assistant Director  
 Jenise Cockhill, Business Manager  
 Ryan Richards, Corporate Sponsorships



Executive Board Members

John Fitzgerald, Superintendent, Red Lodge School (President)  
 Aric Harris, Activities Director, Whitefish School (Vice President)  
 Joe McElroy, State Superintendent’s Appointee, Missoula  
 Dan Mills, Principal, Bozeman High School  
 Kara Triplett, Superintendent, Lambert School  
 Krystal Zentner, MTSBA Appointee, Bridger  
 Jimmy Patelis, Governor’s Appointee, Billings  
 Dee Pretty on Top, American Indian Representative, Lodge Grass

**MHSA thanks all the following corporate sponsors for their steadfast support of Montana's activities!**



**BlueCross BlueShield**  
of Montana

