

Q: Once the Below Grade 9 student/athlete has been granted a waiver to participate on a high school team are they eligible to participate on a middle school team?

A: They become a bona fide member of that respective team and are prevented from missing a high school, practice/competition to participate on a middle level/Jr. high team. Whenever a conflict arises between the high school team practice and a middle Level/Jr. High game, approval must be granted by the principal or athletic director. It is expressly understood that no waiver will be granted to the BG9 athlete in regards to missing an interscholastic game. Any student/athlete violating this rule will lose their waiver to participate on the high school team.

Q: What constitutes a sub-varsity team in the sports of gymnastics, golf, skiing, tennis, indoor track, outdoor track, and cross country?

A: Separate schedules must be developed for the sub-varsity team and the varsity team.

Q: How will the Below Grade 9 Athletic Participation Committee handle requests by schools if they arise during the season (i.e. injury, illness, transfer, etc.)?

A: A sub-committee of three members of the Below Grade 9 Athletic Participation Committee shall handle emergencies which arise. All requests must be submitted in writing from the principal of the member school.

Q: May below grade nine athletes participate in NHIAA Tournament events?

A: Only those students who have been granted waivers for participation at the varsity level during the regular season shall be permitted to participate in an NHIAA Tournament event.

Q: If a waiver is granted for junior varsity participation, is that student eligible to be brought up to the varsity team for tournament play?

A: No. If the waiver is not granted for varsity participation that student athlete is not allowed to participate at the varsity level for tournament play. If an injury or emergency arises which would then require the student athlete's participation, a new waiver request would have to be submitted at that time.

Q: If a below grade nine student athlete is granted a waiver to participate in a sport that allows individuals to enter the State Tournament (i.e. cross country, golf, gymnastics, indoor track, outdoor track, skiing, and tennis.), is that student athlete eligible to participate in the state tournament?

A: In sports where student athletes may participate as individuals, students in grades 9-12 shall be given the first opportunity to participate in the State Tournament before any below grade nine student athletes are entered. A below grade nine student athlete cannot displace a high school student athlete.

Q: Will the high school principal have to appear before the Below Grade 9 Athletic Participation Committee to request a waiver?

A: No. The principal will not have to appear before the Below Grade 9 Athletic Participation Committee; however, if the school wishes to appeal the Committee's decision, the principal will have to appear before the Executive Director and/or Council Appeals Board.

Q: May appeals be handled in writing and/or by telephone?

A: Appeals will only be accepted in writing by the Principal of the member school to the Executive Director of the NHIAA.

Q: May another school official represent the school at an appeals hearing?

A: Yes. The principal may designate a representative to attend the appeals hearing if written documentation is provided.



OFFICIAL INTERPRETATION OF BY-LAW ARTICLE XIII: BELOW GRADE 9 ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION

2026-27

NHIAA BY-LAW ARTICLE XIII: BELOW GRADE 9 ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION IMPORTANT CHANGES / KEY POINTS

Use this quick-reference for the most important Below Grade 9 participation rules. Full by-law language remains in the handbook.

Sect. 3: effective Fall 2026-27

Division III schools 8th grade students who legally reside in their district may play on a sub-varsity team provided those students are needed to maintain the school's sub-varsity program and a waiver has been granted by the Below Grade Nine Athletic Participation Committee.

Division III schools may use 8th grade students to participate at the varsity level, if a waiver has been granted by the Below Grade Nine Athletic Participation Committee, in the following sports: cross country, golf, gymnastics, indoor track, outdoor track, skiing, and tennis.

The Below Grade Nine Committee will consider deviation requests from Division III schools regarding the use of eighth graders at the varsity level. Consideration will be given for the purpose of solely fulfilling a varsity roster. The roster number shall not exceed the minimum number to play the varsity sport.

Sect. 5: effective Fall 2028-29

Schools petitioning up in a sport will be subject to the Below Grade Nine By-Laws that governs their petitioned division. If there are less than four divisions in a sport and a school's enrollment places them in a higher division in that sport, as a Division III or IV school(per By-Law Article IV: Classification) they would still have the right to seek a waiver from the Below Grade 9 Committee.

GUIDELINES FOR MINIMUM NUMBER OF ATHLETES NECESSARY TO FIELD A TEAM

SPORT	Varsity	Sub-Varsity
BASEBALL	15	12
BASKETBALL	12	10
BASS FISHING	2	
BOWLING	8	8
CROSS COUNTRY	7	
FIELD HOCKEY	15	15
FOOTBALL	Review each request based on merits	
GOLF	8	
GYMNASTICS	6	
ICE HOCKEY	20	
INDOOR TRACK - BOYS	15	
INDOOR TRACK - GIRLS	15	
BOYS LACROSSE	18	16
GIRLS LACROSSE	18	16
OUTDOOR TRACK - BOYS	15	
OUTDOOR TRACK - GIRLS	15	
SKIING (Per Discipline)	10	
SOCCER	18	15
SOFTBALL	15	12
SPIRIT	8	
SWIMMING & DIVING	1	
TENNIS	8	6
VOLLEYBALL	9	9
WRESTLING (dependent upon weight classes)	14	

CRITERIA FOR GRANTING WAIVERS

1. The student athlete must be necessary for the school to field a team in that sport.
2. The student athlete cannot take the place of an athlete in grades 9 through 12.
3. The student athlete must meet all NHIAA eligibility requirements.
4. The student athlete must legally reside in the same school district as the high school.
5. In individual sports, students in grades 9 through 12 shall represent their school in competition at the State Tournament. They cannot, under any circumstances, be displaced by a Below Grade 9 student athlete in a competition.

INTERPRETATIONS

Q: Who shall determine the size of the school's team?

A: The Below Grade 9 Athletic Participation Committee, in conjunction with the specific sports committees, shall determine a reasonable size for a school's team.

Q: When will the Below Grade 9 Athletic Participation Committee take action on waiver requests?

A: All waiver requests are due one week following the first date to practice for that sport. Upon receipt of these requests, a waiver review meeting will be scheduled prior to the first date to play in that season.

Q: Does "under the direction of a Principal" mean the students must attend school in the same building as the high school principal?

A: No. If the Board of Education of an NHIAA member school also governs those students.

Q: Will 8th graders be "grandfathered" if they participated on a high school team last year?

A: No. Students will not be "grandfathered". Any participation by a below grade nine student must be granted through the waiver process after meeting the criteria required.

Q: Is a below grade nine student eligible to **practice** with a high school team without having to seek a waiver from the Below Grade 9 Athletic Participation Committee?

A: In order for a below grade nine athlete to play on or with a high school team, that athlete must receive a waiver from the Below Grade 9 Athletic Participation Committee. With regard to practice, it is the responsibility of the high school principal to determine whether a below grade nine athlete may **participate in non-sectioned preseason events** with a team if a waiver has not been granted by the Below Grade 9 Athletic Participation Committee. i.e. scrimmages/jamborees