



NEW HAMPSHIRE INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

MIDDLE SCHOOL LEAGUE

Policy and Procedures Manual

Membership in the NHIAA Middle School League is open to all schools housing a minimum of Grades 7 and 8 that offer interscholastic athletics for students in Grades 5-8.



NHIAA Middle School Committee

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NHIAA Mission Statement

The mission of the NHIAA is to serve its member schools through collaboration and partnership by providing leadership in the administration of education-based athletics.

We believe education-based athletics:

- Enriches the educational experience
- Encourages academic achievement
- Promotes respect and sportsmanship
- Builds interpersonal skills and collaboration
- Encourages a positive school and community culture
- Promotes healthy lifestyles
- Supports safe competitions
- Fosters opportunities
- Should be fun

NHIAA Vision Statement

The vision of the NHIAA is that interscholastic athletic programs and competitions are an integral part of a student's academic, social, emotional, and physical development and thus, educational experience.

NHIAA Middle School League Vision

To ensure consistency, fairness and alignment with the standards and expectations set forth by the New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association. Specifically, the NHIAA Middle School League seeks to:

- Provide the opportunity for continuity between middle school and high school athletic programs.
- each essential life skills like teamwork, discipline, leadership, resiliency, and self-confidence.
- Promote the overall health and well-being of students.
- Focus on skill development.
- Aid in the transition between middle school and high school
- Align with the values of the high school and the greater community
- Standardize practice and application of the rules and foster communication.
- Establish consistency in coaching through mandatory training
- Ensure that athletics are an essential extension of the classroom.

NHIAA Middle School League Disclaimer

If not explicitly stated or modified in the NHIAA Middle School League Policies and Procedures Manual, all rules of the NHIAA shall apply. This league shall be administered by the NHIAA Middle School Committee, and the rules of the National Federation will govern except as modified by the committee or within each sport.

Points of Emphasis

Sportsmanship

- All participants—student-athletes, coaches, and spectators—are expected to demonstrate the highest standards of sportsmanship at all times. Respect for opponents, officials, teammates, and the game itself is essential.
- All programs will adhere to NHIAA By-Law Article IX regarding sportsmanship. Any student-athlete or coach who is disqualified or ejected from a contest will be subject to the consequences outlined in Article IX, Section 6
- Schools should clearly communicate expectations for behavior to students, families, and fans, emphasizing positive support, respectful conduct, and appropriate responses to game situations

Required Equipment and Forfeiture Policy

- Teams are expected to be properly prepared and equipped for all contests
- In accordance with NFHS rules, if a team is unable to field the required number of players due to missing mandatory equipment (e.g., mouthguards, protective eyewear), the team will be required to forfeit the contest

Player Safety: Concussion Protocols

- Student safety remains a top priority in all athletic programs
- The NHIAA mandates adherence to NFHS guidelines for the management of concussions. Any athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion must be immediately removed from play and may not return to participation until cleared by an appropriate healthcare professional
- For additional guidance, please refer to NHIAA By-Law Article III: Sports Medicine, Section 13 (Concussions), as well as the requirements outlined in New Hampshire SB402

Uniforms

- Every attempt should be made to comply with all NFHS uniform rules.
- If a member school is unable to comply with these rules, the home team will change uniforms or wear pinnies if officials request greater contrast between the uniforms of the opposing teams.

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NHIAA Middle School League Rules and Regulations

1. Sports offered

Fall Season

- Cross Country - Boys & Girls
- Field Hockey - Girls
- Soccer - Boys & Girls
- Unified Soccer* - Coed
- Volleyball - Girls

Winter Season

- Basketball - Boys & Girls
- Unified Basketball* - Coed
- Winter Spirit - Coed
- Wrestling - Coed

Spring Season

- Baseball - Boys
- Lacrosse - Boys & Girls
- Softball - Girls
- Outdoor Track & Field - Boys & Girls

* Unified sports teams consist of students with and without intellectual disabilities competing together on the same team.

2. Classification

a. NHIAA By-Law Article IV shall apply except as modified below:

- i. Classification for all schools will be made for each two (2) years. The NHIAA Middle School Committee reserves the right to alter the length of the classification cycle during the implementation of the NHIAA Middle School League.
- ii. Enrollment figures will be used from the October 1st report as submitted to the NHIAA Executive Director from NHIAA member schools. The enrollment figures must be the same as those reported by the School/District to the Department of Education as their official enrollment figures for that year. School enrollment figures will be verified for accuracy against the DOE official figures.
- iii. Classification numbers will be reported for incoming grades 7 & 8 only.
- iv. Petitioning - Schools may petition only up **in all sports per school** during the realignment process. Please see NHIAA By-Law Article IV Sect.4 A-D for additional information regarding the process. In addition to the approval process outlined in BLA IV Sect. 4, the NHIAA Middle School Committee will need to approve all middle school petitions.

- v. New schools entering within a classification cycle will be placed according to their current enrollment figures.
- vi. Cooperative teams (teams composed of students from more than one member school; except as noted in 3.c. below) at the middle school level will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
 - 1. Schools may apply for cooperative team approval if they meet the following criteria:
 - a. Schools involved in the cooperative team must be NHIAA Middle School League members.
 - b. There is a corresponding cooperative team at the high school level.
 - c. All member schools (maximum of three) feed the same high school.
 - d. Schools within the cooperative team would not otherwise be able to support their own program.
 - e. Every cooperative team will acknowledge a NO CUT POLICY on the application.
 - 2. The NHIAA Executive Director is empowered to grant permission for schools to create and/or renew middle school cooperative teams.
 - 3. See NHIAA By-Law Article IV Section 9 for more information.
- vii. Classification of the NHIAA Middle School League will be set by the NHIAA Middle School committee.

3. Eligibility

- a. NHIAA By-Law Article II shall apply except as modified below:
- b. Upon entering grade five, a student is eligible for competition whether or not he/she competes in NHIAA Middle School League Interscholastic Athletics, for no more than four (4) consecutive school years.
 - i. *Rationale: A maximum participation requirement: promotes timely progress toward promotion to high school by discouraging students from delaying or interrupting their middle school education; disallows students to enroll for one (1) semester/trimester each school year to increase athletic ability and skill; promotes equality of competition; diminishes risks stemming from unequal competition; and places the emphasis on the academic mission of the school.*
- c. All students in the enrolled middle school in grades five through eight will be eligible to compete in League sponsored contests as long as they are housed in the school they represent and meet the eligibility standards set forth by their local board of education.
 - i. Students in grade five or six not housed in the member middle school may, by petition, represent the member school.
 - 1. Criteria to compete:
 - a. The school they attend is a direct feeder school to the member middle school.
 - b. The students are necessary to field the team.

Guidelines For Minimum Number Of Athletes Necessary
To Field A Team

Baseball - 15
Basketball - 12
Cross Country - 7
Field Hockey - 15
Lacrosse - 18
Outdoor Track - 15
Soccer - 18
Softball - 15
Spirit - 8
Volleyball - 9
Wrestling - 14

2. Petition process similar to the Below Grade 9 process

- d. A student who has reached the age of 15 on or after September 1 may represent the school in any middle school contest during that school year.
- e. Charter or Home School students who reside in a middle school's district wishing to play sports at the NHIAA member school should refer to bylaw Article 2 Section 13 .
- f. A student approved for high school varsity participation by the NHIAA Below Grade Nine Committee, pursuant to NHIAA By-Law Article XIII, is eligible to participate on a middle school team during the regular season. However, the student may participate in only one postseason tournament—either high school or middle school.
- g. Non-school competition
 - i. A member of a school team is a student athlete who is regularly present for, and actively participates in, team tryouts, practices and competitions. Bona fide members, as of the first date to practice in that sport as listed in By-Law Article XXXIX of the NHIAA Handbook, of a school team are prevented from missing a middle school practice or competition to compete with an out-of-school team, practice or competition to include tournaments, showcases, combines or other athletic events. Whenever a conflict arises between the middle school team practice/competition and an out-of-school practice/competition on the same day, the middle school team practice/competition must be honored by the student athlete. Priority must be given at all times to the middle school team, its practices, and its contests unless a waiver has been granted by the principal and athletic director. It is expressly understood that waivers shall not be granted on a regular basis and shall only be granted in extraordinary circumstances.
 - ii. Penalties: Any student athlete who violates this rule, unless a waiver has been granted as stated above, for the first time shall be declared ineligible for the next two (2) consecutive interscholastic events. This Penalty is effective from the date of his or her last participation in a middle school sport. Any student athlete who violates this rule a second time shall be declared ineligible for the next four (4) consecutive interscholastic events. Any student athlete who violates this rule a third time shall be deemed

ineligible to participate in any middle school sport for the balance of the school year. If the penalty occurs near or at the end of the season, it is expected that the ineligibility carries to the next season.

- h. Middle school coaches are exempt from NHIAA By-Law Article II Section 9, Out of Season Contact.
 - i. Refer to NHIAA By-Law Article II Section 19 Deviations from eligibility.
- 4. Sportsmanship**
- a. Refer to NHIAA By-Law Article IX regarding sportsmanship.
 - b. Any student or coach disqualified/ejected from an event is subject to the NHIAA By-Law Article IX Section 6.
- 5. Scholastic Standing**
- a. No student who has failed to pass half of their graded classes during the school's previous grading period (quarter/trimester) shall represent the school in any NHIAA Middle School League Varsity contests.
 - b. It is expected that the school principal will follow the intent of the By-Law when certifying academic eligibility for student athletes.
 - c. Students entering the first grade level of a middle school (grade 5 for a 5-8 school; grade 6 for a 6-8 school; grade 7 for a 7-8 school) for the first time in the fall are exempt from the Scholastic Standing requirements outlined in this By-Law.
- 6. Contest Officials**
- a. All schools shall pay the NHIAA subvarsity rate to officials working regular season contests (see NHIAA By-Law Article XI)
 - b. Playoff officials will be assigned by the NHIAA Middle School League.
 - c. All championship events officials shall be paid the varsity rate of pay.
 - d. All assignors fees shall comply with NHIAA By-Law Article XI
 - e. All League members shall make every attempt to secure competent officials for all contests held at their home site. The number of officials for each contest shall be the number required by NHIAA By-Law for sub-varsity competition.
 - f. Whenever possible the home team or League tournament director will provide officials meeting the following criteria:
 - 1. First choice - Certified Officials
 - 2. Second choice - Certified Official and Apprentice Official
 - 3. Third choice - Apprentice Officials
 - 4. Last resort - Volunteer Official that will allow the game to be played
 - g. If a game is to be played with anything less than "Certified Officials" (First Choice), it should be by mutual consent of the Athletic Directors of the participating teams prior to the day of the event.
- 7. Post-Season Tournament**
- a. Schools must schedule and play a minimum number of games vs NHIAA Middle School League members to be eligible for post season play. (See NHIAA Middle School Scheduling Calendar)

- i. All schools meeting this standard will be eligible for post season play regardless of record.
 - ii. Upon the last date to compete, all schools meeting the criteria to participate must declare their intent to participate in the post season.
 - iii. Schools must submit results of their in-division games at the end of the regular season to ensure the minimum number of in-division games have been played to qualify for the post season.
- b. Tournaments brackets will be established by random draw and so that regional competitions will take place during the early rounds (preliminary rounds through the quarters).
- c. Dates for tournaments cannot be changed except by the hosting school district for events at the home of the higher seed for weather related issues.

8. Awards

- a. Championship and runner up awards will follow the NHIAA High School model.

9. Corresponding Dates

- a.  Middle School Scheduling Calendar

10. Scheduling

- a. Schools wishing to qualify for the post-season tournament must schedule and play the minimum number of games required against NHIAA Middle School League members, regardless of division. Every effort must be made to fulfill all scheduled games. Per NHIAA By-Law Article I, Section 13-C, the NHIAA Middle School League reserves the right to sanction schools that consistently drop league games. Teams participating in a season prior to the official start date may complete their regular season but will be ineligible for the post-season tournament.
- b. If a school starts the sports season early and it is brought to the attention of the NHIAA Middle School Committee then that team could play their regular season but would not be eligible for the tournament.
- c. A school may play up to the maximum number of contests regardless of division and or affiliation with the NHIAA Middle School League.
- d. Teams may participate in no more than two tournaments or jamborees during the regular season. These events will not be part of the official schedule and will not count toward the regular season record or standings. These events also do not count toward the maximum number of events allowed in a season. Such events are exempt from NHIAA By-Law Article VIII Sanctioning.
- e. Schedules of games against NHIAA Middle School League members must be submitted to the NHIAA by the dates listed in the corresponding dates. The NHIAA Middle School Committee will verify minimum and maximum contest requirements prior to tournament seeding.

11. NHIAA Middle School Uniform

- a. Every attempt should be made to comply with all NFHS uniform rules.
- b. If a member school is unable to comply with these rules, the home team will change uniforms or wear pinnies if officials request greater contrast between the

uniforms of the opposing teams.

12. Dues & Fees*

- a. Dues are \$100 per school plus an additional \$100 per sport per gender. For example: boys soccer and girls soccer are two separate sports charged at \$100 each.
- b. Coach enrollment fee is \$25/coach.
- c. These fees will be implemented the first full year of the NHIAA Middle School League.

13. Coaches' Eligibility

Middle school coaches are expected to meet NHIAA By-Law Article I Section 32 regarding Coaches Eligibility.

The requirement of completing a Coaching Principles course may be satisfied by completing the NFHS Middle School Coaching course.

14. Admission Fees for NHIAA Middle School League Championship Events

- a. Individual schools will be responsible for all game management costs including payment to the officials for all tournament rounds prior to the championship event.
- b. If a school chooses to charge admission at tournament games, the admission fees shall not exceed NHIAA Admission Fees as listed in Article I Section 18.
- c. Admission for all Championship events will be Students or Senior Citizens \$5 and Adults \$10.

15. Due Process

- a. The intent of establishing "Due Process Procedures" is to provide: A. The opportunity as required By-Law and as an integral part of the philosophy of the Association to a due process procedure for appeals for members of the Association; and, B. To provide a process for receiving input for the good of the Association through a concept of "meet and confer" with other interested parties. Since some of the responsibilities of the Association, such as eligibility and school violations, have great impact on students and member schools; procedures are spelled out for these areas. However, this is not intended to exclude any functions of the Association from the concept of due process through "meeting and conferring" with interested parties.
- b. Refer to NHIAA By-Law Article V Due Process Procedures.

16. Agreement to Join

- a. Schools that wish to be a member of the NHIAA Middle School League shall sign and submit the Agreement to Join form by August 1* each year.

17. Registered Sports Form

- a. Member schools will submit a Registered Sports Form by May 1* the previous school year.

18. Sport Committee Representation

- a. Each sport committee will have a middle school representative for all sports offered in the NHIAA Middle School League.

* Dates and fees will be modified for the 2026-27 school year.