

BY-LAW ARTICLE XIII
Below Grade 9 Athletic Participation

Regulations with regard to below grade nine participation on high school sports teams are as follows:

Sect. 1: No below grade seven participation will be allowed in any NHIAA sport at any level (sub-varsity and varsity).

Sect. 2: No below grade nine participation at any level in any sport will be allowed for schools in Divisions I and II (sub-varsity and varsity).

Sect. 3: 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. (CM 5.26)

Sect. 4: Division IV schools 7th and 8th grade students who legally reside in the district may participate, provided those students are needed to maintain the school's program and a waiver has been granted by the Below Grade Nine Athletic Participation Committee.

Sect. 5: 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. (CM 5.26)

Sect. 6: Combined enrollment of the cooperative schools ***shall not*** exceed the divisional alignment numbers, ***set forth by Classification***, in order for Below Grade Nine participation to be ***permitted***.

With respect to the use of Below Grade Nine students in Unified Sports programs, the same guidelines and restrictions used for all other sports will apply to unified sports team. Because of the unique makeup of these teams and the fact that there are students up to the age of 21 involved, in reviewing requests the Below Grade Nine Committee must look at student safety as paramount in granting waivers. Following the basic rule, Division III schools may use grade 8 players and Division IV may use grade 7 and 8 players on their team regardless of the team they are matched with and what division they play in as a team.

Sect. 7: When granted permission by the Classification Committee to petition down in a specific sport(s), a school is entitled to ask the Below Grade 9 Committee for a waiver under the provisions of Sect. 3 and Sect. 4 regardless of the school's original divisional classification. (For example, a Division III school granted permission to participate at the Division IV level in a specific sport would be entitled to request a waiver under the provisions of Sect. 4 of this By-Law in that sport(s) only)

Sect. 8: Below grade nine students who have been granted a below grade nine waiver will be expected to maintain the same academic standards set for high school students.

Sect. 9: If a school uses a below grade nine student athlete without the approved waiver, the team will forfeit all contests in which the ineligible contestant participated. In sports which team standings are not kept, the NHIAA will deny any requests for waivers in the ensuing year in that sport. If a second violation occurs, that school will be brought before the Below Grade Nine Committee with the possibility of receiving sanctions.

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 grade 9 through 12 shall represent their school in competition at the State Tournament. They cannot, under any circumstances, be displaced by a below grade nine student athlete in a competition.