

Procedures for Adding a New Interscholastic Sport

The following procedures are to be used in submitting for consideration the addition of a new sport/team/activity to the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) high school or middle school interscholastic athletics program. Schools may not have competitive athletic clubs, teams, or activities unless they are approved according to these procedures.

Section A

The initiating agent shall submit a detailed, written proposal to the director of systemwide athletics. Section A shall include the name of the initiating agent, contact information, status or position, a description of the sport or activity, proposed level (club, JV, varsity), and the rationale for adding the new sport or activity.

Other details addressed in Section A include a timeline for implementation, the number of schools involved, and the number of anticipated participants per school.

Section B

The proposal shall address the following factors, considerations, or concerns regarding the new sport or activity.

1. Available Facilities. Are facilities an issue? Facilities are an essential concern in considering the addition of a new sport. For multiple reasons, schools should have appropriate facilities to conduct the activity on-campus. The inability to conduct an activity on-campus impacts on student safety, student participation, and expenses, especially if facilities must be rented. Concerns addressing the use of off-site facilities include:

- Transportation – Will students and parents have to drive considerable distances, on a steady basis, sometimes at unusual hours, to attend practices? The commute to and from practices potentially impacts on students' safety, homework, and evening regimens.
- Emergency response – Are there an abundant number of qualified adults available to assist in the event of an emergency? There are generally numerous qualified adults available to assist in emergencies when teams practice on-campus, including coaches of other teams, athletic/assistant athletic directors, and in some instances, athletic trainers.
- Lack of practice time – Will teams systemwide have adequate practice time? With 25 high schools potentially sharing limited off-campus facilities, sufficient practice time becomes an issue. Adequate practice time is an important safety concern, especially for certain sports where proper technique is essential to the safety of participants.
- Supervision – How will practices and contests be supervised? MCPS coaches and activities are carefully supervised. Athletic coaches are evaluated every year. Supervision issues and concerns prevail when virtually all practices and events are conducted at facilities that are distant from the school, and often at unusual hours. The concern extends to crowd supervision at contests.

2. **Facility Conflicts.** Will the activity create facility conflicts with other sports? The number of teams or activities that currently share or utilize a particular facility is an important factor when it comes to adding a new sport. For instance, in MCPS, 11 teams currently utilize the school gymnasiums on a regular basis for practices and contests. Cheerleading and pompons also frequently utilize the gymnasium, along with teams that must practice indoors in inclement weather. Gym schedules are very tight. Similarly, 12 teams share the stadium field for contests at most MCPS high schools.
3. **Equity.** Will all students, systemwide, be able to afford personal expenses associated with participation in the activity? The impact and appeal of the sport should be equitable across the school system, not just particular areas of the county. In this regard, costs associated with personal equipment required for participation should be reasonable, and student interest should be similar across the county. The sport also should accommodate the interests of both genders.
4. **Title IX.** Does the activity accommodate the interests and provide equal opportunities for both genders? The United States Office of Civil Rights requires public schools and school systems to provide equal opportunities for males and females. Thus, a new sport must accommodate the interests of both genders. Unless a particular sport were truly coed in nature, with equal appeal and participation for both genders, then adding one sport would require adding a male or female counterpart – thus two sports. Impact and cost estimates must include that adding one sport or team per school, would in essence require adding a second team as well – bringing the total to 50 teams systemwide, not 25 teams.
5. **Expense.** Are the expenses associated with the activity similar to the expenses of most sports? The expenses associated with a new activity must be carefully considered, not only in terms of the expense to the school system, but also the expense incurred by students in order to participate. When considering expense, the proposal must be based on full-funding for the sport or activity, not partial funding. The school system will not partially fund an activity.

The financial estimate should be detailed, and should address two components – personal costs for students, and school system cost.

- Personal costs – including transportation (if off-campus), practice clothing, mouth-pieces, shoes (or cleats, skates, etc. depending on the sport), etc.
- School system costs – including coach stipends, transportation, uniforms, equipment, rental fees, supervision, security, etc.
- The final calculation of the cost for adding the new sport should be multiplied by two, unless it is truly a coed sport that includes approximately equal participation by both genders. Otherwise, if a boys' team is added, for instance, a comparable girls' team would need to be added.

- 6. Safety.** Are there safety risks or concerns associated with the activity that go beyond many or most other high school sports? Participant safety is an important concern when considering the addition of a new sport or activity. Some sports include inherent risks that others do not. In addition to safety issues directly associated with the sport, there are other safety concerns that merit consideration, including whether the activity may be conducted on campus, where multiple personnel would be able to assist in the event of a significant injury.
- 7. Student Participation and Attendance.** Will the activity spark student spectator interest and attendance? An important rationale for interscholastic athletics is to promote school spirit, including student participation and attendance at after-school or evening activities. Sports should provide students with outlets and opportunities to support their peers in spirited competition with rival schools.
- 8. Available Coaches.** Are there an abundance of capable coaches, especially within the MCPS teaching ranks? The Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) requires that public schools, when possible, employ teachers for coaching positions. The Montgomery County Education Association (MCEA) also has this expectation. For multiple reasons, it is much more desirable for schools to have teachers occupy coaching positions. An important consideration for adding a new sport must include the availability of qualified MCPS teacher-coaches.
- 9. Compliance with MPSSAA and MCPS rules and regulations.** Will the activity conform to all MCPS and MPSSAA rules and regulations? An important requirement for an activity to be considered an interscholastic sport is that it adhere to all MCPS and MPSSAA rules and parameters. These include no participation on Sundays, the requirement that students attend a particular school in order to participate on teams at that school, travel limitations, limiting participation to within a precise season time period, etc.
- 10. Participation by MPSSAA Schools.** Does the activity have wide appeal among other Maryland public high schools? The new sport should be one that has wide participation among MPSSAA schools. MCPS is a member of the MPSSAA, teams adhere to MPSSAA rules and regulations, teams participate primarily against MPSSAA schools, and teams participate primarily in MPSSAA post season championships.
- 11. Appropriate to a High School Setting.** Is the sport appropriate to a high school setting? There are some sports that are not appropriate to a high school setting for one or multiple reasons. For instance, sports that are associated with an excessive safety risk (such as boxing), or sports associated with intimidation or ridicule (such as dodge ball) may not be appropriate to a high school setting.
- 12. Benefit to Schools and School System.** Does the activity provide a clear benefit to students systemwide and to the school system? The addition of a new sport should accomplish a clear purpose and should have a clear benefit for students, schools, and the school system. Examples of such benefits might include satisfaction of a legal requirement, creating opportunities compatible with opportunities at other public schools, creating participation opportunities for students with disabilities, etc.

Section C

The proposal shall include a description of the systemwide benefits of the new sport or activity. The addition of a new sport should accomplish a clear purpose and should have a clear benefit for students, schools, and the school system. Examples of such benefits might include satisfaction of a legal requirement, creating opportunities compatible with opportunities at other public schools, creating participation opportunities for students with disabilities, etc.

The new activity should have appeal across the school system, and should benefit both genders.

Section D

The proposal will be evaluated as follows.

- a. The director of systemwide athletics will deny or recommend approval of the proposal, based primarily on review of the criteria described in Sections B and C.
 - If denied, the proposal will be returned to the originating agent with an explanation for denying the proposal.
 - If deemed appropriate for further consideration, the proposal will be forwarded to MCPS athletic directors for review.
 - Athletic directors will forward their recommendation to the Montgomery County Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MCPSSAA).
- b. The MCPSSAA will deny or recommend approval of the request, with written rationale accompanying its decision.
 - If the MCPSSAA denies the request, the chairperson will indicate so to the director of systemwide athletics, and will inform the initiating agent of the decision and the rationale.
 - If the MCPSSAA recommends approval of the request, the director of systemwide athletics will submit the recommendation to the chief operating officer.
- c. The chief operating officer will deny or recommend approval for the proposal.