

OHIO HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

4080 Roselea Place, Columbus, OH 43214
Phone 614-267-2502 | Fax 614-267-1677
www.ohsaa.org



A Guide To The Competitive Balance Proposal (Published by the Ohio High School Athletic Association)

Why Competitive Balance Was Addressed

A concern about competitive balance in Ohio High School Athletic Association tournaments was raised by a group of school administrators in northeast Ohio, and a study showed that 43 percent (146 of 340) of the state championships in selected team sports between 1999 and 2010 were won by non-public schools, even though non-public schools make up only 17 percent of the total membership of the OHSAA.

Ohio History on Competitive Balance

Competitive balance is neither unique nor new to Ohio. In fact, there were referendum issues to separate the tournaments between public and non-public schools brought before the OHSAA membership by school administrators in both 1978 and 1993, and both were defeated (83.9 percent to 16.1 percent in 1978; 66.8 percent to 33.2 percent in 1993). In addition, a committee was formed to discuss competitive balance during the 2006-07 school year and no recommendations were made since a consensus could not be reached.

While there is a concern across the state from Ohio's public school coaches and administrators that the current system may not be as fair as they would like, coming forward with a recommendation to improve the system has proven challenging to say the least. While a better solution seems elusive, what does seem to be fairly universal is the comment heard from most coaches and administrators that "in order to be the best, we want to compete against the best." Still others believe separate tournaments are the only way to go, and some have even suggested that an enrollment multiplier be used for non-public schools.

The Competitive Balance Committee and its Charge

The OHSAA Competitive Balance Committee was formed in January 2010. It was comprised of 29 school administrators and coaches from across the state from public and non-public schools both large and small along with members of the OHSAA Board of Directors and administrative staff and representatives from both the state superintendents' and state principals' associations.

The Competitive Balance Committee's charge was to attempt to identify what factors account for the disproportionate number of championships being won by an equally disproportionately smaller group of member schools, and what the OHSAA could do to balance out these factors for all member schools.

This meant that the criteria chosen for a new plan must:

- Move toward a more competitive balance in all chosen sports;
- Maximize sustainability;
- Minimize complexity as much as possible;
- Maximize support from both the OHSAA membership and all interested constituents.

The Proposal

The committee's recommendation is that all member schools of the OHSAA pass through the same "filter." This means that school enrollment will continue to be the beginning basis for placing schools into their respective tournament divisions. Once that data is received, schools will be placed into their respective tournament divisions based on their sport-by-sport "athletic counts." Three factors will be used to determine "athletic counts" for each school:

- School Boundary Factor (how students are obtained);
- Socioeconomic Factor, and
- Tradition Factor.

School Boundary Factor

The Competitive Balance Committee identified school boundary as a key factor in competitive balance. From where and how a district or school receives its students does affect athletic success. Current percentages proposed by the committee (which could be modified by the Board of Directors per its discretion or through a recommendation from a Competitive Balance Standing Committee):

1. Non-public schools with no boundaries: 10 percent times enrollment will be added;
2. Non-public schools with limited boundaries: 8 percent times enrollment will be added;
3. Public schools with statewide open enrollment: 6 percent times enrollment will be added (*);
4. Public schools with adjacent districts open enrollment: 4 percent times enrollment will be added (*);
5. Public schools with no open enrollment: no percentage added.

(*) Indicates that this percentage will **NOT** be applied to public schools with open enrollment if their net number of open enrollment students is negative (i.e. have more open enrollment students leaving the school than coming into the school).

Beginning Enrollment x School Boundary Factor = number to be added to the Beginning Enrollment.

Note: The school boundary factor would be gender specific (i.e. the percentage would be placed on a school's boys enrollment for use in boys sports and on a school's girls enrollment for use in girls sports).

Socioeconomic Factor

The Competitive Balance Committee determined that the socioeconomic makeup of a district is a key factor in competitive balance just as it is in the probabilities of educational success. If a district is disadvantaged, the participants may have less resources available to participate and be successful in interscholastic athletics.

The committee chose an objective measure for the socioeconomic factor, which is the number of free lunch participants in a high school or district that is reported to the Ohio Department of Education through claims submitted by participating schools. This number cannot be manipulated by schools and many schools, including non-public schools, have students who participate in the program.

The current percentage proposed by the committee (which could be modified by the Board of Directors per its discretion or through a recommendation from a Competitive Balance Standing Committee):

The number of free lunch participants within either the high school (if exact data is provided) or school district times 10 percent equals number to be subtracted from enrollment

Beginning Enrollment x Percent of the Free Lunch Number of a High School/District = the number to be reduced from the Beginning Enrollment.

Tradition Factor

The Competitive Balance Committee determined that tradition is also a factor which impacts athletic success — success breeds success, as they say. Student-athletes often want to go to a program that has a tradition of success. While this is not recruiting, it is a factor that cannot be discounted when combined with the other factors identified by the committee.

A school's enrollment could increase by adding a percentage based on a school's most recent four-year tradition of advancement to the regional and/or state tournament.

The current percentage proposed by the committee on a sport-by-sport basis (which could be modified by the Board of Directors per its discretion or through a recommendation from a Competitive Balance Standing Committee):

1. Appearances in a regional final: 6 percent of enrollment will be added;
2. Appearances in state tournament: 8 percent of enrollment will be added, and
3. Appearances in state finals: 10 percent of enrollment will be added.

Note: While the highest percentage would be used for each individual year, the total percentage for all four years would be added together to arrive at the tradition factor.

Beginning Enrollment x the Tradition Factor over the past four years = number to be added to the Beginning Enrollment on a sport-by-sport basis.

The Final Formula

As mentioned, once all three factors are derived, schools will be placed into their respective tournament divisions based on their sport-by-sport “athletic counts.” The final “athletic count” would be achieved by:

Beginning Enrollment

- + **Boundary Factor**
- **Socioeconomic Factor**
- + **Tradition Factor**

OHSAA Board of Directors Action on January 13, 2011, and the Next Steps

The OHSAA Board of Directors approved the basic concept of the Competitive Balance Committee’s proposal, with implementation scheduled no later than the 2013-14 school year (but possibly as early as the 2012-13 school year). By approving the concept, the Board placed the following up for a referendum vote of OHSAA member schools, which will occur during the annual referendum voting process that takes place between May 1 and 15:

“Each school shall be placed into tournament divisions based on its sport-by-sport athletic count. The formula for determining athletic counts and to which sports the athletic counts shall be applied will be determined by the Board of Directors on a biennial basis. The formula for athletic counts and the sports to which they are applied are listed in the OHSAA’s General Sports Regulations — Tournaments.”

The Board of Directors’ current plan, which would be spelled out in the companion Sports Regulation, is that only team sports will initially be affected by the proposal.

Those sports are football, soccer and volleyball in the fall; basketball in the winter, and baseball and softball in the spring. Consideration will be given to add other sports in the future.

Additionally, a Competitive Balance Standing Committee will be formed. This committee will monitor the effectiveness of the athletic count formula and recommend to the Board of Directors any changes in the weight to be given to any one or more of the factors in the formula. Changes recommended by the Standing Committee could then be approved by the Board of Directors and reflected in the Sports Regulations.

OHSAA Competitive Balance Formula Examples

Example 1:

School A – Public, Boys Enrollment: 388; Girls Enrollment: 330

School Boundary Factor

- This school has statewide open enrollment and has a positive net gain of open enrollment students.
- Boys — 6 percent of 388 = **+23**
- Girls — 6 percent of 330 = **+20**

Socioeconomic Factor

- This school has 85 total students who are on the free lunch program.
— 10 percent of 85 = **-9** (subtracted from the “athletic count”)

Tradition Factor

- Boys: this school’s basketball team reached the regional finals one year and the state tournament two other years during the past four-year cycle.
— 6 percent of 388 = +23
— 8 percent of 388 = +31
— 8 percent of 388 = +31
— Total Enrollment Addition = **+85**
- Girls: this school’s basketball team reached the regional finals one year and did not advance to the state tournament during the past four-year cycle.
— 6 percent of 330 = +20
— Total Enrollment Addition = **+20**

School A’s Athletic Count For Basketball

Boys: $388 + 23 - 9 + 85 = 487$ (This school was a Division II school. The increase in enrollment would move it to Division I.)

Girls: $330 + 20 - 9 + 20 = 361$ (This school was a Division II school. The increase in enrollment would keep it in Division II.)

Example 2:

School B — Non-Public, Boys Enrollment 175; Girls Enrollment 165

School Boundary Factor

- This school has no boundaries.
- Boys — 10 percent of 175 = **+18**
- Girls — 10 percent of 165 = **+17**

Socioeconomic Factor

- This school has 30 students who are on the free lunch program.
— 10 percent of 30 = **-3** (subtracted from the “athletic count”)

Tradition Factor

- Boys: this school’s football team reached the regional finals one year, the state tournament one year and was state champion two other years during the past four-year cycle.
 - 6 percent of 175 = **+11**
 - 8 percent of 175 = **+14**
 - 10 percent of 175 = **+18**
 - 10 percent of 175 = **+18**
 - Total Enrollment Addition = **+61**
- Girls: this school’s volleyball team reached the regional finals three years during the past four-year cycle.
 - 6 percent of 165 = **+10**
 - 6 percent of 165 = **+10**
 - 6 percent of 165 = **+10**
 - Total Enrollment Addition = **+30**

School B’s Athletic Count

Football: $175 + 18 - 3 + 61 = 251$ (This school was a Division V school. The increase in enrollment would move it to Division IV.)

Volleyball: $165 + 17 - 3 + 30 = 209$ (This school was a Division III school. The increase in enrollment would keep it in Division III.)