

Home-schoolers can play IHSAA sports

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Lost in the announcement Monday by the Indiana High School Athletic Association's realignment of class sports sectionals was the additional announcement that home-school students will now be allowed to play on their local high school teams beginning next school year.

Monday's press release from IHSAA Commissioner Bobby Cox said the approval will allow more students the opportunity to play varsity sports.

"Today, the IHSAA Board of Directors expanded the opportunity for additional high school-aged students in our state to experience the values of education-based athletics," Cox said. "New rule 12-5 now allows a non-public, non-accredited student the prospect of presenting themselves as a candidate for an interscholastic team under specific conditions. I am very pleased that the board of directors has embraced this concept as our association continues its pursuit of becoming more inclusive while maintaining appropriate academic standards."

The impact on local high schools is uncertain said North Montgomery Athletic Director Matt Merica, but he does know a home-schooled student will be welcomed to try out for Charger teams.

"I am unsure if we have any home-school students that live in our school district that are interested in playing athletics," Merica said. "As long as a home-school student meets the criteria established by the IHSAA, they will be treated like any other athlete who comes out for a team."

Crawfordsville Athletic Director Bryce Barton also confirmed home-school students who qualify will be welcomed at the high school with no fanfare or special treatment.

"Based on the criteria set by the IHSAA, I don't see this being a big issue," Barton said. "The student will be allowed to try out for the team. They don't have to be on the team. They have to live in our school district to become eligible."

The IHSAA press release outlined the following guidelines for home-school students.

The criteria includes: 1) the student, in conjunction with the school, provide proof to the IHSAA that the spirit of the eligibility rules will not be compromised including passing a physical examination and participating in the required number of practices in a given sport; 2) the student must have been home-schooled for the previous three consecutive years; 3) the student completes all state-wide examinations as authorized by the Indiana Department of Education; 4) the student's family must submit grade information to the school to affirm the student is passing all courses and; 5) the student must be enrolled in the school for which the student is participating for a minimum of one class per day.

Lois Hepburn, who is a founder and current treasurer of Crawfordsville Area Christian Home

Educators, was pleased to hear the IHSAA announcement. Hepburn and her husband Bill have home-schooled five children. Four have graduated and one is still in middle school.

“It is great,” Hepburn said. “This would have changed a lot of things for my kids. This adds one more positive element to homeschooling.”