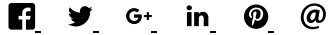




[http://www.ottumwacourier.com/opinion/high-school-athletics-rules-need-change/article\\_52ee66d8-8f2a-11e7-a2e5-478416fef071.html](http://www.ottumwacourier.com/opinion/high-school-athletics-rules-need-change/article_52ee66d8-8f2a-11e7-a2e5-478416fef071.html)

## High school athletics rules need change

Sep 2, 2017



We watched this summer as a slew of complaints emerged about the state softball and baseball tournaments. The complaints weren't about officiating or any of the normal issues you hear fans carp about. They claimed the playing fields weren't level between public schools and private schools.

Frankly, we think they have a point.

Public schools are limited geographically. Broadly speaking, students who live outside the district's borders can't be brought in to bolster a team's hopes of postseason glory. Private schools, on the other hand, can and do actively recruit in a manner that's simply not open to the public schools.

But, some may say, students can and do open enroll into other districts when someone nearby is known for having a better program. That's true. There is a massive difference between a player enrolling from Ottumwa to E-B-F and schools actively searching out and bringing in players.

The results in the state championships show the imbalance. Private schools are dominant, and it's disingenuous to claim that their ability to recruit does not play a role.

Most suggestions from the public we've heard say the state athletic associations should move private schools into their own class. It's not a bad idea, but that would create a situation in which large, wealthy schools would dominate smaller, less prominent ones. The imbalance would be shifted, not resolved.

We think there's a better solution. Private schools should have a multiplier of at least 1.5 applied to their student numbers for athletic purposes.

The impact of such a multiplier on a small private school would be minimal. A school with 90 students would see their total go to 135 for purposes of athletic competition. That's not going to knock them out of the small school classes.

But for the big schools, the ones who most frequently and blatantly seek out star athletes, this would have a major effect. Imagine a school of 700 students getting hit with a 1.5 multiplier. It would send their student population up to 1,050 for athletic competitions. That's likely enough to bump that larger school up by a class.

It's important to note that none of this accuses any of the private schools of breaking the rules as they currently exist. They're using the rules to their advantage. The rules themselves are the issue. They weren't drawn up with the current sports landscape in mind. Given that the rules are the problem, changing them seems like a reasonable step.

Iowa's athletic associations should seriously consider such a fix. Past missteps like giving rights to the live broadcast of the state wrestling tournament to a station most in Iowa cannot receive have created unnecessary black eyes. Doing something to level the playing field between public and private schools would help restore some of that lost credibility.

Will they do so? We have our doubts.

This Week's Circulars



HOVER FOR CIRCULAR



HOVER FOR CIRCULAR



HOVER FOR CIRCULAR

