

LHSAA schools make huge statement with definitive vote on 'select' glossary term



Member schools left no doubt as [they voted to approve](#) the current LHSAA definition of a select school.

A simple majority was needed. Instead, approximately 68% of the 385 schools present voted "yes" during a special-called meeting held Tuesday at the Marriott in Baton Rouge.

"I want to thank all the representatives of schools," LHSAA executive director Eddie Bonine said. "This is one of the largest groups in my years as executive director. And then to have the vote that we did ... 67 or 68 percent ... the membership has spoken."

Some of those in the room placed their paper ballot in one of four boxes at the front of the room before the meeting started. A handful of principals spoke during the meeting, with a one-minute time limit.

Opposition was expressed. Northwood-Lena principal Alex Goodling opened the meeting with questions about parliamentary procedures, which LHSAA attorney Amy Groves Lowe answered.

Shannon Wall, principal of Northwood-Shreveport, was among those who asked schools to vote down the definition.

Wall said that the LHSAA has made changes to meet its goals rather than the goals of its membership.

"That has been going on for the last couple of years," Wall said. "All we have been asking for is to be part of this process."

The Tuesday process included other voices, including Lincoln Prep's Gordon Ford, who played a key role in January when member schools delayed a vote on the select definition and new playoff system. At that time, a parliamentary issue with another proposal could have disrupted the pending basketball playoffs.

"As principals, we have abdicated our responsibilities ... we have given that over to principals who sit on the executive committee," Ford said. "The vote today is simple."

"A vote no means we go back to a structure that we know does not work. A vote yes keeps the structure we have in place. It's not perfect, but its better than the way it was."

Many stayed to watch as the votes were tabulated. LHSAA attorney Mark Boyer read each ballot with the school's name and vote.

The revamped select definition that schools approved was adopted over a year ago. It most notably added all charter schools, schools with any magnet component and schools located in open enrollment parishes to the select side.

The unofficial tally was 259 votes in favor of the lone item on the agenda. The attendance – 95% of the member schools — is the largest in decades, surpassing attendance at the LHSAA's annual convention in many cases.

The vote was held to answer a key question from the judge overseeing the case of nine schools from Monroe and Rapides Parish who sued the LHSAA over their placement as select schools. Those schools were granted an injunction until member schools voted on the definition.

What happened Tuesday carries other notable ramifications.

- It locks in the playoff format developed last year for the select/nonselect sports of football, boys/girls basketball, baseball and softball.
- There will be eight football championships (four select, four nonselect) and 10 in the other sports (five select, five nonselect) with a nearly equal number of schools on each side for the second straight year.

The LHSAA executive committee approved the new playoff structure after approving the new glossary definition for a select school last year.

Tuesday's large turnout for the vote and the results of it are significant in other ways, too. The LHSAA executive committee has been criticized for making decisions without the approval of schools in recent years. In turn, many schools have taken a passive approach to involvement in LHSAA.

"I'm just glad everyone showed up," LHSAA president Shannon Foolkes of Sam Houston said. "Yes or no ... everyone here got to vote. That is what I am proudest of today."

Not only was the vote well above a simple majority, it also represents a two-thirds vote of those in attendance ... something two previous votes to end the select/nonselect split by constitutional means could not garner.