

PIAA changes how it counts students, likely increasing public school enrollment numbers

By: [Chris Harlan](#)

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Christopher Horner | Tribune-Review

The Pine-Richland student section cheers on the Rams during their game against Penn Hills on Friday, Sept. 8, 2023, in Pine.

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Public schools will see their enrollments increase in the next few months, at least according to PIAA statistics.

The PIAA is changing the formula it uses to count school enrollments, so some sports teams might unexpectedly move to a different classification for the 2024-25 school year.

Currently, school districts count only 10% of students attending class in an alternate setting, such as a vo-tech, charter school, cyber charter or homeschool, but they'll need to count 100% of those students moving forward. The change affects only public school enrollments, since private schools don't have charter or vo-tech students.

The 10% rule was in place since 2016.

For example, a high school with 200 charter school students previously counted only 20 toward its PIAA enrollment. In the future, the school's enrollment will include all 200.

“Where we think you’ll see the changes is in the smaller areas, the smaller public schools,” PIAA associate executive director Melissa Mertz said. “If you think about it, they were the ones who were probably benefiting the most from that 10%. They have a lot of kids go into those vo-techs and so forth. I don’t think you’ll see as big of an impact on the big schools.”

The PIAA collects enrollment numbers every two years before sorting the teams into classifications. It counts boys and girls in grades 9, 10 and 11. School administrators will begin submitting updated numbers Oct. 1 for the next realignment, impacting the 2024-25 and 2025-26 sports seasons.

Issues arose two years ago when [the PIAA realized some schools were incorrectly reporting](#) their vo-tech numbers. At that time, the PIAA told schools to recount their enrollment numbers and amend the data.

Eliminating the 10% rule simplifies the reporting process.

“It’s just going to be straight numbers, so one for one,” Mertz said. “We feel that will make it cleaner, and it also helps us if we need to compare numbers with what’s being submitted to the department of education.”

Mertz said the PIAA is adapting to a shifting educational landscape. The options available to families nowadays aren’t as simple as they were a few years ago, and the PIAA started hearing questions from school administrators.

“The education platform has changed greatly,” Mertz said. “It was already changing before covid, but since covid, it has just blown up into so many different vehicles. Sometimes there’s a vo-tech that the public school builds. Sometimes it’s a vo-tech that 10 public schools send kids to. ... Schools have started their own cyber schooling instead of sending (students) to the local cyber charter.




“I think that’s where the confusion came in,” she said. “They had kids going all over the place and weren’t really sure.”

Chris Harlan is a Tribune-Review Staff Writer. You can contact Chris by email at charlan@triblive.com or via Twitter [🐦](#).

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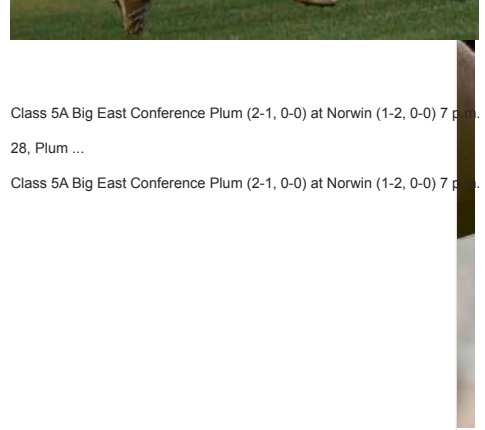
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