

Old rivalries rekindled under proposed new Kentucky high school football alignment

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The proposed realignment of Kentucky high school football for the 2025 and 2026 seasons brings back old rivalries for a couple of Lexington teams and makes an already tough Class 4A even more challenging by reuniting two northern Kentucky powerhouses.

Lexington Christian will renew acquaintances with Danville in the new Class 2A District 4 after being separated for 2023 and 2024. The two had been district rivals since 2011.

Meanwhile Lexington Catholic's proposed new home pushes the Knights into Class 3A, District 4 where they would be grouped with Mercer County after more than two decades apart. Mercer and LexCath last played each other in 2014 and were last districted together in 2000.

In Class 4A, Highlands, one of Class 5As top teams last season, will rejoin archrival Covington Catholic in the new District 5. Although the two have remained on each other's schedules for 2023 and 2024 they are in separate classes after CovCath dropped down to 4A for the current alignment. The Colonels finished runner-up last season to Boyle County, Class 4A's four-peat champion.

The Kentucky High School Athletic Association Board of Control approved a draft of the new alignment for its 224 teams across six

competitive classes during its regular February meeting on Tuesday.

The KHSAA will take feedback from member schools over the next four weeks, Commissioner Julian Tackett said. The board is scheduled to make its final decision on realignment at its May 7-8 session.

Unlike changes in past years, the board has stipulated that it will no longer accept requests from schools to “play up” into a bigger class. The play-up ban was implemented in order to simplify the realignment process. While schools will not be able to request to move up or down in class, they can request changes within the district structure, which typically is rooted in travel issues.

“If they’ve got concerns. If they want to move and have objections to their alignment, then they can turn that in and we’ll publish it a couple of weeks out before the (May) board meeting,” Tackett said. “That’s so everybody sees what anybody else is doing. ... We’ll see what their suggestions are.”

The classifications are based on average enrollment figures for the past two school years. Previously done in four-year increments, the board opted for a second-straight two-year renewal in response to the influence the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have on enrollment figures.

“We’ve had a bunch of schools adjusted (24) and it’s only been two years,” Tackett said. “It’s a chore, but it’s more accurate and it will be more fair. You can really count on playing schools your size.”

The new proposal does not change the current alignment for Lexington’s Sayre in Class A or Lexington’s six Class 6A teams — Bryan Station, Frederick Douglass, Henry Clay, Lafayette, Paul Laurence

Dunbar and Tates Creek.

Under the proposal, nine schools would move up into a higher class:

- South Warren, a former Class 4A state champion and most recently a two-time Class 5A state champion, moves up to Class 6A.
- Hopkinsville makes the jump from Class 4A to Class 6A in anticipation of one day being merged with Christian County
- Jeffersontown moves from 4A to 5A.
- Franklin-Simpson, Elizabethtown and Marion County jump from 3A to 4A
- Edmonson County, Carroll County and Murray move up from 2A to 3A.

The plan calls for 15 schools to move down into a lower class.

- Barren County and Warren Central move down from 6A to 5A.
- Harlan County and Highlands move down from 5A to 4A. Highlands has 23 state titles. Three of them came in Class 4A (2011, 2012, 2014).
- Bardstown, DeSales, Henry County, Letcher County, Thomas Nelson and Western move from 4A to 3A.
- Trigg County, Hancock County, McLean County, West Carter and Belfry move from 3A to 2A. Two of Belfry's eight state championships came in Class 2A (2003, 2004). The others have been in Class 3A.

In other action the board:

- Approved the posting of a job opening for a new, fifth assistant commissioner position to help manage new sports that have been sanctioned recently.

- Elected board member Greg Howard as its president-elect. Howard is the athletic director of Warren County Public Schools.

Lexington Catholic would join a district that includes Mercer County under the new realignment plan proposed Tuesday. After receiving feedback on the proposal, the KHSAA is scheduled to make its final decision on realignment for the 2025 and 2026 seasons in May.

KHSAA football realignment proposal

Final decision scheduled for May board meeting.

Class A

District 1: Ballard Memorial, Caverna, Fulton County, Russellville

District 2: Bethlehem, Campbellsville, Holy Cross (Louisville), Kentucky Country Day

District 3: Bellevue, Dayton, Newport, Newport Central Catholic

District 4: Bishop Brossart, Holy Cross (Covington), Ludlow, Trimble County

District 5: Berea, Eminence, Frankfort, Sayre

District 6: Fairview, Nicholas County, Paris, Raceland

District 7: Harlan, Lynn Camp, Middlesboro, Pineville, Williamsburg

District 8: Hazard, Jenkins, Paintsville, Phelps, Pikeville

Class 2A

District 1: Caldwell County, Crittenden County, Fort Campbell, Mayfield, Todd County Central, Trigg County

District 2: Fort Knox, Hancock County, McLean County, Owensboro Catholic

District 3: Clinton County, Green County, Metcalfe County, Monroe County, Somerset

District 4: Danville, Lexington Christian, Shawnee, Washington County, WEB DuBois

District 5: Beechwood, Bracken County, Gallatin County, Owen County, St. Henry, Walton-Verona

District 6: Breathitt County, Jackson County, Morgan County, West Carter

District 7: Floyd Central, Knott County Central, Leslie County, Martin County, Prestonsburg

District 8: Belfry, Betsy Layne, East Ridge, Pike County Central, Shelby Valley

Class 3A

District 1: Hopkins County Central, Murray, Union County, Webster County

District 2: Adair County, Butler County, Edmonson County, Glasgow, Hart County

District 3: Bardstown, Central, Christian Academy-Louisville, DeSales, Thomas Nelson, Western

District 4: Casey County, Garrard County, LaRue County, Lexington Catholic, Mercer County

District 5: Bourbon County, Carroll County, Henry County, Lloyd Memorial, Pendleton County

District 6: Bath County, East Carter, Fleming County, Lewis County, Russell

District 7: Bell County, Clay County, Knox Central, McCreary Central, Rockcastle County

District 8: Estill County, Lawrence County, Letcher County Central, Magoffin County, Powell County

Class 4A

District 1: Allen County-Scottsville, Calloway County, Franklin-Simpson, Logan County, Paducah Tilghman, Warren East

District 2: Breckinridge County, Elizabethtown, John Hardin, Marion County, Nelson County

District 3: Doss, North Oldham, Valley, Waggener

District 4: Franklin County, Shelby County, Spencer County, Western Hills

District 5: Covington Catholic, Grant County, Harrison County, Highlands, Holmes, Mason County

District 6: Ashland Blazer, Boyd County, Greenup County, Johnson Central, Rowan County

District 7: Boyle County, Lincoln County, Russell County, Taylor County, Wayne County

District 8: Corbin, Harlan County, Perry County Central, Whitley County

Class 5A

District 1: Apollo, Graves County, Madisonville-North Hopkins, Marshall County, Muhlenberg County, Owensboro

District 2: Barren County, Bowling Green, Grayson County, Greenwood, Ohio County, Warren Central

District 3: Atherton, Butler, Iroquois, Seneca

District 4: Bullitt Central, Fairdale, Jeffersontown, Moore, North Bullitt

District 5: Boone County, Conner, Cooper, Dixie Heights, Scott

District 6: Anderson County, Collins, Scott County, South Oldham, Woodford County

District 7: East Jessamine, Madison Southern, Montgomery County, West Jessamine

District 8: North Laurel, Pulaski County, South Laurel, Southwestern

Class 6A

District 1: Christian County, Henderson County, Hopkinsville,

McCracken County

District 2: Central Hardin, Daviess County, Meade County, South Warren

District 3: DuPont Manual, Pleasure Ridge Park, St. Xavier, North Hardin

District 4: Bullitt East, Fern Creek, Male, Southern

District 5: Ballard, Eastern, Oldham County, Trinity (Louisville)

District 6: Campbell County, Great Crossing, Ryle, Simon Kenton

District 7: Henry Clay, Lafayette, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Tates Creek

District 8: Bryan Station, Frederick Douglass, George Rogers Clark, Madison Central