

# Realignment, sportsmanship issues among topics NCHSAA board will discuss at spring meeting

By Nick Stevens , HighSchoolOT managing editor



When the N.C. High School Athletic Association Board of Directors holds its spring meeting at the end of the month, much of the attention will be placed on the upcoming realignment.

Last year, the NCHSAA membership passed a bylaw amendment that says no classification can have more than 64 schools assigned to it. That meant the NCHSAA would have to expand from four classifications to at least seven, and at the last board meeting in

December, it was determined [the new realignment will feature eight classifications](#).

The board will receive a report from the Bylaws Committee, which was tasked with looking at a number of issues surrounding the new realignment process, including topics like how to handle conferences.

The report from the Bylaws Committee will be informed by the results of [a membership survey distributed earlier this year](#). In the survey, the NCHSAA asked schools to provide their opinion on how to allocate teams in eight classifications, how conferences should be structured, and more.

- [Projecting what the NCHSAA conferences could look like after 8A realignment in 2025-26](#)
- [J. Mike Blake: Why I favor the "Little 32" model for realignment](#)

At the spring board meeting, the NCHSAA will establish a new committee — the Realignment Committee. This committee will be charged with submitting a proposed new realignment for review by the membership and the board of directors. Eventually, after a process of proposals, feedback, and appeals, the Realignment Committee will create the final plan for the upcoming alignment.

The new realignment will take effect for the 2025-2026 school year and is currently scheduled to last for four years.

However, the membership survey also asked schools about realigning more often than every four years. Specifically, the survey asked if schools preferred realigning every two years instead of the current four-year cycle. It is not clear if that possibility will be discussed at the

spring board meeting, or if that change would require another bylaw amendment vote by the membership.

The NCHSAA Board of Directors meeting will take place on Tuesday, Apr. 30 and Wednesday, May 1. It will be followed by the NCHSAA Annual Meeting on May 2.

## **Officials wearing body cameras?**

The NCHSAA Board of Directors will discuss the possibility of officials wearing body cameras during high school basketball games. It is just one of several items on the agenda about officiating and sportsmanship.

Body cameras have become more common for law enforcement officers to wear over the years. The recorded video serves as a witness to interactions between officers and members of the public. The same technology is being used for officials in some leagues.

The Washington Interscholastic Activities Association and the Washington Officials Associations began a test of body cameras on officials this year. Basketball officials began wearing the cameras first, and the pilot program was expanded to soccer, baseball, and softball officials.

How does it work? The body cameras record what the official sees during the game. The official wearing the camera can trigger a timestamp to review later. In Washington state, officials are instructed to create a timestamp when there is unsportsmanlike conduct, when there is an unsafe environment for officials, or when there is a disruptive behavior that stops the game.

Other sports leagues across the globe, from the amateur level to the professional level, are experimenting with body cameras for officials.

While the use of body cameras is on the agenda, it is not clear if the board will actually vote on creating a plan to adopt the technology. It is possible body cameras will be a discussion item only.

One of the big questions around the adoption of such a policy will be cost. The NCHSAA is operating in a budget deficit this year and will have restrictions on how it can raise funds going forward when a new state law goes into effect in July. Additionally, passing along the cost of a body camera to officials could make it more difficult to recruit new officials, which is already a problem in high school sports.

## **Should unruly fans be banned from attending games?**

The NCHSAA Policy Committee has received a request for the implementation of a 365-day ban for spectators who are unruly at high school sports events in North Carolina.

Documents released ahead of the board meeting do not indicate who made the request for the policy, but it is aimed at curbing unsportsmanlike behavior by fans at sporting events.

At the Behavior in Sports Summit hosted by the National Federation of State High School Associations in Indianapolis last August, NFHS officials said some state associations had asked the NFHS if it was appropriate for them to adopt a 365-day ban for fans who display poor behavior. The NFHS has said it is up to each individual state association.

State associations across the country are trying to address growing sportsmanship issues, particularly when it comes to spectators.

Some associations have discussed sanctioning fans directly, while others have created fines for schools who have spectator sportsmanship problems. Recent legislation in North Carolina prohibits the NCHSAA from collecting fines though.

Other state associations have created sportsmanship policies for fans that require them to take an online sportsmanship course through the NFHS if they are removed from a game.

There are concerns around the adoption of such policies though. In North Carolina, it is unclear if the NCHSAA has the authority to adopt such policies given new state laws that have been passed. These policies also require schools and administrators to enforce the rules and keep track of any sanctions.

Addressing sportsmanship by fans is a top priority though. National data and data collected within North Carolina shows poor behavior by fans is the number one reason it is difficult to find officials for high school sports.

## **Fee changes for officiating could be coming**

The NCHSAA Board of Directors will look at potential increases for officials fees during its spring meeting.

According to the NCHSAA, increases in fees for swimming & diving, scrimmages, and junior varsity football will be discussed. In addition, the fees for officials in the first two rounds of the football playoffs will be discussed.

The board will also look at standardizing all NCHSAA fees for officials, such as insurance and background check fees, and will review and standardize all local booking association fees.

## **What else will be discussed?**

When the official agenda is released closer to the board meeting, additional topics will certainly be listed that we do not know about today. However, there are some other topics that we know will come up during the two-day meeting:

- New eligibility rules from the State Board of Education
- Increasing the number of umpires in softball and baseball playoffs beginning in the third round
- Changing the RPI formula used for the state playoffs
- Delaying the start of the spring sports season
- Updating the 5-quarter rule for basketball
- Discussing the new regional/state championship format for the basketball playoffs
- Eliminate the early start to the basketball season for schools that do not play football
- Calendar changes for tennis season
- Update on the NCHSAA Foundation
- Updates on the memorandum of understanding with the State Board of Education and the state superintendent
- Impact of Senate Bill 452 on the finances of the NCHSAA