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No simple answers as CHSAA tables discussion of multiplier placing charter and private schools in higher competition

By Hugh Johnson Pikes Peak Courier
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CSCS head coach and athletic director Jason Rollins talks with girls soccer team during halftime of a match against Salida.

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Jason Rollins is grateful for a reprieve but understands there's a larger conversation to be had.

Rollins is the athletic director and girls' soccer coach at Colorado Springs Christian, one of several private schools across the state that would be impacted by a Colorado High School Activities Association (CHSAA) proposal which would add a 1.5 multiplier to the three-year enrollment average of private and charter schools, forcing their athletics programs to compete against larger schools.

In short, a multiplier takes the total number of students enrolled at the school and multiplies it by 1.5 and uses that number when placing the school in a classification (5A, 4A, 3A, etc.).



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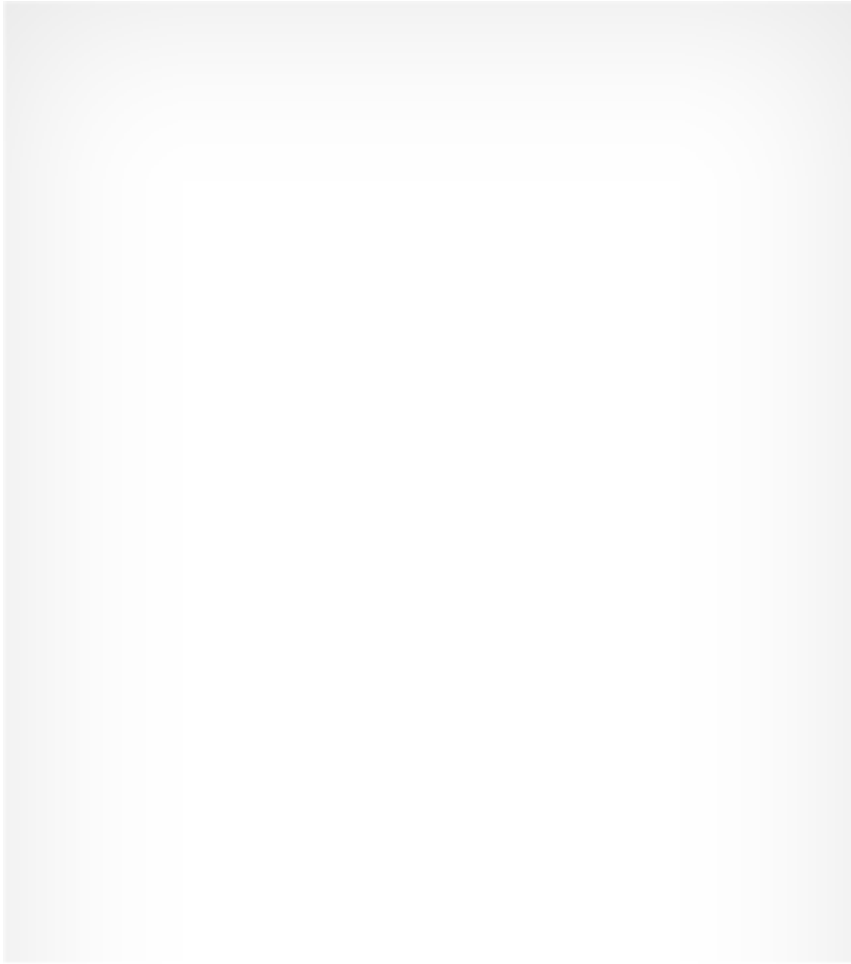
The proposal was set for a vote in CHSAA's Legislative Council meeting on Tuesday, but last week the state's governing authority of high school sports removed the item saying in a release it needed “additional refinement before being presented for a full membership vote.”

Citing competitive advantages these schools have over counterparts, the original proposal stated the multiplier would apply to any school that has a selective admission process for enrollment — including an application/admission process and lottery based enrollment — has enrollment controls or restrictions such as denying enrollment or setting enrollment caps, or has a tuition cost and/or need-based aid availability.

The multiplier would be used for private and many charter schools throughout Colorado, around 90 as currently written.

According to Amanda McClure, the director of communications for CHSAA, the delay will allow for the adjustment of the criteria for the multiplier. CHSAA would like to be more specific on the types of schools included.

“At the end of the day, the intent of who it would impact in its current form is not clear, and that is why it is being pulled now,” McClure stated in an email.



For Rollins, delaying the vote is the right move because the timeline moved too quickly.

CHSAA confirmed that the formal proposal was included in the spring legislative council packet released in mid-March.

The topic has been discussed for decades.

“I’ve been an AD for over 10 years now in the state of Colorado, and the topic of advantage by some schools has been a discussion and how do we classify schools, how do we classify programs?” Rollins said. “I know that every state is

unique and I really believe that Colorado is unique with being a choice state.

“We’ve talked about different ideas for years, and I think some of the concern that the smaller schools, private, charter schools have had with this proposal was the speed at which was proposed, the lack of opportunity to dialogue what was on black and white.”



Rollins said the original proposal cast a blanket net across the board that didn’t take into account data points like winning percentage and the fact that not every program within a charter or private school is successful. For example, while the Lions girls’ basketball and soccer teams are powerhouses, neither CSCS football nor baseball own a state title.

“There’s a good number of our sports and programs that would really suffer as a result of this multiplier,” Rollins said. “Speaking on behalf of the Tri-Peaks League, we have a number of charter schools and private schools that really struggle to just make sure we have a program.”

Rollins also worries about the injury potential as well, as the proposal calls for schools with smaller numbers to play against programs from larger schools.

“You think about football having to go up and play 2A. We’re going to be a smaller-sized team facing against bigger-sized schools with bigger players and I think the increased injury potential is there,” he said.

According to Rollins, CSCS' three-year enrollment average is around 270 which would be 405 after the 1.5 multiplier.

Darron Mitchell, who serves as the athletic director at The Classical Academy, also appreciates the pause.

Mitchell noted that private schools and charter schools have different guidelines concerning enrollment and it's unfair to group them together.

As for TCA specifically, as a K-12 institution, the school doesn't accept transfers beyond the third grade unless the transferring student's parent is hired on to the staff.

Mitchell also mentioned the potential for students to transfer out of the school because the athletic programs wouldn't be as competitive, an issue that plagues the Titans. TCA has a three-year enrollment average of 581 — which becomes 872 with the 1.5 multiplier.

TCA is the type of program the proposal targets in its effort to level the competitive landscape, however, as the Titans have collected state championships in football as well as boys' and girls' track and boys' and girls' cross country since 2023. The school also has titles in boys' and girls' soccer over the past 15 years.

“Each school is different, and research should be done on how each school handles enrollment,” Mitchell said in an email. “No one has asked TCA how we handle enrollment selection or how do we handle transfers. What about schools who don’t offer some sports? ... Those kids go and play at other local schools, should those numbers be included in this process? I would encourage the CLOC committee within CHSAA to answer those questions for each school, first. Then start this conversation within the CHSAA membership and see where it goes.”

While CHSAA removed the proposal for the time being, it intends to submit a revised proposal targeting full implementation in the 2026-2028 classification cycle.

Neither Rollins nor Mitchell know exactly what that workable solution looks like and concede that even with extensive dialogue on the issue some schools and some programs will walk away unhappy.

“This is a really complicated decision, it’s a complicated situation and that’s why for decades it’s been talked about but nothing done. Because every solution you propose affects somebody in a different way. So you’re really looking at tradeoffs,” Rollins said. “I get the challenges that this type of discussion presents, because any type of proposal you make that’s different than what we have right now is going to affect one school at some way.

“And so that’s why I’m entering into this discussion realizing that there is no easy solution, there is no easy fix to this.”

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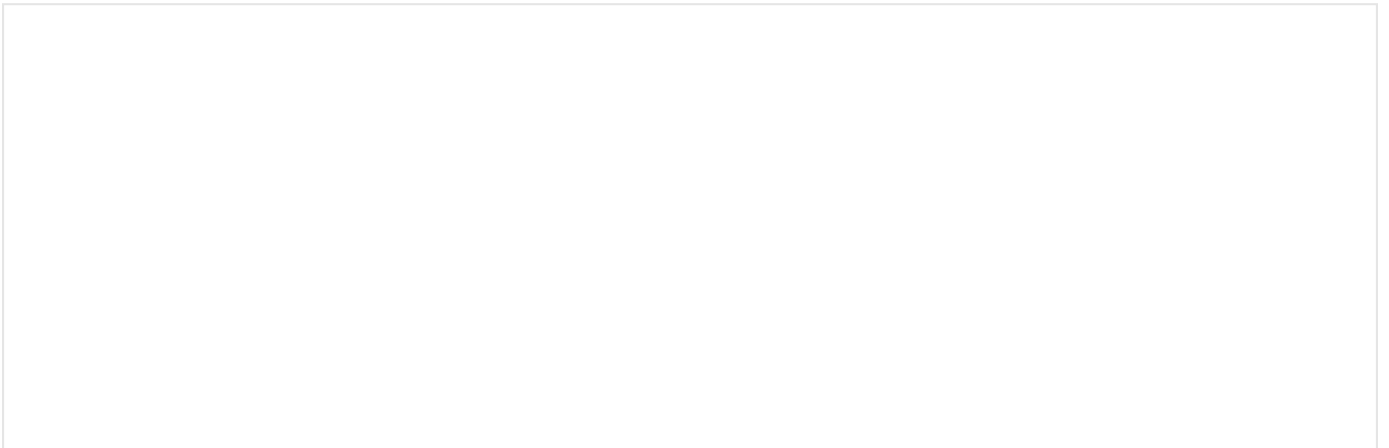


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