

Dr. Jim Dean Selected to be Next Executive Director of the AIA

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Dr. Jim Dean, current associate executive director, has been named the next executive director of the Arizona Interscholastic Association.

After a vote by the AIA's Executive Board Thursday, Dr. Dean will assume the role on July 1 after serving in his current position for the past two school years. He becomes just the eighth executive leader of the AIA since 1925.

"I'm very excited to continue serving our member schools and expanding opportunities for our athletes, coaches and communities. That's what we need to be about," said Dr. Dean. "I'm incredibly grateful for the foundation that (current Executive Director) David Hines has built and the legacy he leaves behind."

Hines will be retiring at the end of this school year. He has spent the past eight years as Executive Director, which has been part of a 17-year career at the AIA and a 48-year career in education and administration.

"Dr. Dean has been very engaging with the membership and has worked well with our staff. He'll continue leading this organization in a positive manner," Hines said. "He knows the AIA bylaws inside and out, and fits right into the mission that we had been operating off of. As we move forward, he will provide some new and additional opportunities for kids, will work closely with all our conferences, and bring new ideas to the table."

Dr. Dean inherits a period of immense growth in the past decade that has featured the largest increase of athletic opportunities and technology across the state. In that time, the AIA added adaptive sports, sanctioned beach volleyball, girls wrestling and flag football, and brought on boys beach volleyball as an emerging sport in the fall of 2024. Additionally, in the last few years, the AIA has created new postseason opportunities with an Open Division in football, two Open Divisions in basketball, expanded the number of conferences in boys volleyball, flag football, and expanded the number of conferences in soccer and added an Open Division there as well.

"It's important to continue to provide every possible opportunity for our students both during the regular season and postseason to be incredibly successful," Dr. Dean said. "We will be looking to strengthen and deepen relationships with our schools and partners that allow us to do the things we are doing. There are some very exciting pieces and ideas that we have to move moving forward."

Dr. Dean came to the AIA in 2023 following a 31-year career in education in the Valley. He began as an

assistant principal, math teacher and coach in the Pendergast School District in Phoenix, and later became principal at Tolleson Elementary School before spearheading numerous roles within the Dysart Unified School District. The latest was leading the district as superintendent. And as superintendent, he served as President of the AIA Executive Board prior to joining the association.

Some of his duties at the AIA have included serving as the main point of contact for member school administrators, the lead administrator for interpretation of bylaws and policies, is the association's liaison for the Sports Medicine Advisory Committee, heads the Student Leadership Advisory Committee, and oversees state tournament coordination.

On the national level, Dr. Dean currently represents Arizona on four committees with the National Association of State High School Associations (NFHS). Those are Sports Medicine, Hall of Fame Screening, Strategic Planning, and Student Services.

"We have exceptional schools throughout the state. Every school that is a member of our association is absolutely amazing, and they look out for the best interest of their students and communities," Dr. Dean added. "The AIA, like school districts, works to meet the needs of each school and provide opportunities for success. We have outstanding athletic directors. We have outstanding school administration, coaches and athletes. We want to continue to meet their needs."

Since its inception, the AIA has created and sustained interscholastic activities that encourage maximum student participation by providing member schools with an even playing field to ensure fair and equitable competition. Through its Arizona member schools, the AIA reaches more than 125,000 participants in high school activity programs. The organization hosts 1,400 postseason contests, officiates more than 45,000 regular season events, and handles 110,000 officials assignments annually.