

March 26, 2026

Commissioner Julian Tackett
Kentucky High School Athletic Association
2280 Executive Drive
Lexington, KY 40505

RE: Submission of Administrative Proposal regarding Class A Football Sustainability

Dear Commissioner Tackett,

On behalf of a collective of Class A football programs, we are submitting the enclosed Proposal for Classification Sustainability.

We recognize the immense challenge the Board of Control faces in balancing the diverse interests of over 280 member schools. Our goal in submitting this document is to provide the Board with class-specific performance data and operational insights that we believe are essential for the long-term health of Kentucky's smallest football playing schools.

As leaders of programs that have navigated the complexities of "small school" football—specifically the critical thresholds of roster depth and the restoration of dormant programs—our primary concern is ensuring that the 1.35 enrollment multiplier achieves its intended goal without inadvertently creating barriers to student-athlete participation.

We are not seeking an exception to the spirit of competitive balance; rather, we are proposing a data-driven refinement to ensure that classification accurately reflects the unique realities of the Class A "floor."

We respectfully request that this proposal be distributed to the Board of Control for their review and that a brief window be provided on the next meeting agenda for a discussion of these findings.

Respectfully,

Chad Pennington
Head Football Coach / Football Program Director
Sayre School

Matthew Jones
Head Football Coach / Athletic Representative
Kentucky Country Day School



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Proposal for CLASSIFICATION SUSTAINABILITY IN CLASS A FOOTBALL

I. PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

The undersigned representatives of Class A football schools submit this proposal to collaborate with the Board of Control in refining the application of the enrollment multiplier. Our objective is to ensure that the classification system remains an accurate reflection of competitive reality, particularly within the Commonwealth's smallest and most vulnerable football programs. We advocate for a data-driven evolution of the current policy to protect program participation and long-term viability.

II. ANALYSIS OF COMPETITIVE TRENDS (1959–2025)

To assist the Board in its ongoing evaluation of “athletic advantage,” we submit the following historical performance data for Class A. This data suggests that within this specific classification, institutional type (Public vs. Non-Public) has not been the primary driver of championship-level success:

- **Public Program Consistency:** Since 1959, public institutions have secured 92% (62 titles) of Class A championships. While four non-public programs have achieved championship success in Class A since 1960, the data confirms this is the exception, not the rule. Even since 2005—a period of perceived shift—public institutions have secured more than 75% of all Class A titles. This confirms that the current classification structure already fosters a highly competitive environment for the Commonwealth's smallest public and independent schools. Despite the success of a few high-profile programs, public schools continue to win Class A championships at a 3-to-1 ratio over the last two decades. This data suggests that institutional type is not the primary driver of competitive dominance at this level.
- **The “Independent” Variable:** The historical data suggests that competitive dominance in Class A is more closely correlated with long-term institutional stability and community-wide athletic infrastructure than with governance type. While several public independent districts have maintained the highest levels of performance through these resources, they remain appropriately classified by enrollment. Applying a multiplier solely to non-public institutions—regardless of their actual infrastructure or historical performance—creates a classification disparity that the data does not support.

III. THE “CLASS A FLOOR” & PARTICIPATION RISK

In the smallest classification, roster depth is the primary metric of program survival. A flat 1.35 multiplier creates a “statistical inflation” that does not reflect the actual number of available student-athletes.

- **Operational Attrition:** At the Class A level, a marginal shift in enrollment does not equate to a linear increase in athletic participation.
- **Risk of Forfeiture:** Forcing “rebuilding” or “dormant” programs into higher classifications based on an enrollment proxy—rather than on-field capacity—risks creating non-competitive schedules. This directly impacts the Association's goal of maximizing student-athlete participation and safety.

IV. PROPOSED ADMINISTRATIVE REFINEMENTS

We respectfully propose two technical adjustments to the current classification model to better align with the KHSAA's mission of equitable competition:

- 1. Establishment of a "Class A Floor":** We propose that the 32 smallest football-playing schools (by raw male enrollment) be exempt from the multiplier. This ensures that the state's most "roster-thin" programs are not displaced by a mathematical formula that does not account for their actual participation numbers.
- 2. Transition to a Success-Based Metric:** We recommend the Board evaluate a "Success Multiplier" model (similar to the IHSAA). This would move programs between classes based on demonstrated on-field performance (objective data) rather than enrollment potential (speculative data). This creates a self-correcting system where successful programs move up, and struggling programs are permitted to recalibrate within their natural enrollment class.

V. REQUEST FOR COLLABORATIVE DATA REVIEW

In the interest of administrative transparency and procedural excellence, we request that the Board of Control authorize a formal Class A Impact Study before the next realignment cycle. This would allow the KFCA and member schools to provide the Board with specific participation-to-enrollment ratios, ensuring the 1.35 metric is achieving its intended goal without unintended consequences for program retention.

VI. CONCLUSION

We offer these recommendations not as a critique of the Board's intent, but as a resource for its implementation. Our goal is a classification system that is as precise as it is fair. We look forward to discussing how these refinements can strengthen the "Small School" experience in Kentucky.

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNDERSIGNED:

Matthew Jones, Kentucky Country Day
Chad Pennington, Sayre
Paul Wiggins, Newport
William Griffin, Russellville
Tim Mattingly, Bethlehem