

Adding New Sports Programs and Maintaining Participation

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Who We Are

Mr. Larry Herges, RAA

- Athletic Director (12) years Taylor High School (OH)
- (22) years of service
- 697 HS students
- Secretary of SWOADA

Dr. Jeffrey Sullivan, CMAA

- Director, Systemwide Athletics for Montgomery County (MD) Public Schools
 - 14th largest school district in the country
 - 25 high schools
 - 40 middle schools
- President-Elect, Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association
- 20 years as athletic administrator



Outcomes

1. Provide strategies for adding new sports programs, including process and considerations
2. Provide strategies for boosting and maintaining participation across interscholastic athletics

Jeff - district level perspective

Larry - school level perspective

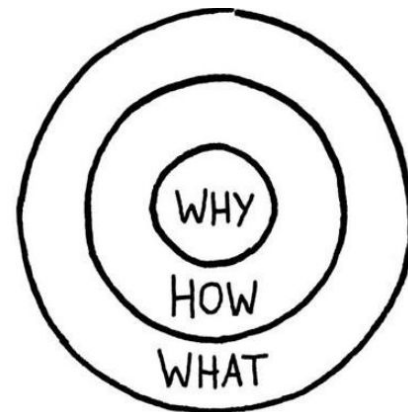


Adding New Sports Programs

District-Level Considerations

Critical Steps

- Establish the “Why” for adding the sport
- Receive approval from appropriate leadership to proceed
- Communicate with stakeholders and receive feedback throughout the process - the “How”
- Highlight the outcomes of adding the sport - the “What”
- Be prepared to adjust - starting small is ok!



Adding New Sports Programs

Key Considerations

Title IX & Equity

- Does the activity accommodate the interests and provide equal opportunities for all genders?
- If not, what is the impact on Title IX compliance, in terms of participation and resources?
- What groups of students are underserved in your school/district?

Considerations for equity:

- Know the numbers and current state of overall program
- Conduct an interest survey, gain community input
- Identify existing barriers that may impact or exclude marginalized populations



Adding New Sports Programs

Key Considerations

Budget & Expenses

- What will the costs be to the school and/or district?
- What are the personal costs to individual students/families?
- Where will this funding come from? Organizing advocacy and support?

Considerations for expenses:

- School/district costs - coach stipends, transportation, uniforms, equipment, rental fees, supervision, security, etc.
- Personal costs - transportation (if off-campus), practice clothing, mouth-pieces, shoes (or cleats, skates, etc. depending on the sport), etc
- Accounting for both genders, if applicable

Adding New Sports Programs

Key Considerations

Personnel - Coaches & Officials

- Is there an abundance of capable coaches, especially within the teaching ranks?
- How will interested coaches be trained?
- Are there existing officials associations for the sport? If not, how will this be addressed?

Considerations for personnel:

- Ensure interest of staff to serve as coaches, ideally school staff
- Plan for officials (if necessary) - does an association exist or start one?
- Funding for training should be included in the proposal and planning



Adding New Sports Programs

Key Considerations

Facilities

- Are there available facilities on campus for the new sport?
- Will this activity conflict with existing programs? Including arts, music, intramurals, etc.
- If not, are there available facilities off-campus, such as elementary or middle schools or parks/recreation facilities?

Considerations for off-site facilities:

- Transportation
- Emergency response
- Lack of practice time
- Supervision



Adding New Sports Programs

Key Considerations

Bigger Picture - Expansion & State Compliance

- Are other schools/districts offering the activity?
- What is the outlet at the youth level - signs of continued growth?
- Will the activity comply with existing state regulations?

Considerations for expansion and state compliance:

- Will there be other schools to play?
- Analyze programming at the youth/rec levels - growth outlook
- State compliance examples - no participation on Sundays, eligibility, travel limitations, limiting participation to within a precise season time period, etc.

Adding New Sports Programs

Key Considerations

Clear Benefits & Transparent Process

- What are the benefits to the students, school, and district?
- How does the new sport target underserved and/or marginalized populations?
- What is the approval process and timeline? Has this been communicated?

Considerations for expansion and state compliance:

- Clearly outline the benefits - for example, satisfaction of a legal requirement, creating opportunities compatible with opportunities at other schools, creating opportunities for students with disabilities, etc.
- What student groups need to be engaged?
- Outline the process and timeline - post and advertise publicly



Adding New Sports Programs

Key Considerations



Timing

- Determine when the new sport will begin
- Consider pilot, club, or full implementation

Feedback & Communicate

- Survey community
- Work collaboratively with school/district staff
- Inform leadership and Board of Education
- Provide ongoing updates
- Utilize the media and control the narrative



Adding New Sports Programs

New Programs - What's Popular?

- Corollary/Allied Sports
- Boys' Volleyball
- Girls' Wrestling
- Lacrosse
- Flag Football
- Pickleball
- Archery

Survey - students and staff

Sample surveys

Boosting & Maintaining Participation

Fundamental Points

- Bring the program to students, don't wait for students to come to the program
- Ensure a culture where all students feel welcome regardless of race, gender identity, culture, religion, or socioeconomic status
- Analyze team roster composition - what students are underrepresented? Why?
- Implement a variety of outreach strategies to boost and maintain participation



Boosting & Maintaining Participation

Strategies - Spring for Following Year:

1. Incoming 9th Grade Information Night (at high school)
2. Sports Field Day/Showcase (at high school)
3. Open House for Athletics and Extracurricular Activities (at high school)
4. Google Interest Form (QR code or posted on local school website)
5. Middle school visits during lunch or evenings
6. Request middle school athletic rosters from schools, so high schools can contact students & parents/guardians
7. Phone calls to incoming 9th grade students
8. Information distributed through Physical Education & Health classes

Boosting & Maintaining Participation

Strategies - Fall:

1. 9th Grade Orientation Fairs
2. School Welcome Back Picnics
3. Back to School Night Fairs
4. Visits to physical education classes
5. Teams set up booths at contests



Clubs, Sports, and Activities

Please visit our website for information about the extracurricular lives and experiences of SVHS students.



Here are some popular links to start your journey:

School Site www.senecavalleyhighschool.org

School Activities www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/senecavalleyhs/activities/activities.aspx

School Athletics www.svhsathletics.org

School Clubs <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/senecavalleyhs/activities/clubs.aspx>

School Event Photos www.svhsphotos.smugmug.com

Boosting & Maintaining Participation

Strategies - Seasonal Throughout the School Year:

1. Resources available in multiple languages
2. Community nights/games for sports (youth nights)
3. Recruitment videos & social media outreach
4. "Bring a Friend" to interest meetings
5. Middle school instructional clinics
6. Email & website communications



Boosting & Maintaining Participation

Additional Best Practices:

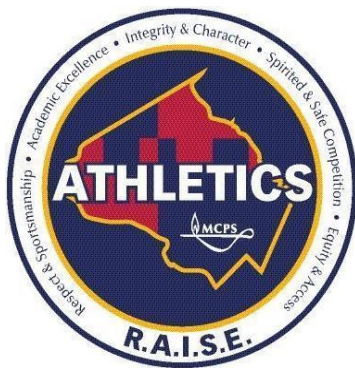
1. Interest posters with QR codes
2. Media promotional videos
3. Free promotional nights for middle school students at contests
4. Summer engagement opportunities/camps for next year
5. Boost communication with the Recreation Department
6. Translate more materials into Spanish/Other languages
7. Additional clinics for incoming 9th graders
8. Enhance middle school curriculum to highlight underrepresented sports





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MCPS ATHLETICS

ENHANCING PARTICIPATION

STRATEGIES & INITIATIVES

MCPS Athletics is committed to enhancing participation to ensure all students feel welcome regardless of race, gender identity, culture, religion, or socioeconomic status. High schools implement a variety of outreach strategies to enhance participation. Following is a summary of existing strategies and newer initiatives that can be used to enhance recruitment efforts and boost participation. These strategies can also be utilized and incorporated into the *Enhancement in Athletics Plan* for the local school athletics program.

Current Strategies for High Schools

Spring

1. Incoming 9th Grade Information Night (at high school)
2. Sports Field Day/Showcase (at high school)
3. Open House for Athletics and Extracurricular Activities (at high school)
4. Google Interest Form (QR code or posted on local school website)
5. Middle school visits during lunch or evenings (athletics specialist and/or coaches at middle schools, in coordination with principal, 8th grade team leader, resource counselor, and/or athletic coordinator)
6. Request middle school athletic rosters from schools, so high schools can contact students & parents/guardians
7. Phone calls to incoming 9th grade students
8. Information distributed through Physical Education & Health classes

Fall

1. 9th Grade Orientation Fairs
2. School Welcome Back Picnics
3. Back to School Night Fairs
4. Visits to physical education classes

Seasonal/School Year

1. Resources available in multiple languages
2. Community nights/games for sports (youth nights)
3. Recruitment videos & social media outreach
4. "Bring a Friend" to interest meetings
5. Middle school instructional clinics
6. Email & website communications

Newer Initiatives to Boost Participation

1. Interest posters with QR codes
2. Media promotional videos
3. Free promotional nights for middle school students at contests
4. Summer engagement opportunities/camps for next year
5. Boost communication with the Montgomery County Recreation Department
6. Translate more materials into Spanish
7. Additional clinics for incoming 9th graders
8. Enhance middle school curriculum to highlight underrepresented sports

Procedures for Adding a New Interscholastic Sport

The following procedures are to be used in submitting for consideration the addition of a new sport/team/activity to the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) high school or middle school interscholastic athletics program. Schools may not have competitive athletic clubs, teams, or activities unless they are approved according to these procedures.

Section A

The initiating agent shall submit a detailed, written proposal to the director of systemwide athletics. Section A shall include the name of the initiating agent, contact information, status or position, a description of the sport or activity, proposed level (club, JV, varsity), and the rationale for adding the new sport or activity.

Other details addressed in Section A include a timeline for implementation, the number of schools involved, and the number of anticipated participants per school.

Section B

The proposal shall address the following factors, considerations, or concerns regarding the new sport or activity.

1. Available Facilities. Are facilities an issue? Facilities are an essential concern in considering the addition of a new sport. For multiple reasons, schools should have appropriate facilities to conduct the activity on-campus. The inability to conduct an activity on-campus impacts on student safety, student participation, and expenses, especially if facilities must be rented. Concerns addressing the use of off-site facilities include:

- Transportation – Will students and parents have to drive considerable distances, on a steady basis, sometimes at unusual hours, to attend practices? The commute to and from practices potentially impacts on students' safety, homework, and evening regimens.
- Emergency response – Are there an abundant number of qualified adults available to assist in the event of an emergency? There are generally numerous qualified adults available to assist in emergencies when teams practice on-campus, including coaches of other teams, athletic/assistant athletic directors, and in some instances, athletic trainers.
- Lack of practice time – Will teams systemwide have adequate practice time? With 25 high schools potentially sharing limited off-campus facilities, sufficient practice time becomes an issue. Adequate practice time is an important safety concern, especially for certain sports where proper technique is essential to the safety of participants.
- Supervision – How will practices and contests be supervised? MCPS coaches and activities are carefully supervised. Athletic coaches are evaluated every year. Supervision issues and concerns prevail when virtually all practices and events are conducted at facilities that are distant from the school, and often at unusual hours. The concern extends to crowd supervision at contests.

2. **Facility Conflicts.** Will the activity create facility conflicts with other sports? The number of teams or activities that currently share or utilize a particular facility is an important factor when it comes to adding a new sport. For instance, in MCPS, 11 teams currently utilize the school gymnasiums on a regular basis for practices and contests. Cheerleading and pompons also frequently utilize the gymnasium, along with teams that must practice indoors in inclement weather. Gym schedules are very tight. Similarly, 12 teams share the stadium field for contests at most MCPS high schools.
3. **Equity.** Will all students, systemwide, be able to afford personal expenses associated with participation in the activity? The impact and appeal of the sport should be equitable across the school system, not just particular areas of the county. In this regard, costs associated with personal equipment required for participation should be reasonable, and student interest should be similar across the county. The sport also should accommodate the interests of both genders.
4. **Title IX.** Does the activity accommodate the interests and provide equal opportunities for both genders? The United States Office of Civil Rights requires public schools and school systems to provide equal opportunities for males and females. Thus, a new sport must accommodate the interests of both genders. Unless a particular sport were truly coed in nature, with equal appeal and participation for both genders, then adding one sport would require adding a male or female counterpart – thus two sports. Impact and cost estimates must include that adding one sport or team per school, would in essence require adding a second team as well – bringing the total to 50 teams systemwide, not 25 teams.
5. **Expense.** Are the expenses associated with the activity similar to the expenses of most sports? The expenses associated with a new activity must be carefully considered, not only in terms of the expense to the school system, but also the expense incurred by students in order to participate. When considering expense, the proposal must be based on full-funding for the sport or activity, not partial funding. The school system will not partially fund an activity.

The financial estimate should be detailed, and should address two components – personal costs for students, and school system cost.

- Personal costs – including transportation (if off-campus), practice clothing, mouth-pieces, shoes (or cleats, skates, etc. depending on the sport), etc.
- School system costs – including coach stipends, transportation, uniforms, equipment, rental fees, supervision, security, etc.
- The final calculation of the cost for adding the new sport should be multiplied by two, unless it is truly a coed sport that includes approximately equal participation by both genders. Otherwise, if a boys' team is added, for instance, a comparable girls' team would need to be added.

- 6. Safety.** Are there safety risks or concerns associated with the activity that go beyond many or most other high school sports? Participant safety is an important concern when considering the addition of a new sport or activity. Some sports include inherent risks that others do not. In addition to safety issues directly associated with the sport, there are other safety concerns that merit consideration, including whether the activity may be conducted on campus, where multiple personnel would be able to assist in the event of a significant injury.
- 7. Student Participation and Attendance.** Will the activity spark student spectator interest and attendance? An important rationale for interscholastic athletics is to promote school spirit, including student participation and attendance at after-school or evening activities. Sports should provide students with outlets and opportunities to support their peers in spirited competition with rival schools.
- 8. Available Coaches.** Are there an abundance of capable coaches, especially within the MCPS teaching ranks? The Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) requires that public schools, when possible, employ teachers for coaching positions. The Montgomery County Education Association (MCEA) also has this expectation. For multiple reasons, it is much more desirable for schools to have teachers occupy coaching positions. An important consideration for adding a new sport must include the availability of qualified MCPS teacher-coaches.
- 9. Compliance with MPSSAA and MCPS rules and regulations.** Will the activity conform to all MCPS and MPSSAA rules and regulations? An important requirement for an activity to be considered an interscholastic sport is that it adhere to all MCPS and MPSSAA rules and parameters. These include no participation on Sundays, the requirement that students attend a particular school in order to participate on teams at that school, travel limitations, limiting participation to within a precise season time period, etc.
- 10. Participation by MPSSAA Schools.** Does the activity have wide appeal among other Maryland public high schools? The new sport should be one that has wide participation among MPSSAA schools. MCPS is a member of the MPSSAA, teams adhere to MPSSAA rules and regulations, teams participate primarily against MPSSAA schools, and teams participate primarily in MPSSAA post season championships.
- 11. Appropriate to a High School Setting.** Is the sport appropriate to a high school setting? There are some sports that are not appropriate to a high school setting for one or multiple reasons. For instance, sports that are associated with an excessive safety risk (such as boxing), or sports associated with intimidation or ridicule (such as dodge ball) may not be appropriate to a high school setting.
- 12. Benefit to Schools and School System.** Does the activity provide a clear benefit to students systemwide and to the school system? The addition of a new sport should accomplish a clear purpose and should have a clear benefit for students, schools, and the school system. Examples of such benefits might include satisfaction of a legal requirement, creating opportunities compatible with opportunities at other public schools, creating participation opportunities for students with disabilities, etc.

Section C

The proposal shall include a description of the systemwide benefits of the new sport or activity. The addition of a new sport should accomplish a clear purpose and should have a clear benefit for students, schools, and the school system. Examples of such benefits might include satisfaction of a legal requirement, creating opportunities compatible with opportunities at other public schools, creating participation opportunities for students with disabilities, etc.

The new activity should have appeal across the school system, and should benefit both genders.

Section D

The proposal will be evaluated as follows.

- a. The director of systemwide athletics will deny or recommend approval of the proposal, based primarily on review of the criteria described in Sections B and C.
 - If denied, the proposal will be returned to the originating agent with an explanation for denying the proposal.
 - If deemed appropriate for further consideration, the proposal will be forwarded to MCPS athletic directors for review.
 - Athletic directors will forward their recommendation to the Montgomery County Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MCPSSAA).
- b. The MCPSSAA will deny or recommend approval of the request, with written rationale accompanying its decision.
 - If the MCPSSAA denies the request, the chairperson will indicate so to the director of systemwide athletics, and will inform the initiating agent of the decision and the rationale.
 - If the MCPSSAA recommends approval of the request, the director of systemwide athletics will submit the recommendation to the chief operating officer.
- c. The chief operating officer will deny or recommend approval for the proposal.