



To: NJSIAA Executive Committee

From: Paul Popadiuk, Chief Compliance Officer

Date: May 14, 2025

RE: NJSIAA Bylaws and Handbook Changes Proposal

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The NJSIAA Chief Compliance Officer was tasked with reviewing the NJSIAA Bylaws, Rules and Regulations, Guidelines, Rules and Procedures to ensure accuracy and consistency. There are a number of areas that are not worded correctly, not within the spirit of the rule, need to be amended in order to clarify our practices or address new areas of need. In consultation with NJSIAA staff and counsel, the NJSIAA Chief Compliance Officer recommends the following changes to the NJSIAA Bylaws, Rules and Regulations, Guidelines, Rules and Procedures. Each recommended change is supported by a brief rationale statement.

### **PROPOSED AMENDMENTS**

[Additions are underlined, and deletions are ~~struck through~~.]

#### **Bylaws, Article V, Section 4 K (Transfers)**

2. **Definitions:**

**Transfer:** A “transfer” occurs when a student who has previously enrolled in a secondary school leaves that school and enrolls in a new one. The date of transfer shall be the earlier of the first day of class or the first day of sports participation at the new school.

*CL1: It is considered a transfer if a homeschooled student moves from homeschooling to a high school or from a high school to homeschooling. If the student’s home district has a Board of Education policy that permits homeschooled students to participate in sports, the student will be exempt from the penalty sit when transferring from homeschooling to the home district or from the home district to homeschooling.*

*CL 2: A transfer student is eligible to participate in sports at the new high school when (1) the student has enrolled at the new school and (2) the student has either withdrawn from the former school, or the school year has concluded at the former school. Acceptance or admission alone does not constitute enrollment. This clarification is applicable to the school year and summer recess period.*

*CL 3: Sports participation at the new school includes participation in summer sports activities. Therefore, students who participate in summer sports activities at their new school, and subsequently transfer to another school, or return to their former school, prior to the start of the school year, are subject to the 30-day period of ineligibility for a second transfer.*

***Rationale:*** This makes it clear that a student who leaves a school, enrolls in a new school, participates in summer sports activities at the new school, and then either enrolls in a third school or reenrolls in their original school, is subject to the 30-day period of ineligibility for a second transfer. This will stop students from disenrolling from a school, trying a new school’s sports program out during the summer, and then transferring back to their school or to a different new school without penalty.

Competition Start Date: The “Competition Start Date” is the first day of the school’s first regular season contest competition for in each sport. as set forth annually in the Program Regulations, Section 8. For football, the Week 1 Competition Start Date will be used.

Maximum Number of Contests: The “Maximum Number of Contests” for each sport are as set forth in the Program Regulations, Section 15. For football, the sit-out period will be three (3) games for a 22-day period of ineligibility, and four (4) games for a 30-day period of ineligibility, regardless of the maximum number of contests. ~~the maximum number of contests is nine.~~ For wrestling and other sports without a maximum number of contests listed in the Program Regulations, the period of ineligibility shall be the number of days specified in each section below.

***Rationale:*** Changing these definitions make our rule consistent with changes that have been made to our competition start date (allowing schools to start their regular season any time after their 6 practices), and it clarifies the number of games football players will sit, making it easier for ADs to calculate the period of ineligibility.

#### **Bylaws, Article V, Section 4 E (Credits)**

2. To be eligible for athletic competition during the second semester (Feb. 1 to June 30), a pupil must have passed the equivalent of 12½% of the credits (15) required by New Jersey for graduation (120) at the close of the preceding semester (Jan. 31). Full-year courses shall be equated as one-half of the total credits to be gained for the full year to determine credits passed during the immediately preceding semester.

*CL 5: ~~An athlete~~ A student in 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, or 11<sup>th</sup> grade, who is ineligible under Article V, Section 4.E(2) may become eligible for the remainder of the spring sports season on May 1, if ~~he/she~~ the student meets the requirements of Article V, Section 4E(2) as of that date. A student in 12<sup>th</sup> grade may become eligible at the end of the third marking period if the student meets the same requirements.*

***Rationale:*** This more accurately describes our practice. As an added incentive and perk, we allow seniors to become eligible at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> marking period, rather than wait until May 1<sup>st</sup>.

4. Notwithstanding the provisions of Paragraph 1 and 2 above, a pupil who is eligible at the beginning of a sports season shall be allowed to finish that season.

*CL 3: It is recognized that students may accelerate their academic programs during their first three years of secondary schooling. Consequently, such students may be eligible in the second semester of their senior year even when they carry less than 12½% of the State minimum (15 credits) during the first semester provided they are meeting their school district’s graduation requirements and are passing all courses required for graduation. ~~in which they are enrolled at the start of the first semester.~~ Seniors who withdraw from courses with a passing grade (WP) will be eligible provided they are carrying sufficient credits for graduation purposes.*

***Rationale:*** This clarification places the focus on graduation requirements of State and school.

## **Bylaws, Article IX, Sportsmanship**

### **Section 3: Association Responsibility: Sportsmanship Rule/Policy**

Unsportsmanlike conduct shall include but not be limited to the following:

- A. Any person (athletic department, staff member, student-athlete or a fan or spectator associated with a member school) who strikes or physically abuses an official, opposing coach, player, or spectator.
- B. Any person (athletic department, staff member, student-athlete or a fan or spectator associated with a member school) who intentionally incites participants or spectators to violent or abusive action.
- C. Any person (athletic department, staff member, student-athlete or a fan or spectator associated with a member school) who uses obscene gestures or profane or unduly provocative language or action towards officials, opponents, or spectators.
- D. Any person (athletic department, staff member, student-athlete, or a fan or spectator associated with a member school) who engages in harassing verbal or physical conduct related to race, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or religion at an interscholastic event.
- E. Any school or athletic staff member who is publicly critical of a game official, opponents and/or opposing coaches/players.
- F. The administration of a member school will be responsible for the unsportsmanlike conduct of that school's athletic department, staff members, student-athletes, fans or spectators.

***Rationale:*** This clarifies that member schools are responsible for everyone associated with the school.

## **Section 5**

### **Executive Authority:**

- A. The Investigation of Complaints. The Association vests authority in its President and Executive Director to investigate and take appropriate action on any reported flagrant violation of the sportsmanship rule occurring during the regular season or NJSIAA tournament competitions. The President or Executive Director may request the school or the league or conference to investigate the violation and report any action taken. The President or Executive Director may also refer the violation to the Controversies Committee for investigation.
- B. Bias incidents. In addition to any other investigation undertaken by a school, league conference or the NJSIAA, the Executive Director shall forward to the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights any report of a violation of the sportsmanship rule resulting from harassing verbal or physical conduct related to race, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or religion at an interscholastic event.
- C. Reported violations shall be resolved in a manner sufficient to correct the problem and may range from a written statement of the findings by the Executive Director to the school administration, to appropriate disciplinary action, including but not limited to, suspension, disqualification, or removal from interscholastic events.
- D. ~~Any report of a violation of good sportsmanship occurring during an NJSIAA sanctioned event, must be submitted in writing and include the violator and/or his/her school.~~

***Rationale:*** This defines the types of disciplinary actions that may be administered by the Executive Director. This also removes outdated language that is no longer relied on by NJSIAA staff.

## **NJSIAA Rules and Regulations**

### **Program Regulations:**

#### **Section 2 Strenuous Sports**

A player on an interscholastic athletic team shall participate in only one strenuous high school sport at a time during the regular high school sports season. A player may drop one high school sport to participate in another, but he/she may not return to a sport from which he/she withdrew.

The strenuous sports are: Baseball, Basketball, Unified Basketball, Cross-Country, Diving, Fencing, Field Hockey, Football, Gymnastics, Ice Hockey, Lacrosse, Soccer, Softball, Swimming, Tennis, Spring Track, Winter Track, Unified Track, Volleyball, and Wrestling.

***Rationale:*** Unified Basketball and Track are considered strenuous sports.

## **Section 6 Start of Practice**

For all strenuous sports (which excludes bowling and golf), student-athletes must take part in 6 practices and have one day of rest (6 days on and 1 day off rule) prior to participating in a scrimmage or regular season contest. the “first scrimmage” date must include one day of rest within the first 7 days from the first practice (6 days on and 1 day off rule). The 6 days of practice and 1 day of rest do not have to be consecutive but must adhere to the 7-day time frame. This requirement applies to all three seasons.

***Rationale:*** *This language adjusts to schools that elect not to scrimmage.*

## **Specific Sport Regulations:**

### **4. Disqualification**

- a. Any student-athlete or coach disqualified before, during or after an interscholastic event for unsportsmanlike and flagrant verbal or physical misconduct will be disqualified from the next two (2) regularly scheduled games/meets, with the exception of football which will carry a one (1) game disqualification, at that level of competition and all other game(s)/meet(s) in the interim at any level in addition to any other penalties which the NJSIAA or a league/conference may assess.

*CL 2: Any student disqualified during a scrimmage will remain ineligible until the second regular season contest in football or the third regular season contest in all other sports. Scrimmage DQs do not count toward the team disqualification maximum but do count toward an individual’s disqualification maximum for participation in the NJSIAA tournament. Scrimmages are not considered part of the disqualification rule.*

***Rationale:*** *This sends a consistent message to student athletes that getting disqualified during a scrimmage is not okay and better aligns with the in-season rule without jeopardizing the team’s ability to participate in the NJSIAA tournament.*

### **4. Disqualification**

- b. A disqualified player or coach may not be present at any contest in that sport during the period of disqualification. Definition of not being present at the site means the disqualified player or coach is not to be present in the locker room, on the bus, on the sidelines, in the stands or site area before, during or after the game/meet. In addition, a disqualified coach may not engage in any coaching or communication whatsoever with anyone at the contest.

***Rationale:*** *This clearly addresses coaches who are disqualified and try to circumvent the rule by using technology to coach from home.*

## **Fencing**

Section 1 Rules United States Fencing Association NCAA Rules shall govern all NJSIAA meets.

***Rationale:*** *NJSIAA has been following NCAA rules for years. This is a mandatory update.*

## **Bowling**

Section 16 Championship Eligibility A student competing on an interscholastic bowling team must participate as a member of his/her high school team in at least 50% of the school’s total matches to be eligible for the NJSIAA Team State Tournament.

*CL 1: Students who experience extraordinary circumstances, which are limited to injuries/medical reasons or return from academic ineligibility, must play in at least 50% of the school’s matches, up to and including the cut-off date, less those matches in which the student was not able to compete due to extraordinary circumstances. Extraordinary circumstances shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the NJSIAA upon request by the school.*

## **Gymnastics**

Section 16 Championship Eligibility A student competing on an interscholastic gymnastics team must participate as a member of his/her high school team in at least 50% of the school's total meets to be eligible for the NJSIAA Team State Tournament.

*CL 1: Students who experience extraordinary circumstances, which are limited to injuries/medical reasons or return from academic ineligibility, must play in at least 50% of the school's meets, up to and including the cut-off date, less those meets in which the student was not able to compete due to extraordinary circumstances. Extraordinary circumstances shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the NJSIAA upon request by the school.*

## **Girls Tennis (Fall), Boys Tennis (Spring)**

Section 16 Championship Eligibility A student competing on an interscholastic tennis team must participate as a member of his/her high school team in at least 50% of the school's total matches to be eligible for the NJSIAA Team State Tournament.

*CL 1: Students who experience extraordinary circumstances, which are limited to injuries/medical reasons or return from academic ineligibility, must play in at least 50% of the school's matches, up to and including the cut-off date, less those matches in which the student was not able to compete due to extraordinary circumstances. Extraordinary circumstances shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the NJSIAA upon request by the school.*

**Rationale:** The addition of bowling, gymnastics and tennis is consistent with how we treat fencing, ice hockey, swimming and soccer.

## **Guidelines, Policies and Procedures**

### **Unified Sports, Section 2. Unified Partner Eligibility**

1. Any student participating in a strenuous sport at any level ~~the varsity level~~ at any time during the season is NOT eligible to compete as a Unified partner in a strenuous Unified Sport ~~the same sport~~. Appropriate participation for such a student may take place as a manager.

**Rationale:** Special Olympics New Jersey requested this clarification. It specifies that a unified partner may not participate in two strenuous sports during the same season.