

MIDDLE LEVEL INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS IN MASSACHUSETTS

The Middle Level Athletic Committee (MLAC) of the Massachusetts Secondary School Administrators' Association (MSSAA) is the official organization in Massachusetts for regulating and conducting athletic events and contests among middle level schools. MLAC is responsible for enforcement of rules relative to the eligibility of athletes for participation in inter-school athletic events and for recommending changes in rules to the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Council (MIAC).

MIAC is the policy-making body, which has final decision on the formation of all rules governing interscholastic athletics in the Commonwealth. It also hears appeals on decisions of the MLAC.

MASSACHUSETTS INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC COUNCIL

The Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Council was formed in 1950 and endorsed as the policy-making body for the control of interscholastic athletics by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, what is now referred to as the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA), and what was formerly called the Massachusetts Middle Level School Administrators' Association.

Previous to 1950, policy determination and administration had been the sole concern of the high school principals (MSSPA). To many, this seemed to be an unfair burden to place on the principals. Therefore, it was decided to have the three groups – superintendents, school committees, and principals responsible for the educational program, working together in the matter of determining athletic policy. The responsibility for the administration of the program within the framework of the established policies was left to the MSSPA. In 1972, the Massachusetts Middle Level School Administrators' Association was also included in MIAC. Junior high schools and middle schools follow rules approved by the MIAC and implemented by the MLAC.

The membership of the MIAC now consists of five members each from the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, one from the Massachusetts Secondary School Athletic Directors Association, two principals from the middle level of MSSAA, and five principals representing MIAA. A school committee representative serves as chair, and the Executive Director of MIAA serves as secretary.

At the formation of the MIAC in 1950, the MSSPA Constitution and Bylaws were approved by the Council.

Before any question of policy is presented to the MIAC for its action, it is carefully considered by the MIAA Board of Directors or the MLAC. Those recommendations are forwarded to the MIAC. Rule changes are not final until approved by the MIAC.

Meetings of the MIAC are held in the fall and spring of each year. In addition, meetings are called when necessary to consider urgent matters of business. Appeals on eligibility rulings are heard by three members of MIAC who serve as the MIAC Appeal Board.

Questions may be addressed to:

MSSAA Liaison to the Middle Level Committee

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PREAMBLE

The emphasis upon athletics at the middle level should be on participation for all and be school based. Development of fundamental skills is advocated. Policies to achieve this should be developed by the Middle School Principal and Staff. Intramural and/or Interscholastic schedules at the middle level should include all middle level grades within the building (e.g. 5-8, 6-8, 7-8).

The Middle Level Athletic Committee would like it to be known that we adhere to the spirit of the MIAA rules, even though these written rules may not address a particular point. Since athletics at both the high school and middle levels are under the final control of the MIAC and the general rules for both groups are essentially the same, then the intention is that items not covered by this middle level document should be considered to follow along with the thinking of the MIAA rules.

MASSACHUSETTS MIDDLE LEVEL ATHLETIC COMMITTEE RULES WHICH APPLY TO ALL SPORTS

Each regularly enrolled student in a middle level school must conform to the following in order to be eligible to compete and to represent his/her school in interscholastic competition.

1. **Age Limits**

A student must be under fifteen years of age. He/she may compete during the remainder of the school year provided that his/her fifteenth birthday occurs on or after September 1 of that year. Exception to this is if both schools mutually agree prior to competition.

2. **Expulsion – Sportsmanship**

2a. When a student or coach is ruled out of a contest for unsportsmanlike conduct, s/he shall be kept out of the next regularly scheduled contest for the first offense, and out for one full year from the date of disqualification for the second infraction in the same season. Such coach may not be present at the game site.

2b. The game official who excludes a coach or player under the conditions of the general rule listed above, must immediately inform the coach of each team, official scorer (if any), and state the violation.

2c. The athletic director or person in charge of the contest is responsible for having the official Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association Game Suspension Form available for game officials. The official(s) shall complete the forms before leaving the site of the contest.

Exception: If conditions at the site of the contest are such that it is not feasible for the suspension to be filed at the end of the contest, the official(s) may defer it, but said official(s) are required to place the report in the hands of the person in charge of the contest not more than twenty-four (24) hours after the end of the contest.

2d. Whenever a coach is excluded by an official from an inter-school competition, the official shall file a written report of the incident with the coach's principal.

2e. The person in charge of the contest is responsible for sending copies to:

1. The Principal of each school involved
2. The Athletic Director of each school involved
3. The MSSAA Executive Staff liaison of the Middle Level Athletic Committee

3. Academic Eligibility

Satisfactory scholarship achievement is required for interscholastic competition. It is recommended that a student must pass a minimum of four major academic subjects; however, local rules established by the Principal will dictate academic eligibility. It is highly recommended that good school citizenship (per local rules) be a prerequisite for participation.

4. Competition Levels

Interscholastic competition in a middle level school will be determined by the Middle School Principal and/or Athletic Director.

5. Participation in More than One Sport

No student shall participate in more than one school sport during the same season unless approved by the Middle School Principal. If a student violates this rule, s/he will be ineligible for that season and all contests in which s/he participated must be forfeited.

6. Bona Fide Team Member

MIAA Rule 45 Loyalty to the Middle/High School Team: Bona Fide Team Members

A bona fide member of the school team is a student who is consistently present for, and actively participates in, all school team sessions (e.g. practices, tryouts, and competitions). Bona fide members of a school team are precluded from missing a school practice or competition in order to participate in a non-school athletic activity/event in any sport recognized by the MIAA. Any student who violates this standard is ineligible for the next two contests or two weeks (whichever is greater) immediately upon confirmation of the violation.

7. Tournaments

No tournament or playoffs are permitted. Play days and jamborees involving all participants are encouraged.

8. Officials

Officials for interscholastic athletic contests should be certified whenever possible and must be approved by the athletic directors or principals. The use of local home officials should be avoided except in case of emergency.

9. Cheerleaders

No cheerleaders shall be sent to any away contest unless the principal of the host school has given prior approval.

10. Practice Time

There will be no more than two hours of daily practice in any sport, and teams may not practice on weekends unless approved by the principal or athletic director.

11. Insurance

Suitable accident insurance shall be made available by the school district.

12. Physical Examinations & Concussions

**RULE 56 of MIAA Handbook: Student Eligibility/School Requirements:
Physical Examinations/Medical Coverage/Concussions**

All students must pass a physical examination prior to participation in High School Athletics. A Physical exam covers the student for 13 months from the exam date. A student's eligibility will terminate once a physical has reached the 13 month limit. Physical examinations must be performed by a duly registered Physician, Physician's Assistant or Nurse Practitioner. The Sports Medicine Committee recommended physical examination form is in the MIAA White Book.

All MIAA member school coaches (paid or volunteer) are required to take annually the on-line National Federation Concussion Course, or other recognized education program, prior to the start of their season. This Board of Directors' policy is effective with the upcoming winter season, which began on Monday, November 29, 2010.

All MIAA member school Athletic Directors and Athletic Trainers are required to take annually the on-line National Federation Concussion Course, or other recognized education program, prior to the start of their season. This Board of Directors' policy is effective with the upcoming spring season, which began on Monday, March 21, 2011.

PENALTY: A student in violation shall be suspended for the number of contests in which he/she participated without a proper physical.

Each school's medical person/staff is responsible for the members of that team. These individuals annually must have taken, and been certified in, the NFHS on-line Concussion Course ([click here](#)) or other recognized education program. In the event of injury, that medical person/staff will make the final judgment as to whether a student athlete may return to play (please see Rule 56.4 below regarding concussions). Whenever a medical person is on duty at an athletic event, he/she shall be responsible for both teams (unless the other team has its own medical person present). His/her judgment will be final. Physical disqualification by the medical person renders the student ineligible. The Penalty for playing an ineligible student is forfeiture.

Medical Alert Bracelets/Anklets are approved for wearing in all sports, provided they are taped to the body and marked in red.

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Any student athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion, or balance problems) shall be immediately removed from the practice or competition and must not return to practice or competition that day, and further shall not return to play until cleared (in writing to the Athletic Director) by an appropriate health-care professional (as determined by the Department of Public Health). Whenever it is decided to disqualify a student-athlete from further participation for a suspected concussion or other injury, the person making that decision must communicate about this matter with the injured athlete's coach and athletic director in a timely fashion.

13. Uniforms

Participants must be properly equipped with uniforms manufactured to give maximum protection for the specific activities.

14 Time of Contests

All athletic contests shall start before 6:00 PM unless mutually agreed to by both schools, and no competition may occur on Sundays.

15. Combining Schools for Team Purposes

If there is more than one public middle school in the community, the students of these schools may be joined into one team for the purposes of interscholastic athletic competition if mutually agreed by both.

16. Penalties for Violation

If a school does not abide by the Rules Governing Athletics of the Middle Level Athletic Committee or the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association, the MLAC will notify the principals of all schools of this fact and advise them not to compete in interscholastic competition with the offending school. The Superintendent and the School Committee will be informed of this recommendation.

17. Waivers and Appeals

Requests for waivers to any of the rules governing interscholastic competition will be made by the principal in writing to the MSSAA Executive Staff Liaison of the Middle Level Athletic Committee at least fifteen days prior to the beginning of each season. The same procedure will also be used in the event of protests and grievances, except that they must be filed within 48 hours of the incident being appealed.

Adverse decisions of the Athletic Committee may be appealed by the principal of the school, if endorsed by the Superintendent of Schools to the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Council. Any appeal must be filed in writing with the MSSAA Liaison within ten (10) school days of receipt of notification of the adverse decision.

18. Boys and Girls on the Same Team

- 18.a. No student shall be denied the opportunity in any implied or explicit manner to participate in a co-curricular activity because of the gender of the student, except as provided in part b.
- 18b. A school may establish separate teams for males and females for interscholastic competition in a particular sport, provided that the requirements of part c. are satisfied.
- 18c. Teams comprised primarily or solely of persons of one gender shall be granted equal instruction, training, coaching, access to available facilities, equipment and opportunities to practice and compete as teams engaged in a similar activity comprised primarily or solely of persons of the opposite gender.
- 18d. A girl may play on a boys' team if that sport is not offered in the school for that girl. Also, a boy may play on a girls' team if that sport is not offered in the school for that boy.

19. Medical Exclusion from Participation

No athlete with the absence or disease of one paired organ shall participate in interscholastic athletics unless the athlete provides his/her principal with completion of parental permission form as well as authorization from a medical specialist. The athlete is required to wear the protective equipment recommended by the specialist for all practices and contests. It is requested that copies of all such material be filed with the MIAA Sports Medical Committee.

20. Season Limits

The limitation on the start and end of seasons will be determined by the Middle School Principal. The following are guidelines:

Fall Season: First day of school to end of October.

Winter Season: November 1st to February vacation.

Spring Season: March 1 to June 1

The number of contests allowed per season in each sport will not exceed 18, except in football where no more than 8 contests will be allowed.

21. Chemical Health

***RULE 62 OF MIAA HANDBOOK: Student (and Coach) Eligibility:
Chemical Health/Alcohol/Drugs/Tobacco***

- 62.1 ***From the earliest fall practice date, to the conclusion of the academic year or final athletic event (whichever is latest), a student shall not, regardless of the quantity, use, consume, possess, buy/sell, or give away any beverage containing alcohol; any tobacco product; marijuana; steroids; or any controlled substance. This policy includes products such as "NA or near beer". It is not a violation for a student to be***

in possession of a legally defined drug specifically prescribed for the student's own use by his/her doctor.

This MIAA statewide minimum standard is not intended to render "guilt by association", e.g. many student athletes might be present at a party where only a few violate this standard. This rule represents only a minimum standard upon which schools may develop more stringent requirements.

If a student in violation of this rule is unable to participate in interscholastic sports due to injury or academics, the penalty will not take effect until that student is able to participate again.

Minimum PENALTIES:

First violation: When the Principal confirms, following an opportunity for the student to be heard, that a violation occurred, the student shall lose eligibility for the next consecutive interscholastic contests totaling 25% of all interscholastic contests in that sport. No exception is permitted for a student who becomes a participant in a treatment program. It is recommended that the student be allowed to remain at practice for the purpose of rehabilitation. All decimal part of an event will be truncated i.e. All fractional part of an event will be dropped when calculating the 25% of the season.

Second and subsequent violations: When the Principal confirms, following an opportunity for the student to be heard, that a violation occurred, the student shall lose eligibility for the next consecutive interscholastic contests totaling 60% of all interscholastic contests in that sport. All decimal part of an event will be truncated i.e. All fractional part of an event will be dropped when calculating the 60% of the season.

If after the second or subsequent violations the student of his/her own volition becomes a participant in an approved chemical dependency program or treatment program, the student may be certified for reinstatement in MIAA activities after a minimum of 40% of events. The director or a counselor of a chemical dependency treatment center must issue such certification. All decimal part of an event will be truncated i.e. All fractional part of an event will be dropped when calculating the 40% of the season.

Penalties shall be cumulative each academic year. If the penalty period is not completed during the season of violation, the penalty shall carry over to the student's next season of actual participation, which may affect the eligibility status of the student during the next academic year.

1st Offense	
# of Events / Season	# of Events / Penalty
1-7	1
8-11	2
12-15	3
16-19	4
20 or over	5
2nd Offense	
# of Events / Season	# of Events / Penalty
1-3	1
4	2
5-6	3
7-8	4
9	5
10-11	6
12-13	7
14	8
15-16	9
17-18	10
19	11
20 or over	12
2nd Offense w/Dependency Program	
# of Events / Season	# of Events / Penalty
1-4	1
5-7	2
8-9	3
10-12	4
13-14	5
15-17	6
18-19	7
20 or over	8

62.2 During practice or competition, a coach shall not use any tobacco product.

62.3 Steroids are used by some athletes, and the seriousness of the problem has been well documented. Coaches should take a proactive role, learning about steroids, and then providing this information to their athletes.

Steroids can, with proper diet and weight training, increase muscle development; however, as is typical with most “get-rich-quick” schemes, steroid use has serious short and long term consequences.

Normal and equal musculature development can occur without steroid use. Although the natural process takes longer, muscle tone will last longer and does not carry the harmful side effects of steroids.

Most coaches would not promote steroid use intentionally. Total silence by coaches however condones use in some young people's minds. Even though steroids may not

be mentioned when it is suggested to an athlete that his/her success is limited only by a lack of weight and/or strength, without a disclaimer the statement can be a motivation to use steroids. The pervasiveness of the drugs that allow for development of increased weight under the aforementioned circumstances is a coercive power that is difficult for young athletes to resist without knowing what the side effects of the drugs may be.

The issue goes beyond protecting the integrity of sport. The use of steroids in sports is cheating. We must oppose the use of steroids for both health and ethical reasons.

22. GOOD CITIZEN RULE

Student-athletes may not represent their school if they are on in-house or out-of-house disciplinary suspension. A suspended student is ineligible for practice or competition for at least the number of days (or partial days) equal to the number of days of the suspension. Local policies will determine the actual days of ineligibility. (The MIAA Board of Directors suggests that policies be included in local Student Handbooks.)

23. JEWELRY

Jewelry shall not be worn. Religious and medical-alert medals are not considered jewelry. A religious medal must be taped and worn under the uniform. A medical-alert medal must be taped and may be visible.

24. MOUTHGUARDS

The following MIAA sports require mouth guards: field hockey, football, ice hockey, and lacrosse. In basketball and soccer mouth guards are highly recommended.

25. COACHES EDUCATION

RULE 33 of MIAA Handbook: Coaches' Education

All coaches hired prior to August 1, 1998 are exempt from taking the Fundamentals of Coaching Course. Coaches hired after 8/1/98 and before 7/1/05 must complete the NFHS Fundamentals of Coaching Course with the exception of Certified MA teachers.

All MIAA member school coaches (stipend or volunteer) are required to take annually the on-line National Federation Concussion Course, or other MA Department of Public Health recognized education program, prior to the start of their season. This Board of Directors' policy became effective on Monday, November 29, 2010.

All coaches (stipend or volunteer) first serving as an interscholastic coach after July 1, 2005 must complete the National Federation of High Schools, NFHS Fundamentals of Coaching Course taught by an MIAA Instructor, (must be passed prior to coaching a second year) and the NFHS Sports First Aid course (must be passed prior to coaching a third year).

All coaches (stipend or volunteer) first serving as an interscholastic coach after July 1, 2007 must complete the NFHS Fundamentals of Coaching Course, the NFHS Sports First Aid course and the NFHS Sport Specific Technical and Tactical Skills Course in the sport they are coaching (must be completed prior to coaching a third year). Note: The sport-specific requirement will begin on July 1, 2007 or when the particular sport-specific course becomes available, if after this date.

*NFHS Sport Specific Technical and Tactical Skills Courses presently available: Basketball, **Field Hockey**, Football, Soccer, Softball, Wrestling, Volleyball, Cheer & Dance, and Track & Field.*

The NFHS Fundamentals of Coaching Course requirement must be met through attending an MIAA sponsored Fundamentals of Coaching Class with MIAA Certified Instructors.

The NFHS Sports First Aid and Sport Specific requirement may be met by completing on-line courses with the NFHS <http://www.nfhslearn.com>.

26. STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

RULE 51 of MIAA Handbook: Student Eligibility: Baseline Eligibility Requirements

For a student to practice with, or to represent a MIAA member school in athletic competition, the student must be duly enrolled in that school. Additionally, the student must be a candidate for that school's diploma, subject to the jurisdiction of that school's principal (i.e. the principal must have the authority to suspend the student from classes), and under the supervision of that school principal (i.e. the principal must have control and knowledge of the student's daily attendance and achievement).

Ultimately the interpretation and application of Association rules rests with the MIAA executive director/staff and the Board of Directors. Principals (or athletic directors) must contact the Association executive staff to resolve any possible eligibility issues before permitting a student to represent your school.

You should be aware of Rule 53 of the M.I.A.A.:

Student Eligibility: Middle School Students on Senior High Teams

A middle school student is eligible to represent a senior high school on its athletic teams only when the MIAA member high school includes those grades and they are under the direct "jurisdiction" and "supervision" of the high school principal (see MIAA Rule 51 for definitions).

RULES FOR SPORTS

With the exception of football, no contest may be conducted before the 11th calendar day after the first day of practice. Also, with the exception of football, only two contests per week may be scheduled. Member schools may exceed two contests per week due to game postponements.

The rules for each sport are the same as those listed in the current issue of the MIAA Handbook except as follows:

I. **Baseball**

1. A regular game shall be seven innings. No full inning should start after 6:00 PM.
2. *Beginning January 1, 2012, all bats not made of a single piece of wood shall meet the Batted Ball Coefficient of Restitution (BBCOR) performance standard, and such bats shall be labeled with a silkscreen or other permanent certification mark. The certification mark shall be rectangular, a minimum of a half-inch on each side and located on the barrel of the bat in any contrasting color. Aluminum and composite bats shall be labeled as approved tamper evident, and be marked as to being aluminum or composite. This marking shall be silkscreen or other permanent certification mark, a minimum of one-half-inch on each side and located on the barrel of the bat in any contrasting color (NFHS Rule 1-3-2-e).*

II. **Basketball**

1. A game will consist of four quarters with overtime being an extension of the fourth quarter.
2. Quarters for games shall not exceed an overall game time of 32 minutes.
3. Allowing the 3-pt shot will be up to the school(s)/league(s) that participate. Must be mutually agreed to use and court must be marked.

III. **Cross Country**

1. Distances in all meets will not be less than one and one-quarter miles, nor more than two miles.

IV. **Field Hockey**

1. Free substitution is allowed.

V. **Football**

1. The first game shall not be played before the fifteenth calendar day after the first day of practice, nor may a player participate in a game before having fifteen days of practice.
2. The game will consist of four periods each of eight minutes duration. There will be a minimum of ten-minute intermission between halves.

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3. The tie breaker rule is not in effect. Games which end in a tie at the conclusion of four periods will be declared a tie game.
4. Unlimited substitution will be allowed.
5. One contest may be scheduled per week.

VI. Ice Hockey

1. The length of periods shall be eight minutes of actual playing time.
2. Games which end in a tie at the conclusion of three regular periods will be declared a tie game and will not be played off in overtime.

VII. Lacrosse

1. The maximum length of a period is ten minutes.

VIII. Soccer

1. The game will consist of four periods each of fifteen minutes duration.
2. Games which end in a tie will be declared a tie game and overtime will not be played.
3. Unlimited substitution will be allowed.

IX. Softball

1. A regular game shall be 7 innings. No full inning should start after 6:00 PM.
2. ***The distance between the nearer edge of the pitcher's plate and the apex of home plate shall be 40'.***

X. Track

1. The National Federation Track Rules with middle level or junior high school modifications will be used.

Note: Friendship or open Track Meets held with multiple teams participating and a slight entry fee charged would not be in violation of the rules. The spirit of the Meet would be to promote interest in track and field at the middle level and therefore a Meet winner would not be declared. Participation pins or some similar token might be distributed to all students. Eligibility rules would be in effect.

XI. Volleyball

1. Free substitution is allowed.
2. Modified MIAA rules which are distributed to all coaches and officials.
3. Coaches and officials meet prior to contest to agree on format/rules.

XII. OTHER SPORTS WOULD FOLLOW MIAA SPORTS RULES IN HANDBOOK.