



2026-27

WIAA High School Rules at a Glance

The WIAA Rules at a Glance offers a brief synopsis of WIAA Bylaws and Rules of Eligibility, to address in general some of the most common questions of the membership.

WIAA Bylaws, which outline the provisions of membership in the Association and the Rules of Eligibility, appear in the WIAA Handbook. The reader should refer to that publication, or confer with your school athletic director, for more complete information. Your Athletic Director (AD) should always be your first contact for questions or concerns about school sports.

WIAA rules and regulations are established by membership vote. The Annual Meeting is held in the spring of the year, at which time amendments are presented to the membership. The interpretation and enforcement of the rules and regulations are the responsibility of the WIAA Executive Office and Board of Control.

It is the responsibility of member schools to abide by the rules of the Association, to educate students, coaches, parents, and others regarding the provisions of membership and Rules of Eligibility and to report to the WIAA all violations of Association provisions.

I. Coaches and Coaching Contact

- A. **Returning** coaches may not have coaching contact with any athletes that they will be coaching (except their own children) the following school season during restricted times. There is no distinction between varsity and junior varsity (J.V.) coaches, i.e., J.V. coaches cannot coach varsity athletes during restricted times, and vice-versa, nor any distinction between paid and nonpaid (volunteer) coaches. An exception is that varsity and J.V. coaches can have coaching contact with students who have just completed 8th grade or any preceding grade up until those 8th graders actually start their 9th grade year.
- B. Coaching restrictions apply to all sports during the school year, except during the respective sport season. All coaches have sanctioned school coaching contact in the summer, between June 1 and July 31 with no contact July 1 through July 6. Football must follow WIAA Fall Football Acclimatization rules and contact ends July 26, 2025. In 2026, July 25 will be the last day for football coaches contact. In addition, coaching restrictions do not apply in the summer beyond the sanctioned school days in all sports except football, the summer being defined as when school is not in normal session, **provided such nonschool programs are not limited to students on the basis of school or team affiliation**. Other than during the actual school season and as specifically approved in the summer, coaches may not have coaching contact with their athletes other than as listed above; including practicing or competing with athletes, driving athletes to nonschool competition, driving athletes to camps, clinics, etc., or having basically anything to do with the athletes' nonschool participation. Further, coaches may not:
 1. Mandate athletes participate in nonschool competition, or determine who may or may not participate in nonschool activities.
 2. Require involvement in out-of-season activities as part of the requirements for making a school team, earning a school letter award, etc.
 3. Provide incentives such as T-shirts, etc., for participation in the off-season.

II. Schools and School Teams

A. Competition and Practice

1. Schools may conduct sport competition and practice only during the defined respective sport season as specified in Season Regulations and during Board of Control–approved sanctioned school contact days in the summer. Season Regulations detail, for example, when practice starts, how many contests may be played, how many contests individuals may participate in, how many practice days are required before the first competition, and when the season ends. This means schools and school organizations, such as the letter winners club, the senior class, etc., cannot be involved in running any competition or practice in WIAA recognized sports outside the defined school season for that sport and during the summer sanctioned school contact days.
2. WIAA rules also specify a school may not assemble athletes, or prospective athletes, in physical education classes, or some other manner, for purposes of teaching fundamentals, techniques, plays, etc., except during the designated school season of that particular sport and summertime-sanctioned school days. Further, schools may not organize conditioning programs limited to students with athletic team status, or to prospective athletes, except during the designated school season of that sport. Nor may a school conduct intramural programs, which involve athletes with past status on a school team, at any level, except during the established school season of a sport. (BL – Art. II)
3. **Interstate Competition:** WIAA Bylaws prohibit member schools from competing against school teams that are post-secondary schools and/or academies and schools that are not members of their respective state associations. They also limit the number of events member schools may schedule in non-bordering states to one competition, event, and/or scrimmage per team each school season. Schools may schedule any number of events in bordering states within season game maximum limitations. Bylaws also provide that competition which involves out-of-state teams may require additional WIAA and/or National Federation sanctioning. Additional requirements exist relative to school teams participating in competition sponsored by non-school providers, e.g. Professional sport teams, American Legion, YMCA. (BL – Art. II)
4. A school coach must always be present when an athlete is participating in interscholastic competition. It is not acceptable for parents, or others, to take the place of the coach at school-sponsored competition, unless they meet WIAA coaching requirements and have the approval of the school administration. (RE – Art. I, Sect. 7 and Art. VI, Sect. 2)

B. Uniforms and Equipment

1. Schools may not issue wearing apparel and protective equipment prior to the first allowable day of practice, unless specifically allowed in Season Regulations for that sport.
2. One exception is that, with the approval of its governing body, schools may issue school uniforms or other wearing apparel and protective equipment for use by athletes in training or competition in the summertime. For school protective equipment, summertime shall be from the Friday before Memorial Day to the first day of school. Reminder: coaching contact is not allowed prior to June 1. During the school year, with the approval of its governing body, a school may issue its baseball and softball equipment at its own discretion. It is acceptable to issue implements at any time if the school wishes, such as vaulting poles, shot puts, hurdles, baseball bats, basketballs, volleyballs, etc. (BL – Art. III and RE – Art. VI, Sect. 2)

C. Clinics and School Facilities

1. Schools may not be involved in conducting clinics outside the season, with the following exceptions. So long as participation is voluntary and available to all interested students:

- i. There shall be no restrictions upon schools, school teams and school coaches (grades 9-12) relative to assembling in the summertime, from June 1 through June 30 and July 1 through July 31. Sanctioned school contact days must conclude no later than July 31 for all sports except football. Sanctioned school contact for football must conclude by July 25, 2026 and July 24, 2027.
- ii. A school may conduct a clinic for students in grades 8 and below, where high school varsity and junior varsity coaches may use some or all of their high school athletes as clinicians. This may be done June 1 through June 30 and July 1 through July 31.
- iii. Clinics for students in grades 8 and below not utilizing athletes as clinicians may be conducted at any time.
- iv. School facilities may be used for nonschool programs, according to board of education policy, which can result in clinics being conducted, outside the season, by nonschool groups. The nonschool group must request the facilities from the board of education or governing board, through normal procedures and are encouraged to provide their own insurance protection. (BL – Art. II and RE – Art. VI, Sect. 2)

D. Open Gyms

1. Coaches and schools cannot be involved in out-of-season practice for athletes. However, open gyms do not violate WIAA rules if they are conducted according to the following guidelines:
 - i. The open gym is made known and available to all students in the designated population of that school that are interested in attending. Open gyms may be gender specific. It is also acceptable to include people from the community. Schools may conduct “open gyms” in any activity. It is not acceptable to include athletes from another school, public or nonpublic.
 - ii. There is no instruction during the open gym by a coach or anyone else.
 - iii. Coaches may supervise open gyms, but they may not instruct, organize drills, etc. Coaches can also recreate with students in school sponsored, open gym settings that are purely recreational in nature, i.e., there is no instruction, sport skill demonstration, organized drills, or resemblance of a practice being conducted.
 - iv. There is no organized competition, such as established teams participating in round-robin competition, etc.
2. “Open Gym” is not a code word for out-of-season practice. The philosophy of the open gym is students from that school may attend, for wholesome recreation, or for purposes of improving their skills, but it’s something they do on their own. It would be a violation of WIAA rules to mandate attendance at open gyms, or to provide incentives for athletes to attend open gyms, or to limit participation based on athletic status, or to allow athletes from other schools to come and work out or compete against the host school’s athletes. (BL – Art. II and RE – Art. VI, Sect. 2)

E. Scrimmages

1. WIAA rules limit the number of interscholastic (another high school, tech school, college, etc.) scrimmages/practices teams may have. Teams may practice/scrimmage with or against nonschool groups (alumni, city team, etc.) at their discretion.

Note (1): An alumni contest counts toward season maximums. (BL – Art. II and SR)

Note (2): If either school counts a scrimmage as a game, it must be counted as a game for both programs, schools and/or teams.

F. Who May Participate Interscholastically

1. A school may use on its interscholastic teams only its full-time students enrolled in grades affiliated with WIAA membership.

Note: No eligibility will be granted for a student whose residence within a school’s attendance boundaries, with or without parents, or whose attendance at a school has been the result of undue influence (special consideration due to athletic ability or potential) on the part of any person, whether or not connected with the school.
2. A bona fide home school student may be eligible at their public school of residence on the same basis and to the same extent as all other full-time students of the member school.
3. Full-time students enrolled in member charter schools are eligible only at the school of residence.
4. The administration of the school is responsible for the eligibility of all its athletes. School administration must verify the eligibility of each participating student prior to their first competition each school year. A student must meet school and WIAA definition of a full-time student (as identified by school policy), be carried on a school’s attendance roles and be meeting the minimum academic requirement in credits accepted by the school in order to be eligible to participate in any interscholastic competition.
5. Students that are academically ineligible, ineligible due to code of conduct violations, or those required to miss the next competitive event due to being ejected from their last competitive event, may participate in scrimmages against other schools according to local school policy. Students ineligible for other reasons may not participate in scrimmages against other schools.
6. For varsity eligibility, public school students are basically eligible to participate in the district in which their parents reside in their primary residence. A transfer of guardianship, or reaching 18 years of age, does not set aside this rule. Parents may not establish a secondary residence, in a second district, and gain athletic eligibility. Nonpublic school students, with the exception of boarding schools, must reside full-time with parents in their primary residence.

Note: For the purpose of this rule, attendance at one day of class and/or attendance at one athletic practice shall determine “beginning of school year.”
7. Students entering 9th or 10th grade at the beginning of the school year as open enrollment students are eligible starting with the fall season, from a residence standpoint. If this student transfers back to the school of residence or to a nonpublic school, after attending one day of school or one athletic practice, he/she is ineligible for varsity competition for one calendar year. Additional transfer restrictions may apply to students following entry into their third consecutive semester.
8. Students entering 9th or 10th grade at the beginning of the school year as Board of Education approved full-time student(s), paying their own tuition and residing full-time with parents in their primary residence shall be afforded eligibility. Additional transfer restrictions may apply to students following entry into their third consecutive semester.
9. Students not meeting residence requirements will be eligible for non-varsity competition only, unless a waiver is provided.

10. All transfer students should initially be treated as ineligible athletes until the athletic director at the receiving school has had the opportunity to completely check all aspects of athletic eligibility.
 - i. A student who transfers with a status of ineligibility for disciplinary reasons or academics, retains such status at his/her new school for the same period as decreed by the former school.
 - ii. Students transferring more than once in any school year are not eligible for any level of competition unless a WIAA waiver is provided. (RE – Art. II Sect. 3-A-3)
11. 9th grade students who transfer after the beginning of the school year and with written consent from both schools directly involved may be provided non-varsity opportunities for the remainder of the school year, unless the transfer is made necessary by a total and complete change in residence by parent(s). Restrictions are removed upon entering 10th grade. First-time 9th grade students will be permitted one transfer upon appropriate petition to the WIAA Board of Control if the student has attended no more than three days of practice and/or no more than three days of school.
 - i. 10th, 11th or 12th grade students who transfer after the beginning of the school year and with written consent from both schools directly involved may be provided nonvarsity opportunities for one calendar year. [The calendar year (365 days) will be determined from a student's first day of attendance at the new school].
 - ii. Transfer students entering 11th or 12th grade or transferring after the beginning of 11th grade are restricted to non-varsity for one calendar year.
 - iii. In the event of divorce or legal separation, whether pending or final, residence at the beginning of the school year shall determine eligibility for students entering 9th and/or 10th grade. Students transferring after the beginning of 10th grade will be restricted to non-varsity for one calendar year.
12. A student who transfers from any school into a member school will be subject to the transfer rules for one calendar year, unless the transfer is made necessary by a total and complete change in residence by parent(s), or a waiver is provided.
13. Foreign exchange students may be granted one year of varsity eligibility if they come to a school through a CSIET approved exchange program with full listing status and are placed randomly. These students are not eligible until the appropriate form has been submitted to the WIAA and eligibility has been granted. Foreign exchange students who transfer from one school to another should be regarded as ineligible for varsity competition, the same as any other transfer student. (RE – Art. I and Art. II)

G. Consecutive Days of Competition/Practice

1. A team must take one day off, from all physical activity, after six consecutive days of practice/competition. Teams may schedule nonphysical activity, such as film review, scouting reports, rehab, etc., during this off day. (SR)

H. Protests

1. A protest is possible relative to a game official's misapplication of a rule. Such protests are not allowed in WIAA tournament competition. During the regular season, a protest will not result in replaying or repeating any game, meet, match, event, or race, or any portion of any game, meet, match, event, or race. The purpose of the protest is to correct an official if an official was in error. It is not possible to recreate the game situation that existed. (BL – Art. VI)
2. With the exception of the tournament series, a school may appeal a ruling of forfeiture based on an ineligible student's contribution to victory, in a team sport, with the understanding the school must satisfy to a clear and convincing standard the student in question did not contribute in any way to the victory. (RE – Art. I)

I. Code of Conduct

1. WIAA rules require that all schools have a code of conduct, which they must enforce on a year-round basis. WIAA rules do not indicate specific penalties, other than stating in-season violations involving possession and/or use of alcohol, possession and/or use of tobacco products, and/or the possession, use, buying or selling of controlled substances must result in at least a one-game (not scrimmage) suspension. Any suspension, which results in a student missing any portion of WIAA tournament competition, results in that athlete being ineligible for the remainder of the WIAA tournament series in that sport.
2. A student that transfers from one school to another with a suspension due to athletic code violation(s) from the previous school must serve that mandated suspension at the new school.
3. A student charged and/or convicted of a felony shall, upon the filing of felony charges, become ineligible for all further participation until the student has paid his/her debt to society and the courts consider the sentence served (including probation, community service, etc.).
4. The school must provide an opportunity for the student to be heard prior to any penalty being enforced (except for felony charges).
5. If a student appeals a suspension, according to the school's appeal procedure, **the student is ineligible during the appeal process.**
6. A student ejected from a contest is suspended for the rest of that competition and the next scheduled competition at the same level of competition as the disqualification. If it happens the next competition is a multi-school meet, which counts as one meet on the schedule, the student misses the entire competition. (RE – Art. VII)
7. A student-athlete disqualified from a contest for flagrant or unsportsmanlike conduct is also suspended from the next competitive event.
8. Any player who in the judgment of the official, intentionally spits on, strikes, slaps, kicks, pushes, or aggressively physically contacts an official at any time shall be immediately ineligible for competition a minimum of 90 calendar days from the date of the confrontation. In addition, the player is ineligible to compete for the first 25% of the next season in that same sport.

J. Physical Examination

1. It is necessary the school have a current physical examination on file for every athlete **before the athlete is allowed to start practice.** This physical examination must bear the signature or signature stamp of a physician, or the stamp of the clinic the physician is associated with or the signature of a Physician's Assistant (PA) or Advanced Practice Nurse Prescriber (APNP). A physical examination taken April 1 and thereafter is valid for the following two school years; a physical examination taken before April 1 is valid only for remainder of that school year and following school year. (RE – Art. VII)

III. Students

A. Age Requirement

1. A student shall be ineligible for interscholastic competition if he/she reaches his/her 19th birthday before August 1 of any given school year. (RE – Art. III)

B. Consecutive Semester Rule

1. A student has eight consecutive semesters of potential athletic eligibility, starting with the first semester of his/her 9th grade year. A fifth year senior is not eligible to participate, unless a waiver is granted by the WIAA. (RE – Art. V)

C. Amateur Status

1. A student may not accept, receive and/or direct to another, reimbursement in any form of salary, cash (including gift cards), or share of game or season proceeds for athletic accomplishments, such as being on a winning team, being selected for the school varsity team, or being a place winner in an individual tournament, etc. A student may receive: 1) school mementos valued not more than \$200, 2) an award valued no more than \$100 retail, 3) nonschool competition apparel worn by the student as part of the team uniform. Rules further prevent athletes from capitalizing on athletic fame by receiving money, compensation, endorsements or gifts of monetary value in affiliation with activities involving the student's school team, school, conference or WIAA. An athlete violates this rule if he/she plays in any contest (school or nonschool) under a name other than his/her own. (RE – Art. IV)

D. Nonschool Participation

1. WIAA rules do not prevent athletes from practicing with nonschool teams or from receiving private skills instruction during the school season. Rules indicate athletes may not participate in more than two nonschool competitions during the school season, in the same respective sport with prior school approval. Nonschool competitions include: races, scrimmages against other teams, normal nonschool games, "gimmicks," such as reduced numbers competition (3-on-3 basketball, 6 player soccer, etc.), fun runs (including "banditing"), etc. During the season, athletes may participate in a skills contest with approval of the school. Specific skill contests (punt, pass, and kick, shooting contests, e.g., free throws, 3 point, drive, chip and putt) isolate separate skills outside of the traditional competition setting. The skill contest may not include physical contact or extreme fatigue as the actual sport competition. Fun runs are not considered skills contests. There can be no school coach involvement. All other eligibility rules including amateur status apply. Additionally, a student who was a member of a school team during the previous year may not delay reporting for the school team beyond the school's official opening day of practice in order to continue nonschool training or competition. (RE – Art. VI)

E. All-Star Contests

1. Athletes with remaining high school eligibility may not participate in all-star contests. During the school year, a school, including its administrators, athletic director and coaches shall not become involved directly or indirectly with any kind of all-star or similar contest that involves students with remaining eligibility. An all-star team is one where participants are chosen on the basis of individual accomplishment or reputation. An underclassmen becomes ineligible in a sport for a maximum of one year from the date of last offense for participation in an all-star game or similar activity. A senior who violates this rule forfeits all remaining high school eligibility in the same specific sport as the all-star event. Violation of this rule results in loss of eligibility for the remainder of the season. (BL – Art. IV, Sect. 1 & RE – Art. VI, Sect. 3)

F. Expenses – Training and Competing

1. The WIAA recognizes a distinction between training and competing. Students must pay 100% of their own expenses, including transportation, to any nonschool (out-of-season) camps, clinics, or specialized training. Schools may pay expenses and provide transportation to similar in-season activities in that sport and during sanctioned school contact days in the summer.
2. A student may be reimbursed actual and necessary costs associated with competing. This may include transportation, food, lodging and entry fees.
3. A school may not become involved financially, through transportation or any other way in a student's nonschool participation outside the sport season and the Board of Control approved sanctioned school contact days in the summer. (BL – Art. II, RE – Art. IV and Art. VI)

Note: Funds kept in school activity accounts are considered school funds.

G. Out-of-Season

1. Athletes may participate in nonschool competition, outside the school season; however, certain restrictions apply. Amateur status rules are still in effect and must be observed. Schools cannot be involved, and coaches are restricted as indicated in Number 1, page 1. Team makeup may not be restricted based on school or team status. (BL – Art. II, RE – Art. IV and VI)

H. Falsification of Information

1. If a student or a student's parents or guardian falsify any information submitted to a school, and a student participates resulting in an order of forfeiture, the student becomes ineligible in all sports for one calendar year from the date of the last game or meet in which the student participated. (RE – Art. I, Sect. 5)

IV. Penalties for Violations

It should be noted that most rules do not have a specific penalty associated with them. The WIAA has the authority, however, to impose penalties relative to rules violations, such as 1) suspension of membership for not more than one year; 2) probation for not more than one year; 3) denial of participation in Association tournament program; 4) denial of any area of Association services and benefits; 5) monetary fine equal to Association expense incurred in any investigation and actual reimbursement of costs resulting from the violation; 6) forfeiture (team sports) of contests won by school or (individual sports) of points/places won by individuals; 7) loss of opportunity to host WIAA tournament events for not more than one year; 8) loss of conference affiliation; 9) loss of eligibility for athletes involved. (WIAA Constitution, Art. VI, RE – Art. 1)

Reference Key BL – Bylaws RE – Rules of Eligibility SR – Season Regulations

5/25 (revised)



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