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- Teaching Sport Skills

Take Part. Get Set For Life.™
In contemporary American society, it seems that everything has been touched in some manner by the tenuous economic situation we are currently experiencing.

Every day, the media reports negative economic indicators such as an increase in mortgage foreclosures, longstanding automobile manufacturers ceasing production, and massive layoffs by some of the nation’s most respected corporations.

High school athletic and fine arts activity programs have been a bright spot that communities have focused on since the 19th century. For many people, their much-needed burst of energy comes on Friday nights as they watch their hometown football team, band and cheerleaders take over their local high school stadium. For others, their bright spot appears on Saturday mornings as they enjoy a soccer game or cross country meet. Some people may look forward to a musical, a theatrical performance or an orchestra production. However, it appears as dark clouds loom above, even high school athletic and fine arts activity programs are not impervious to challenging times.

Evidence of the challenges to high school activity programs abounds from coast to coast. We hear numerous reports about stopgap measures being taken to enable these valuable programs to continue to be offered to our nation’s youth. Although these programs have long been a basic offering available to all high school students, they are now being re-evaluated, and in some instances, are becoming a luxury item available to only those who can afford to pay for them.

Many schools and school districts charge students “pay to participate” fees. While not a new practice, it appears that they are on the rise. Further, some have actually reduced the number of contests that their students can play within a given sport season. In yet another effort, some high schools have taken the drastic measure of eliminating programs altogether.

While such belt-tightening measures might make short-term fiscal sense, is this really the best way to go? During the Great Depression, Franklin D. Roosevelt stated, “Happiness lies not in possession of money, but it lies in the joy of achievement, in the thrill of creative effort.” While it is true that a few dollars may be saved by downsizing and reducing high school activity programs, who really wins in that scenario? Certainly not the students themselves.

Numerous studies have shown that participation in high school athletic and fine arts activity programs provide several benefits to our nation’s youth. They teach life lessons such as teamwork, leadership and perseverance. Many professionals can attest that the skills learned during high school activities transfer directly to their adult life. Other studies have shown measurable positive outcomes that stem from high school activities, such as higher grade-point averages, better college acceptance rates, and greater financial success in later life.

High school athletic and fine arts activity programs are an American institution. They provide a unifying effect in most communities and can create a tremendous source of local pride. For these reasons, and many more, we need to defend and protect this great American institution, and ensure that these programs are available not only to the youth of 2009, but also to subsequent generations.

Ensuring the continuance of high school athletic and fine arts activity programs will not be an easy feat, but there are things that each and every one of us can do to contribute to the success of these programs.

First, you can support high school programs by attending athletic contests, even if you do not know any of the participants. While tickets to high school sporting events are generally inexpensive, the ticket sales and concession revenue can dramatically help the local high school’s operating budget. If the high school has a booster club, be sure to support it, and if there’s a fundraiser going on, contribute to it.

There is obviously no simple answer to the economic challenges facing our high schools today, any more than there is an easy solution to the economic issues facing our society in general. However, by each of us taking a proactive role, we can collectively make an impact.
Trading Bats for Shovels

Members of various North Dakota high school and college sports teams took time away from competition this spring to help fight flood waters. Pictured is the baseball team from Valley City High School.

Photograph provided by George Dutton of Valley Gallery of Photography in Valley City, North Dakota.
Welcome

We hope you enjoy this publication and welcome your feedback. You may contact Bruce Howard or John Gillis, editors of High School Today, at bhoward@nfhs.org or jgillis@nfhs.org.

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Around the Nation

**Question:** Do any schools in your state have pay-to-play programs?

![Map showing states with pay-to-play programs](image)

**33 YES**

**18 NO**

The Cost

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Recently commissioned Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor may now sit on the highest bench in the country, but she certainly didn’t start out in such lofty circumstances.

Sotomayor’s parents, who moved to the Bronx from Puerto Rico, had little education – her father didn’t speak English and Sotomayor took it upon herself to learn the language. Living in project housing throughout her childhood, Sotomayor had few resources, but she had a natural love of learning.

In 1968, Sotomayor was enrolled in the demanding Cardinal Spellman High School in New York City. An active student, she was a member of the forensics team and participated in student government. When the school became co-ed in 1971, Sotomayor helped write the unified constitution. With hopes of attending college and later law school, it was a momentous occasion when Sotomayor first heard about the Ivy League from her debate coach who had attended Princeton University.

She followed in his footsteps, when, after graduating as valedictorian of her class in 1972, Sotomayor attended Princeton with a full scholarship. Her senior year at Princeton, she was awarded the Pyne Prize, the top award for undergraduates, due to her strong academic record and her active leadership on campus. She earned a scholarship to Yale Law School where she was subsequently an editor of the Yale Law Journal.

After her graduation in 1979, Sotomayor was admitted to the New York Bar. She worked as an assistant district attorney and in a private practice, before moving behind the bench in 1992 when she was confirmed by the U.S. Senate as the first Puerto Rican U.S. District Court Judge. In 1998, Sotomayor was commissioned to the U.S. Court of Appeals.

Just over a decade later, Sotomayor received the most important distinction of her life. Following a presidential nomination and Senate proceedings, Sotomayor was sworn in as the first Hispanic U.S. Supreme Court Justice on August 8, 2009.

But just because Sotomayor has risen to the top doesn’t mean she’s forgotten her roots. Over the years, she has hosted groups of students from Cardinal Spellman in her courtroom. In 2006, she returned to the school to speak for Career Day. With great perseverance and remarkable courage, Sotomayor illustrates the idyllic American Dream.
Dan Bolden still had the cuts on his hands this summer from removing more than 100 mini-lockers from the wall of the Colerain High School visitor’s locker room in suburban Cincinnati.

It took the athletic director a couple days to divide the lockers into pieces and haul them away to make room for the new lockers. Despite the arduous work, Bolden said the time and physical labor was well worth it.

“It saved the district a whole bunch of money,” Bolden said.

A savings of a few thousand dollars for the project will undoubtedly help the district’s finances and, in turn, aid the Colerain athletic department this school year.

Bolden, who has been the athletic director since 2006, is in charge of one of Ohio’s largest public high school athletic programs. About 70 percent of the 2,200 students at Colerain will participate in extracurricular activities.

As the nation’s high school athletic programs cope with the challenges of the nation’s economic recession, school officials – in public and private high schools – are going the extra mile to save financial resources wherever they can.

“I think we have a handle on it from our end,” Bolden said. “If things get worse, obviously it will get worse for us. A lot of times you get into this position and you are asked to do more with less.”

The reality is school districts are cutting back or eliminating needs for transportation, infrastructure projects, employees, uniforms and new equipment that isn’t deemed necessary.

Schools across the country have worked together to minimize the expense of travel by scheduling athletic contests closer to home and stretch existing resources to the fullest extent.

“After a while, you are beating your head against the wall,” Bolden said. “I am hoping things get better.”

While each region of the country has its unique economic concerns, several state associations have proposed or enacted changes to several athletic contests in their respective states.

Some states have changed their postseason format to play a game at the site of the higher seed instead of a neutral site, according to Bob Kanaby, executive director of the National Federation of State High School Associations. There have also been limits to the number of teams that would qualify to the postseason, as well as a reduction in the number of contests schools are permitted to play.

In Tennessee, football teams often qualified for the playoffs based on strength of schedule. Now, the qualifications have been relaxed and the emphasis isn’t on whether a team plays a small or large school on its schedule, according to Kanaby.

The Associated Press reported this summer that some high schools in California have halted coaching stipends and have asked families to make donations. The AP said there is concern about cuts on the West Coast heading toward the fall.

The budgets don’t affect just athletics. About 11 million students across the country will participate in activities such as speech, music and theatre along with sports.

“That represents in some cases half the population in schools,” Kanaby said. “That’s a significant thing.”

A new era in creative thinking

While the economic realities are stark, athletic directors are brainstorming for innovative ways of generating revenue.

Kanaby said it’s common for schools to decide where to cut back on expenditures during these tough times. But, as he points out: “By the same token, we sit down and say: ‘What can we do to draw new revenue?’”

The NFHS has launched a national licensing program that will provide schools royalties on merchandise sold in retail stores.

But, the marketing efforts go beyond just apparel.

At Cincinnati La Salle High School, athletic director Dan Flynn said his school created a booster club last year that reached out to alumni
and past parents. “That effort has reaped outstanding results,” Flynn said.

This fall, La Salle made a strong effort to increase attendance at football games, including a media blitz of flyers and e-mails that was present throughout the summer. Some of this year’s pregame festivities will include a flyover of a squadron of vintage warplanes, a giveaway of fan towels and a parachuting exhibition.

Those are just some of the examples of high schools that are competing for the entertainment dollar of parents, alumni and fans within the community. Ticket sales at one Ohio high school were down about 20 percent last season – so attracting fans to events is even more vital to the athletic budget during the recession.

“I joke at our awards nights that it is not as simple as showing up on a Friday night, turning the lights on and rolling out the ball,” said Loveland (Ohio) athletic director Jeff Zidron. “From ticket takers to concession griller, from split-the-pot vendors to stadium cleanup, it would not happen without our parents.”

Kanaby said the relationships between parents and students are vital for all aspects of high school activities.

“It brings those two generations together,” Kanaby said. “That is being diminished unfortunately by other kinds of avenues to re-direct their time in order to save costs on other things.”

**Transportation, scheduling under review**

While high school teams aim to stay closer to home these days, schools have learned to share transportation resources with each other. The use of buses especially during times of high fuel costs are consistently under review.

“The No. 1 issue we have heard from our member schools is to try to reduce travel and the costs associated with travel (meals, potential lodging) to a tournament contest,” says Jerry Snodgrass, an assistant commissioner of the Ohio High School Athletic Association.

“This has been a tough challenge as coaches often are willing to drive clear across the state for a perceived ‘easier game’ in a tournament.”

But, during the regular season, it seems most high school athletic programs are vigilant about the budget for taking a special trip. Some schools have implemented a limit on travel.

“We are much more cognizant of bus travel and trying to be as efficient with bus travel as possible,” said Molly Moorhead, principal of Loveland High School in suburban Cincinnati. “We have not eliminated any sports or games. We have reduced any travel beyond 40 miles to a game.”

Bolden said the school is “not taking any extremely long trips” and that “coaches are acutely aware of how to spend money.”

In Virginia, the AP reported that a school district has explored the possibility of teams sharing buses. Other states have considered similar solutions.

“I think we have seen and heard that schools are getting creative with regard to doubleheaders, tournaments, etc.,” said Butch Cope, spokesman for the Kentucky High School Athletic Association. “I know a superintendent on our board said that in the past a bus might have been used for the varsity, then another JV, and another for the cheerleaders. Now all are taking the same bus.”

Mike Dyer is the assistant high school sports editor at the Cincinnati Enquirer. He has been covering high school sports in Southwest Ohio since 2004. Prior to arriving in Cincinnati, the Akron native was a high school sports correspondent for the Akron Beacon Journal and the Sun Newspapers. Some of his articles have also appeared in the Washington Post, Orlando Sentinel, Cleveland Plain Dealer and Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.
Track and Field Athletes Set Five National High School Records

BY BETHANY JULKA

Track and field athletes jumped, threw, hurdled and, well, threw some more to set five national records during the spring 2009 season.

On May 13, Anna Jelmini of Shafter (California) High School launched the discus 190 feet, 3 inches, breaking the previous national record of 188-4 set in 1994. Earlier that same day, she tossed the shot 54-4¾, putting her just inches behind the national record of 54-10¾ set in 2003 and earning her the second-best shot put of all time. The Arizona State University-bound Jelmini was named the 2008-09 Gatorade National Girls Track and Field Athlete of the Year last June.

On the boys’ side, Mason Finley, who graduated from Buena Vista (Colorado) High School last spring, marked the record books with his 236-6 discus throw on April 25. The 6-8, 330-pound Finley took home both the shot put and the discus Colorado state titles in 2007, 2008 and 2009. Although Finley’s father competed in the discus at the University of Wyoming, Finley will be joining the University of California-Los Angeles track and field team this fall.

The unbelievable 253-3 javelin record was set by Justin Shirk of Harrisburg (Pennsylvania) Central Dauphin High School last May. The only javelin thrower in Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association history to win three state titles — from 2007 to 2009 — Shirk was named Gatorade Track and Field Player of the Year for Pennsylvania for the second consecutive year. A standout linebacker and quarterback for Central Dauphin, Shirk will compete in both football and track at Bloomsburg University in Pennsylvania.

Hurdler Reggie Wyatt’s story shows what a little perseverance can do. In 2007, Wyatt, then a sophomore, watched as Jeshua Anderson set the national record in the 300-meter intermediate hurdles at the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) Track and Field Championships. Wyatt finished in second place, trailing Anderson by just .7 seconds. Two years later, Wyatt, who graduated last spring from Riverside (California) La Sierra High School, followed in Anderson’s footsteps again by making history at the 2009 CIF Track and Field Championships with his record-setting 300-meter intermediate hurdle race of :35.02. Wyatt even one-upped Anderson: he broke the record during the prelims. Wyatt will join the University of Southern California Trojans in the fall.

The final track and field record set this season was by Del City (Oklahoma) High School graduate Toni Young, pending normal verification process. Young leaped 6-4 in the high jump last April, inching out Amy Acuff’s 6-3 record set in 1992. An Internet sensation for her basketball-dunking skills, it’s no wonder that Young, who stands at 6-1, was able to earn the Oklahoma state title in the high jump three consecutive years. She also led the Del City girls basketball team to its first state title during the 2008-09 season. Young will play basketball for Oklahoma State University this year.

Swim record set four times during 2008-09 season

Although Matt Thompson of Dallas (Texas) Jesuit High School, Nick D’Innocenzo of Andover (Massachusetts) High School and Kyle Whitaker of Chesterton (Indiana) High School have competed against each other at club swimming meets, they never put as much as a toe in the same pool during high school competition. But this didn’t stop the super-swimmers from forming a spirited rivalry spanning more than a thousand miles during the 2008-09 high school swimming season.

“Rivalry is a harsh term,” said D’Innocenzo, who is headed to the
University of Texas this fall. “I look forward to racing them. They’re great competitors and I enjoy the relationship we have.”

Rivalry or not, all three boys were contending for the national record in the 200-yard individual medley last season. And amazingly, all three reached their goals.

The race to the record began at the Texas University Interscholastic League (UIL) regional meet on February 14. Thompson, who is attending Stanford (California) University this year, easily glided to a 1:45.75 record finish, following a tough preliminary race. At the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association state championship the following week, however, D’Innocenzo washed away Thompson’s record with his 1:45.52 swim. Despite setting the record, D’Innocenzo had mixed feelings about his race, which was not as fast as he had hoped.

“I set the bar higher, but not as high as I wanted to,” D’Innocenzo said. “I was disappointed, but at the same time, I’m at the state championship with all my buddies around me congratulating me, so it’s hard to feel disappointed in that moment.”

So the ball was back in Thompson’s court — er, pool — as he headed to the UIL state championship meet. Focused on topping D’Innocenzo’s time, Thompson knew he had just one more shot. Remarkably, he tapped the wall at 1:45.27, setting the national record for the second time in one season. Having regained the title, he breathed a “huge sigh of relief,” describing the race as a “whirlwind.” It wasn’t until his relaxing ride home later that evening that he learned the results of the Indiana High School Athletic Association state championship meet held that same day in Indianapolis.

Just an hour after Thompson’s race, Whitaker swam the 200 IM in 1:45.25, surpassing Thompson by just two hundredths of a second. Although Whitaker’s coach knew about Thompson’s most recent performance, he didn’t tell Whitaker until after his race.

“I just said, ‘Wow, that’s a close race!’” Whitaker remembers. “There’s a great competition between us: we’re always trying to top each other. It’s great to have those people there that force you to push yourself to the next level.”

Thompson, who sometimes wonders what might have happened had the three swum the races side-by-side, took the news gracefully.

“I just wanted to get two state records and a national record and go out with a bang,” Thompson said. “I did what I wanted to do, even though [the national record] didn’t last. It’s good for Kyle that he got the record. I’ve raced him before and I guess it was his turn to win.”

Bethany Julka was a summer intern in the NFHS Publications/Communications Department. She is a senior at Butler (Indiana) University majoring in journalism (public relations/advertising) and French.
A mong educators, school boards and the public, the topic continually arises about the value of academic extracurricular activities. Are they necessary? Are they worth the time and money? Actually, numerous studies and anecdotal evidence support the claim that students involved in fine arts and/or forensic activities, including such things as speech, debate, music and theatre, receive invaluable preparation for college and the world of work.

When asked his opinion, President John F. Kennedy stated, “I think debating in high school and college a most valuable training whether for politics, the law, business or for service on community committees such as the PTA and the League of Women Voters. A good debater must not only study material in support of his own case, but he must also, of course, thoroughly analyze the expected arguments of his opponent … The give-and-take of debating, the testing of ideas, is essential to democracy. I wish we had a good deal more debating in our institutions than we do now.”

A 2007 study by James S. Catterall, a professor of education at the University of California, Los Angeles, found that students who had more involvement in the arts – both in school and after school – scored better on standardized tests. Further support of Catterall’s findings came from research conducted by the Texas Music Educators Association and the Texas Coalition for Quality Arts Education. According to Robert Floyd, chairman of the coalition, the two groups produced a study in 2007 revealing that student participation in the fine arts led to higher academic ratings and lower dropout rates in Texas middle schools and high schools. Schools with a higher number of students enrolled in the fine arts had higher attendance, fewer dropouts and higher SAT scores.

A national study by the Open Society Institute in 2004 determined that debate/speech involvement dramatically increased the reading skills of students. Specifically, the study discovered a strong correlation between participation in debate and reading skills – an improvement of up to 25 percent occurred with the addition of debate courses in comparison to just taking English classes alone. A quantitative study by Linda Collier, submitted to the Hawaii International Conference on Social Sciences in June 2004, argued that competitive policy debate improved reading scores, decreased high-risk behavior and improved student attitude towards higher education.

In March of 2009, the Department of Labor placed a renewed emphasis on the SCANS Report, the Secretary’s Commission on Achieving the Necessary Skills (Teaching the SCANS Competencies, 1993). The report highlighted a list of competencies necessary for workplace success. Not surprisingly, fine arts and/or forensic activities, including speech, debate, music and theatre involvement, pro-
vide ample opportunities for students to receive instruction and experience in each skill. The following are the competencies outlined by the SCANS report, including a few examples explaining how academic events support each of the proficiencies:

**SCANS Workplace Competencies**

**Effective workers can effectively use:**

- **Resources** – allocating time, money, materials, space, staff
  
  Students, participating in music and drama, plan and produce performances, speakers create reports and multimedia presentations and debaters research and organize affirmative and negative cases. All of the activities require students to create and organize materials and become adept at meeting deadlines.

- **Interpersonal Skills** – working on teams, teaching others, serving customers, leading, negotiating and working well with people from culturally diverse backgrounds
  
  Casts preparing for play productions, band or orchestra members practicing for performances, visual artists creating a project, debaters brainstorming and preparing briefs, and speakers researching and critiquing practice speeches must work harmoniously with a diverse group of students to generate a final product.

- **Information** – acquiring and evaluating data, organizing and maintaining files, interpreting and communication and using computers to process information
  
  Any dramatic production by students includes research, design and construction of a set, lighting and costumes. Participants conduct much of their research on computers and manage lighting components, special effects and music through technology. Speakers and debaters process an abundance of information using both computers and hard copies. Students must evaluate ideas and arguments, selecting and synthesizing them for arrangement by priority and/or impact.

- **Systems** – understanding social, organizational and technological systems, monitoring and correcting performance and designing or improving systems
  
  Students involved in speech, debate and fine arts events must have an understanding of the system in which they are participating. In other words, they must take a “whole system” approach to their efforts, following the regulations or working within the parameters of the program requirements. For instance, a debater must understand all of the rules for participation and the criteria by which she/he will be judged. Students are motivated to learn and continue to critique and alter their work to achieve excellence. All of their undertakings lead the students to a more holistic understanding of subjects and social systems.

- **Technology** – selecting equipment and tools, applying technology to specific tasks and maintaining and troubleshooting technologies
  
  Theatre students select the appropriate equipment for a play. If a technical problem arises during a rehearsal or performance, they must address the situation as quickly and efficiently as possible. Musicians maintain their instruments and equipment and artists select the best materials or mediums, all involving technological assistance. Speakers and debaters work with various software technologies to maintain files and research.

**The SCANS Foundation**

**Competence requires:**

- **Basic Skills** – reading, writing, arithmetic and mathematics, speaking and listening
  
  The communication and artistic events serve as tools to assist all students in their learning. They learn by doing. Research shows that when enthusiastically involved in an activity, no matter the student’s ability level, she/he masters the basic skills faster and with greater retention because of the concrete experiences.

- **Thinking Skills** – thinking creatively, making decisions, solving problems, seeing things in the mind’s eye, knowing how to learn and reasoning
  
  Speech, debate and artistic activities challenge students and contribute to the development of critical-thinking skills. Participants solve problems, such as formulating a plan for an affirmative debate case or plotting a lighting scheme for a play. They refute an argument in a debate, edit a piece of literature for oral interpretation, cut a script for a duet scene, evaluate a proposal for a persuasive speech, devise an artistic approach to a subject, and plan for a marching band show.

- **Personal Qualities** – individual responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management and integrity
  
  Actors, artists, musicians, speakers and debaters must develop responsible traits, both as an individual and as a member of a group. Performers must be accountable to the whole ensemble, contributing to the final production. Speakers and debaters must contribute to the success of the squad and when applicable, their partners.

The SCANS report implies that the United States needs a new type of American worker, one with a broad range of skills and the ability to be a lifelong learner. Speech, debate and artistic activities prepare students for exactly such a workplace setting. Former Secretary of State Colin Powell once said, “Great leaders are almost always great simplifiers, who can cut through argument and doubt to offer a solution.”

By providing our students with educational opportunities in speech, debate and artistic activities, we are helping to create leaders who possess the SCANS competencies. They can manage information and arguments, think critically and offer solutions.

---

Paula Fisher presently serves as the academic grant coordinator for the Texas University Interscholastic League. She has been a high school administrator, department chairman, academic coordinator and a speech, debate and English teacher. In 1989, she authored the national high school debate topic and in 1990 was named the National Outstanding Speech Educator by the NFHS Speech, Debate and Theatre Association.
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ost educational administrators never imagined that they would follow the Dow Jones Industrial Average. But on March 9, 2009, the Dow hit a record low of 6,547.05—a 53-percent drop from its high just 16 months earlier. The significance of that number and the way it reflects the future budgetary reality that athletic administrators across the country are facing have become clear.

Managers of athletic departments are facing a new challenge. How are they going to lead their programs and stretch their budgets to face this new economic reality and maintain quality programs for our communities?

Athletic administrators across the country are basically dealing with the same concerns and problems. These issues come down to three or four central themes: planning, saving, methods of increasing revenue and unique ways to address the economic uncertainty.

**Planning**

Probably the most important way to handle the current financial squeeze is to spend more time in the planning process than in the past. While planning will not solve all the problems of working with smaller budgets, it will, at least, set up a road map that the department can follow.

At New Trier High School in Winnetka, Illinois, Athletic Director Randy Oberembt and his department have established certain core values that will guide their budgeting decisions. In this way, when a tough call has to be made, these guidelines drive the decision. The values include stewardship of resources, staff empowerment and projections of future needs.

Michael Duffy, athletic manager of Howard High School in Maryland, looks at three areas when his school district creates the budget annually. First, what are the needs that are essential to run the athletic department? This includes coaches’ stipends, protective equipment and officials. On the next level are higher-end equipment and additional supplies. Finally, there are wishes that are dream items.

“With finances as they are right now, we are dealing with the needs and perhaps a few of our wants,” Duffy said.

In many areas of the country, even many of the needs are being questioned.

**Savings**

The reality is that most departments around the country will have to make cuts or freeze spending. At North Shore Country Day School, the administration is looking at a five to eight percent reduction in athletic expenditures. Some schools may be facing budget cuts of up to 20 percent. Where are those savings coming from?

At a recent breakfast at the Washington State Athletic Directors Conference, a question was circulated at a feedback forum. What reductions are being made in activities and athletics by your school district? The following are some answers:

- Reduce the number of lower-level teams
- Eliminate out-of-state travel
- Freeze coaching stipends
- Cut to a four-day week for competition
- Charge a transportation fee
- Schedule multiple games on one day; for example, baseball doubleheaders

The most common solution that athletic directors mentioned as an area of savings was transportation. Pat Pagnucco, athletic director at Francis Parker School in Chicago, stated that the major area of savings in her budget will be a change in the type of transportation. At Parker, charter buses were typically scheduled in the past for long trips. Now, school buses are used almost exclusively.

Throughout the country, elite high school teams were commonly beginning to travel to out-of-state competitions. Last year, North Shore Country Day Schools football and field hockey teams traveled to Ohio for games. However, now out-of-state trips are either completely cut or funded by team fundraising efforts.
Increasing Revenue for Athletics

Is it possible to find new areas of revenue for athletics to help offset the losses from traditional forms of income? Many schools are investigating new revenue streams. One of the most innovative areas is through the potential of the Internet. State associations around the country have started streaming video of state championship events. There are potential dollars to be made from the sponsorship of these video productions.

Increasing programs may actually help some schools through this tough time better than decreasing programs. Often private schools have broad athletic programs because more opportunities to participate in activity programs is a selling point over local large public schools.

The Illinois High School Association had tremendous success this year by adding a bass fishing tournament that involved 199 schools from throughout the state. While the current climate may be financially challenging, there still seems to be a need to increase programs.

Unique Ways to Defend the Importance of Athletic Expenditures

With the constant need to stretch or cut budgets, there is an even greater need to defend athletic programs. Private and public schools have different ways of justifying the expenditures.

At many private schools, athletics has been a required part of the curriculum but is now also being considered for cuts. Keeping athletics as an integral part of the school day requires that the school financially support these programs.

At North Shore Country Day School, the administration revisited the athletic mission that focuses on the life lessons that athletics teaches. Like many schools, North Shore also recognizes that having teachers who coach often leads to a better classroom relationship between students and teachers — another crucial benefit.

At Howard High School, Duffy tracks the grades of students who participate in athletics. They also have a leadership initiative within the school for their athletic participants (a Captains Clinic). Through these efforts, they try to ensure that athletes are positive examples of what their students should be and thus defend the importance of athletics at the school.

For many involved in high school athletics, their careers have occurred mostly during boom times. With good financial times came an expanded interest and involvement in high school athletics. The current financial crisis will be a test of resolve to maintain the growth in high school athletics that has occurred during the past two decades.

Some economists believe it will take many years for the markets and our economy to regain the strong position they had back in the fall of 2008. But with an eye for improving financial markets, educational administrators will have to test their ability to be innovative in order to best serve student-athletes’ needs and interests.

Patrick McHugh is athletic director at North Shore Country Day School in Winnetka, Illinois. McHugh earned his bachelor’s degree from Franklin and Marshall (Pennsylvania) College and his master’s from the University of Massachusetts. He also is the school’s track coach and has been on the North Shore staff since 1994.
Legal Issues Impacting School Sports Programs During Economic Downturn

BY LEE GREEN

As school districts across the country struggle to deal with funding cutbacks and budget shortfalls during the present economic crisis, policy-makers must ensure that the strategies adopted to respond to the financial crisis do not violate legal standards applicable to scholastic sports programs. The three categories of legal issues most likely to be implicated are 1) Title IX and its gender-equity mandates for athletics programs, 2) liability for sports injuries principles and the risk management strategies employed by schools and 3) Fair Labor Standards Act considerations related to the use of assistant coaches and event management personnel.

Title IX

One of the strategies being employed by schools to deal with athletics program funding shortfalls is to reduce the number of contests to be played by sports teams and thereby reduce transportation costs and event management expenses. The Title IX issue related to this strategy is whether the reduction in the number of events is implemented in a gender-neutral fashion.

For instance, if such reductions were to disproportionately impact girls teams, the cutbacks would likely be held by the U.S. Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and the federal courts to be in violation of prevailing Title IX legal standards. Therefore, it would be inadvisable for state associations or districts to institute across-the-board, percentage reductions in the number of contests and to exempt certain boys sports from those cutbacks. Despite the argument that exempting revenue-producing boys sports such as football or basketball from contest reductions would provide funds to help support other school sports teams, the federal courts have never applied monetary rationales to justify any form of discrimination under Title IX.

Another Title IX issue related to the present economic crisis is the use by schools of “outside” sources of funding to support athletics programs. The four sources most often used by schools are funds raised by sports booster clubs, monies acquired through team fundraising activities, gifts from donors and revenue from corporate sponsorship of teams.
Over the course of the past year, schools across the country have increased their efforts to close athletics program funding shortfalls with monies raised through one or more of these four sources and oftentimes the funds are earmarked for a particular school team by the booster club, donor, sponsor or fundraiser. For instance, if such revenue was designated for a school’s baseball team to support improvements in facilities, the purchase of equipment, or travel to additional contests or tournaments, the Title IX issue would be whether these benefits discriminated against the school’s softball team if it does not receive equivalent benefits related to facilities, equipment and travel.

It has long been the stance of the OCR and federal courts that outside sources of funding for school sports programs are permissible, but that the monies raised from those sources must be used in a non-discriminatory manner. In other words, the source of the funding that creates an inequity is irrelevant – the inequity is impermissible even if the revenue was acquired from outside sources of funding. Therefore, it is incumbent upon athletic administrators to ensure that monies raised from outside sources are used in a manner that will provide equivalent benefits and opportunities to boys and girls sports programs at the school.

Liability for Sports Injuries

It is essential that as budgets for sports programs are reduced, athletic administrators are vigilant to ensure that the cutbacks do not negatively impact safety initiatives designed to protect the well-being of student-athletes and to minimize legal exposure for the school and its athletics personnel. In recent years, the evolution of case law regarding liability for sports injuries has been to continuously impose greater and more specific duties on school and athletics personnel related to the safety of student-athletes. These include the duties of supervision, safe playing environment, protective athletic equipment, proper technique instruction, safe transportation, effective medical assistance in the event of injury, and many other affirmative responsibilities about which athletic administrators, coaches and trainers receive extensive education as part of their sport-specific training for their jobs.

Budget cutbacks can have a significant impact on the ability of athletics personnel to fulfill the risk management duties imposed upon them by law. For instance, if cutbacks result in student-athletes having to purchase on their own more of their protective sports equipment, the resulting quality of the equipment in use may vary according to the socio-economic background of the student-athletes and safety standards related to equipment might also suffer accordingly. Similarly, shifts in transportation methods from independent contract carriers to greater use of vehicles owned by coaches, parents and student-athletes would impact both the safety of the young athletes and the liability of the school.

Fair Labor Standards Act

The basic mandate of the FLSA is that non-exempt school personnel must be paid at least minimum wage for hours worked up to 40 per week and must receive overtime for hours worked in excess of 40. Therefore, a non-exempt school employee (administrative assistant, cafeteria worker, custodian, teacher’s aide and the like) who serves as an assistant coach or who works at sports events (ticket seller, ticket taker, concession worker, public-address announcer, event supervisor and the like) must be paid minimum wage up to 40 hours per week of total employment for the district and must be paid overtime for hours worked in excess of 40.

During the past year, many schools across the country have attempted to deal with budget shortfalls by relying more heavily on the use in sports programs of unpaid or low-paid non-exempt school personnel. The Department of Labor’s Wage & Hour Division – the federal agency charged with the responsibility of enforcing the FLSA – has not accepted as a rationale for FLSA violations the argument by school districts that the economic crisis and resulting budget shortfalls should excuse noncompliance with the statute. To the contrary, the agency has pursued its mission of protecting workers by enforcing even more stringently the requirements of the FLSA. Therefore, athletic administrators need to ensure that they have a full understanding of the nuances of the FLSA and its application to athletics personnel and sports event management personnel. The FLSA and all of its legal requirements pertaining to school athletics programs are detailed in a November 2007 article in High School Today which can be found in the magazine’s online archives at www.nfhs.org/hstoday.

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The troublesome state of the economy has made constructing a budget a complicated task for many superintendents. School districts are attempting to stretch their resources to cover widespread costs like utilities, staff salaries and benefits, supplies, transportation and technology.

While federal stimulus funds given to states may provide some relief for school districts under pressure, many superintendents say that the package has made things even more confusing.

“This year is a mixed blessing because of the challenge of stimulus dollars,” said Paul Gausman, superintendent of the Sioux City Community School District in Sioux City, Iowa. “We sure appreciate the funding through the ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009), but we struggle daily with the requirements and parameters that are in place.”

Gausman and others explain that many states have chosen to use the stimulus dollars through regular funding formulas, which don’t provide as much extra as the community might think. In Texas, for example, a recent legislative session resulted in the passage of a controversial bill on public school finance.

“Rather than keep public school funding at the same level, and then add the federal stimulus money to that, they chose to decrease the state’s contribution to public school funding by the same amount of federal stimulus funding Texas schools were to receive,” explained Darrell Floyd, superintendent of the Stephenville (Texas) Independent School District. The state also required districts to spend a certain amount on pay raises for employees on the minimum salary schedule. “What does that mean financially for school districts in Texas?” Floyd said. “It means that after mandated salary step increases and mandated raises, there is no new money in the 2009-10 budgets.”

While the budget itself is a dilemma, the economic recession has caused other related problems for superintendents as well. Layoffs and shutdowns in and around the school districts cause enrollment numbers to vary. Bill Thompson, superintendent of the Kimball School District in Kimball, South Dakota, explains that since state aid is based on student enrollment, they have been faced with having to increase revenue or cut expenses due to their declining student enrollment. Floyd echoes Thompson’s concern. In Stephenville, some major manufacturing plants have lost workers, while others continue to expand.

“Some families may have been displaced over the summer due to work-related situations, yet others who have been displaced in other areas may be moving into our area to live with relatives,” Floyd said. Until about a month into the school year, the district won’t know how the situation has affected enrollment and consequently its bottom-line budget.

In Michael Deweese’s area, a major concern is convincing the taxpayers to agree on a budget. While the school budget requires voter approval, only one in five of the community’s households have school-aged children.

“We are experiencing heightened criticism of our school districts’ budgets, even if expenses are reduced or tax rates are decreased,” said Deweese, superintendent of the Chittenden Central Supervisory Union (CCSU), which serves the areas around Essex Junction, Vermont.

So, what gets cut and what gets saved? Where do the schools’ priorities lie? And, importantly, what does this mean for athletic and fine arts activities?

Deweese explained that the CCSU, like most areas, prioritizes salaries and benefits for staff and supporting contractual obligations like utilities. Gausman agreed:

“Our highest priority is to maintain staff members and equip them with the tools necessary to make a difference in the lives of students,” Gausman said.

Floyd explained that since most school district budgets are made up of approximately 80 percent payroll, there is not much flexibility.

“We’re always going to take care of our instructional budgets...
first,” he said. “We try hard to focus our attention each year on our areas of greatest academic weakness.” After utility costs, however, many schools don’t have much left.

While priorities lie – as they should – in the classroom, athletic and activities programs are still considered by most to be an important part of the school experience.

“We value these programs for what they do for students and we want to continue them especially in a national financial challenge,” Gausman said. “They are a pivotal component of our success in reaching our mission to educate students to believe in their talents and skills, achieve academic excellence, and succeed in reaching their potential.”

And just because community members and families are tightening their belts doesn’t mean extracurricular participation is waning.

“Despite declining enrollment, students continue to subscribe at high levels to our athletics program options, and the arts continue to receive strong support from our community,” Deweese said.

The Stephenville School District carried out a study a few years ago and found that approximately 85 percent of its junior high students and 75 percent of its high school students were involved in some type of extracurricular program.

“With so many students involved in extracurricular activities in our school district, it is obviously very important to our students, parents and community members that we find a way to maintain our tradition of excellence in those areas,” Floyd said.

With such an emphasis on the importance of and interest in extracurricular activities, school districts are finding effective ways to cope with reduced funding. Some areas use pay-to-play programs, while others rely on booster clubs. The booster club that supports the Kimball School District, for example, has funded its athletic trainer over the past few years. The district also has begun hosting summer camps on campus to relieve the financial burden of transportation.

“If there is a financial need and it will benefit a large number of students, we try to find a way to meet the financial expense,” Thompson explained.

Meanwhile, national studies show that athletic budgets are, on average, around just three percent of a school district’s budget. Deweese said that while extracurricular programs are scrutinized like all other areas, they don’t constitute a significant part of the budget.

“A ‘deep’ cut in an extracurricular program might be $100,” Deweese said.

Floyd reports that, in Texas, athletic budgets make up about three to five percent of the school district budget. While this is by no means a large portion of the resources, it is obviously affected by the overall funds in the school district.

“So, what gets cut and what gets saved?”

“Since there is no new district money, then it follows that there will be no new money for athletic budgets either,” Floyd said. “We’re not decreasing our athletic budget, but we’re not increasing it either.”

Whether programs are remaining stagnant or are looking to outside help for funding, the sentiment remains true about high school activity programs: they’re here to stay. Their importance is echoed time and time again in studies proving that they increase attendance and academic performance and create well-rounded individuals. The money that goes into keeping these programs alive will positively affect the participants, their development as upright citizens and their futures.

Some superintendents suggest that as community members review their tightened budgets, maybe these activity programs will benefit more than just the student participants. Instead of buying tickets to a Broadway performance, community members might attend the local school musical. And rather than cashing in on tickets to a professional football game, maybe they’ll head out on Friday nights to the high school field to watch the neighbor kids play.

“Our district has always believed that athletics and activities are the other half of education,” Thompson said. “For small schools and communities, the athletic and activity programs are a source of pride and community identity and involvement.”

Bethany Julka was a summer intern in the NFHS Publications/Communications Department. She is a senior at Butler (Indiana) University majoring in journalism (public relations/advertising) and French.
On November 8, 2008 – an early Saturday morning in rural Sloan, Iowa – five students and their coach piled into a school SUV and headed for a wrestling clinic 25 miles away in Mapleton. Assistant wrestling coach Todd Greder, who also is the athletic director of tiny Westwood High School, was scheduled to drive a second vehicle of athletes, but plans changed. So, Greder met with the father of one of the wrestlers to work on a community service project delivering softener salt to the elderly. That’s when they got the call.

“The wrestling coach at Mapleton called and said that our guys hadn’t gotten there yet,” Greder remembers. “He said that another van of wrestlers had passed an accident and they were wondering if it was our kids.”

Unfortunately, they were right. Just seven miles into the drive on Highway 141, an oncoming van crossed the center line and collided with the SUV. The driver of the van – the father of a Westwood High School student – was killed instantly. The five athletes and their coach weren’t in good shape either.

Coach Dan Thompson’s leg and knee were shattered. Senior Jordan Mitchell suffered a broken back, but found himself wandering around the SUV after the accident, unsure of what had taken place. Junior Sage Washburn had a broken right femur and a broken left humerus. Adam Greeno, a sophomore, had a broken back and a crushed skull. Sophomore Trent Baker, who was in the passenger seat, suffered severe internal bleeding and a lacerated liver, and his right leg was crushed from his femur to his toes. Blake Jorgensen, just a sophomore, was paralyzed from the chest down.

Greder and Baker’s father headed for the scene of the accident. Jorgensen’s father, Don, was already there as he serves on the volunteer ambulance squad. Onlookers and parents prayed as they watched the EMTs tend to the victims and waited for helicopters to transport two of the boys. By the time they got to Mercy Medical Center in Sioux City, there was a crowd gathering in the lobby. Word gets around fast in a small town, and community is like family.

“There were 150 to 200 people waiting downstairs in the lobby, so we bought pizzas and chicken for all of them,” Greder said. “If you didn’t know why we were there, it would have looked like a big party. It was very supportive and everyone was trying to do anything they possibly could to help out and be there to support the families.”

The group of well-wishers was soon relocated to the Westwood gymnasium, where Superintendent Kirk Ahrends kept the group and the media apprised of the statuses of the victims. Coach Thompson had a rod inserted into his leg and eventually would have a reconstructed kneecap. Washburn and Baker also had rods in their legs, and Baker would undergo surgery to have his spleen removed and a coil put in his liver. Greeno would have neurosurgery and would have to relearn to swallow and speak. During their recoveries, the community was always present. Thompson remembers that, many nights, there were so many visitors in the hospital that he couldn’t see them all in one evening.

A number of high school girls made a poster with their handprints that read, “We’re all in this together.” Soon, banners, t-shirts and rubber bracelets would don the phrase. A few days later, the school held a blood drive in the athletes’ honor. Just two weeks after the accident, a pancake breakfast was set up. Even though the K-12 school enrolls only 650 students, 1,500 people showed up for the breakfast and auction, with all proceeds going to the families of the victims. The bracelets and shirts were sold to classmates and community members, but soon other schools and communities were asking for them as well.

“It was unbelievable because here are our rival schools, and their kids are having ‘blue and gold’ days at school for our guys,” Ahrends said. “The support from the entire area was incredible.” Westwood received cards and posters from communities hundreds of miles away. At one wrestling meet, when the opposing coach stepped on the mat to shake hands with coach Greder, the crowd went wild. He was wearing a Westwood t-shirt.
“You can’t list what all the districts and schools have done for us,” Greder said. “I would hate to start naming schools because there are just so many and I wouldn’t want to leave any out.”

And while most of the athletes were slowly healing, one wrestler had a much longer road to recovery. Blake Jorgensen, who suffered a C-6/7 spinal cord injury and is paralyzed from the chest down, was approved to be moved on November 20 to Craig Hospital in Colorado, a rehabilitation center for patients with spinal injuries. Like any family, the Westwood-area community wanted to send him off right. Ahrends scheduled a morning school delay and organized for buses to be available at Westwood, so community members could ride to the airport together. Six busloads of supporters lined the tarmac, creating a tunnel-like entrance for Jorgensen and his family. For many, this was the first time they had seen Jorgensen since the accident because he had been in critical condition and only family visitors were allowed. There was hardly a dry eye to be found as community members and friends held signs and waved as he was loaded onto the plane.

The biggest form of community support, however, was a massive undertaking proposed by Chad Shook, an old coaching friend of Greder and Don Jorgensen. Shook, who approached Greder about the plan in December, pointed out that the Jorgensen home was split-level with narrow halls and doorways and a far cry from wheelchair accessible. His idea? He wanted to build the family a house.

Shook, Greder and contractor Todd Berg held a community meeting for anyone interested in helping with the project. The meeting drew a crowd of nearly 300 people. Over the next several months, the community pulled together and organized fundraisers for the “Build a House for Blake” project. There were concerts and walks, free-will offerings and talent shows, dinners and dances and even hot dog-eating contests. Billboards were donated to advertise the cause and families mailed letters across the country. In total, there were more than 30 organizations and businesses that held fundraisers and nearly 100 sponsors and donors that offered paint, tile, siding, roofing, appliances, windows – anything the builders needed to complete the home. The $100,000 was raised and the crew broke ground on March 2.

The Jorgensens held an open house July 13 so the community could gather and visit and so the family could thank everybody for the support. The house wasn’t quite complete but Blake was able to motor freely around, showing his friends his new bedroom. The family moved in at the end of July.

Though many of the boys are still a little banged up, including coach Thompson who can barely run, they have begun to return to their normal activities. Mitchell and Baker played baseball for Westwood last summer and Jorgensen, who had been a pitcher on the team, wore his jersey in the dugout. Several of the boys have traveled with the show choir and competed on the golf team. Mitchell heads off to college this fall, while the other four boys look forward to the football season – they will serve as captains the first game – and eventually wrestling again with Thompson serving as head coach. As for Jorgensen, the determination and competitive spirit of an athlete has not left him. The first week of May, Jorgensen attended a home track meet, the Rebel Relays, and wheeled the 100-meter race. He struggled as the crowd stood and cheered, his teammates encouraging him from the finish line. He crossed the line, covered in sweat, in 1:47.7. Jorgensen hopes to continue his athletic career by competing in quadriplegic rugby. He was able to scrimmage with the Midwest Rugby Rebels last spring.

The boys have overcome incredible obstacles and their community has watched proudly every step of the way, proving that they really are “all in this together.”

“I don’t think we’re atypical,” Greder said when asked about his family-like community. “We just had a tragedy that allowed us to show our support and what we’re made of. Other communities would do the same kind of thing. Because they did it for us.”

Ahrends agreed: “I’m incredibly proud of our community. We always had it in us. It’s that Midwest loyalty to our community. Everyone was so supportive, I’m just so proud.”

Bethany Julka was a summer intern in the NFHS Publications/Communications Department. She is a senior at Butler (Indiana) University majoring in journalism (public relations/advertising) and French.
How State Associations are Stretching Their Dollars

BY BETHANY JULKA

As the economic recession causes many school districts across the nation to tighten their belts with budget cuts and programming restrictions, many state associations are striving to keep athletic and fine arts activities affordable.

These tough times call for tough choices and there’s really no easy answer to the budget woes that face the nation’s schools. The adjustments made by state associations vary from state to state and district to district, and even those decisions can waver, as the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) recently realized.

Following months of economic hardship, many Florida schools discussed cutting their junior varsity teams or even entire athletic programs in order to stay afloat during the 2009-10 school year. In response, the FHSAA Board of Directors proposed decreasing the maximum number of contests for varsity program by 20 percent and junior varsity programs by 40 percent. These cuts would exclude football and competitive cheerleading. FHSAA Director of Media Relations Cristina Alvarez explained that the proposed reduction was meant to benefit the student-athletes, especially those in the districts that were hardest hit.

“The Association wanted to help all of our member schools with the financial crisis affecting our country,” Alvarez said. “We felt that by cutting the maximum number of games, all of our schools would be on an even playing field.”

Though the FHSAA Board of Directors recently decided to reconsider its decision and not reduce the number of contests, the association is still making adjustments to help the schools save money through efforts like eliminating sanctioning fees and allowing district schools to move into one classification level resulting in closer competition and less travel.

The FHSAA isn’t alone in its attempt to help member schools pinch pennies. Many state associations have considered reducing the maximum number of contests and at least six states have chosen to make that move. Early last spring, the New York State Public High School Athletics Association became one of the first state associations to reduce its contest total due to the economy, making a cut between 10 and 20 percent depending upon the program. The Mississippi High School Activities Association has reduced its contests in all sports except football by 10 percent and the Oklahoma Secondary School Athletic Association made a 20-percent cut in contests a few years ago. All Delaware varsity, junior varsity and middle school sports except football experienced a 10-percent reduction by the Delaware Interscholastic Athletic Association (DIAA) earlier this year.

“Our state was particularly hard hit by the downturn in the economy,” DIAA Executive Director Kevin Charles said. “At the time the decision was made, Delaware was faced with finding a way to survive a one-third cut in our state fiscal resources. The DIAA Board and our member schools felt it important that athletics contribute to the solution and not be part of the problem.”

The 10-percent reduction, which is effective for the 2009-10 and 2010-11 school years, wasn’t the only way the DIAA made sacrifices to make ends meet. The DIAA reduced the number of allowable scrimmages and is encouraging more multi-team events so that travel costs will be more feasible. Individual tournament games will be hosted by the higher-seeded school instead of in one central location to which all teams must travel. The association is also reducing its printing costs by making publications available only electronically and rules meetings and clinics have gone online, as well. In addition, the DIAA staff is experiencing a 2.5 percent pay cut.

“We’ve seen immediate, tangible savings as a result of the pay cut and conversion of printed materials to electronic documents,” Charles said. He also speculated that the shift to higher-seeded teams hosting games has neutralized reduction in attendance caused by the economy as attendance numbers held steady throughout the spring. “We were one of the few state agencies in Delaware that generated a profit in the 2009 fiscal year. And while we did reduce our projected expenditures for 2010, we are confident our revenues will hold steady.”

Many state associations have made similar cutbacks and adjustments by hosting online meetings and providing electronic publications. Reduction in travel seems to be a popular cost-saving
method for states, whether by staff, coaches, officials or teams. The Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association and the Nevada Interscholastic Activities Association are just two associations that are considering geography-based conference realignment in order to reduce travel expenses and foster local competition. The Idaho High School Activities Association has chosen to reduce the number of participants that advance to several state-level tournaments. It is also putting together a hotel database and securing discounted prices for member schools. In several states, some member schools have chosen to establish pay-to-play policies, though this shift doesn’t seem to be widespread.

One common problem that state associations seem to be facing is the diversity in economic situations across their particular state. Some schools would surely benefit from a reduction in the maximum allowable games, while others find it unnecessary. As a result, several states left the decision to reduce contests up to the member schools.

Last fall, for example, the Missouri State High School Activities Association (MSHSAA) sent out a survey to its member schools that included questions about a reduction of contests.

“The overwhelming response was ‘No, let us make that decision ourselves and do what’s best for our own area,’” said MSHSAA Communications Director Jason West. “So far, we’ve not heard of too many members cutting back.”

The MSHSAA, as well as a few other state associations including the Indiana High School Athletic Association, the Texas University Interscholastic League and the Nebraska School Activities Association, expressed that the association doesn’t seem to have been as affected as some other areas of the country.

“Every state has been hit by the current situation, but I think Missouri is more fortunate than others,” West said. “We’re not in the same boat as Michigan or some of the bigger states that have the big industries and have been hit hard by the current crunch.” Despite its fortunate standing, the MSHSAA is still taking proactive measures to reduce strain on its member schools. Its current discussions address reformatting playoff games and increasing the number of districts in order to cut down on long travel times and costs.

As the recession causes dwindling funds and potential program cuts, it’s important that state associations continually ensure that member schools, parents and community members remember the influence that interscholastic activities have on student-athletes, creating positive, active and responsible citizens who can hopefully prevent similar downturns in the future.

“The activities help teach life lessons,” West said. “It’s part of the educational process. It helps kids learn to deal with the ups of winning and the failures of losing and what to improve on to get better. It helps students be productive citizens once they’re out of school and see the big picture and not just their wallets.”

Whether seemingly dodging the recession bullet like Missouri or being hit with brute force like Delaware, most state associations are remaining confident about the importance and survival of activity programs. In fact, the NFHS has determined through information received from across the country that, on average, activity programs make up only one to three percent of the overall education budget in a school. With studies proving that activities boost academic achievement, develop self-discipline and time-management and increase attendance rates, activity programs are not only important to the student’s overall success, they’re a bargain, as well!

“Participation in extracurricular activities is an important precursor to success in life,” Charles said. “Lessons learned in the classroom that is the field of play are often just as important as those learned in the traditional academic classroom setting. But, we can’t take it for granted that the taxpayer is aware that this clear and direct causal relationship exists. We must take advantage of every opportunity to promote the value of education-based athletics. As long as we continue to create awareness about the value of our activities, I remain optimistic about the future of interscholastic athletics.”

Bethany Julka was a summer intern in the NFHS Publications/Communications Department. She is a senior at Butler (Indiana) University majoring in journalism (public relations/advertising) and French.
There is No Such Thing as a “Ding” — A Community Approach to Managing Sport-related Concussions

BY BART PETERSON

After a Tucson, Arizona high-profile athlete suffered a series of highly publicized concussions in the fall of 2006, parents began to ask questions. Athletic trainers and physicians in the local area were operating much the same as health-care professionals across the country. While all were following a concussion protocol, there were so many protocols that there was no consistent manner of diagnosis, definition and treatment. This meant that athletes at one school were being treated in a different manner than athletes only miles away.

Due to the varied treatments, health-care professionals formed a coalition of physicians, athletic trainers and schools to establish a uniform protocol for diagnosis and treatment of concussion. The protocol follows the NATA (National Athletic Trainers’ Association) recommendations that all athletes in contact and collision sports, as well as those with prior history of concussion, should be baseline tested for neurocognitive abilities prior to participation. (Guskiewicz, et al., 2004) In addition, all athletes having sustained a suspected concussive injury were to be treated following the same and established protocol.

The Plan

Under the direction of Arizona Institute for Sports Medicine’s Don Porter, M.D., and Randy Cohen, ATC, PT, head athletic trainer and associate director of athletics at the University of Arizona, a neurocognitive assessment program was selected: ImPact is one of a number of scientifically developed programs designed to accommodate the recommendations made by McCrory, et al., and the National Athletic Trainers’ Association concussion statement. (McCrory, et al., 2005) (Guskiewicz, et al., 2004) The ImPact protocol has also been implemented in many colleges and universities, the NFL, NBA, MLB, NHL, as well as other organizations around the world.

Concussion

Defining concussion has been difficult at best. Recent advances have made diagnosis and treatment much simpler. (McCrory, et al., 2009) A football coach once told me never to use the word “concussion” regarding his athletes. It was his opinion that “no athlete of mine has ever had a concussion.” However wrong or misguided this coach was, it is important to note that the medical community erred long ago by allowing pervasive use of “mis-terminology.”

We now know that there are no “dings,” “bell-ringers” or “having cob-web shaken loose” injuries. In fact, lawyers love to hear “he just had his bell rung.” Each of these events, however minimal, affects the brain’s ability to function and each is a concussion. School officials must take the responsibility to recognize and appropriately treat all sports-related concussions.

The athletic trainer is the gatekeeper of student health in the athletic program. Without daily contact with a highly trained health-care provider such as an athletic trainer, the athlete would
have cursory follow-up care at best and the program would fail. Athletes are followed closely in the hours and days following a suspected concussive event and are asked to repeat neuropsychological testing approximately 72 hours after the injury. During the intervening time, daily and sometimes hourly, collection of symptoms and signs is managed by the athletic trainer.

This baseline and post-injury testing allows the athletic trainer and physician to see how the athlete’s brain is functioning with the ability to compare current brain activity to that prior to the concussion. Based upon these tests in combination with signs, symptoms and other criteria, the athlete is scheduled for follow-up with a physician. Follow-up appointments are based upon both increasing symptoms as well as a reduction of symptoms. No athlete is allowed to practice or play when experiencing signs and/or symptoms.

Every detail of the athlete’s condition is taken into account when the health-care professional treats a concussion. Using this exhaustive model ensures that all athletes are treated individually. Since research has shown the rigors of academics may delay recovery, observations from counselors and teachers are used to aid the athlete when appropriate. Plans similar to IEPs (Individualized Education Program) are established to aid the athlete during time of recovery if necessary.

This stands in contrast to the old way of looking at a single set of data, then looking into the athlete’s eyes and hoping to catch a glimpse of some hidden “red flag” to indicate a hint of trouble.

It is important to note that an athlete who is seen in the emergency room may emerge with the required documentation for return to play, yet may not be ready for such activity. While a CT scan or other radiographic image will show physical damage and bleeding in the brain, it does not show cognitive impairment. The athlete emerges with a clean bill of health from the emergency room only to have signs and symptoms of the injury for days or weeks to come. The brain of a concussed athlete may not have the physical signs of injury that would show on x-rays or CT scans, but the ability of the injured brain to function is still impaired. (McCrory, et al., 2009)

In addition, a condition termed “Second-impact Syndrome” is not a condition that can be easily diagnosed in the emergency department. A startling fact remains; those most susceptible to Second-impact Syndrome are our secondary-school age students. Secondary-school age student athletes do not recover at the same rate as their adult counterparts. Many young athletes have returned to practice and played too soon following a visit to the emergency room only to sustain a second injury. Brain injuries can be cumulative in nature, and the effects exponential. Returning an athlete too soon, without regard for current signs and symptoms and/or cognitive function, can be devastating if not fatal. (McCrory, et al., 2009)

Where We Stand Now

Booster clubs, fundraising and curricular funding have been used successfully to support the program. Curricular funding allows the school to use the software to help teach CTE (Career and Technical Education) or health courses to the general student population. Each student in the class is required to complete the neurocognitive testing as a part of the curriculum. In this way, students learn the various brain functions affected by concussion. Student-athletes are also able to utilize the program.

As of the 2008-09 school year, the University of Arizona, Pima Community College and 18 secondary schools in the Tucson and southern Arizona area are participating. One of the most beneficial aspects of the program is that a student can be tested (both baseline and post-injury) at the school site without lost class time. A physician at AIISM can access the results of the follow-up testing and develop a course of treatment, including office visits, without having to initially see the athlete.

While we haven’t reached every school and every athlete, we are closing the gap. In addition, community awareness of concussion is far greater than in the past. We continue to educate parent groups, school administrators and staff, and the medical community as a whole.

Where we’re going

At the outset, the goal was to standardize diagnosis and treatment of concussion across the community. While we haven’t yet reached all schools, that is within our reach. We have achieved a higher recognition of injury throughout the educational system and the medical community. Physicians who previously were quick to release an athlete to return to play now are using neurocognitive testing, balance scores and the signs and symptoms to determine a plan for return to play.

It was our belief that a consistent system of identifying and treating concussion could be developed and maintained across our community. The continued education of stakeholders, administrators, coaches, parents and athletes is a vital component of this program. ☺


Bart Peterson is a certified athletic trainer at Palo Verde High School in Tucson, Arizona and can be reached at bart.peterson@tusd1.org or arizatc@cox.net.

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How does it work?

**Baseline testing:** Athletes take a baseline test before the season begins (or when uninjured). On completion, tests are submitted online to CogState using our secure encrypted password-protected data transfer system. A report is immediately available online, stating the validity of the baseline test, or if the athlete needs to take another test. Invalid baselines may occur due to poor effort, task understanding or existing impairment. A valid best-effort baseline is essential to detect subtle post-concussion changes.

Reports are accessible via email and viewable on DataPoint® - a secure, dedicated website in your own account. For multi-team competitions, this system allows medical staff to monitor testing conducted at all clubs.

Testing software and manuals are downloadable from DataPoint® at any time, and can be installed on multiple computers for no extra charge.

**After injury testing:** If an athlete becomes concussed, follow-up testing can be performed on any computer. Tests are submitted online to CogState for comparison with their baseline, and a report is immediately available on DataPoint®. CogState Sport should be performed until cognitive performance returns to baseline levels.

Benefits

**Quick:** Can be conducted in around 8 minutes.

**Can be used frequently** — daily or hourly with minimal practice effects.

**User friendly:** Does not need expert administration and results are easy to understand.

**Scientifically valid:** CogState tests have been validated in over 100 peer-reviewed articles.

**Sensitive:** Detects clinically significant cognitive changes after injury.

**Anyone can be tested:** As CogState Sport utilizes culture-neutral stimuli, any athlete can be tested regardless of language, education or cultural background. Instructions are available in multiple languages.

CogState Sport provides objective measures of brain function after concussion, and helps guide medical decisions regarding:

- Safe return to graduated training and competitive play.
- Annual pre-season baseline monitoring for cumulative damage or between season injury.
- Exit medical examination cognitive testing.

Pricing

CogState offers a simple but flexible pricing system that offers excellent value for money:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>Price for Additional Athletes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annual Base Price</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Teams</td>
<td>US$100 per 10 athletes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Professional Teams</td>
<td>US$50 per 100 athletes</td>
</tr>
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</table>

About Us

CogState is a globally-focused company specializing in testing human cognition (brain function) across a variety of industries and applications.

Our customers include:

- 5 of the leading top 10 pharmaceutical companies in the world.
- Yale University
- The University of Melbourne
- The Australian Government (National Health and Medical Research Council)
- University of Michigan
- University of Notre Dame
- FIFA
- AFL and NRL clubs
- UK Jockey Club
- UK Rugby Football League

To purchase CogState Sport, or to browse through dozens of peer-reviewed scientific research articles that support our technology, please visit [www.cogstate.com](http://www.cogstate.com)
Saluting States Qualifying for the NIAAA Membership Commendation Program

States with 100% NIAAA membership:
- Connecticut Association of Athletic Directors
- District of Columbia Athletic Directors Association
- Indiana Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association
- Maryland State Athletic Directors Association
- New Hampshire Athletic Directors Association
- Rhode Island Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association
- Utah Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association
- Virginia Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association

Reached both NIAAA membership commendation levels of 10% growth and 70% membership among athletic directors in respective state:
- Arizona DCIAA
- District of Columbia DCIAA
- Indiana MSADA
- Maryland NSADA
- Massachusetts NAD
- New York NIAAA
- Vermont VSADA
- North Dakota NIAAA
- Virginia

Maintained at least 70% NIAAA membership from among number of athletic directors in state:
- Connecticut HIAA
- Hawaii HIAA
- New Hampshire
- Rhode Island
- Utah

Raised NIAAA membership by at least 10%:
- Colorado
- Hawaii
- Illinois
- Indiana
- Iowa
- Kansas
- Louisiana
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- Missouri
- Montana
- Nebraska
- Nevada
- New Mexico
- North Carolina
- Ohio
- Oklahoma
- Oregon
- Pennsylvania
- South Dakota
- Tennessee
- Texas
- Utah
- Virginia
- Washington
- Wisconsin
- Wyoming

Connecticut, Hawaii and Rhode Island are the only states to earn commendation awards every year since the program began in 1981.

Acknowledging state athletic director associations that raised 2007-08 and/or 2008-09 NIAAA membership. State association either increased membership by at least 10% or maintained at least 70% membership among those athletic administrators, directors, liaisons, or coordinators at schools belonging to the respective state athletic association.
IN THE NEWS

Survey Indicates Nearly 400,000 High School Cheerleaders

Almost 400,000 individuals are participating in high school cheerleading, according to a new survey conducted this spring by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS).

This first-of-its-kind, comprehensive survey of the NFHS member state high school associations measured participation in cheerleading at the freshman, junior varsity and varsity levels. With 18,922 high schools in the 51 member associations, the new figure of 394,694 translates to an average of 21 cheerleaders per school.

The only national participation figure for high school cheerleading in the past has been one for those boys and girls involved in competitive spirit squads. The 2007-08 High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the NFHS indicated a total of 113,980 boys and girls involved in competitive cheer.

The new survey not only includes those individuals in competitive cheer, but also everyone involved in sideline cheerleading at the high school level throughout the United States.

“This figure of almost 400,000 provides a more accurate portrayal of student participation in cheerleading,” said Robert F. Kanaby, executive director of the NFHS. “This adjustment is particularly noteworthy in relation to reports on cheerleading injuries. The NFHS will begin tracking the incidence of such injuries through our partnership with Dr. Dawn Comstock at Ohio State University.”

High-tech swimsuits banned in high school swimming

High-tech swimsuits that have been linked to record performances at all levels of competition the past couple of years have been banned for high school competition, effective August 11, 2009.

The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Swimming and Diving Rules Committee approved changes to Rule 3-2-2 that will make the high-tech swimsuit no longer a legal suit for swimmers at the high school level. The committee’s recommendations were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

Swimmers shall be limited to one swimsuit, which shall be constructed of a woven/knit textile material, permeable to water and air, constructed so as not to aid in buoyancy, and shall not contain zippers or other fastening systems. In addition, the suit shall be constructed so that the style/shape for males shall not extend above the waist or below the top of the kneecap and for females shall not extend beyond the shoulders or below the top of the kneecap, and it shall not cover the neck.

“These high-tech suits had fundamentally altered the sport and become more similar to equipment, rather than a uniform,” said Becky Oakes, NFHS assistant director and liaison to the Swimming and Diving Rules Committee. “The rules of swimming have always prohibited the use or wearing of items that would aid in the swimmer’s speed and/or buoyancy. The technical suits and styles had evolved to a point where there was little, if any, compliance with these basic rules,” Oakes said.

“With new developments in the swimming community, the committee knew that in order to preserve the integrity, tradition and heritage of the sport, as well as protect and enhance the interscholastic swimming program, these new requirements were necessary to promote fair play and the educational values of high school and could not wait for another year,” Oakes said. “The immediate implementation date, including style, will help guarantee fairness in competition throughout the high school swimming seasons and allow meet officials to fairly and consistently enforce the rule.”

Complete information on the new swimsuit requirements, is available on the NFHS Web site – www.nfhs.org.

New NFHS officers, board members elected

By Bethany Julka

Ennis Proctor, executive director of the Mississippi High School Activities Association (MHSAA), is the new president of the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) for 2009-10. Proctor, the 50th president of the NFHS, began his one-year term July 2 following the NFHS Summer Meeting in Chicago.

Nina Van Erk, executive director of the New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSPH-
SAA), was elected by the NFHS Board of Directors to the position of president-elect for the upcoming year.

Proctor began his career in education as a teacher and coach in the Titusville (Florida) Public Schools in 1964. After three years at Titusville, Proctor moved back to Mississippi to serve as a coach, athletic director, assistant principal and principal at the high school level. In 1991, Proctor was named executive director of the MHSAA. During his 18 years as executive director, Proctor has served as president of both the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame and the South Jackson Rotary Club. At the national level, he has served on the NFHS Appeals Board, the NFHS Football Rules Committee and the NFHS Hall of Fame Screening Committee. He also was chair of the Operations Subcommittee of the NFHS Strategic Planning Committee last year.

Van Erk was named NYSPHSAA executive director in 2000 after working as the director of health, physical education and athletics in the Katonah (New York) Lewisboro School District for five years. Previously, she served as athletic director of Rhinebeck (New York) Central Schools from 1983 to 1995. Van Erk began her career in education at Rhinebeck Central Schools in 1977 along with serving as recreation director of the town of Rhinebeck beginning in 1979.

At the national level, VanErk has served on the NFHS Annual Meeting Planning Committee and is currently a member of the NFHS National High School Spirit of Sport Award Selection Committee.

In addition, three new NFHS Board of Directors members were approved for four-year terms. All Board of Directors members were approved by the NFHS National Council. Sherm Sylling, executive secretary of the North Dakota High School Activities Association, Section 5; Kevin Charles, executive director of the Delaware Interscholastic Athletic Association, Section 2; and Karen Sanford Gall, executive director of the Big Sky State Games in Montana, at large, Sections 5 and 8, will begin their terms this year.

New executive directors named in Oklahoma, Utah, Vermont

The Oklahoma Secondary School Activities Association (OSSAA), the Utah High School Activities Association (UHSAA) and the Vermont Principals’ Association (VPA) named Ed Sheakley, Rob Cuff and Kenneth Page, respectively, as their new executive directors this past summer.

Sheakley, who had served in an interim capacity in the position since April, was approved by the OSSAA Board of Directors in May to continue the role permanently. Sheakley was an assistant director with the OSSAA for 17 years before accepting his new position. Before joining the OSSAA in 1992, Sheakley served as an administrator, educator and coach in Oklahoma’s Blackwell, Madill and Clinton school districts, including the roles of assistant principal and athletic director at Blackwell High School. Before moving to Oklahoma, Sheakley taught and coached in his home state of Iowa.

Cuff, who was approved for the UHSAA’s executive position in June, assumed his duties August 1, succeeding Dave Wilkey, who retired after 30 years as an educator and administrator. Cuff joined the UHSAA as an assistant director in 2001. Before his tenure with the UHSAA, Cuff coached basketball at Orem (Utah) Mountain View High School for 12 years – seven as head coach – earning the title as winningest coach in Mountain View boys basketball history and leading the teams to two state championships and a 23-5 record in state tournament games. He is a former president of the Utah High School Basketball Coaches Association.

Cuff currently is a member of both the NFHS Football Rules Committee and the NFHS Baseball Rules Committee and formerly served on the NFHS National Records Committee.

Page, who assumed his executive director duties of the VPA August 10, succeeds Bob Stevens, who headed the VPA for three years. Page joins the VPA after 21 years as a principal at Plainfield (Vermont) Calais Elementary School and Duxbury (Vermont) Crossett Brook Middle School. He started his career in education as a teacher, softball coach and middle school athletic director after graduating from the University of Vermont.

Bethany Julka was a summer intern in the NFHS Publications/Communications Department. She is a senior at Butler (Indiana) University majoring in journalism (public relations/advertising) and French.
On every sideline
in every halftime show
of every season
in every school across America

It’s Game Time!

GAME TIME
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