

ACTIVITY NEWS

Montana High School Association · 1 South Dakota Ave · Helena, Montana 59601 · 406-442-6010 · www.mhsa.org

August 2023



MHSA PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

Greetings from Helena High School!

I trust you all had a memorable summer vacation and you and your family took full advantage of all the opportunities our communities and state have to offer!

I am Steve Thennis and I am the Principal at Helena High School. I am entering my fourth year as the AA representative on the MHSA board and my first as the board president. It is truly an honor for me

to be in this position to do what I can to serve all of you and especially our students involved in the wide array of activities our schools provide. I look forward to meeting more administrators, coaches, and advisors from across our state.

My heartfelt admiration goes out to all our coaches and advisors that commit their time, energy and talents to our young people. The impact you have on your communities and especially these young people and their futures is remarkable. There is nothing quite like the responsibilities you graciously take on. THANK YOU!

I am sure your schools are already abuzz with activity as you welcome your new and returning participants. I can't wait to welcome our student body back and to see them grow and develop as they navigate toward their ultimate goals and visions for themselves. It's a privilege to be a part of that.

I am entering my 32nd year at Helena High School – 12th as the principal of our school! Wow! Not sure how that time has gone so fast. I am a big baseball fan (Go Twins!) and the start of the school year brings the same excitement to me as opening day. I have a strong feeling of optimism and potential for all the great things that will become of the upcoming seasons! I hope all of you have that same feeling of anticipation and your goals and aspirations for the season are met.

This newsletter has a mountain of information in it! Please take some time to review and highlight all the important dates and responsibilities. Of course, if you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact any of the hard-working members of our Montana High School Association. They are happy to support you.

Welcome back and I wish you all a successful start to your season and school year.

Steve Thennis
Executive Board President of the MHSA
Helena High School Principal

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

We are very excited about the new school year! I am starting my second year as the Executive Director and am truly fortunate to be able to lead our outstanding organization. I had the opportunity to speak at a few conferences this summer and saw a ton of old friends and also met some great new administrators.

The greatest resource in the MHSA is our people. The MHSA is composed of our staff, administrators, coaches, participants and officials. The MHSA staff includes six individuals (seven if you include me). Since April, we have made many adjustments in our office. Each staff member participated in high school sports and/or activities and understands the values, commitment and benefits of being a team player. Here is a breakdown of our staff and the major responsibilities of each person:

- Brian Michelotti – MHSA Executive Director and MOA Commissioner – budget/finances, MHSA personnel, legal issues, eligibility, foreign exchange, hardships, soccer and golf liaison.
- Kip Ryan – Senior Associate Director – volleyball, swimming, cross-country, track & field, Sports Advisory Rules Review Committee, athletes' Hall of Fame, awards and MHSA publications (Activity News).
- Scott Wilson – Associate Director – football, wrestling, baseball, AIM Higher, NFHS Network, Coaches Education reporting, NFHS participation survey.
- Amy Bartels – Assistant Director – softball, spirit, speech & drama, music, gender equity officer, MOA oversight and Regional Directors, Student Advisory Committee, MOA Hall of Fame, Social Media coordinator.
- Greta Buehler – Assistant Director – basketball, tennis, sports medicine and cooperative sponsorships,
- Office Manager and Executive Assistant – To be hired soon. Business Manager, accounts payable/accounts receivable, membership dues / catastrophic insurance, Executive Board meeting secretary and Executive Director assistant
- Ryan Richards - MHSA Sports Properties - Corporate Sponsors

As we begin a new year of high school sports and activities across the state of Montana, we want to create an open culture with the following commitments:

- To listen to you as administrators;
- To ensure each staff member will be an excellent resource;
- To be present at your meetings and events;
- To develop state-of-the-art technology (website/app);
- To give on-time delivery of all MHSA resources;
- To have every MHSA Committee meet yearly and provide more direction to MHSA staff, the Executive Board and the membership;

If you ever have any questions or concerns, please contact any one of us. We are here to assist and we will be a resource that will allow you to grow student activity participation in your community.

As I mentioned above, the MHSA is made up of YOU– the administrators, coaches, officials and participants across the state. We have outstanding people in our membership and we encourage everyone to step forward and take an active role in your MHSA. We can accomplish incredible things when we come together.

Throughout this entire *Activity News*, you will see a significant amount of information that will assist you in the startup of your school year. We have posted all of the fall rules clinics and will have additional administrative clinics available in the near future. These additional clinics include Eligibility, Equity and Sportsmanship. Stay tuned for the release of those administrative clinics.

The importance of closely checking the eligibility of all student activity participants is very important. We have information on our website including the Fundamentals of Athletic Regulations which covers many scenarios including:

- Eligibility
 - A "Quick Check" for sports eligibility
 - The new 8th grade participation rules
 - Information on home school and nonpublic school participation
- Fundraising
- Gender equity
- In-season and out-of-season regulations
- Coaching rules, camps and invitationals
- Much more!

Have a great school year. We look forward to hearing from you!

Brian Michelotti, Executive Director

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRACTICE REQUIREMENT

This is a reminder that the initial required amount of practices has changed for all sports except football and golf this year (ten for football; two for golf; eight for basketball, tennis, soccer, cross country, track and field, softball, volleyball, wrestling, swimming and spirit). Each individual must complete a comprehensive, regularly scheduled team practice with the full coaching staff present. Also, here is the rule in regard to determining what constitutes/satisfies an initial MHSA practice mentioned above. The following criteria must be applied:

1. Practice must be at least one (1) hour long.
2. At least one full squad (varsity team/J.V. team/C squad) and their coaching staff must be present.
3. The athlete must participate in the entire practice.
4. Practice should include the majority of drills and conditioning that are the norm for that team or squad.
5. A practice the day of a game does not count (unless an athlete is practicing with another squad that does not have a game that day, i.e. a varsity team member who stays home and practices with the JV team that does not have a game that day).
6. Warm-ups or walk-throughs with the team prior to a game does not constitute a practice.

MHSA HANDBOOK TO BE PUBLISHED

The MHSA Handbook will be printed soon and mailed to each member school in September. One copy will be sent to each school contact and one copy will be sent to each superintendent. Additional copies are available through the MHSA office for \$10 each. The Handbook is also posted on the MHSA website (www.mhsa.org) where all coaches and staff can access the information.

2023-24 DIRECTORY INFORMATION REQUESTED - FINAL FORMS

The 2023-24 Roster of School Personnel will still need to be filled out and verified by each school. In our new program (FinalForms), each school administrator has access to complete this process in their FinalForms account. District AD's may do this as well if they log into each school. Once in FinalForms, the readiness checklist is available. Each school must complete all steps of the readiness checklist which includes updating all school directory information. Administrators, business managers and head coaches information and emails must be updated. All of the information from last year's directory has been imported. We will also have an online directory, which can be found by [clicking this link](#) on the MHSA website.

PHYSICAL EXAMINATION FORM

The updated MHSA pre-participation physical examination form is attached. The newest update has removed questions related to COVID-19.

This is a reminder to all member schools that physical exams are mandated for all students who are going to participate in MHSA sanctioned sports. These exams must be completed before they practice and must have been performed after May 1, 2023. Examinations must be certified by a licensed medical professional acting within the scope and limitations of his/her practice for the current 2023-24 school year. Schools must use the MHSA standardized pre-participation exam form.

The MHSA is committed to the safety and health of our student activity participants and believe this form will facilitate that objective. You may access this form any time at mhsa.org. Please feel free to copy the form and distribute it appropriately. Please contact the MHSA office if you have any questions or to direct any questions from physicians. According to HIPPA, schools should note that these physical forms must be kept in confidential private files.

PROCEDURE FOR ACTIVITY NEWS/QUICK BITS MAILINGS

MHSA will distribute monthly publications in one format only: *Activity News*.

Activity News is an electronic publication, which will be emailed to all administrative emails. *Activity News* is distributed in August, September, October, November, December, January, March/April, and May.

RULE BOOK INFORMATION

NFHS Rule book information will be sent to each head coach to access a rules book in a digital format directly from the NFHS. In order to receive a rules book it has been requested that the activities director submit a list of all head coaches by sport and emails to Amy Bartels at abartels@mhsa.org. Emails will not be sent without the coaches information being submitted. Physical copies of the rules books will not be mailed, but if schools wish to purchase a copy they may go to the NFHS at nfhs.com to order any book in a print format.

For all questions contact Amy Bartels.

RULES CLINICS MANDATORY FOR ALL COACHES

The MHSA/MOA rules clinics are presented in an online format for coaches and officials. **All coaches, including the head coach and all assistant coaches and all school-approved volunteer coaches, are required to view the sport-specific rules clinic(s).** The information sheet is available on our website, www.mhsa.org, under the clinics tab. If you have any questions, please contact the MHSA office.

RECORDS OF TRANSFER MANDATORY

Any student who transfers to your school and desires to participate in athletics at any level of competition has to be reported to the MHSA office on a Record of Transfer Form. This form and other related forms are available on our website. We are requiring schools to report home school and nonpublic school participants on the record of transfer form. They cannot transfer and are not considered transfers, however having one form to report transfers and home school and nonpublic school participants hopefully is easier for schools. This helps the school verify eligibility for the home school and nonpublic school participants also.

The Record of Transfer form is required in reporting transfer students (and **now 8th graders that participated in high school**, home school and nonpublic school participants) and certifying in writing to the MHSA office that the transfer student and home school and nonpublic school participant meets the MHSA eligibility requirements stated in Article II of the Association By-Laws. These forms **must be filed before** the student participates on **any** high school athletic team in any, sub-varsity or varsity, Association contest. The forms can be emailed (if signed) or faxed without hard copies having to be mailed. If you have any questions regarding transfer students, please contact Brian Michelotti.

AWARENESS EVENTS

When requested, the MHSA permits a school to modify certain uniform/apparel from the NFHS Rules and/or school colors for one (1) week during the regular season to be designated for charitable

awareness events, such as Breast Cancer Awareness week. This interpretation will be applied to all sports. **The school must inform the MHSAA when/if they conduct these events.** Should you have questions, please contact the MHSAA staff liaison for the particular sport.

SOCIAL JUSTICE STATEMENT

The MHSAA respects each individual's first amendment rights; however, any form of statement/protest cannot disrupt the start of or progression of a contest and all MHSAA and NFHS rules must be followed for the contest (uniforms rules, etc.).

ELIGIBILITY/EQUITY ONLINE CLINIC

Member schools are required to have an onsite administrator and/or athletic/activities director who have viewed the online in-service on the eligibility rules as well as equity and the Ridgeway Settlement Agreement. Such on site personnel are required to complete the renewal online in-services every five years. **This is the first year the clinic will be offered online and all schools will need to have one administrator complete the clinic to meet the requirement.**

COACHES' EDUCATION

COACHES' EDUCATION UPDATE

Please refer to the website for information regarding the three MHSAA Coaches' Education requirements, including instructions on MHSAA Rules Clinics, NFHS Fundamentals of Coaching and NFHS Concussion in Sport. Once these courses are viewed, the requirement is met for the particular school year and the certificate must be uploaded to Dragonfly. Users may review the course again at any time, but after 90 days users may be required to "order" the course again to access the content.

If you have any questions about the Coaches' Education program, please contact Scott Wilson at the MHSAA office.

EXECUTIVE BOARD ITEMS

SEPTEMBER BOARD MEETING

The next regular meeting of the MHSAA Executive Board will be held in Helena beginning on Monday, September 11, 2023, at 8:30 a.m. The Board meeting will continue Tuesday, September 12, if business has not been completed.

If any member school administrator wishes to have an item placed on the agenda for the Board to consider at this meeting, he/she must send the request to the Association office **ten (10) days** prior to the meeting. If any member school wishes to meet with the Executive Board concerning any items, requests for appointments must be made in advance.

MEETING DATES SET FOR EXECUTIVE BOARD

The MHSAA Executive Board has established dates for their regular meetings for the 2023-24 school year. While the Board is required by MHSAA By-Laws to hold a minimum of four (4) meetings, they can also hold special meetings in person, or the Board can conduct business by conference phone calls or electronic format such as Zoom.

2023-24 Board Meeting Dates

September 11, 2023
November 20-21, 2023
January 13 & 15, 2024
April 22-23, 2024

ANNUAL MEETING IN BOZEMAN

The next MHSAA Annual Meeting will be in Bozeman on January 15, 2024. The Best Western Plus GranTree Inn is the host facility. Reservations may be made by calling 406-587-5261 and asking for Block Code 2949 or online using the following link, [MHSAA - Annual Conference 2024](#) with Block Code 2949. Reservations must be made by December 15, 2023, for the conference rate.

CROSS COUNTRY

CROSS COUNTRY MATERIALS FOUND IN THE ENCLOSURES

For the 2023 season, we have listed the major NFHS and MHSAA rule changes and also some other important MHSAA cross country information. Please contact Kip Ryan in the MHSAA office if you have any questions.

VOLLEYBALL

VOLLEYBALL MATERIALS FOUND IN THE ENCLOSURES

For the 2023 season, we have listed the major NFHS and MHSAA rule changes and also some other important MHSAA volleyball information. Please contact Kip Ryan in the MHSAA office if you have any questions.

FOOTBALL

MAJOR FOOTBALL REVISIONS FOR 2023

There are several changes to MHSAA and NFHS rules that will go into effect for the football season, including new alignments for each classification, NFHS rule changes and other important MHSAA football safety issues. Please review the football information and distribute it to all affected personnel. Please feel free to contact Scott Wilson if you have questions on the football materials.

MOA

THE HIRING OF OFFICIALS

ATTENTION: All administrators and coaches — please make sure all officials whom you hire for varsity contests are members in good standing with the Montana Officials' Association. Per MHSAA/MOA rules, schools must go through the local official's pool when hiring officials unless the official is not in a pool (an approved non-pool affiliated official). To be a member in good standing, officials must have passed the qualifying exam for the respective sport or pay to take the exam that will be given at the start of the season. We had a few non-MOA's work varsity contests in the past few years which is a serious violation of MHSAA/MOA rules and schools will be penalized accordingly for any violations.

In compliance with the Dylan Steigers' Protection of Youth Athletes Act, any sports' official working an athletic contest in your district must have completed concussion education. This includes all varsity contests (for which MOA officials must be used) and any other contests, including sub-varsity, middle school, and elementary. The local district is responsible for ensuring that officials who are not MOA members working athletic contests have completed concussion education, unless the MOA pool has assigned those officials.

Also, please remember to be on hand to greet officials, assist the crew at half-time and to ensure that security and locker rooms etc. are provided for them from the time they arrive until the time they leave the premises. The 2023-2024 MOA Officiating Fees for the regular season have been updated and available in the attachments section below. If there are any questions, please contact Amy Bartels at 406-442-6010 or abartels@mhsaa.org.

SPIRIT

SPIRIT REMINDERS

National Federation Spirit Rules Books will only be available through an electronic copy beginning Fall 2023. High School activities directors must mail Amy Bartels a list of head coaches in order for the coach to receive the electronic version by email.

Please note that National Federation Spirit Rules and MHSAA handbook rules found in the Spirit Section are to be followed during all spirit related activities. Violations of the rules are subject to penalties as found in the By-Laws under General Penalties. Spirit information may be found on the MHSAA website Spirit section at www.mhsaa.org.

Also, remember **all** cheer and dance coaches and volunteers must complete or be current with an approved Cheer and Dance Safety Certification Safety Certification course if their squad does any stunting. The Cheer and Dance (formerly known as AACCA) Safety Certification is offered online through the National Federation's website and directions to access that course are included in the rules book mailing.

Concussion management is a primary area of emphasis for schools. Each coach (spirit and dance) must also take the online NFHS Concussion Course, for your use in adhering to MHSA rules as well as Montana's concussion legislation. **All** coaches and volunteers must have a current NFHS Concussion in Sport certificate.

The MHSA Spirit Rules Clinic must be completed each year and opened on August 1st.

All three certificates for the NFHS Concussion in Sport, NFHS Cheer and Dance and the MHSA Spirit Rules Clinic must be completed prior to the first day of practice.

For all Spirit related questions, contact Amy Bartels at abartels@mhsa.org.

FINE ARTS

MUSIC COMMITTEE FALL MEETING will be held August 13-14, to discuss the upcoming school year and potential changes to the Music Handbook. Member schools are required to ensure that all music teachers, festival managers and administrators who oversee their school's music program must complete the Understanding Copyright and Compliance online course available at nfhslearn.com. Each individual will be required to complete the course once during their high school tenure. For current teachers, festival managers and administrators, the course must be completed before the start of the 2023-2024 school year. For

more information contact Amy Bartels at 406-442-6010 or abartels@mhsa.org

FORENSICS & DRAMA BOOKLET UNDER PRODUCTION

The Speech & Drama booklets will be available to schools in September. Copies will be available on the Speech, Drama and Debate section of the MHSA website.

Administrators are asked to encourage their speech & drama coaches to utilize the information on the MHSA website. All information is currently being updated and a tentative schedule is currently posted. If your school has not verified the date of your speech meet, please do so as soon as possible. Whenever possible our mailings will be sent to coaches electronically.

Contact Amy Bartels at abartels@mhsa.org for more information.

ATTACHMENTS

[2023-2024 Events Calendar](#)
[2024-2025 Events Calendar](#)
[2023-2024 Ready Reference Activity Dates](#)
[2023-2024 National Testing Dates](#)
[2023-2024 MHSA & NFHS Cross Country Information](#)
[2023-2024 MOA Officiating Fees - Regular Season](#)
[2023-24 NFHS Football Rule Changes](#)
[MHSA and NFHS Football Changes and Information](#)
[NFHS Heat Acclimatization and Heat Illness Prevention Statement](#)
[2023-24 MHSA & NFHS Volleyball Information](#)
[2023-24 NFHS Volleyball Rule Revisions](#)
[Athletic Pre-Participation Physical](#)
[Coaches' Education Handout](#)

Staff Members

Brian Michelotti, Executive Director
Kip Ryan, Senior Associate Director
Scott Wilson, Associate Director
Amy Bartels, Assistant Director
Greta Buehler, Assistant Director



Executive Board Members

Steve Thennis, Principal, Helena High School (President)
Krystal Zentner, MTSBA Appointee, Bridger (Vice President)
Joe McElroy, State Superintendent's Appointee, Missoula
Kara Triplett, Activities Director, Richey-Lambert High School
Aric Harris, Activities Director, Whitefish High School
John Fitzgerald, Superintendent, Red Lodge High School
Jimmy Patelis, Governor's Appointee, Billings

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