

Dr. Steve Gallon III, Board Member

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SUBJECT: REVIEW OF FHSAA CLASSIFICATION OF HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC PROGRAMS

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

LINK TO STRATEGIC

BLUEPRINT: SAFE, HEALTHY, AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) is committed to students' participation in interscholastic sports. In doing so, it recognizes athletics as a mainstay of school districts, schools, and more important, the learning and life experiences of students. In fact, research has shown that athletics, specifically at the high school level, provides a vehicle that improves students' citizenship, sportsmanship, self-discipline, physical and emotional wellness, and their grade point averages.

In the development, implementation, and enforcement of policies governing high school athletics, M-DCPS works very closely with the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA), the governing body of high school athletics in the state of Florida. For nearly a century, the FHSAA – through the cooperative efforts of its member schools – has provided opportunities for high school students in Florida to participate on a fair and equitable basis in interscholastic athletic programs that produce vital educational benefits. As with the FHSAA, M-DCPS is committed to policies and practices that support and promote the same spirit of fair and equitable participation and competition. In fact, School Board Policy 2431, Interscholastic Athletics affirms that *“All high schools shall be members of and governed by the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) rules and regulations.”*

One salient provision outlined in FHSAA's rules and regulations is reflected in FHSAA By-Law 2.8, *Competitive Equity* which promotes the *“opportunity for equity in competition to assure that individual student-athletes and school teams will not be prevented unfairly from achieving the benefits possible through participation in interscholastic athletics.”* One widely known benefit is the exposure of student-athletes to increased opportunities for athletic scholarships for higher education. It is also known that such increased opportunities come from competing at the highest level and on the largest stage. In high school athletics a state or “mythical” national championship represents the pinnacle of success for high school competitive sports.

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Such an ascension to compete in, let alone win a state championship instills a sense of pride within the school and throughout the District and communities served. However, any competition that is either “unfair” or outside of the classification criteria set forth in the bylaws of the FHSAA must be examined, addressed, and corrected.

Presently, member schools are classified pursuant to the provisions outlined in FHSAA Policy 12.2, *Classification Criteria*. For “*Existing Member Schools*,” classification is determined “*on the basis of the school’s traditional and non-traditional student population in the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grades combined as reported during the week in October designated by the Florida Department of Education for the fall semester FTE survey of public schools. Each member school shall be responsible for reporting to the FHSAA its student population as required.*”

The preceding provisions outlined in Policy 12.2 provide guidelines for the *reclassification* of schools based on an increase or decrease of student membership, as stipulated. Presently, M-DCPS may have FHSAA member schools categorized in a manner inconsistent with the policies and provisions of FHSAA and present enrollment figures. Such inconsistency may have resulted in member schools competing outside of their appropriate classification status, pursuant to FHSAA guidelines.

This item seeks to direct the Superintendent to review district schools’ compliance and alignment with FHSAA by-laws and guidelines for classification of members schools, review and discuss findings with a Task Force comprised of principals, athletic directors, and coaches, as well as members of the District Athletic Advisory Committee and Greater Miami Athletic Conference, and provide guidance and direction to ensure appropriate alignment with School Board Policy and related guidelines stipulated in FHSAA.

This item has been reviewed by the School Board Attorney for legal sufficiency.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
DR. STEVE GALLON III:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida direct the Superintendent to:

1. review compliance and alignment with FHSAA by-laws and guidelines for classification of member schools;
2. utilize members of the District Athletic Advisory Committee, Greater Miami Athletic Conference, and representatives from potentially impacted schools to review and discuss findings and solicit input and recommendations;
3. provide guidance and direction, based on findings and recommendations, to ensure appropriate alignment with School Board Policy and related guidelines stipulated in FHSAA;
4. implement procedures, where appropriate, to reclassify schools in accordance with FHSAA Policy 12.2;
5. establish guidelines and procedures to conduct an annual review regarding the classification of schools in accordance with FHSAA Policy 12.2 and any other related guidelines;
6. make any policy recommendations, as appropriate; and
7. provide an update to the Board no later than March 30, 2019.

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