



Waterloo Community School District

8th grade participation on high school teams guidelines and process

[State FAQ](#)

Proposal:

8th graders are now permitted to participate in high school athletics starting August 1, 2026 due to the passage of HF 2591. Individual school districts are permitted to also determine guidelines for participation for 8th graders in high school sports.

The Waterloo Community School District will use the following guidelines and procedures in regards to 8th grade participation in high school athletics.

1. Information will be communicated annually to 8th grade families in regards to information and procedures regarding 8th grade participation in high school athletics.
2. 8th graders will be allowed to participate in high school sports that do not offer 8th grade options. Examples include: bowling, tennis, swimming, golf and soccer. 8th graders will continue to be able to participate in baseball and softball. Students will practice and try out in order to determine the appropriate competition level for the student. The ability level of the student-athlete will determine if there is an appropriate competition level. Based on the number of high school athletes and the ability level of the 8th grade student, there may not be regular competition opportunities.
3. 8th graders will be permitted to participate on an 8th grade team for one sport and a high school team for a different sport. An 8th grader may not participate on an 8th grade team and a high school team for the same sport. Once an 8th grade season ends, an 8th grader could practice with the high school program if the high school coach permits it, but 8th graders would not be eligible to compete with the high school program because they had been on an 8th grade team.
4. If a student wishes to go out for a sport that does have an 8th grade team option, the following procedures will be utilized:
 - a. Player and Parent/Guardian complete Intent to Participate form
 - b. Program head coach and Athletic Director receive Intent to Participate form and complete initial review of athlete's intent. Important factors that will be considered include: current high school participation levels, physical nature of the sport being considered, past playing experiences of the athlete

- c. The tryout can last one or multiple days, but the tryout procedures must be on file in the Athletic Office and the general tryout framework must also be shared with the parent/guardians.
 - d. At the conclusion of the tryout the Head Coach and his/her coaching staff determine the appropriate level for the athlete. The appropriate level may be at the 8th grade or high school level depending on the skills of the athlete and the circumstances of the sport involved.
 - e. The program head coach will communicate the results of the tryout and status of the athlete to the parent/guardian. Appropriate means of communication include phone call, email or face to face meeting.
 - f. The decision of the program head coach is final. There is no appeal process.
 - g. 8th graders that participate on a high school team must comply with all State and local school district participation requirements. This includes academic and conduct policies. Transportation to practices, meetings, training sessions and home events that is outside the scope of regular daily transportation that is offered by the WCSD will be the responsibility of the student's family. The high school will provide appropriate transportation to Away events.
5. If an 8th grade student participates in a high school sport, the student will participate with the high school that they are currently expected to attend based on their residence.

At the current time 8th graders may not participate in high school cheerleading. The Iowa Cheer Coaches Association (ICCA) currently limits high school cheer participation to students in grades 9-12. As a result, eighth-grade students are not eligible to participate in high school cheer at this time. This will be reevaluated should ICCA participation requirements change. Although the Iowa Dance Team Association (IDTA) allows students in grades 8-12 to participate, the 2026-27 WCSD Dance teams were established prior to implementation of the new legislation. Eighth-grade students will be eligible to try out for the 2027-28 Dance teams.

These guidelines and procedures will be evaluated annually as additional information is provided by the Iowa High School Athletic Association and Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union and yearly WCSD needs are evaluated. The Waterloo Community School District athletic programs will comply with all necessary requirements of the IHSAA and IGHS AU and the state of Iowa.