

Houston County Board of Education

Monitoring: Review: Annually, in November	Descriptor Term: Interscholastic Athletics	Descriptor Code: 4.301	Issued Date: 08/10/26
		Rescinds:	Issued: 07/14/25; 07/18/24; 08/09/21; 11/13/17; 01/12/09

General

No person shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, be treated differently from another person, or otherwise be discriminated against in any athletic program of the school. Equal athletic opportunities shall be provided for members of both sexes.¹

Sex shall be defined as the “immutable characteristics of the person’s reproductive system that identify the person as male or female, as determined by anatomy and genetics existing at the time of birth”.² Student athletes shall only be allowed to participate in athletic activities or events that align with the student’s sex indicated on his/her original birth certificate.³ The Director of Schools/designee shall require the parent/guardian to provide the student’s original birth certificate prior to participation in any interscholastic athletics. If the original birth certificate is not available or does not indicate the student’s sex at the time of birth, the parent/guardian shall provide medical documentation showing evidence of the student’s sex at birth.

Interscholastic athletics shall be administered as a part of the regular school program and shall be the principal’s responsibility. Principals shall ensure that school regulations regarding participation in a sport are reasonable. Athletic schedules shall be filed in each principal’s office. The principal/designee shall accompany an athletic team on trips. Transportation of teams to athletic games is approved by the Board, provided the team’s school reimburses the Board for mileage.

Bylaws of the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association shall regulate the operation and control of athletics.³ The Director of Schools shall develop a code of conduct for all coaches to follow in order to ensure the health and safety of athletes.⁴

INSURANCE & PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS

In the event that the school's insurance provider does not extend coverage to an athlete, the athlete shall provide proof of independently secured catastrophic coverage and liability coverage, with the school district as a named insured, of not less than the limits set forth in state law.⁵ It shall be the responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian(s) to provide health and hospitalization insurance for all students participating in interscholastic athletics.

Prior to participation in interscholastic athletics, every student shall complete an annual physical examination.⁶ The parent(s)/guardian(s) of each student shall be responsible for covering the cost of the examination, and these records shall be on file in the principal’s office.

SCHEDULING CONFLICTS

No principal or teacher shall dismiss his/her school or any group of students for the purpose of attending the practice of any interscholastic sport during the school day without written permission from the Board.⁷ This does not prevent regular physical training lessons in the daily school program.

Students shall not be required to attend a school athletic event, or event related to participation on a school athletic team, if the event is on an official school holiday, observed day of worship, or religious holiday. The student's parent/guardian shall notify the coach in writing three (3) full school days prior to the event.⁸

SEVERE WEATHER⁴

Severe weather is any type of weather that could impede the safety of any athlete by compromising the playing conditions of the interscholastic sport. Severe weather includes, but is not limited to, thunder, lightning, and extreme temperatures. When severe weather is forecasted, suspension of play shall be discussed with all players, coaches, and officials, if applicable.

All coaches who oversee or participate in outdoor training, practice, or competition shall annually complete a heat illness prevention course approved by the Tennessee Department of Health as well as receive training on activity modifications based on environmental conditions.

PROHIBITION AGAINST HAZING

Coaches, employees, and volunteers of the school district shall not encourage, permit, condone, or tolerate hazing activities.⁹

HOME SCHOOL STUDENT PARTICIPATION¹⁰

Home school students shall be permitted to participate in accordance with TSSAA or TMSAA guidelines. If a school is not a member with these organizations, home school students that are zoned for the school shall be permitted to participate in interscholastic athletics to the same extent as other students.

VIRTUAL SCHOOL STUDENT PARTICIPATION¹¹

Virtual school students shall be permitted to participate in accordance with TSSAA or TMSAA guidelines. If a school is not a member with these organizations, virtual school students that are zoned for the school shall be permitted to participate in interscholastic athletics to the same extent as other students.

PRIVATE SCHOOL STUDENT PARTICIPATION¹²

While students from private schools are permitted to try out for interscholastic athletics teams, this does not guarantee that they will make the team. As with all students, those from other schools shall only be admitted to the team subject to the independent decision of the coach or other relevant school official.

Public Schools with TSSAA or TMSSAA Membership

Private school students shall be permitted to participate in accordance with TSSAA or TMSAA guidelines subject to the following conditions. These students must:

- Attend a private school that is not a member with TSSAA or TMSAA and serves fewer than two-hundred (200) students in grades six through eight (6-8) or fewer than two hundred students in grades nine through twelve (9-12);
- Satisfy the eligibility requirements established by TSSAA or TMSAA; and
- Reside within the geographic boundaries of the district.

These students shall be permitted to participate in athletic programs not offered by the private school, but only in the middle or high school that they are zoned to attend.

Public Schools without TSSAA or TMSSAA Membership

If a school is not a member with these organizations and offers its students the opportunity to participate in interscholastic athletic competition, private school students that are zoned for the school shall be permitted to participate in interscholastic athletics to the same extent as other students.

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Legal References

1. [34 CFR § 106.41](#); [20 USCA § 1681 et seq.](#)
2. [TCA 49-6-310\(a\)](#)
3. [TRR/MS 0520-01-02-.08\(1\)](#)
4. [TCA 49-6-3601](#)
5. [TCA 29-20-403](#)
6. [20 USCA § 1232h\(c\)](#); [TRR/MS 0520-01-13-.01\(1\)\(a\)](#)
7. [TCA 49-6-1002\(a\)](#)
8. [TCA 49-6-1002\(c\)](#)
9. [TCA 49-2-120](#)
10. [TCA 49-6-3050\(e\)\(1\)\(B\)](#)
11. [Public Acts of 2025, Chapter No. 173](#)
12. [Public Acts of 2026, Chapter No. 893](#)

Cross References

Special Use of School Vehicles 3.402
 Student Insurance Program 3.601
 Extracurricular Activities 4.300
 Attendance 6.200