

## **JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMITTEE II MINUTES**

MHSAA, February 19, 2020, 9:30 a.m.

### **Members**

Chris Adams, Napoleon

Don Gustafson, St. Ignace (Zoom)

James Hogan, Allendale

Jason Kemler, Brethren

Jolinda Lucas, Grand Rapids

Jay Mulder, Montague

Steve Newkirk, Clare

Adam Schihl, Clawson

Brian Southworth, Decatur

Steve Uyl, Caledonia

### **MHSAA Staff**

Cody Inglis

The MHSAA Junior High/Middle School Committee met for the second time in 2019-20 to review topics identified for discussion by the MHSAA staff, Representative Council and member schools.

The committee began by reviewing responsibilities and purpose including a thorough review of the JH/MS committee meeting minutes from October of 2019. Staff updated the committee on the responsibilities, purpose and topics on the agenda.

### **MHSAA JH/MS Survey results and review**

The committee reviewed the newly completed MHSAA JH/MS survey given to member schools for feedback and perspective. Key data garnered from the survey includes:

- There were almost 700 member schools who responded to this MHSAA JH/MS survey.
- The relatively new (2018) MHSAA adjustment to the limited team membership rule has had some impact on increasing participation at member schools, but more education about this rule is needed to let parents, students and schools know about the allowance to play two outside of school competitions in the same sport, in the same season.
- Survey respondents were clear in not supporting MHSAA involvement in JH/MS flag football at this time (26% in favor, 74% showing no interest).
- MHSAA leagues and conferences at the JH/MS level operate both in the three and four season models with nearly 50% of respondents in the traditional three season model while 47% operate in the four season model. The initial look at this survey question opens up a number of questions that the JH/MS committee will need to look at in the future when determining if and when JH/MS tournaments can be sponsored by the MHSAA at either the regional or statewide level.
- JH/MS member schools, leagues and conferences operate their JH/MS basketball games in different formats including both 6 minute and 8 minute quarters, two halves and some provide a 5<sup>th</sup> quarter for maximum participation.

The survey results have been shared with MHSAA staff along with representatives from league and conference meeting in order to get data to the appropriate groups making decisions and serving MHSAA JH/MS membership.

### **MHSAA JH/MS Regional and Statewide tournaments**

Steve Endsley, the Illinois Elementary School Association Director, joined the JH/MS committee meeting via Zoom to update the committee on the IESA and how Illinois has conducted JH/MS sports and tournaments for over 90 years. Highlights of how Illinois handles elementary and middle school sports including the fact that the current Illinois model for elementary and youth sports is decades old and is a "way of life" for their schools and youth sports. The Committee agreed that this fact makes it easier for Illinois to conduct statewide tournaments in middle school sports for student-athletes and to

adapt and be more flexible with their rules and regulations as it relates to elementary and middle schools school sports. The flexible rules and regulations that the IESA allows include opting in for certain sports, grades playing “up” against older student athletes and student-athletes playing multiple games per day on multiple teams and multiple state tournaments in various sports. These rules and the philosophy behind them would be harder to grasp for Michigan schools as that has not been how middle school sports are currently administered here.

Discussion on what aspects of the Illinois model might work for Michigan centered upon some “regional tournaments” in specific sports like cross country and track and field as these sports do not have current outside competing youth competitions that exist on a statewide or regional level. In addition, the general timeframe of both Cross Country and Track, no matter the season model, is in the fall for Cross Country and the spring for Track.

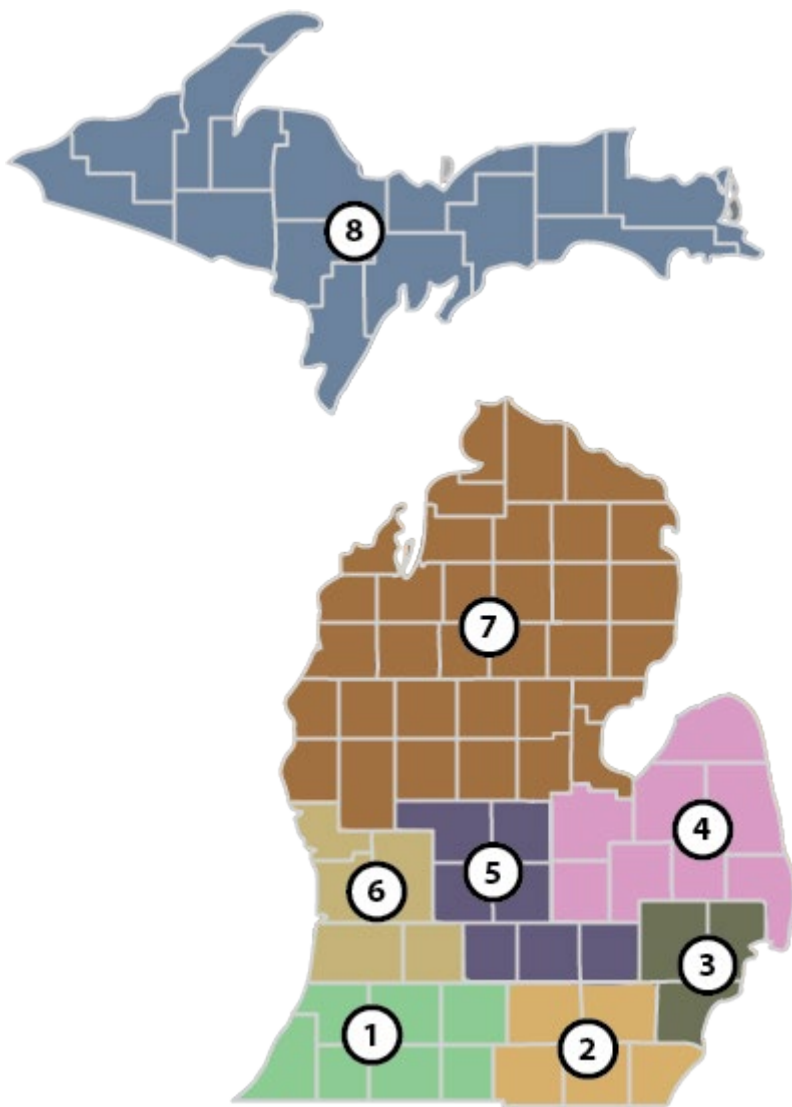
Steve recommended to the committee that we take things slowly. Steve also used the analogy of a train, indicating the “once you start the JH/MS tournament on the tracks, you won’t be able to stop it.” Steve indicated that JH/MS growth in Illinois and other states who have started sponsoring tournaments at the JH/MS level has been massive and plans are already underway to grow this area in those states.

The JH/MS committee continues to believe that there would be a positive impact on the MHSAA and school based sports if Regional MHSAA JH/MS events would be sponsored. The growth in this area could be done in a responsible way within schools and the scope and perspective of JH/MS sports would not be lost. MHSAA signage and branding was again identified as a key part of the Regional emphasis, including MHSAA JH/MS specific signs and banners.

The MHSAA continues some “pilot” programs in the sports of cross country and track. Feedback received from these meets has helped the committee and the MHSAA determine best practices moving forward. The committee recommended to the Representative Council that starting in the Fall of the 2020-21 school year that the MHSAA conduct regional cross country meets at 8 different sites across the state based upon the “zones” of the MHSAA. (see zone map below) At this point the committee did not recommend Track and Field be included in this recommendation, wanted to instead go slow and give schools, leagues and conferences time to adjust and adapt to this new JH/MS concept and get feedback from regional cross country hosts and the logistics involved.

Key protocols related to the Cross Country Regional recommendation include:

- JH/MS Cross Country Regionals would be hosted during the month of October at eight preset regional sites, as determined by MHSAA staff.
- These JH/MS Cross Country Regionals could coincide with already existing MHSAA HS Cross Country Regionals or exist as separate races or events dependent upon the host school and MHSAA.
- Athletic.net will be the entry registration website where schools will enter their JH/MS teams and individuals into the Regional races.
- JH/MS Regional races will be done by gender in each of the 8 zones.
- The JH/MS Regional race would not be counted against a schools’ MHSAA contest limit in Cross Country.
- Trophies and medals would include one MHSAA district size trophy for the winning team per gender along with 7 team medals per gender. Individual medals would be awarded to the top 15 places per gender.
- Each school host would complete an MHSAA financial report form. The admission policy would be the same as an MHSAA HS Cross Country Regional where admission would be by carload at either \$6.00 per person or \$10 per carload.
- Host schools would be responsible for conducting the Regional meet according to MHSAA rules, regulations and protocols based upon a to be developed JH/MS Manager Manual for Cross Country.



### **MHSAA Presenting Sponsorship**

An update of the current program on “Presenting Sponsorship of JH/MS events” was reviewed for the committee in which, “money and messaging” were provided for these existing events. The events continue to be well-received by leagues, conferences, administrators, coaches and the student-athletes themselves. The JH/MS committee recommends continuation of the presenting sponsorship program especially in track and field so that the JH/MS committee can use this to determine logistics for future MHSAA regional track and field events. The presenting sponsorship concept has been successful and the next step is to have the JH/MS committee transition this program into MHSAA regional or area meets for JH/MS student-athletes.

### **General JH/MS Discussion Topics**

The committee spent time discussing areas that the MHSAA could enhance JH/MS membership and serve JH/MS even better moving forward. While there was no consensus on these topics or areas, the committee felt strongly to continue to discuss and brainstorm with MHSAA membership to determine which direction should be followed. These areas include:

- Requiring rules meetings for JH/MS coaches and having specific JH/MS content available.
- Establishing season start and finish dates for MHSAA JH/MS sport seasons.
- Publishing a manual for JH/MS athletic directors on how to successfully administer a season ending tournament.
- Establishing a JH/MS specific coaching conference for educational athletics.

- Establish an MHSAA CAP specific course for JH/MS level coaches
- Support JH/MS level coaches with more coaching information and content on the MHSAA website.
- Establish and make clear what JH/MS expectations are for coaches and the student-athletes they serve and coach.
- Create a public service announcement or TedTalk on what JH/MS athletics is and should be for all aspects of JH/MS including the athlete, parent, athletic director, official and coach.
- Provide MHSAA JH/MS specific banners for purchase by member schools.

A potential MHSAA JH/MS Athletic Director in-service discussion occurred on whether something could be planned for in the future. The MIAAA JH/MS committee will take the lead on this idea and work to solidify ideas and concepts. In addition, the MIAAA conference will offer a key time for brainstorming and presentations on different JH/MS topics. Several members of the MHSAA JH/MS committee will be a part of these presentations and help coordinate JH/MS specific content for the MIAAA conference. This is a key educational opportunity for the ever changing JH/MS athletic administrator to get new ideas and find mentors in educational athletics.