

Handbook changes proposed for JR/SR high athletics/activities

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

Handbook changes for athletics/activities have gone through extensive committee discussion this year. Proposed changes for the handbook were presented by JR/SR High Principal Susan Ortner at the April 6 school board meeting.

One of the biggest proposed changes is the establishment of a violations committee to convene for an alleged major violation of participation rules.

Additionally, the word “involvement” at an activity involving alcoholic beverages will replace “attendance” or “participation.”

Consequences for violation of a major offense are clarified for participants in school activities in a different way than for athletics. But consequences are specific for either activities or athletics in the proposed changes.

The conduct standards will be enforced during the school year, with parents encouraged to promote the goals and enforce the handbook guidelines with their own child when school is not in session.

Having met seven times since Jan. 12, committee members thoroughly discussed the proposed changes. Included on the committee were activity sponsors, coaches, curriculum director, athletic director, principal, four parents and one student.

Committee asks further questions

In addition to providing suggested handbook changes, the committee asked the board for consideration for three other questions.

—Is the board interested in reviewing the rule that students can only compete in one sport

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during a sport season?

—Is cheerleading considered a sport by the district?

—Is the board interested in allowing sixth graders to participate in JH athletics?

Ortner noted it was close to a consensus of the committee that cheerleading as a sport sort of sets a precedent for participating in two per season.

Board member Kim Killin suggested if there is someone advocating participation in two sports or allowing sixth graders in JH sports, the board would be interested to hear their perspective.

Violations committee proposed

In an effort to be consistent, a violations committee is proposed to convene when there is an alleged major violation of participation rules.

Members of the violations committee will include the principal as chairman, activity/athletic director (AD) and sponsors/head coaches. Each member of the committee will have one vote.

Prior to making a decision, this committee will ensure the student involved is fully advised as to the allegations and has had an opportunity to present his/her position.

Each major violation will be acted on individually. The committee will never discuss or consider

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more than one individual participant/athlete at any one time.

The participant/athlete involved and his/her parents or guardians are to be present at the violations committee meeting and will be allowed to present information.

Duties and responsibilities of participants/athletes will be used as guidelines for decisions of the violations committee.

Major violations include the following:

—use, possession, distribution or sale of alcohol, illegal drugs, cigarettes, chewing tobacco or any other controlled substances.

—involvement in any activity where alcoholic beverages or drugs are used/consumed by minors.

—violations of CHSAA rules and regulations.

—violations of regulations as established as major offenses by individual sponsors/coaches.

—out-of-school suspension (changed from any suspension).

—theft, vandalism or any other behavior that brings discredit to Holyoke JR/SR High (new).

The violations committee will not convene for minor offenses. With regard to minor offenses and consequences, the coach/sponsor will communicate with the AD/Principal, and the AD will

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follow through with the coach/sponsor to assure the consequences have occurred in a timely manner.

Consequences for major offenses proposed

Consequences will be enforced any time the participant/athlete is currently participating in a sport or activity or the next time he/she enrolls in a sport or activity during the present school year.

Consequences for a first major offense violation for activities is proposed as follows:

When the first offense occurs, the offending participant will be denied participation in the next activity or will have a choice of five hours of school service to be served prior to the next event. (A list of acceptable school service projects will be presented by the AD/Principal as previously established by sponsors.)

Consequences for a first major offense violation for athletics is proposed as follows:

When the first offense occurs, suspensions will include 20 percent of regular season CHSAA approved contests beginning with the next contest.

This equates to two contests for football, track, golf and swimming; four contests for cheerleading, volleyball, softball, basketball and baseball; and six points for wrestling.

When a second major offense occurs, the participant/athlete will be removed from that activity for the remainder of the semester, and the athlete will be removed from that sport and will not

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receive a letter award. The athlete will be ineligible for any post season honors. In addition, the participant/athlete will sit out of one-third of the contests/events for the next sport/activity.

When the third major offense occurs, the participant/athlete will not be allowed to participate on any activity/athletic team for the remainder of the school year.

Consequences will be served concurrently when a participant is involved in multiple activities.

Curfew timelines in the proposed changes will be updated to reflect correct city ordinance. Participants/athletes are expected to be home by 11 p.m. during the week and 12 a.m. on Friday and Saturday nights.

Board members heard further explanation on “involvement” at an activity where alcoholic beverages or drugs are used/consumed by minors. This word change replaces attendance or participation.

For instance, if a student responds to a friend as a designated driver, the violations committee would say the driver was not involved, he/she was just doing a good deed.

However, if they responded to a friend needing a ride, but then chose to hang around the party, they would be involved and would be subject to consequences.

Policy study committee member Arlan Scholl said the intent of the policy is to try to help students make the right decision, not to punish them.

He referred to the philosophy of the activity/athletic programs, which is cited in the handbook, as well.

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The philosophy is to build character in students by teaching them good sportsmanship, teamwork, a positive self concept, good self control, a strong work ethic, pride in a job well done and a sense of fairness.