



## Oregon School Activities Association

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July 22, 2020

To: Superintendents, Principals, and Athletic Directors

From: Peter Weber, Executive Director

Subject: OSAA July 22 Update

The OSAA Executive Board met in a closed work session July 20-22 to discuss the latest updates on the Coronavirus pandemic as it relates to OSAA member schools and the upcoming school year. The Board had lengthy discussions about several topics related to school reopening and school sports and activities.

The OSAA Executive Board remains committed to providing school sports and activities opportunities for students this Fall provided it's safe to do so and within parameters set by the Governor's Office, Oregon Health Authority (OHA) and the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). The OSAA, with its 290+ members, is bound to work within these parameters.

During the past few weeks and months we've received countless emails advocating for the safe return of school sports and activities. The OSAA Executive Board and staff share the passion and desire expressed by this communication and have been advocating with the Governor's Office accordingly. Just as schools will not look the same in the Fall of 2020, it's clear that school sports and activities will not either. It's important to remember that any participation that can be done safely is a positive step forward for the physical health and mental well-being of students and their communities.

The OSAA Executive Board will meet again the week of August 3 as they and the staff anticipate additional information regarding reopening plans by schools and further school sports and activity guidance from the state.

At its work sessions, the OSAA Executive Board discussed the following topics and made decisions in accordance with current guidance and directives from the Governor's Office, OHA and ODE. Per Governor Brown's press conference, new guidance regarding face coverings, health metrics and school reopenings is coming soon. That guidance will impact ongoing OSAA decisions for school sports and activities during this fluid situation.

### **Fall Sports First Contest Date**

With the uncertainty of school reopening plans in many parts of the state and the timeframe related to those decisions, the OSAA Executive Board has decided to delay the first contest date for Cross Country, Volleyball and Soccer until Wednesday, September 23 (previously August 27). The original first Fall practice date of August 17 remains in place at this time. New guidance from the state requiring face coverings even when exercising indoors will require further consideration regarding guidance for indoor activities.

These dates allow for local school control regarding Fall practice schedules while enabling them to focus on their primary objective of reopening to students. Decisions schools are making regarding their instructional models – on-site, hybrid or distance learning – are still being discussed locally. The dates referenced above, and an individual school's ability to participate, may be impacted by their instructional model, along with any new health metrics set forth by the Governor's Office and OHA. Additional guidance for Fall contest protocols, including multi-team events, spectator policies, and regional scheduling considerations, will be forthcoming. The OSAA Executive Board understands that if Fall end dates are not extended then contest limitations, playoff structures, and championship events will need to be altered.

Football is considered a full contact activity per the Governor's and OHA guidelines and is currently prohibited. No

definitive date has been established by the state for a review of this prohibition. Based on strategies provided by the OSAA Football Contingency Group it is necessary that any Football restrictions be lifted by September 28 in order to have a modified regular season this Fall that would include some type of restructured postseason.

If Fall activities aren't able to be held in the Fall, the OSAA Executive Board is committed to working with its contingency groups to exhaust all options for these activities including shifting, condensing, or stacking seasons, like our neighbors in Washington and California, with the fundamental objective of providing participation opportunities for students. These changes may ultimately force schools into choosing which programs they will offer and students into choosing between activities, but the Board believes that a potentially difficult choice is better than no choice.

### **Cheerleading / Dance & Drill / Music / Speech & Debate**

Cheerleading and Dance/Drill are considered full contact activities per the Governor's and OHA guidelines and are currently prohibited. No definitive date has been established by the state for a review of this prohibition. The OSAA Staff is seeking clarification from the state as to how possible modifications to these activities could allow them to take place. The OSAA Staff and activities contingency groups are also working to develop best practices for rehearsals and considerations for competitive seasons that would include modifications to choreography, stunting/lifting, etc. Music and Speech & Debate Contingency Groups will begin meeting in late July/early August focusing on competition elements and considerations for the coming year. Band, Orchestra and Choir resources, including guidance from the NFHS for ways to return to in-person instruction safely, can be found on the OSAA COVID-19 page.

### **OSAA Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) Recommendations**

The OSAA Executive Board adopted two recommendations from the OSAA SMAC. Both recommendations surround student safety and the deconditioning of students during the pandemic. The first change prohibits multiple practice sessions on the same day for the 2020-21 school year. No single practice session shall be longer than three hours, including warm-up and cool down. On days with a single practice session, students are limited to a maximum of one hour of weight training either before or after practice but not both.

The second change mandates a minimum of nine practice days for any student participating in a Fall sport or activity. This unifies Fall sports and activities and provides students time to acclimatize before participation versus another school. As Winter and Spring seasons approach, the Board will consult with the SMAC to determine if this same mandate is necessary.

### **Academic Eligibility**

The OSAA staff shared language from ODE about student academic eligibility in relation to the Spring 2020 transcribed grading period. In alignment with ODE's Safeguarding Student Opportunity Clause, the OSAA Executive Board is amending the academic waiver process for the 2020-21 school year. Schools will be able to use transcribed grades from the grading period prior to the COVID-19 showdown to determine eligibility for students that are academically ineligible based on incompletes from the final grading period of 2019-20. These students will not be denied access to school sports and activities provided that the student was eligible entering the final grading period of 2019-20, the school has a Credit-Earning Assurance Plan in place for that student and the student maintains eligibility in the current grading period based on progress reports.

The OSAA Executive Board is aware that school districts are considering a variety of approaches to course schedules for the coming year. Current OSAA academic policies cover many of these approaches but may not cover every potential scenario. The Board has instructed staff to be flexible in working with schools to determine full-time enrollment for the purpose of participation in the 2020-21 school year.

The OSAA Staff has received several inquiries about students wanting to take a year off school and then returning in the Fall of 2021. The OSAA Executive Board continues to support current OSAA policy allowing students eight consecutive semesters to participate with no additional eligibility being granted.

For the latest OSAA information regarding the Coronavirus pandemic, please visit: <http://www.osaa.org/coronavirus>.

Thank you for all your efforts on behalf of the students and families in our state. Stay safe and be well.