

160-5-1-19 GRADES 6-8: COMPETITIVE INTERSCHOLASTIC ACTIVITIES.

(1) **PURPOSE.** The state board supports the offering of competitive interscholastic activities subject to reasonable rules and regulations that prevent any participation from interfering with the academic achievement of students.

(2) **DEFINITIONS.**

(a) **Competitive interscholastic activities** - any function held under the auspices or sponsorship of a school that involves its students in competition between individuals or groups representing two or more schools. Cheerleading, bands, and chorus are included in this definition if the members compete in scheduled activities with students representing a different school.

(b) **School day** - the period between the time students are required to report and the time of dismissal as specified by the local board of education.

(3) **REQUIREMENTS.**

(a) Each local board of education shall adopt a policy regulating competitive interscholastic activities for grades 6-12.

(b) The school principal shall regulate competitive interscholastic activities in his or her school and shall ensure that all staff members adhere to requirements.

(c) Each school principal shall maintain documentation and upon request provide evidence that the following requirements are met.

1. Student Eligibility.

(i) For determining student eligibility, the grading period shall be either a quarter or a semester as specified by local board of education policy. The same period shall also be the minimum length of the ineligibility period.

(ii) Students participating in competitive interscholastic activities shall pass a minimum of five subjects carrying credit toward grade promotion in the local board-designated grading period immediately preceding participation.

(I) Students initially enrolling in the first quarter or semester of the sixth grade are exempt from this requirement.

(II) Exploratory subjects taken during the same quarter or semester are averaged to count as one subject for eligibility purposes.

(iii) Students participating in competitive interscholastic activities shall be enrolled full time in a public school and shall take a minimum of five subjects carrying credit toward grade promotion during the local board-designated grading period of participation.

(iv) Student eligibility shall be determined on the first school day of a quarter or semester.

(I) A student is eligible to practice/condition for first quarter/semester activities if he or she has passed a minimum of five subjects carrying credit toward grade promotion during the preceding third quarter or second semester.

I. A maximum of two subjects taken in summer school and carrying credit toward grade promotion may be counted for eligibility purposes for participation in first quarter/semester activities.

(II) If a student receives an incomplete for a subject that will be used to establish eligibility, he/she may complete make-up work that will change the incomplete to a grade provided this opportunity is available to all students.

I. To participate in first quarter/semester competitive activities, the student shall complete all make-up work within 14 calendar days from the end of the previous third quarter or second semester.

II. To participate during the second quarter, third quarter, or second semester, the student shall complete all make-up work within 14 calendar days from the first day of the respective quarter/semester.

III. A student is ineligible until make-up work is completed and the required passing grade(s) is/are recorded in the student's permanent record.

(v) Independent study course credit taken in summer school may not be used to gain eligibility.

(vi) Summer school credits earned in nonaccredited home study programs or nonaccredited private schools may not be used to gain eligibility. For summer school credits to be accepted for eligibility purposes from either private schools or home study programs, the credits must have been earned in programs approved by an accrediting agency recognized by the State Board of Education in accordance with Rule 160-5-1-.15 Acceptance of Transfer Credit and/or Grades.

2. Physical Examinations. All students who participate in competitive interscholastic athletics and cheerleading shall have an annual physical examination prior to participation in any tryout, practice or conditioning, whichever comes first. The physical examination form shall indicate approval for participation and be signed by a doctor of medicine or a doctor of osteopathy. The physical examination form shall also include the date that the exam was performed (month, day, year), the student's name and the physician's signature.

3. Time Restrictions.

(i) Competitive interscholastic activities and all individual and group practice for such activities shall be conducted outside the school day.

(ii) Competitive interscholastic activities and group and individual practice on a day preceding a school day may not begin prior to the end of the school day and must end no later than four hours after the close of the home team's school day.

(iii) Only one day or night each week preceding a school day may be used to schedule the same competitive interscholastic activity; tournaments are excluded from this restriction.

(iv) The number of games scheduled shall not exceed 60 percent of the number of regularly-scheduled games played by the high school varsity in any given sport. One tournament, not to exceed four games, may be played in addition to the regular season games.

4. Seasonal Practice.

(i) Spring football practice shall be scheduled so that it does not interfere with other regular season sports, academics, or examinations.

(I) If individual players are participating in scheduled league or association playoffs for one sport, these players shall be excused from spring football practice for the duration of the playoffs.

(ii) Neither school personnel, sponsors nor coaches shall suggest, require, or otherwise attempt to influence students to participate in, practice and/or condition for a competitive interscholastic activity during the school day.

5. Special Provisions.

(i) Special education students shall meet the same eligibility requirements as regular students, except that the courses passed must be according to the student's IEP. Special Olympics or other athletic programs designed exclusively for students with disabilities are exempt.

(ii) Students who have not attained ninth grade status but are participating in high school competitive interscholastic activities shall abide by the appropriate grades 6-8 requirements. The principal of grades 6-8 shall be responsible for the compliance of this requirement.

(iii) Ineligible students are prohibited from practicing or dressing out for competitive interscholastic events.

(iv) The provisions of this rule do not apply to participation in vocational clubs, academic bowls, geography bees, spelling bees, science fairs, math bowls, or specific subject area fairs. (v) Local boards of education may allow schools within its jurisdiction to join leagues or appropriate associations for the purpose of formulating and enforcing uniform rules of eligibility and play. Nothing in this rule shall be deemed to authorize the use of state or local tax dollars for membership in these organizations.

(d) Retention of students for athletic purposes is prohibited.

1. If a school chooses to retain a student in grade 6, 7, or 8 who has passing grades, the school shall document the educational reasons for the retention. Written documentation shall be maintained in the student's permanent record and shall include the following information.

(i) A parent/guardian written request outlining the reasons for requesting the retention and/or a school-initiated written request with accompanying written approval of the request by the parent/guardian.

(ii) Statements from two professional sources from outside the school justifying the retention for educational reasons.

(iii) Written approval of the retention request and justification of the retention for educational reasons by the principal, the superintendent and by two teachers (other than athletic coach) who have taught the student.

(4) WAIVERS/VARIANCES.

(a) Requests for waiver or variance of provisions in this rule may be made by a student or a student's parent or guardian, by school or school system personnel, or by a local board of education.

(b) Such requests shall include the following information.

1. The requirement from which a variance or waiver is requested

2. The type of action requested

3. The specific facts of substantial hardship which would justify a variance or waiver for the petitioner, including the alternative standards which the person seeking the variance or waiver agrees to meet and a showing that such alternative standards will afford adequate protection for the public health, safety, and welfare

4. The reason why the variance or waiver requested would serve the purpose of the rule on competitive activities

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5. The activity involved

6. Evidence that supports the request, including statements of students and/or parents, school personnel, and doctors (if medical condition is involved); student grade reports; official student transcripts; and any other pertinent information.

(c) The State Board of Education authorizes the state school superintendent to approve or deny requests for waivers/variances of this rule when requirements pose an undue hardship upon the student or the school.

Authority O.C.G.A. § 20-2-240.

Adopted: November 13, 1997

Effective: December 29, 1997