

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

February 2026

West Virginia Secondary School Activities Commission

2875 Staunton Turnpike, Parkersburg, WV 26104

Website: www.wvssac.org

UPCOMING INFORMATION

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

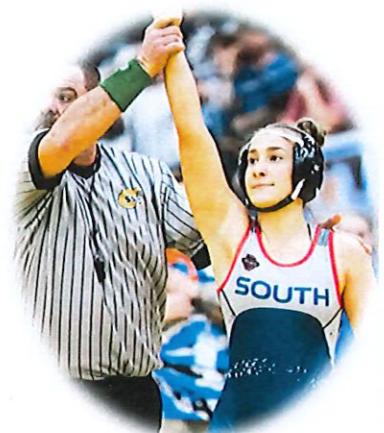
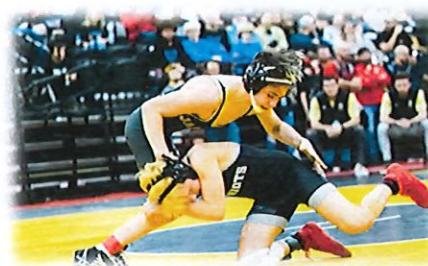
The Board of Directors will meet February 18 at the WVSSAC office in Parkersburg. All Petition Material/Forms for Appeal Process due to the WVSSAC by February 6, 2026 4:00pm

SWIMMING

Swim Regional Tournament February 7
Swim State Tournament February 19-20

WRESTLING

Regional Wrestling Seed Deadline Feb. 16
State Wrestling Ticket Order Due By: Feb. 13
Regional Wrestling Tournament Feb. 20-21
State Wrestling Tournament March 5-7



SEASON ENDS

Middle School Girls Basketball February 21
Middle School Wrestling February 21
Middle School Boys Basketball February 28
Middle School Cheer February 28

BASKETBALL

Girls' Regional Tourn. Begins: February 24-March 5
Boys' Regional Tourn. Begins: March 3-12

Girls' Regional Finals :

AAAA/A March 4
AA March 5
AAA March 3

Boys' Regional Finals:

AAAA/A March 11
AA March 12
AAA March 10

Girls' HS State Basketball Tourn March 10-14
Boys' HS State Basketball Tourn March 17-21

SEASON BEGINS

High School and Middle School Spring Sports begin March 2

Please take the time to read the attached Op-ed. Co-authored by:
NFHS CEO, Karissa Niehoff and WVSSAC Executive Director, Wayne
Ryan



GROWING IS THE PURPOSE: KEEPING EDUCATION FIRST IN HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS



Dr. Karrisa Niehoff
NFHS CEO



Wayne Ryan, CAA
WVSSAC Executive Director



High school sports is experiencing record participation. It is also experiencing unprecedented pressure. Across the country, young athletes are training earlier, competing year-round and navigating expectations shaped by a rapidly expanding youth sports economy. For many families, athletics now feel like increasingly high stakes.

High school sports operate differently — by design. They exist within schools, alongside classrooms, guided by the same educational mission. Participation is structured to support academic success and to teach intangibles like discipline, teamwork, resilience and responsibility. Rules around eligibility, seasons and competition are not barriers to ambition; they are safeguards for students.

As expectations around winning and advancement continue to rise, we at the WVSSAC believe it is worth reaffirming the role that high school athletics play in education — and why that purpose matters.

Every high school athlete is a student first, and we see high school sports as a vital extension of the classroom. In "the last class of the day," student-athletes develop character and integrity and learn life lessons they will carry with them long after their playing days are over.

Today's high school student-athletes will be tomorrow's leaders. So, while the goal of playing high school sports is to win, the true purpose is much greater — for students to learn and grow as people.

How? By keeping high school sports educational, competitively balanced and accessible for all students. Why? To ensure high school sports develop the whole person, not just the athlete.

Last summer, The New York Times published an article stating youth sports is now a \$40 billion industry. Private lessons, club sports, travel teams and elite competitions are costly and wildly popular.

For many student-athletes, their sports experience is focused on becoming an elite athlete and landing a college scholarship.

But according to the NCAA, of the 8.2 million high school student-athletes in the U.S. (an all-time record), only 7% go on to play in college, and only 2% earn any type of scholarship.

Further, data from College Board's "Trends in College Pricing and Student Aid 2025" report shows that the total published cost of attendance (tuition, fees, room and board) at four-year colleges now averages roughly \$31,000 per year in-state and more than \$50,000 per year out-of-state—underscoring why families feel intense pressure to secure athletic scholarships.

That's why the purpose of high school sports must be so much more than winning, earning trophies or advancing to the next level.

Only a select few go on to play in college and even fewer get scholarships. But nearly all student-athletes benefit from participating in high school sports. They experience personal growth. They learn leadership skills. They build community and more. When athletics are education-based, students' long-term development and well-being remain the top priority above all else.

With the guiding principle of students first, the NFHS and state high school associations like the WVSSAC are committed to preserving the integrity, opportunity and educational alignment of high school sports for all student-athletes.

The purpose of high school sports — helping students learn and grow as people — is what we are here to protect and preserve for generations to come. And it is our honor to do so.