



CPS Athletics Frequently Asked Questions and Follow Up to Town Hall

Question: *Why has CPS determined not to allow its athletic teams to compete in inter-scholastic competition at this time?*

The health and safety of our students, student-athletes, and staff is the number one priority of the District's Athletic Department and administration. Earlier this summer, the Athletics Department started working toward a phased restart of athletics – starting with virtual team meetings, and advancing to socially distanced training and conditioning, and eventually starting full contact practices. When the Board of Education determined to start the school year with full remote learning, the decision also was made to pause our phased-in restart of high school athletics. As of now, the District's fall sports teams will not compete in interscholastic competition or school-to-school travel.

In the view of the administration and the Board of Education, the District will likely not take the next steps to restarting athletics until schools start meeting in-person again.

Question: *Why is there a difference between junior high and high school athletics?*

Answer: In addition to pausing the restart of high school athletics, the District has determined not to start athletics at the junior high and elementary level. While a few junior high teams had already started try-outs and practices, the majority of junior high and elementary teams across the District had not yet started. Given the large number of junior high and elementary teams that had not yet had tryouts and practices, we felt it best not to start elementary and junior high athletics at this time. And to be equitable across the District, we are temporarily stopping practices and competitions for those junior high teams that already started training.

As an athletic department, we will continue to collaborate with high school/junior high athletic directors, school principals and other departments when making decisions. These decisions have been made with health and safety in mind and limiting the number of students coming in contact with each other. A significant percentage of competition for Jr. High was scheduled prior to September 28. However, we plan to reevaluate junior high athletics for the winter and spring seasons, while continuing to be thoughtful and innovative on ways to keep K-8 students engaged.

Question: *Hamilton County was just downgraded from Red to Orange. If we are downgraded to Yellow, will your approach change?*

Answer: We are looking at multiple measures when we consider safety decisions. These include positivity rate, reduction in confirmed cases, the length of time to get test results back, and the State of Ohio alert system.

Question: *How many students have been infected with COVID-19 during skills training sessions?*

Answer: 9 student athletes and 2 adults tested positive for COVID-19 with no spread traced back to our skills training sessions. We had 1,517 student athletes and 178 coaches participate in skills training sessions.

Question: *I am curious about the sports that the state determined were non-contact. If these sports are considered low risk, why are these athletes not allowed to participate in games/meets/matches?*

Answer: At this time, health and safety is the top priority and we are taking every precaution necessary to limit exposure of ALL student-athletes and coaches during athletic practices and competition. Competition between schools increases the number of students and adults our young people are potentially exposed to, and for this reason the decision covers all sports. For the time being, all high school students are still permitted to participate in skills training at their schools in compliance with Return to Play guidelines and coaches and athletic directors are encouraged to be innovative and creative with district support.

Our plan is to continue to monitor current health conditions and continue evaluating all options and scenarios for returning to play and interscholastic competition. While a final decision for high school athletics has not yet been determined for interscholastic competition, we have been working on different options to give our students an opportunity to compete.

Low/non-contact fall sports include: girls tennis, volleyball, cross country, golf.

Contact fall sports include: football, soccer, field hockey.

Question: *Will CPS be MORE restrictive than OHSAA in regards to return to play? I know the kids are ready to play and also rely heavily on the interactions with peers.*

Answer: CPS Athletics understands that this is a difficult time for our families, student-athletes, coaches and athletic directors. We also understand the importance of athletics and what that means for both physical and mental health of CPS students. We will continue to collaborate with athletic directors and coaches to think innovatively on how we can continue to engage our students through athletics. We will adapt to each situation that is presented and will always put our students' health and safety as the top priority.

With that being said, it is also important to note that the District Athletics office will continue to work with the local health department and OHSAA and will share guidance and procedures for Return to Play updates/adjustments; however, it is within a school's right to make that policy stricter, should their scenario require them to do so. Schools do not have the ability to lift/nullify any protocol set forth by the district. You can reference the Return to Play three-phase plan by contacting your school athletic director.

Question: *What is the direct correlation between distance-learning and not having competitive matches/games? If other school districts that our schools compete (e.g. ECC, MVC) do not modify schedules, how will our fall programs be able to compete in a potentially deferred schedule?*

Answer: Superintendent, Laura Mitchell, the Board of Education and additional district leadership will continue to monitor health conditions in Hamilton County with guidance from the Governor's Office, local Health Departments and other health experts. The current plan is to continue evaluating the district learning model and what is best for our students and staff by September 14 for what will happen after September 28.

While a final decision for high school athletics has not yet been determined for interscholastic competition, we have been working on different options to give our students an opportunity to compete. For the time being, all high school students are still permitted to participate in skills training at their schools in compliance with Return to Play guidelines and coaches and athletic directors are encouraged to be innovative and creative with district support.

Question: *Will CPS permit interscholastic competition if the state approves it for contact sports?*

Answer: Our plan is to continue operating under district guidance for Return to Play and observe the mandate for a pause in athletics until September 28, unless stated otherwise by CPS district leaders.

Question: *Will COVID-19 testing be required for all student athletes?*

Answer: No, not at this time, unless a student shows signs of any COVID-19 symptoms at a skills training session/practice. At that time, student athletes will be required to receive clearance from a physician before returning.

Our policy currently requires all athletics staff to turn COVID-19 testing receipt/results over to district Human Resources no later than September 4. Any athletics programs that are still participating in practice/skills sessions will be required to continue student-athlete temperature checks, in addition to mandatory COVID-19 symptom questionnaire completion on a daily basis.

Additional information on the potential testing of student-athletes could be subject to change at any time.

Question: *What changes can we expect regarding rules for participation with club sports since school seasons are being delayed? Right now kids cannot play club or workout with club coaches while playing school-sponsored sports.*

Answer: Jr High student-athletes can participate in club sports as CPS Jr High schools are not sanctioned through the Ohio High School Athletic Association, therefore this particular regulation is not applicable towards our 7/8 grade students.

High school students:

A student does not become a member of a school team until the student actually participates in a school contest (e.g. scrimmage, foundation game, regular season contest, etc.). Thus, a student may participate as much as they would like “non-interscholastically” because the student has not yet joined the school team. However, every sport has a non-interscholastic date. So if a student who has not yet competed in a contest for the school team participates on or after the non-interscholastic date for that respective sport – while realizing the student may still join the school team “late” – the student who has participated on the non-interscholastic team on or after the non-interscholastic date is not permitted to participate in the OHSAA postseason in that sport . . . thus, they can only participate for the remainder of the regular season. Said another way, the non-interscholastic date for each sport indicates that students can continue to participate in non-school sports, but they eventually have to join the team and stop participating on that date. The non-interscholastic dates for 2020 fall sports are:

August 24 – Football

September 8 – Girls Tennis

September 7 – Field Hockey, Soccer and

September 28 – Cross Country and Golf and Volleyball

Additionally, it is not when “practice” starts that requires a student to stop participating with the non-school team, but rather when the student participates in a school contest. Some students can still practice and participate non-interscholastically because they have not yet participated in a school contest. Be advised that participating non-interscholastically AFTER the student has competed for the school team can create an eligibility issue.

Question: *With the deferred in-person learning, the sports teams are already an 'isolated' group. What is the reasoning for restricting competition if the athletes are not interacting in an in-person scenario at the school?*

Answer: The risk is greater if the decision is made to expose CPS students to students from a community with potentially different health and safety procedures and community transmission rates. We are still considering different options to give our students an opportunity to compete. For the time being, all high school students are still permitted to participate in skills training at their schools in compliance with Return to Play guidelines and coaches and athletic directors are encouraged to be innovative and creative with district support.

Question: *If fall sports end up being canceled will the current fall teams get to compete in the spring?*

Answer: Nothing has been determined at this point in time. We hope to be able to give students an opportunity to compete and will continue to work with the OHSAA and district leaders to determine future options for interscholastic competition.

Question: *What about the students that are upperclassmen and are trying to play in college. How can you provide them with opportunities to showcase their talents and make their case for scholarships?*

Answer: In addition to exploring new routes towards progressing to some kind of interscholastic competition at some point, different concepts like sport combines, inter-squad scrimmages and more have been discussed with athletic departments. Our plan is to expand on these ideas, while supporting the schools in gathering the resources to film, promote, etc. while empowering athletic directors to continue to be innovative and creative in the process.

Question: *If you try out and made the team will you have to try out again to play again?*

Answer: Decisions about final team rosters will be made by each school.

Question: *Since the full season and activities have been curtailed, will pay to play fees be prorated?*

Answer: Pay to play fees related to a season that doesn't occur would be refunded or credited accordingly.

Question: *What are other large districts around the state doing in regards to Athletics?*

Answer: Akron, Columbus, Dayton and Toledo have suspended their fall season with no practices or activities to be assessed at a later date with the potential of resuming. Cleveland Public Schools has canceled their fall season.

Question: *Where can we find more information about this fall and future seasons?*

Answer: As updates are made we will send memos to our Athletic Directors and coaches to share with families and will post information on our website at <https://www.cps-k12.org/schools/athletics>.