



## Online or Virtual Learning and MHSAA Athletic Eligibility

*As several schools are considering an increase or shift to online learning due to the Pandemic the following is offered regarding eligibility under three MHSAA Handbook Regulations (Enrollment, Current Academic Credit Record, and the Transfer Rule). Classification Procedures are also referenced on Page Two regarding non-traditional or alternative programs where students are not “enrolled” in the base school.*

### **Enrollment (Regulation 1, Section 1 (A) 3, pg. 28)**

3. Unless a specific exemption is stated in this section or Section 8, a student must be enrolled in and receiving active credit (courses awaiting grades for credit) in at least 66 percent of full credit load potential for a full-time student (as explained in Interpretation 46) in the school for which he or she participates.

### **Current Academic Credit Record Regulation I, Section 7 Int. 47 b. and 48 D note 2 Pg. 38**

47. b. **Long distance learning and online courses** may be counted toward athletic eligibility in the school of actual enrollment provided the school to be represented is granting current credit toward graduation or a certificate of completion in measured units over a pre-determined period of time similar to traditional trimester or semester terms. Arrangements for current eligibility reports corresponding to the reports of the school of participation must be in accordance with the provisions of this Section.

### **Non-Traditional School /Program Transfer Students Int. 48.d Note 2:**

A student who enrolls from a non-traditional school or program (administered by that student's base/original school or consortium as defined) into the base/original school of that student is not considered to be transferring between schools, insofar as the transfer regulation is concerned, regardless of whether the base school counts nontraditional students on its Enrollment Declaration Form.

### **Transfer Regulation I, Section 9 (B-1) Pg. 42**

SECTION 9 (B-1)— Sport-Specific Transfer Regulation: “A student who does not qualify for one of the Exceptions under Section 9(A) and has transferred (changed enrollment) from a high school in Michigan or elsewhere including an online, home school or nontraditional school at which he/she has participated in an MHSAA tournament sport on any level (9th grade, JV or varsity) of that school's team in an interscholastic scrimmage or contest during the previous season for a sport, is not eligible for the next season (including MHSAA tournament) in that sport at any MHSAA member high school; and if the transfer occurs during a season, that student is also not eligible in that sport at any level for the remainder of that season (including MHSAA tournament). This student is eligible for all other sports.”

**Enrollment Regulation Summary:** A school may allow for online or virtual courses to count for credit towards athletic eligibility provided the courses are for active credit, courses awaiting grades for credit on the transcript of the school the student plays for towards a diploma from that school. A separate virtual school diploma does not suffice. In accord with Int. 47 b above, online courses must be in measured units like traditional semesters or trimesters and regular academic eligibility checks can occur for online students as they are for other students in the school. An outside entity may provide the online courses to the school so long as the courses are for credit as above at the school they play for and follow Int. 47 b.

Also note that the Sport Specific Transfer Regulation applies to all students **including those who seek an online option**. A transfer student who starts the 9<sup>th</sup> grade at another school and does not meet a stated exception (residential change) is not eligible in a sport played in the previous school year.

**Continued:**

**Note:** Due to the Pandemic, in May 2020, the MHSAA Representative Council stated that for sports played in the fall of 2020-21 that the MHSAA minimum previous semester record regulation is waived and for each school to determine for its students. Handbook changes from May 2020 are posted at the link below:  
<https://www.mhsaa.com/Portals/0/Documents/AD%20Forms/hbpandemic.pdf>

**Generally, there are two paths to eligibility.** Enrollment as explained above or through **Alternative Education or Non-Traditional Programs.** Last February, schools submitted their Enrollment Declaration Form for the current school year which included whether or not the school allowed Non-traditional or alternative education students to participate in athletics. If the school does permit this, they name the program(s) and add to their enrollment **all** the students who reside in that school's district or attendance area- not just those who play sports.

If a school listed an online school as non-traditional on their Enrollment Declaration Form last February and are allowing students already enrolled in its school and counted in its basic enrollment to take the online option, **there is no other action necessary.** For the most part, these students were already counted and their eligibility continues so long as the online program meets the points of Int. 47b (measured terms, regular grade checks).

**Alternative Education Summary:** If a school did not list an online program or school last February as non-traditional and they are not receiving credit or a diploma as described under the enrollment rule above, there is an MHSAA Handbook provision that allows a school to amend its form under three conditions with a letter to the MHSAA Executive Director (see Classification Procedures below Item 8 b.)

The Transfer Regulation continues to apply to students not enrolled in your school who may want to enroll in the new online program. Students who have been attending an alternative school of your district and now enroll in their base school of residence are NOT considered transfer students and eligible under the transfer rule. (See Int. 48 d. Note 2 from page 1).

**The Classification Procedures from page 105, item 8 b. states:**

- b. Once MHSAA classifications or tournament divisions are publicized the previous March or April, a school may add a non-traditional school or program and adjust its count upward when three conditions exist:
- (1) The Board of Education or Governing Body of a non-public school officially adds **a newly created** non-traditional program that did not exist at the time the Enrollment Declaration Form was submitted;
  - (2) Students of grades 10, 11 and 12 in the new program were counted in the basic enrollment count submitted on the Form; and
  - (3) The **program addition does not cause a change in division/classification** that would alter that school's published tournament division unless the change is prior to when MHSAA tournament assignments are made for the sport(s) involved or Oct. 15, whichever occurs first.

This may be granted on a case by case basis by the Executive Director upon the written request of a member school.

Schools may contact the MHSAA Staff for further information.

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