HF2591
Frequently Asked Questions
Preliminary Guidance – Updated 7-27-2026
Updated information, additions highlighted in yellow.

Eighth Grade Students Playing High School Sports

Q1: May eighth grade students participate in interscholastic athletic contests or competitions?
A1: *Yes. As per **281-36.1(280)**, if the board of directors of a school district, the authorities in charge of nonpublic school, or the governing board of a charter school adopt a local policy to allow it.*

Q2: In what sports may eighth graders participate in high school interscholastic athletic contests or competitions?
A2: *This is a local decision.*

Q3: At what level (freshman, sophomore, JV, varsity) may eighth grade students participate in interscholastic high school athletic contests or competitions?
A3: *This is a local decision.*

Q4: May eighth grade students participate in both high school interscholastic athletic contests and competitions, and also participate in the same sport for an eighth-grade team? **A4:** *No. As per **281-36.1(280)**, "An eighth-grade student who participates pursuant to this policy shall not also participate in the same sports season for an eighth-grade team."*

Even if a junior high season is different from the high school season, the eighth-grade student may only participate on the junior high team or the high school team, not both

Once the student competes as part of a junior high team, he/she may not compete on the high school team in that sport at any time. Once the student competes as part of the high school team, he/she may not compete on the junior high team at any time.

This applies to competing on a junior high team and a high school team. It does not prohibit a student from competing on different levels of a high school program (e.g. freshman, JV, varsity).

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Q5: Must eighth grade students meet academic requirements in order to participate in high school interscholastic athletic contests or competitions?
A5: *No. This is similar to current eighth-grade student participation in summer baseball and softball. There are no academic requirements for those eight grade students.*

Q6: May a school district, non-public school, or charter school implement academic requirements as a condition for eighth grade students to participate in high school interscholastic athletic contests or competitions?

A6: *Yes. This is a local decision.*

Q7: May a school district, non-public school, or charter school limit the number of eighth grade students permitted to participate in high school interscholastic athletic contests or competitions?

A7: *Yes. This is a local decision.*

Q8: How many semesters of eligibility does a student have if he/she participates in high school interscholastic athletic contests or competitions as an eighth-grade student? **A8:** *As per **36.8(2)"e,"** "A student who meets all other qualifications may be eligible to participate in interscholastic athletics for a maximum of eight consecutive semesters upon entering ninth grade for the first time, including students who participated during eighth grade."*

If an eighth-grade student participates in high school athletic contests or competitions, he/she still has eight semesters of eligibility once he/she enters ninth grade.

Q9: Is an eighth-grade student required to present a pre-participation physical form in order to participate in high school interscholastic athletic contests or competitions? **A9:** *Yes. And, as per **36.7(1)**, the determination by the person conducting the examination that the student may safely engage in athletic competition will consider, "the nature of the athletic competition and the student's health and development."*

The IHSAA and IGHSAU Boards approved an Eighth Grade Student Participation in High School Athletics – Supplemental Provider Attestation developed by the IHSAA/IGHSAU Sports Medicine Advisory Committee to account for this new language. The form is available on both of our websites. The IHSAA/IGHSAU SMAC has shared the form with the medical community.

Q10: At what school may an eighth-grade student participate in high school interscholastic athletic contests or competitions?

A10: *An eighth-grade student may participate only at a school where the student is otherwise eligible to participate under applicable enrollment, attendance, and eligibility rules and where the local board or governing authority has adopted a policy allowing eighth-grade participation. Examples:*

Public School District

An eighth-grade student who resides in a district in which the Board of Directors adopts a policy to allow eighth graders to participate in high school interscholastic athletic contests

or competitions may participate in the high school in that district. If the district has multiple high schools, the district will determine which high school the student may participate.

Cooperative Sharing Agreement

An eighth grade student who attends a school in which the district Board Directors, the authorities in charge of nonpublic school, or the governing board of a charter school adopts a policy to allow eighth graders to participate in high school interscholastic athletic contests or competitions, and whose district is in a cooperative sharing agreement with a district, non-public school, or charter school that also adopts a policy to allow eighth graders to participate in high school interscholastic athletic contests or competitions, may participate as part of the cooperative sharing agreement.

Non-Public School or Charter School Continuation

If an eighth-grade student attends a non-public school or charter school and a high school with the same governing body has adopted a policy to allow eighth graders to participate in high school interscholastic athletic contests or competitions, the eighth grade student may participate in high school interscholastic athletic contests or competitions at that school.

District of Residence

If the high school with the same governing body as the non-public or charter school does not offer the interscholastic sport and is not in a cooperative sharing agreement with another school, the eighth-grade student may participate in his/her district of residence.

If an eighth-grade student attends a non-public school or charter school and has no high school with the same governing body, the eighth-grade student may participate in high school interscholastic athletic contests or competitions in his/her district of residence.

Q11: If an eighth-grade student who participates in high school interscholastic athletic contests or competitions enters ninth grade at a school different than the school he/she participated as an eighth-grade student, is he/she immediately eligible to participate in varsity interscholastic athletic contests or competitions?

A11: *No. The student would be ineligible to participate in varsity athletics for a period of 140 calendar days.*

Q12: May an eighth-grade student who attends a school in a state other than Iowa participate in an Iowa high school interscholastic athletic contest or competition?

A12: *No.*

Q13: May a coach of a high school program coach an eighth-grade student out of season

during the school year if the school district, non-public school, or charter school allows eighth grade students to participate in interscholastic athletic contests or competitions? **A13:** *No.*

Q14: May seventh grade students now participate in high school interscholastic baseball or softball contests or competitions following the completion of their seventh-grade year? **A14:** *No.*

Q15: Will sixth grade students now be permitted to participate in Junior High/Middle School athletics?
A15: *No.*

Q16: Will eighth grade students be counted in the Basic Educational Data Survey (BEDS) for the purposes of classification?
A16: *No.*

Q17: May a high school team (e.g. Freshmen B Team) consisting of all 8th graders compete against a junior high team consisting of all 8th graders?
A17: *No. High school teams compete against high school teams; junior high teams compete against junior high teams.*

Q18: May a school district allow eighth-grade participation in some sports but not others?
A18: *Yes. This is a local decision.*

Q19: Does HF2591 apply to other activities such as music, speech, debate, dance, cheer, esports, etc.?
A19: *No. The law and DE Rules apply only to activities sanctioned by IHSAA and IGHSAU. HF2591 specifically states, "interscholastic athletic contest or competition."*

Q20: If a district adopts a policy allowing eighth-grade participation, is a coach required to place an eighth-grade student on a high school team?
A20: *No. Adoption of a policy permits participation but does not guarantee team membership, playing time, or placement at a particular level.*

Q21: What is the first day that eighth grade students are eligible to compete in high school interscholastic contests or competitions if the district board or governing body adopts a policy to permit it?
A21: *HF2591, which allows students in grade eight to participate in any interscholastic athletic contest or competition on the same basis as students who are enrolled in grades nine through twelve, includes an effective date of* ***August 1, 2026****.*
The IHSAA and IGHSAU interpret this to mean that, if a local policy is adopted by the

board of directors of a school district, the authorities in charge of a nonpublic school, or the governing board of a charter school to allow, students in grade eight may begin to compete on the same starting date as students in grades nine through twelve. See IHSAA Key Sports Dates and IGHSAU All Sports Tournament Dates for specific dates in each sport.

Q22: Is there are will there be a model policy template for us to use as a starting point as we work to develop one with our board? Will that come from IASB?

A22: *IASB will be hosting a Legislative Policy Update Webinar on June 30, where we will discuss the recently enacted bills and their impact on board policy, including related sample policy revisions. Information on how to register can be found in The Learning Hub.*

Q23: If a student moves in as a freshman at the beginning of the school year, and they did NOT participate in high school interscholastic contests or competitions in any season as an 8th grader, are they immediately eligible for varsity?

A23: *If a student has not competed on a high school team during his/her eighth grade year, he/she is eligible to compete immediately at the varsity level in the school he/she attends at the beginning of ninth grade. If, however, the student has competed at any level in high school interscholastic contests or competitions, and attends a school other the high school under the same governing body as the school he/she competed for as an eighth grade student, he/she is ineligible for varsity competition for 140 calendar days.*

Note: Once an eighth grade student competes in high school interscholastic contests or competitions (in any sport), he/she has established their high school eligibility (in every sport).

Q24: May an eighth grade student practice with the high school team if he/she does not compete in the high school's interscholastic contests or competitions? Could that student compete at the junior high level?

A24: *Yes to both questions.*

Q25: May an eighth grade student compete in high school interscholastic contests or competitions and also participate on a non-school youth team?

A25: *This is a local decision and would be similar to a ninth, tenth, eleventh, or twelfth grade student competing with the high school team and also competing on a non-school team.*

Q26: If an eighth grade student at "Junior High School A" competes in high school interscholastic contests or competitions and then transfers to "Junior High School B," is he/she immediately eligible to compete in junior high sports?

A26: *Yes. The transfer and open enrollment rules only apply to participation in high school interscholastic athletics.*

Q27: Can an eighth grade student be retained and compete in high school interscholastic contests or competitions again as an eight grade student?
A27: *No.*

Q28: Considering some students may now have 5 years of competition, how will State records be addressed?
Q28: *This has not yet been determined. The IHSAA and IGHSAU will discuss.*

Q29: If a student repeats his/her eighth grade year, what eligibility does he or she have? **A29:** Once a student enters seventh grade, he/she has four consecutive semesters of eligibility while in grades 7 and 8. It does not matter whether the two semesters of 8th grade are spent competing in junior high sports, high school sports, a combination of both, or neither. Once 8th grade is completed, the student is finished competing as an 8th grader.

Consequently, if a student repeats 8th grade, he/she has no eligibility to participate in either junior high or high school interscholastic athletics during the repeated year. His/her next eligibility would begin when he/she enters high school as a 9th grade student. His/her 8 semesters of high school student eligibility would begin at that time.

Ineligibility Days

Q1: What is the period of ineligibility from varsity competition for a student who transfers or open enrolls to a different school?
A1: *One hundred and forty (140) calendar days.*

Q2: When does the period of ineligibility from varsity competition begin for a student who transfers or open enrolls to a different school?
A2: ***Winter/Spring/Summer Sports***
The first day the student is physically present to attend classes in the school.

Fall Sports
The Monday of the first week in which competition is permitted in the sport in which the student participates.

Q3: When calculating a student's period of varsity ineligibility for students who transfer or open enroll to another school, are summer days counted?

A3: *Only if the student was physically present to attend classes in the school* ***prior to the end of the school year.***

Q4: How will the ineligibility days of students who transferred or open enrolled to a different school prior to August 1, 2026, be counted?

A4: *School administrators should count one hundred and forty calendar days from the day the student was physically present to attend classes in the school he/she transferred or open enrolled to.*

If the student transferred or open enrolled after the end of the school year, ***and the student plays a fall sport****, the one hundred and forty days are counted, beginning with the Monday of the first week of competition in that sport.*