

Q: Is a below grade nine student eligible to practice with a high school team without having to seek a waiver from the Below Grade 9 Athletic Participation Committee?

A: In order for a below grade nine athlete to play on or with a high school team, that athlete must receive a waiver from the Below Grade 9 Athletic Participation Committee. With regard to practice, it is the responsibility of the high school principal to determine whether a below grade nine athlete may practice with a team if a waiver has not been granted by the Below Grade 9 Athletic Participation Committee.

Q: Once the Below Grade 9 student/athlete has been granted a waiver to participate on a high school team are they eligible to participate on a middle school team?

A: They become a bona fide member of that respective team and are prevented from missing a high school, practice/competition to participate on a middle level/Jr. high team. Whenever a conflict arises between the high school team practice and a middle Level/Jr. High game, approval must be granted by the principal or athletic director. It is expressly understood that no waiver will be granted to the BG9 athlete in regards to missing an interscholastic game. Any student/athlete violating this rule will lose their waiver to participate on the high school team.

Q: What constitutes a sub-varsity team in the sports of gymnastics, golf, skiing, tennis, indoor track, outdoor track, and cross country?

A: Separate schedules must be developed for the sub-varsity team and the varsity team.

Q: How will the Below Grade 9 Athletic Participation Committee handle requests by schools if they arise during the season (i.e. injury, illness, transfer, etc.)?

A: A sub-committee of three members of the Below Grade 9 Athletic Participation Committee shall handle emergencies which arise. All requests must be submitted in writing from the principal of the member school.

Q: May below grade nine athletes participate in NHIAA Tournament events?

A: Only those students who have been granted waivers for participation at the varsity level during the regular season shall be permitted to participate in an NHIAA Tournament event.

Q: If a waiver is granted for junior varsity participation, is that student eligible to be brought up to the varsity team for tournament play?

A: No. If the waiver is not granted for varsity participation that student athlete is not allowed to participate at the varsity level for tournament play. If an injury or emergency arises which would then require the student athlete's participation, a new waiver request would have to be submitted at that time.

Q: If a below grade nine student athlete is granted a waiver to participate in a sport that allows individuals to enter the State Tournament (i.e. cross country, golf, gymnastics, indoor track, outdoor track, skiing, and tennis.), is that student athlete eligible to participate in the state tournament?

A: In sports where student athletes may participate as individuals, students in grades 9-12 shall be given the first opportunity to participate in the State Tournament before any below grade nine student athletes are entered. A below grade nine student athlete cannot displace a high school student athlete.

Q: Will the high school principal have to appear before the Below Grade 9 Athletic Participation Committee to request a waiver?

A: No. The principal will not have to appear before the Below Grade 9 Athletic Participation Committee; however, if the school wishes to appeal the Committee's decision, the principal will have to appear before the Executive Director and/or Council Appeals Board.

Q: May appeals be handled in writing and/or by telephone?

A: Appeals will only be accepted in writing by the Principal of the member school to the Executive Director of the NHIAA.

Q: May another school official represent the school at an appeals hearing?

A: Yes. The principal may designate a representative to attend the appeals hearing if written documentation is provided.



NEW HAMPSHIRE INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

OFFICIAL INTERPRETATION OF BY-LAW ARTICLE XIII: BELOW GRADE 9 ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION

2025-26

NHIAA BY-LAW ARTICLE XIII: BELOW GRADE 9 ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION

Regulations with regard to Below Grade nine participation on high school sports teams are as follows:

Sect. 1: No below grade seven participation will be allowed in any NHIAA sport at any level (sub-varsity and varsity).

Sect. 2: No below grade nine participation at any level in any sport will be allowed for schools in Divisions I and II (sub-varsity and varsity).

Sect. 3: Division III schools 8th grade students who legally reside in their district may play on a sub-varsity team provided those students are needed to maintain the school's sub-varsity program and a waiver has been granted by the Below Grade Nine Athletic Participation Committee. Division III schools may use 8th grade students to participate at the varsity level, **if a waiver has been granted by the Below Grade Nine Athletic Participation Committee**, in the following sports: cross country, golf, gymnastics, indoor track, outdoor track, skiing, and tennis.

Sect. 4: Division IV schools 7th and 8th grade students who legally reside in the district may participate, provided those students are needed to maintain the school's program and a waiver has been granted by the Below Grade Nine Athletic Participation Committee.

Sect. 5: The provisions of Sect. 3 and Sect. 4 apply even when a school is playing in a higher division due to petitioning up or as a result of the number of divisions in a sport. (For example, if there are only two (2) divisions in a sport, schools normally classified as Division III or IV would still have the right to seek a waiver from the Below Grade 9 Committee for younger players to participate.)

Sect. 6: Combined enrollment of the cooperative schools *shall not* exceed the divisional alignment numbers, *set forth by Classification*, in order for Below Grade Nine participation to be *permitted*. With respect to the use of Below Grade Nine students in Unified Sports programs, the same guidelines and restrictions used for all other sports will apply to unified sports team.

Sect. 6 (continued):

Because of the unique makeup of these teams and the fact that there are students up to the age of 21 involved, in reviewing requests the Below Grade Nine Committee must look at student safety as paramount in granting waivers. Following the basic rule, Division III schools may use grade 8 players and Division IV may use grade 7 and 8 players on their team regardless of the team they are matched with and what division they play in as a team.

Sect. 7: When granted permission by the Classification Committee to petition down in a specific sport(s), a school is entitled to ask the Below Grade 9 Committee for a waiver under the provisions of Sect. 3 and Sect. 4 regardless of the school's original divisional classification. (For example, a Division III school granted permission to participate at the Division IV level in a specific sport would be entitled to request a waiver under the provisions of Sect. 4 of this By-Law in that sport(s) only)

Sect. 8: Below grade nine students who have been granted a below grade nine waiver will be expected to maintain the same academic standards set for high school students.

Sect. 9: If a school uses a below grade nine student athlete without the approved waiver, the team will forfeit all contests in which the ineligible contestant participated. In sports which team standings are not kept, the NHIAA will deny any requests for waivers in the ensuing year in that sport. If a second violation occurs, that school will be brought before the Below Grade Nine Committee with the possibility of receiving sanctions.

CRITERIA FOR GRANTING WAIVERS

1. The student athlete must be necessary for the school to field a team in that sport.
2. The student athlete cannot take the place of an athlete in grades 9 through 12.
3. The student athlete must meet all NHIAA eligibility requirements.
4. The student athlete must legally reside in the same school district as the high school.
5. In individual sports, students in grades 9 through 12 shall represent their school in competition at the State Tournament. They cannot, under any circumstances, be displaced by a Below Grade 9 student athlete in a competition.

GUIDELINES FOR MINIMUM NUMBER OF ATHLETES NECESSARY TO FIELD A TEAM

BASEBALL - 15 -Varsity; 12 - Sub-Varsity
BASKETBALL - 12 -Varsity; 10 - Sub-Varsity
BASS FISHING - 2
BOWLING - 8 - Varsity; 8 - Sub-Varsity
CROSS COUNTRY - 7
FIELD HOCKEY - 15 - Varsity; 15 - Sub-Varsity
FOOTBALL - Review each request based on merits.
GOLF - 8
GYMNASTICS - 6
ICE HOCKEY - 20
INDOOR TRACK - 15 - boys; 15 - girls
BOYS LACROSSE - 18 - Varsity; 16 - Sub-Varsity
GIRLS LACROSSE - 18 - Varsity; 16 - Sub-Varsity
OUTDOOR TRACK - 15 - boys; 15 - girls
SKIING - 10 per discipline
SOCCER - 18 - Varsity; 15 - Sub-Varsity
SOFTBALL - 15 - Varsity; 12 - Sub-Varsity
SPIRIT - 8
SWIMMING & DIVING - 1
TENNIS - 8 - Varsity; 6 - Sub-Varsity
VOLLEYBALL - 9 - Varsity; 9 - Sub-Varsity
WRESTLING - 14 - dependent upon weight classes

INTERPRETATIONS

Q: Who shall determine the size of the school's team?

A: The Below Grade 9 Athletic Participation Committee, in conjunction with the specific sports committees, shall determine a reasonable size for a school's team.

Q: When will the Below Grade 9 Athletic Participation Committee take action on waiver requests?

A: All waiver requests are due one week following the first date to practice for that sport. Upon receipt of these requests, a waiver review meeting will be scheduled as soon as possible.

Q: Does "under the direction of a Principal" mean the students must attend school in the same building as the high school principal?

A: No. If the Board of Education of an NHIAA member school also governs those students.

Q: Will 8th graders be "grandfathered" if they participated on a high school team last year?

A: No. Students will not be "grandfathered". Any participation by a below grade nine student must be granted through the waiver process after meeting the criteria required.