

7/2/26 - Sent via Parent Square to ALL incoming 8th grade families...

8th-Grade Participation in High School Sports

Dear Incoming 8th-Grade Parents/Guardians,

As parents/guardians of incoming 8th graders, I wanted to reach out regarding new legislation that may impact your child. The Governor recently signed HF2591 into legislation allowing 8th-grade students the opportunity to participate in high school interscholastic athletics starting August 1, 2026.

Currently, districts have the ability to determine if and how they are going to proceed based on this new legislation. As you might imagine, there are many moving parts as schools continue to receive updates from the Department of Education, the Iowa High School Athletic Association (IHSAA) and the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union (IGHSAU).

Our district greatly values connections to school and experiences gained by having our students participate in any and all activities provided by our schools. Therefore, we've decided to move forward and allow for this opportunity for our incoming 8th-grade students.

It is important to state that not every 8th-grade student will be ready to play high school sports and we are committed to helping students and families make the choice that is best for their student.

We will continue to offer middle school athletic opportunities for our 8th-grade students as we have in the past. Those opportunities continue to be a great choice for students who may not be ready or wish to compete with their 8th-grade peers.

For those considering playing high school sports in 8th grade, we ask that you carefully read and understand the expectations and commitment that come with playing high school sports – especially that families will be responsible for transporting students to and from practices and to the high school for competitions.

This, and other important information to consider is included in a Q&A resource for interested parents following this letter.

We hope this additional information will help you determine the best next step for your student. I would ask that you review the Frequently Asked Questions section prior to reaching out to high school activities directors with questions, as your question may be answered below.

As guidance continues to evolve, there will likely be adjustments to how we implement this new law and we will continue to provide updates as necessary.

Thank you for your continued support of your child and our district. We appreciate your patience and flexibility as we navigate this new legislation in our state. Most importantly, we are committed to helping students get involved, stay involved, and grow in their extracurricular participation in the district.

Sincerely,

Joe Maloney

Director of Activities and Athletics

HF2591 – Frequently Asked Questions

1. How do we decide if this is the right move for our child?

We recommend talking with your child to determine if this opportunity is something they would like to pursue. If yes, and you are able to meet the expectations around practices, transportation, etc., reach out to your high school assistant principal for activities and athletics. If your student is not interested in high school athletics at this time, they can simply continue to participate in 8th-grade interscholastic athletics at their middle school.

2. In what high school interscholastic sports can my 8th-grade student participate?

Dubuque Community Schools 8th-graders will have the opportunity to try out for and participate in all interscholastic athletics offered at the high school level.

3. How do I know which high school my child would attend/play sports at?

Students in 8th grade who participate in high school sports will do so at their home high school as determined by the location of their primary residence. Not sure your home high school? [Find Your School](#).

4. Could my student participate in our non-boundary high school?

Yes. Parents would need to complete the in-district transfer application and be approved prior to participating at their non-boundary high school.

Note: If a family is approved for an in-district transfer during their 8th-grade year and decides to rescind that decision at a later time, their student athlete would be subject to the eligibility rule for varsity competitions similar to what is already in place for students in grades 9-12.

5. When is the first day of practice for fall high school sports teams?

Following are the practice start dates for fall sports:

- August 3, 2026 – Girls Tennis
- August 10, 2026 – Football, Boys Golf, Boys & Girls Cross Country, Volleyball and Girls Swimming & Diving.

6. Who do we contact if we want our child to try out for a high school team?

Following are the contacts based on your student's home high school:

- Dubuque Senior High School - Brent Cook at bcook@dbqschools.org
- Hempstead High School - Eric Miller at emiller@dbqschools.org

7. If my child makes a high school team, how will my child get to practices and competitions?

- Parents will be expected to transport their child to all practices at the high school, as well as getting them to and from the high school to load the bus/van for all out-of-town competitions.

Note: Many of out-of-town competitions at the high school level require buses/vans to depart from school prior to the end of the school day.

8. Do all 8th-graders who try out automatically make the team?

No. Those 8th-graders participating in try-outs will be subject to the same criteria as other players regarding who makes an athletic team. Additionally, numbers in a specific high school program may determine how many, if any, 8th-graders would make the high school team.

9. Can my child play one sport at the middle school level and another at the high school level?

Yes. A student may participate in one sport (i.e. volleyball) at high school and a different sport in a different season (i.e. track and field) at middle school. **Students in 8th-grade will not be allowed to participate in sports at both the middle school and high school where the seasons overlap. You also may not move between middle and high school competition once a season has started.**

10. Does HF2591 also apply to high school cheer, dance, color guard, etc.?

No. The law and Department of Education rules only apply to activities sanctioned by IHSAA and IGHSAA for “interscholastic athletic contests or competitions.”

11. Who will decide if my 8th-grader makes a high school team?

The head coach for each athletic team, along with the school activities and athletics director will make the final decision on whether an 8th-grader makes a team. Additionally, the student athlete and their parents/guardians will be expected to sign a participation agreement prior to finalizing any decision to have an 8th-grader practice and compete at the high school level. This is to ensure that all parties understand the increased physical, emotional and time demands of high school interscholastic athletics versus that of middle school athletics.

12. At what level (freshman, sophomore, JV, varsity) may my 8th-grade student participate in high school interscholastic athletics?

If an 8th-grader makes a high school team, the coaching staff will determine what level they are able to compete at.