

Eighth Grade Student Participation in Linn-Mar High School Interscholastic Athletics

Pursuant to House File 2591 (2026 Iowa Legislative Session)

Effective July 1, 2026

I. Purpose and Authority

This document establishes the local framework and operational guidelines for eighth-grade students enrolled in the Linn-Mar Community School District to participate in high school interscholastic athletic contests and competitions. It is developed in accordance with Iowa Code section 280.13 and 281 Iowa Administrative Code chapter 36, as amended by House File 2591 (2026).

HF2591 permits, but does not require, school districts to allow eighth-grade students to participate in high school athletics. The decision to permit such participation, as well as the specific parameters (sports offered, roster limits, levels of play, etc.), remains a matter of local control. Linn-Mar Community School District has elected to extend this opportunity to its eighth-grade students in a manner that prioritizes program integrity, student development, and equitable access while complying fully with all state and association rules.

II. Scope of Participation

Sports Covered: Eighth-grade students may try out for and participate on high school teams in all interscholastic sports sanctioned by the Iowa High School Athletic Association (IHSAA) and Iowa Girls' High School Athletic Union (IGHSAU) that are currently offered by Linn-Mar High School. Participation in non-sanctioned activities (Cheer and Poms) is governed by the respective state associations and is addressed below.

Levels of Play: Placement at the freshman, sophomore, junior varsity, or varsity level is determined solely by the head coach and athletic administration for each sport, consistent with existing program structures and competitive needs. No new teams, coaching positions, or competitive levels will be created exclusively to accommodate eighth-grade participation.

Cheer and Poms (2026–2027): The Iowa Cheer Coaches Association (ICCA) limits high school cheer participation to grades 9–12. Therefore, eighth-grade students will not be permitted to participate in high school cheer. This will be reevaluated if the ICCA changes its policy.

The Iowa Dance Team Association (IDTA) permits participation by students in grades 8–12. However, because the 2026–2027 Poms teams have already been established, eighth-grade students will first be eligible to try out for the 2027–2028 teams.

III. Team Selection and Roster Management

Team selection and roster decisions are made by the coaching staff and athletic administration. The following principles guide these decisions:

- **Cut Sports:** For programs that conduct competitive tryouts and cuts (including but not limited to Bowling, Golf, Poms, and Cheer), eighth-grade students are subject to the identical selection criteria, timeline, and standards applied to high school students.
- **Non-Cut Sports:** For programs without formal cuts, head coaches will establish roster sizes that allow for meaningful participation opportunities, skill development, and competitive balance. Final roster decisions rest with the coaching staff.

- **Resource Neutrality:** Eighth-grade participation will not result in the addition of teams, coaches, out-of-town bus trips, or other incremental district resources beyond what is already budgeted and allocated for high school programs.
- **No Guarantees:** Making a high school team does not guarantee placement at any particular level of competition or any minimum amount of playing time. These decisions are within the sole discretion of the coaching staff.

IV. Participation Across School Levels (Middle School / High School)

Eighth-grade students may participate in both middle school (junior high) and high school athletics during the same academic year, subject to the following strict limitations required by state rule:

- **Same-Sport Prohibition:** An eighth-grade student may not participate in the same sport on both a middle school team and a high school team during the same academic year or sports season. This prohibition applies regardless of whether the middle school and high school seasons occur at different times of the year.
- **Irreversible Choice:** Once an eighth-grade student competes (i.e., participates in an interscholastic contest) as a member of a junior high team in a given sport, that student is thereafter ineligible to compete on the high school team in that same sport for the remainder of the academic year. The reverse is also true: once a student competes on a high school team in a sport, they may not subsequently compete on a junior high team in that sport.
- **Different Sports Permitted:** Participation in different sports at the middle school and high school levels is allowed (for example, middle school volleyball and high school basketball).

Important Note: *This rule applies only to competition on junior high versus high school teams. It does not prohibit an eighth-grade student from competing at multiple levels within the high school program (e.g., freshman and JV) in the same sport.*

V. Student and Family Responsibilities

- **Transportation:** Parents and guardians are solely responsible for transporting their eighth-grade student to and from all high school practices, competitions at Linn-Mar, meetings, and related activities. The district will not provide or arrange additional transportation for eighth-grade participants beyond existing high school allocations.
- **Good Conduct Policy:** All eighth-grade participants are subject to the Linn-Mar Community School District Good Conduct Policy and any additional team or program rules established by the coach and athletic department.
- **Pre-Participation Physical:** A current, valid pre-participation physical examination form is required prior to any tryout or participation. The IHSA/IGHSAU Sports Medicine Advisory Committee is developing updated guidance and forms; families should monitor official communications for any changes regarding form validity or new requirements.
- **Academic Expectations:** While HF2591 and state rules do not impose academic eligibility requirements on eighth-grade students participating at the high school level, students are expected to maintain satisfactory academic progress and meet all classroom obligations. Coaches and administrators will monitor academic standing and may counsel students whose participation appears to negatively affect school performance. **In addition, middle school students must attend school during regular school hours and will not be permitted to miss instructional time for high school practices, except for early dismissal related to a contest or event.**

VI. Eligibility, Physicals, and Compliance with State Rules

All eighth-grade participants must comply with every applicable IHSA and IGHS AU eligibility rule, transfer rule, and bylaw, except where HF2591 or implementing regulations expressly provide otherwise. Key points include:

- **Semesters of Eligibility:** An eighth-grade student who participates in high school athletics retains a full eight consecutive semesters of eligibility beginning upon first entry into ninth grade.
- **Transfer / Open Enrollment:** If an eighth-grade student participates in high school interscholastic contests and subsequently transfers or open-enrolls to a different high school, the student is ineligible for varsity competition at the new school for a period of 140 calendar days (subject to the specific start-date rules set forth in the [IGHS AU/IHSA - 8th Grade FAQ](#)).
- **Out-of-State Students:** Eighth-grade students who attend school in a state other than Iowa are not eligible to participate in Iowa high school interscholastic athletic contests.
- **Official Guidance:** The IHSA and IGHS AU have jointly issued a comprehensive Frequently Asked Questions document addressing eligibility, physical examinations, competition dates, records, and numerous other implementation details. All families, coaches, and administrators are expected to review and adhere to the most current version of that guidance, which is available on the IHSA and IGHS AU websites and linked here - [IGHS AU/IHSA - 8th Grade FAQ](#)

VII. Registration, Tryouts, and Communication (2026–2027 School Year)

All registrations for high school sports are completed online through the [Bound](#) platform. Specific procedures and timelines for eighth-grade students seeking to participate at the high school level are as follows for the 2026–2027 school year:

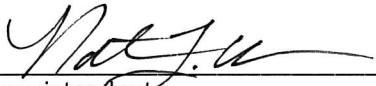
- **High School Registration (Grades 9–12):** Opens Wednesday, July 1, 2026, at 12:00 p.m.
- **Eighth-Grade Intent Form (Fall Sports):** Eighth-grade students who wish to **try out** for a high school fall sport must first complete a Google Form indicating their intent. The form opens Friday, July 3, 2026, and closes Monday, July 20, 2026. Completion of this form is an indication of interest only; it triggers follow-up communication from the Athletic Department regarding the formal Bound registration process.
- **Form Access:** The Google Form will be (a) emailed directly to all eighth-grade parent/guardian contacts on file in PowerSchool as of June 1, 2026, and (c) posted on the Linn-Mar Athletic Department website.
- **Middle School Registration:** Opens Wednesday, July 1, 2026, at 12:00 p.m.
- **Ongoing Communication:** As additional guidance is released by the Iowa Department of Education, IHSA, or IGHS AU, updates will be posted on the district athletic website and communicated via email to registered families. Families are strongly encouraged to review the official HF2591 FAQ document linked on the IHSA and IGHS AU websites and linked here - [IGHS AU/IHSA - 8th Grade FAQ](#)

VIII. Administration and Updates

This document is subject to revision as new guidance, rules interpretations, or legislative changes are issued by the Iowa Department of Education, IHSA, IGHS AU, or the Linn-Mar Board of Directors. The Athletic Department will maintain the most current version on the district website and will communicate material changes to affected families, coaches, and staff in a timely manner.

Questions regarding the interpretation or application of this document should be directed to the Linn-Mar High School Athletic Department.

Prepared by the Linn-Mar High School Athletic Department

 7/1/26

Superintendent

This document supersedes all prior drafts and informal guidance regarding eighth-grade participation in high school athletics at Linn-Mar High School.