



MINNESOTA STATE HIGH SCHOOL LEAGUE

9th Grade Governance Talking Points

Background Information

The Minnesota State High School League has long governed interscholastic athletic and fine arts programs for students in grades 10, 11 and 12, along with any students in grades 7, 8 and 9 who participate in these programs. In the past few years, the League has heard clearly from representatives of our Member Schools and the Board of Directors that it is time to transition our League to an organization that governs and includes all students in grade 9 in the same way it serves students in grades 10, 11 and 12.

This past school year, the League's Board of Directors engaged in significant internal and external conversations to learn more about the necessary steps to become a grades 9-12 organization as well as the reasons that support or challenge this potential change. Ultimately, at its June 2024 meeting, the Board of Directors unanimously passed a resolution supporting a call for a Member School vote this fall that would amend the MSHSL Constitution to include all 9th graders in MSHSL Member Schools.

The Member School vote will also include a second amendment proposal. This amendment proposes changing and updating outdated and inconsistent language in the Constitution. These changes will be technical in nature and will not change intent or application.

Why is the MSHSL Requesting Support to Become a Grades 9-12 Organization?

Through study, discussion, and review, the Board of Directors has identified the following reasons that support the inclusion of all 9th graders in the Minnesota State High School League:

- In earlier years of the League, most schools were grades 10–12 and were often called senior high schools. Currently, most high schools are either grades 9–12, grades 7–12, or grades K–12, and there are fewer than five high schools with a grades 10-12 configuration.
- The consistency of governance and management of all students in grades 9-12, regardless of the level at which they play, is a more effective model for our high schools to manage.
- This consistent management would also extend the League's Catastrophic Medical Accident and Concussion Insurance to all students in grades 9-12 participating in any League athletic or fine arts activity.
- The League has many Member Schools that host 9th grade only teams, or teams that combine 9th graders with students from grades 7 and/or 8. Currently students on these teams are not covered with the same insurance policies provided by the League for MSHSL Teams.
- Governing all aspects of 9th grade participation aligns with current League practices including:
 - The calculation of the MSHSL Enrollment for each school is based on enrollments for students in grades 9-12.
 - Students begin their personal limit of four consecutive years of League participation in grade 9.

- Students establish their school of eligibility through their enrollment in 9th grade.
- Minnesota Graduation Requirements begin in 9th grade, aligning with the proposed amendment to add 9th grade to the League.
- The League would join nearly all other states in governing all students in grades 9-12, improving consistency with NFHS rules, mirroring practices throughout the Midwest and managing out-of-state transfers in a consistent fashion.

Process

- The Minnesota State High School League Constitution is the foundation on which all League Bylaws and Policies are built. The first step in making a change in the grade levels governed by the League is to amend the League's Constitution.
- Changes to the Constitution are only done through a Member School vote. Through the unanimous approval of a resolution by the Board of Directors, a vote to expand League governance to include 9th grade will take place in October 2024.
- If the Member School vote to amend the League's Constitution is passed, the Board of Directors is prepared to begin approving Board Policy changes throughout the 2024-2025 school year.
- The Representative Assembly will meet in May 2025 to approve potential Bylaw changes.
- The change to the League governing grades 9-12 will be effective in the 2025-2026 school year.

Action Steps

- Additional communications will be sent to Superintendents/Presidents/Heads of School via email and the United States Postal Service prior to the vote. These will contain additional information and logistics on how to vote.
- Voting will take place from Friday, Oct. 4 through Friday, Oct. 18.
- Each Member School may cast one vote. This vote is to be cast by either the designated school representative or the school's governing board designated representative. The suggested practice is for the district/school's lead administrator and the school's governing board designated representative to collaborate on the vote with the Activities Director.

The League invites any member school representative to contact the Minnesota State High School League with any questions they might have about the pending vote and potential outcomes of this vote.