

Reviewing “Pay to Participate” for Athletics in Madison Public Schools

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Pay-to-Participate: Education Based Athletics

Athletics serve as a vital extension of the education experience, teaching students crucial life skills including teamwork, perseverance, accountability, and leadership.

Pay-to-Participate Model:

- Model designed to help cover the costs of transportation, officials and event staff
- MPS is one of just four districts in our 23-school conference still requiring payment for athletic participation
- Creates a financial barrier to entry for students and families
- When families must "pay," they may prioritize athletics over academics to justify the cost, creating an imbalance in focus. Education Based Athletics is an extension of the academic environment/experience. It is not a separate entity.



Current MPS Pay-to-Participate Fee Structure:

Daniel Hand High School: \$125 per season

Polson Middle School: \$90 per season

Family Cap of: \$600



Access for All Students



- Pay-to-Participate programs can exclude students who lack financial resources.
- Eliminating or minimizing pay-to-participate programs ensures that educational-based athletics remain inclusive and true to our mission of fostering growth, development, and opportunity for all students.

Eliminating Pay-to-Participate Fees

- Could lead to increased participation & higher student engagement
- Build community by reducing socioeconomic barriers
- Increase in athletic budget to cover the costs previously collected through fees

Higher
Enrollment
Equals Higher
Fees Collected

	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	Average	Fees Collected per Season -Four year average	Fees Collected per Season - This year
Fall # of Athletes	394	375	344	341	364.00	\$ 45,500.00	\$ 42,625.00
Winter # of Athletes	393	329	319	298	335.00	\$ 41,875.00	\$ 37,250.00
Spring # of Athletes	416	412	385	356	393	\$49,125.00	\$ 44,500.00
						\$138,000.00	\$124,375.00

Some of the Why.....



The pay-to-participate system creates uncomfortable dynamics when families have paid fees but students receive limited playing time. While coaches make decisions based on skill, effort, and team needs, the financial transaction can create expectations that undermine the developmental focus of educational athletics.

Eliminating or minimizing pay-to-participate programs ensures that education based athletics remain inclusive and true to our mission of fostering growth, development, and opportunity for all students.



Eliminate Fee Collection

Remove the need to process payments and track financial compliance



Simplify Participation Process

Focus on medical clearance and eligibility rather than financial transactions



Improve Coach-Family Relationships

Remove financial expectations from playing time discussions



Refocus on Educational Outcomes

Center athletic programs on skill development and character building





Thank you!

Any Questions? Comments?

