



# WAUPACA EAST HOCKEY



# About Co-ops

- Schools agree to be a member of the WIAA and abide by their rules and regulations
- Co-ops must be approved by the conference (for us, it's the Wisconsin Valley Conference - West, East, SPASH, DCE, Wis. Rapids, and Marshfield), within the rules and guidelines of the WIAA
  - Conference principals vote to adopt or form a co-op
    - If the conference supports the co-op, the district's school board must approve it next
    - Co-ops must be approved by the deadline, which is dependent upon the sport
      - Hockey's deadline was February 1



# A Recap of Recent Events

- **December 2025:** The Merrill School Board tabled their vote on the East/Merrill Co-op to January
- **December 15, 2025:** The Wausau School Board was presented with the East/Merrill Boys Hockey Co-op at their Education/Operations Committee meeting
- **January 12, 2026:** Formal approval was given by the Wausau School Board for the East/Merrill Co-op for the next two years
- **January 14, 2026:** Merrill School Board Committee begins discussions about moving away from the co-op
- **January 21, 2026:** Wausau East requests an emergency meeting of the Wisconsin Valley Conference (WVC) schools to vote on the potential for an East/West Boys Hockey Co-op. That vote was scheduled for January 29 in response to information from Merrill



# Continued...A Recap of Recent Events

- **January 28, 2026:** The Merrill School Board formally votes against the co-op, 3 days before the WIAA co-op deadline
  - Merrill Hockey is now a member of the Great Northern Conference
- **January 29, 2026:** Due to Merrill's vote, the emergency WVC meeting took place the following morning
  - The vote on a motion to form an East/West Co-op was split 3-3 (according to conference bylaws, the motion does not pass)
- **January 30, 2026:** An emergency meeting of the Wausau School Board was planned in the event they would have a need to approve an East/West Co-op before the February 1 deadline. Due to the WVC vote, the Wausau School Board meeting was not needed.



# From the WIAA...

- Merrill's decision aligns to the purpose of co-ops
  - Teams co-op to build their numbers until they can form their own team again
  - What has happened here is not a 'unique' situation
- There is not an option for the Wausau School District or Wausau East to appeal the vote made by the WVC schools
- There's no precedent for an extension of the February 1 co-op deadline
- The WIAA Board of Control has no authority to force a conference to adopt a co-op



# From the WIAA...

- Individual Students
  - If they move (in-district transfer) or open enroll to another school to play hockey, they have to appeal to the WIAA for a waiver of eligibility
    - A waiver is not guaranteed for 10-12th graders
      - “The discontinuation of a program is not interpreted by the Board of Control as an extenuating circumstance for the purposes of receiving a(n) (eligibility)waiver.” -WIAA
      - 8-9th graders do not lose a year of eligibility if they move schools



# Our Reality

- Following the 3-3 vote, a motion was made to support an East/West JV Hockey Co-op
- The WVC voted in favor of the JV co-op
  - A motion and vote is not required to form a JV co-op
  - This allows for East students to compete in hockey - only at the **JV** level





# POTENTIAL OPTIONS



# East/West Hockey Numbers

- 1 westside student currently playing for the East/Merrill Co-op
- 1 eastside student currently playing for Wausau West
  - West also has 2 open-enrolled students on their roster

Grade	East Numbers	West Numbers
11	1	7
10	5	10
9	3	7
8	2	11
7	2 - Tentative	8 - Tentative



# East Hockey Options

- **East/West JV Co-op**

- East players still get to compete at the JV level with Wausau West
  - This requires no oversight from the WIAA or the WVC
    - Local control

- **East Hockey forms their own team**

- 9-11 current players
  - No goalie
- Leave the WVC and go independent
- Run only a JV schedule
  - Build numbers to form a varsity team in the future
- The deadline to declare a Wausau East Varsity team has passed



# East Hockey Options

- **Look for other co-op opportunities in the future**
  - Present a motion to the WVC to amend the bylaws forcing a tie-breaker in the event of a 3-3 vote
  - Bring back another proposal for an East/West Co-op to the WVC next year
  - Look to co-op with a Great Northern Conference (GNC) team or another local high school next year



# Petition the WIAA

- Request an extension to the February 1 deadline for hockey co-ops
  - Goal: to provide East the opportunity to explore other co-ops for boys hockey
    - An extension has never been granted by the WIAA
- Suggest a change to the co-op process and procedure with the WIAA
  - Specific to the co-op timeline with the goal of preventing this from happening to other schools



# Revise District's In-District Transfer Policy

- **Current Policy:**

- Secondary level:
  - Per IEP team decision - Care program or Medically Fragile program;
  - or when a comparable academic program offering is not available at the current school of attendance;
  - or for other special considerations to be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Director of Pupil Services or his/her designee.
- Requests cannot be granted if space is not available. Space considerations maintain seats for students who may move into an attendance zone.



# Revise In-District Transfer Policy

- **Looking Forward:**

- There is potential to expand upon **academic program** to include athletics not offered at the home school (Boys Hockey at East, Boys Swimming at West)
  - Would not affect eligibility for 8-9th graders
  - 10-12th graders would be ineligible and would need to appeal to the WIAA for a waiver
    - WIAA:
      - “the discontinuation of a program is not interpreted by the Board of Control as an extenuating circumstance for the purposes of receiving a(n) (eligibility)waiver.”





# THANK YOU

