

MINUTES OF THE ATHLETES WITH DISABILITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
September 21, 2016

The IHSA Athletes with Disabilities Advisory Committee met at the IHSA Office, Bloomington, Illinois, on Wednesday, September 21, 2016, beginning at 10:00 a.m. Committee members present were: Ed Hoyt, Jacksonville (Illinois School for the Deaf); Jason Ward, South Elgin; Bob Wells, Fairfield; and Jim Wood, Charleston. Also in attendance were Kurt Gibson, IHSA Associate Executive Director; Kraig Garber, IHSA Assistant Executive Director; Leslie Alappattu, Illinois Elementary School Association Assistant Executive Director; and guests Geza Ehrentreu, IHSA Cross Country State Finals Meet Management Team; Jason Stubbeman, Synergy Adaptive Athletics; Laura Bracht, Interpreter; and Emily Hartzell, Interpreter. Members not in attendance were: Monica Burkholder, Lanark (Eastland); and Nicole Ebsen, Berwyn-Cicero (Morton).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

No recommendations were brought forth at this time.

ITEMS OF GENERAL DISCUSSION:

1. The committee reviewed the minutes of their February 2016 meeting.
2. Committee members discussed the status of participation by students with disabilities at their schools. The committee shared observations on the challenge of identifying potential student-athletes and getting them to participate as a part of any school athletic team
3. The committee discussed general times or dates when a Road Race could be conducted. The committee was reminded that the IHSA was forced to cancel its scheduled July 30, 2016, race due to a lack of entrants. While individual members of the committee thought the July date made sense, the committee as a whole wondered if, in the end, the July date wasn't attractive due to family or work obligations at the end of the summer. In their discussion, the committee suggested the IHSA consider conducting a race either near the end of March (whether on one of the boys' basketball weekends or the weekend immediately following that event), or at the beginning of the Cross Country season (within the seven-day window allowed for such an event under by-law 3.100). One thought expressed by the committee favoring the March date was that a date just before the start of the outdoor track season might be more enticing to students and not conflict with scheduled track meets.

In further discussion about the race, the committee discussed the logistical challenge of having just one race in one location and the impact that might have on schools choosing to participate in such a race that are a greater distance from the race site. The committee also discussed allowing individuals to enter themselves and consider allowing non-HS students to enter the event. To that point, the committee wondered if greater participation would occur if a division for coaches, administrators, and/or school staff was created as a part of the over-all event.

4. Jason Stubbeman from Synergy Adaptive Athletics met with the committee to continue the discussion regarding ambulatory athletes the committee had begun at their February 2016 meeting. During the discussion, the committee discussed the different classifications that exist for athletes in track and field and learned how those athletes compete against one another in the para-ambulatory arena.

5. Following the visit with Jason Stubbeman, the committee discussed the possibility that the IHSA might want to consider making programs for students with disabilities a part of the up-coming Town and IADA Division Meetings. As a part of that discussion, the committee suggested that those meetings gauge membership interest on the following:
 - What should the guiding philosophy be for programs for students with disabilities?
 - In track and field (or other sports), should the IHSA consider expanding opportunities for ambulatory athletes?

To help with that discussion, the committee suggested the IHSA create some kind of one-page document that presents information on what programs are currently offered, participation numbers over the years, as well as any other information that might be pertinent for administrators. The committee believes taking an informal straw poll at these meetings could provide the association with needed feedback about future changes to make to these programs.

6. The committee discussed contacting someone from IPA or ISBE who works with special populations that could attend a future committee meeting to try and identify more strategies member schools can use to foster more participation from students with disabilities in athletic and activity programs.
7. The committee heard a report from IHSA staff concerning initial entry numbers in girls' swimming for students with disabilities. IHSA staff will begin the process of verifying entries with schools in early October to confirm their intentions regarding state series participation.
8. The committee heard a report from IHSA staff concerning a new partnership the IHSA Board of Directors has entered into with Special Olympics to offer additional unified programming this school year. In particular, the committee heard initial plans for a unified basketball tournament to be held in Peoria as a part of the IHSA's Boys' Basketball Class 3A/4A State Finals.