

IHSA's Classification Policy: An Explainer

In June 2018, the IHSA Board of Directors approved significant changes to the way the schools will be classified in sports that use a multiple-class system. These changes were formalized in Policy 17 and will go into effect next school year (2019-20).

The text of the new policy is [here](#). This explainer boils down the language of the new policy to its essentials and gives examples of how classifications will be determined in the future.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR CHANGES

- **Two-year classification cycle:** All multi-class sports (along with music and Scholastic Bowl) will be classified on a two-year cycle, during which a school's classification will not change. Exception: Football will continue to be classified at the end of the regular season. However, if Proposal 23 is approved by IHSA member schools during the by-law amendment process in December, football will also be classified on a two-year cycle, beginning in 2021-22.
- **Earlier notification of classifications:** Enrollments and classification cutoffs will be released in the December preceding each two-year cycle (starting December 2018 for cycle that begins in July 2019). The classification of the individual programs at each school will be announced following the conclusion of each sport season.
- **Higher enrollment cutoffs:** In several sports, the new policy will raise the enrollment cutoffs for each class. This will be accomplished by increasing the percentage of schools (and therefore the number of schools) allocated to classes with the smallest enrollments.
- **Uniform enrollment cutoffs across seven bracketed team sports:** The new policy provides for identical enrollment cutoffs across all multiple-class, bracketed team sports (boys and girls basketball, baseball, softball, girls volleyball, and boys and girls soccer), so that at any particular school, the programs in all seven of these sports will be in the same class. (NOTE: Soccer has only three classes, but it will share the two highest enrollment cutoffs with the four-class sports, so that, for example, the schools in Class 3A soccer will be the same the schools in as Class 4A basketball). Exception: At non-boundaried schools, programs that are affected by the multiplier or success factor may be in a different class from other programs at the school.
- **Changes in programs subject to the multiplier and success factor:** For non-boundaried schools, past success in the IHSA state series will be measured over a two-year period instead of a four-year period. In addition, small changes have been made to formulas that determine how much past success causes the 1.65 multiplier or the success factor (or both) to go into effect.
- **Synchronization of coop agreements and "play-up" requests:** Finally, to ensure that classifications stay the same over an entire two-year cycle, coop agreements and play-up requests that are currently set to expire at the end of 2019-20 will either be canceled at the end of the current school year or extended through 2020-21, at the discretion of the schools involved.

DETAILS

COMPUTATION OF ENROLLMENTS AND CUTOFFS

The computation of a school's "classification enrollment" will be different from years past. The new policy sets the classification enrollment as the average of the enrollments gathered for the previous two school terms. So, for the upcoming two-year cycle (2019-20 and 2020-21), the average of the 2017-18 and 2018-19 enrollments will be used, as shown by the examples in the following chart.

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21		
1-year enrollment	500	520	530	520		
2-year cycle enrollment			510	525		
			2019-21	2021-23		

The classification cutoffs in each sport or activity will be determined using the schools that entered the tournament during the previous school year (in the current case, 2017-18). Coop programs will be considered at the combined enrollment of all schools in the coop. The list of schools will be sorted by enrollment and divided into groups based upon the following formulas, which have not changed:

- For **music**, the entries from both the solo & ensemble and organization competitions will be combined, and then 1/5 of the schools will be allocated to each class.
- For **competitive cheer and dance**, 1/3 of the schools will be allocated to each division (schools entered in the cheer coed division will be removed from the list prior to allocation).
- For **girls golf and Scholastic Bowl**, 1/2 of the schools will be allocated to each class.
- For **cross country, track & field, boys golf**, the smallest 40% of the schools will be allocated to one class, and 30% each to the remaining two classes. Then, in both cross country and track & field, the boys' and girls' cutoffs will be equalized by using the higher of the two figures for both sports.

In a change from past practice, the cutoffs for **wrestling** will be computed using the same formula as the other three-class individual sports (cross country, track & field, boys golf).

The **four-class sports and soccer** have also changed and require a more detailed explanation. For these seven sports, the cutoffs will be based on the field from the smallest four-class sport, which is currently softball, with approximately 600 schools. The softball field will be divided into four classes, with the smallest 27.5% of the schools in Class 1A, the next smallest 27.5% in Class 2A, the next smallest 22.5% in Class 3A, and the remaining 22.5% in Class 4A. The cutoffs that result from this process will be applied to all seven sports.

Soccer, having only three classes, will disregard the smallest cutoff. The largest two classes in soccer, Class 2A & 3A, are equivalent to Class 3A & 4A in the four-class sports and include essentially all the same schools. The relationship between the cutoffs for the four-class sports and the cutoffs for soccer is shown in the example below.

4-class sports		boys & girls soccer	
class	range	range	class
Class 1A	1-299	1-697	Class 1A
Class 2A	299.01-697		Class 2A
Class 3A	697.01-1635	697.01-1635	Class 3A
Class 4A	1635.01-above	1635.01-above	Class 4A

COMPUTATION OF MULTIPLIER, WAIVER, AND SUCCESS FACTOR

As IHSA By-law 3.170 and Policy 17 are written, each program at a non-boundaried school is subject to a 1.65 enrollment multiplier and then a waiver of that multiplier, if applicable, is issued automatically. This explainer takes a look at the situation from a simplified perspective:

What has to happen for a sport or activity program at a non-boundaried school to be multiplied?

1. A program will be multiplied if it wins a state tournament trophy in either year of the two-year window (2017-18 or 2018-19).
2. Otherwise, a program will be multiplied if:
 - a. In football only, during the two-year window, it wins three games in the IHSA football playoff series.
 - b. In golf and cross country only, during the two-year window, it accomplishes four of the following: winning a regional title, winning a sectional title, a top-10 finish at state.
 - c. In all other sports, during the two-year window, it accomplishes three of the following: winning a regional title, winning a sectional title, a top-10 finish at state (in individual sports such as tennis and track & field).

It is important to note that multiplying a school's enrollment by 1.65 does not necessarily result in placement in a higher classification.

The table below gives a few examples of how the formula works. **R** is a regional title, **S** is a sectional title, and a **number** represents a program's finish in state tournament. The small letters **a**, **b**, and **c** represent wins in the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd round of the football playoffs, respectively.

Sport or Activity	State Series Success		Analysis	Result
	Year 1	Year 2		
any sport	S3	(none)	a trophy in any sport during either year puts the multiplier into effect	multiplied
any bracketed team sport	R	RS	two regionals and one sectional over two years = 3 "events"	multiplied
football	abc	(none)	three wins in either year = 3 games	multiplied
football	ab	a	two wins in one year and one win in the other = 3 games	multiplied
golf or cross country	RS	S7	one regional, two sectionals, and one top-10 finish over two years = 4 "events"	multiplied
golf or cross country	R	RS	two regionals and one sectional over two years = 3 "events" (4 required to be multiplied)	NOT multiplied
golf or cross country	(none)	RS10	a regional, sectional, and top-10 finish over two years = 3 "events" (4 required to be multiplied)	NOT multiplied
track & field or tennis	S6	9	one sectional and two top-10 finishes over two years = 3 "events"	multiplied
track & field or tennis	S	S	two sectionals over two years = 2 "events" (3 required to be multiplied)	NOT multiplied
track & field or tennis	4	8	two top-10 finishes over two years = 2 "events" (3 required to be multiplied)	NOT multiplied

What has to happen for a sport or activity program at a non-boundaried school to be subject to the success factor?

1. The success factor will be applied to a program if it wins a state tournament trophy in both years of the two-year window (2017-18 and 2018-19).

The resulting classification will be one class above the lowest classification in which a trophy was won. Thus if a program won one trophy in Class 2A and one in Class 3A, the team would be placed in Class 3A during the next classification cycle.

The success factor usually raises a program's classification. But exceptions can also occur when a program is already competing in the highest class, or when the school's enrollment has increased to the point where it would be placed in a higher class regardless of the success factor.

Waivers and the success factor will be recalculated every two years as part of the reclassification process.

RELEASE SCHEDULE

This is the first of three releases of classification information for the initial two-year cycle (2019-20 and 2020-21).

This release (December 2018) covers school enrollments and enrollment cutoffs for all sports for the upcoming cycle.

For each sport season, a list of programs affected by the multiplier and success factor and assignment of all programs to particular classes will be released according to the following schedule:

- Fall sports: December 2018
- Winter sports (and Scholastic bowl): April 2019
- Spring sports (and music): June 2019