

# MSHSLconnect

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## Managing safety, participation is a challenging balance during COVID era



Erich Martens,  
Executive Director

**LIKE SO MANY SIGNIFICANT EVENTS** in our lives, from the amazing feat like the Twins winning the World Series to the horrific attack on the Twin Towers, the onset of COVID-19 in Minnesota will forever be etched in my mind. During the second week in March, the League and its member schools had no idea where we were going to be in another six months, yet here we are, and the unknowns, the questions, and the challenges continue.

Making difficult decisions began with cancelling the last three Minnesota State High School League winter state tournaments. It continued with the cancellation of spring seasons and followed with the postponed summer coaching waiver period, and then, into the fall sports season. Through it all, the need to balance safety and participation, as well as providing guidance, continues on a daily basis. Each uncertainty is met with information, study, input, discussion, and ultimately, consensus. Each decision builds on previous decisions and leads into those that will be made in the future.

As I have shared with a number of groups, despite the most informed, involved and careful decision-making, it will be impossible to determine if our decisions were the best ones we could make for a minimum of months, but much more likely, years, yet decide we must as our students, our coaches and our schools rely on the structure and leadership that the League provides.

There remains so much to learn about this highly contagious disease, its immediate and long-term effects on individuals, and how to best cope with it, live with it, and participate with it. What does it look like for our student-athletes and fine arts participants to be safely involved in their passions in group settings, in teams, and in competitions or performances? This has been the ongoing challenge that has faced each one of our member schools within the League and each one of them is doing their very best for their students.

From the outset of the pandemic, the League has had two primary goals:

- Provide an opportunity in every activity the League offers at the best possible time
- Provide these opportunities in the safest way possible.

When sifting through all of the information that surrounds the uncertainties we face, from the medical knowledge, the well-being of our students, the federal and state guidance, the Executive Orders of the Governor and the advice of the Minnesota Department of Health and the Minnesota Department of Education, the League's Board of Directors has considered every piece of information.

*Continued on page 2*

# Managing safety and participation brings a challenging balance to decision-making during a pandemic

*Continued from Cover*

To best understand the process in which our Board of Directors has made decisions, it is critical to remember that the Minnesota State High School League is a member-driven organization with about 500 member schools. Member-driven discussion and input has been a major and crucial part of the process. Given the one-of-a-kind connection that exists between our educational system and our participation of student-athletes, it is imperative that all decisions must support the educational mission of each member school. At the same time, they should assist in providing opportunities for all students.

Most importantly, all who read this should know that the members of our Board of Directors are school and community leaders with families of their own that are impacted by these decisions. Many work in or lead school communities that are guided by each decision. They are Minnesota residents with close friends and neighbors that rely on them to do the very best they can to support their kids and keep all involved as safe as possible.

A statement I heard early in the onset of this pandemic was "Despite the fact that there are not good choices, there are still good decisions." What we do know in this challenging time is that in many cases, we are not presented with good choices, yet it will always be the goal of the League to make the best decisions it can on behalf of students, educators, schools and communities. League staff and the Board of Directors will continue forward to manage that delicate balance of participation and safety.

## voices *we asked, you answered*

During the summer months, administrators have been busy behind the scenes preparing for a Return to Learning and a Return to Participation for participants of the League's member schools. We caught up to two Region Secretaries and posed this question:

### What have you learned about leadership during this COVID-19 pandemic?



**NANCY MANDERFELD** | Region 6AA Secretary

*"There are many principles of effective leadership, but two that are paramount in this unprecedented time, in my opinion, are compassion and communication. Compassion for family and personal situations that vary greatly during this stressful time, and frequent communication to ensure your employees feel they feel safe and are part of the process --- make sure they have the tools they need to work effectively from home, and that they are a part of the process. Share as much as you can and be transparent with them and ask for feedback.*

*"Leaders don't look for recognition from others, leaders look for others to recognize." Simon Sinek*



**JIM WEINZIERL** | Region 8A Secretary

*"Leadership during this pandemic has taken on many roles. Not only does a leader need to have a positive, but realistic attitude, but he/she needs to be extremely flexible. Leaders make decisions base on the best, current information that they have, only to have the information change a week later. A leader also needs to be transparent and continue to ask for current input from various sources to help them make these extremely important decisions, whether at the local, state or national levels. A leader needs to understand that everyone is not necessarily going to agree with their decisions, but not to take disagreements on a personal level. Above all, a leader needs to keep looking at the big picture and make decisions in the best interest of all the people that are looking to them for leadership."*

## Recognition Programs

**THE LEAGUE IS COUNTING ON YOU** to help us recognize student leaders in your school who are difference makers. We are pleased to announce that we are now accepting nominations for the 2020-21 MSHSL student recognition programs. These programs, some of which have been on the MSHSL's books for more than 25 years, recognize students for academic achievement, community serve, and leadership. Please take a moment to go to [www.mshsl.org/awards](http://www.mshsl.org/awards) to review additional information and nomination instructions for these programs.



**EXCEL** — This program recognizes high school juniors who are involved in MSHSL activities for leadership and community service.



**ACADEMICS, ARTS, AND ATHLETICS** — Commonly known as the Triple 'A' Award, this program honors high school seniors who have a 3.0 or higher-grade point average and who participate in a MSHSL-sponsored athletic and fine arts activity.



**MOST VALUABLE TEAMMATE** — High school coaches and directors of fine arts activities are encouraged to nominate students from their team who exemplify the qualities of a great teammate—respectful, reliable, positive, and supportive of others. These students will be recognized weekly on the League's social media platforms—Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram—throughout the school year beginning in October.



**SPOTLIGHT ON SCHOLARSHIP** — This year-round recognition program honors student-athletes and fine arts participants who have a "B" or better grade point average. The program also recognizes and rewards fine arts and athletic teams that collectively achieve a 3.0 or higher-grade average.

## Technology News

### CHECK THIS OUT!

State Tournament Archives are now posted at <https://www.mshsl.org/Archives>. This information includes photos of the 2019-2020 team and individual champions and historical information broken out by activity.

The most current information is displayed at the top of each activity page. Historical data, including state tournament participant lists, state championship winners and scores, attendance numbers, and state tournament performance records, are posted at the bottom of each page.

Look for this area to grow as we dig into our old Handbooks and Record Books, scan past tournament brackets and championship photos, and add them through a yearly drop-down menu at the top of each page.

## do you know?

- 1 Who is the author of these words: "Development of better and happier boys and girls is our aim. Winning games is incidental. . . . High ideals of sportsmanship must prevail."
- 2 When did the Minnesota State High School Athletic Association change its name to Minnesota State High School League?
- 3 True or False? The League's office was once in Edina.
- 4 What high school is located in Minnesota's 1st Congressional District?
- 5 True or False? The Girls Swimming & Diving State Meet has never been held at two different locations in the same season.

Answers on page 4

# Sponsorship Salute



**THE MINNESOTA STATE HIGH SCHOOL LEAGUE** is grateful to our corporate partners, who despite the uncertainty of the economy, continue to invest in high school activity programs.

The League salutes:



**INSTITUTE FOR ATHLETIC MEDICINE®**



**TOYOTA**



## quiz answers

### Questions on page 3

1. M.L. Jacobson, president of the Minnesota State High School Athletic Association, in the 1923 Handbook.
2. 1929. The association broadened its scope to include all interscholastic athletic activities and added speech and debate.
3. True. In 1970, League staff moved from downtown Minneapolis to Southdale Office Building in Edina until 1972.
  4. Worthington High School.
5. False. In 1989, because of construction of a new swimming facility on the University of Minnesota campus, the Girls Swimming & Diving Meet was held at two sites. The diving competition took place at Cooke Hall on the University of Minnesota campus while the swimming events were held at Richfield Junior High.

## Board of Directors Meeting Minutes Links

**GET CAUGHT UP** with Minnesota State High School League news and information from the Board of Directors.

June 1, 2020:

[bit.ly/MSHSLBoardJune2020](http://bit.ly/MSHSLBoardJune2020)

July 14, 2020:

[bit.ly/MSHSLBoardJuly2020](http://bit.ly/MSHSLBoardJuly2020)