

# MSHSLconnect

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## League's Board of Directors meet twice; approve return to participation, set calendar

**In an 11-day span in late September and early October**, the Minnesota State High School League's Board of Directors twice made news with the approvals of returning volleyball and football to the fall season and setting the activities calendar for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year.

On Sept. 21, in a special meeting called by Board President Blaine Novak of New York Mills, the Board of Directors approved a reconsideration of placement of fall activities, a decision that returned volleyball and football to the fall season. The plan, which fits within COVID-19 guidance of the Minnesota Department of Health began on Sept. 28 when both activities returned to practice. Football was approved for a six-game regular season that will begin this week. A planned football postseason will begin the week of Nov. 16. Volleyball began an 11-week season on Sept. 28 and member schools are permitted to play their first matches on Oct. 8. In the framework that was approved by the board, two weeks of postseason play would begin the week of Nov. 30.

The Board of Directors, at their meeting on Oct. 1, did not approve a postseason for fall activities beyond the section level.

"The Minnesota State High School League continues to work to provide educational opportunities for our student athletes in the safest manner possible for all involved," Novak said after the Sept. 21 meeting. "Coming into the meeting, we knew that every decision we make affects every other decision for the rest of the calendar year. Today's decision, based on what we currently know and with the unknowns of what spring will bring, is based on the belief that playing now provides us the best opportunity to play a football and volleyball season."

In a vote on Aug. 4, the Board of Directors approved postponing volleyball and football until a spring season to minimize the risks of exposure in combatting COVID-19. But in a workshop session on Sept. 16, the MDH presented updated information on COVID-19 analytics and data on spread and prevention. The Board of Directors also engaged in discussion with the Return to Participation Task Force, a group formed in late July to explore participation models and options for member schools and their participants during the COVID era. Following the workshop, Novak called for a special meeting five days later to reconsider the placement of volleyball and football.

To that point, six League activities were currently underway: Girls Tennis, Boys and Girls Cross Country, Boys and Girls Soccer and Girls Swimming and Diving. Those activities began on Aug. 17 with additional safety protocols and practices as well as modified seasons, which trimmed the length of the season by 20 percent and the number of contests by 30 percent.

On Oct. 1, during the Board of Directors' already-scheduled meeting, the activities calendar for the remainder of the school year became clearer with the approval of a maximized winter schedule that will see, like the fall activities, a 30 percent reduction in contests played.

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# Volleyball, football return to fall; activities calendar approved

Continued from Cover

In presenting the plan, Waconia Activities Director Jill Johnson, who chairs the Return to Participation Task Force, said the final two weeks of the seasons will provide flexibility for member schools for rescheduling if contests are postponed because of COVID-19 related outbreaks or other interruptions. Scrimmages and jamborees are not allowed under the approved decision. Johnson said the approved plan also reduces the overlap in seasons, which benefits the start of the spring season, thus, providing a full experience in those activities while minimizing exposure risks.

"Extensive work was done within the Return to Participation Task Force, which provided the board with much needed information to make a decision moving forward in our calendar year," Novak said. "The board decision today provides a natural progression to opening up our activities in the safest manner possible, while providing the best opportunity for participation for all of our student participants."

Here are the start dates for winter activities:

- Nov 9 --- Dance
- Nov. 23 --- Boys Hockey, Boys Basketball
- Nov. 30 --- Adapted Floor Hockey, Alpine Skiing and Nordic Skiing, Wrestling, Boys Swimming and Diving, Girls Hockey
- Dec. 7 --- Gymnastics, Girls Basketball



In the spring, most activities will be pushed forward one week from their traditional start dates. Softball and track and field will be pushed forward two weeks while lacrosse will stay the same.

"The thoughtful approach of our Board in considering ways to extend opportunities and continuing to maintain their focus on the safety of all who participate in MSHSL activities and athletics is evident in their decision-making," said League Executive Director Erich Martens.

## voices *we asked, you answered*

A Return to Learning has taken on different methods this school year. We checked in with two music educators and posed this question:

### What has been the greatest challenge and the greatest reward in returning to school this fall?

**ANTHONY BOLDT** | Director of Bands | Kasson-Mantorville High School



*"By far the greatest challenge in returning to school this fall has been the added logistics involved in consistently cleaning and disinfecting classroom areas. At Kasson-Mantorville, we started the year with all students in-person. This allowed us to build relationships with students and set expectations. We have been extremely lucky with a beautiful performing arts center to rehearse in that it allows for appropriate social distancing. Navigating technology has posed some challenges, but it is becoming part of the daily teaching routines, and each day becomes a little bit easier. I am so thankful for an amazing group of band parents and students who helped sew bell covers for all the instruments prior to the start of the year. I could have never imagined that being a facet of my job. The greatest reward this fall has been making music together and the sense of community that music making brings! Students were so grateful and excited to make music together again. Just having conversations with students in-person these first three weeks has been a daily highlight! Over the course of the pandemic, a silver-lining has been the continuous collaborations and conversations with band directors and music educators throughout the state."*

**JENNIFER WIELAND** | Lafayette High School/J.A. Hughes Elementary School | Red Lake Falls



*"This school year has definitely been an interesting challenge, not only for me, but many other music educators in our country. We have been asked to perform many different tasks that I never thought I would see in my career! It seems so strange to tell a 2nd grader, 'You have to put your mask back on and please stop using it as a slingshot.' I have been temporarily moved from a music classroom to traveling from room to room to deliver music education to our students. My biggest challenge has been having to develop an entire new way to deliver curriculum and standards to students ranging from 2nd grade through 12th grade while following new restrictions due to COVID-19. After 23 years of teaching music, these challenges have brought me back to memories of my first few years of teaching where I was trying to 'figure it all out.' I certainly can relate to teachers, both new and experienced, who are encountering new challenges and joys every day. However, in the midst of the COVID-19 storm, I work hard to find joy in my position. I am thankful to have a job and to be able to see my students in person. I have joy watching a child with autism take piano lessons from me and find enormous success in a short period of time. It is so rewarding to still be able to direct my choirs, even if we can only rehearse in small groups with social distancing protocols in place. I love it when a student says, 'I know we can't hug for real, but can you give me an air hug?' or my 4th graders addressing me as 'Mrs. Queen Diva' (a nickname they created for me last year) when they are asking me a question. Finally, I am so grateful to work with an amazing and hardworking staff and awesome students who are doing their absolute best to educate and learn during this unprecedented school year. I hope all educators can embrace and find joy in their job this year."*



## reflection

# League's music programs strive to hit high notes

By Tim Leighton, *MSHSL Communications Coordinator*



**Minnesota's music programs took center stage** nationally in mid-September.

In what is believed to be the first time in recent memory, the Minnesota State High School League accepted an invitation to share the journeys of League music programs during the National Federation of State High School Associations Performing Arts Conference. The three-day conference was originally scheduled to be held in Denver, but the event instead became a virtual presentation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The League's journey of providing music education opportunities for member schools and its participants has gained national attention from other state associations in recent years. That interest coincides with a surge of energy, enthusiasm and vision from the League's Music Advisory Committee. The group, along with feedback and input from music educators throughout Minnesota, have been working intently on updating many areas in the League's music opportunities.

"As the Music Advisory Committee takes a closer look at the music offerings of the Minnesota State High School League and seeks ways to engage our member schools and students, the NFHS Performing Arts Conference session afforded the opportunity to share our initial steps forward," said Rochester Century band director Amanda Kaus, a committee member that also serves on the League's Board of Directors. "So often, we are presented with the final product or outcome, yet this session allowed us to share out while still on our journey --- both providing information for other state organizations and receiving encouragement from those who are farther along in developing their League-sponsored music activities."

Along with Kaus, former Board member and current Shakopee band director Eric Christenson, and two members of League staff, served as hosts for the hourlong presentation to music administrators from

across the country. Before focusing on the League's recent initiatives, the presentation began by highlighting Minnesota's national reputation in the Fine Arts, the iconic venues and stages in the Twin Cities and some of the legendary music figures with Minnesota roots.

Achieving similar music excellence, in this case, in co-curricular activities, is the charge of the League's Music Advisory Committee. But before moving forward, the group had to know where music had been, and they acknowledged work needed to be done. During the presentation, the hosts shared an overview of areas that needed attention. They include:

- Updating Music Rules and Policies
- Addressing a shortage of music adjudicators
- Judges online registration and training
- Exploration of a revised scoring rubric
- Inclusion of under-represented composers
- Visions of a state-level festival or contest

The League's Board of Directors approved online registration and training for music judges through the NFHS Learn Curriculum. In unison with continued development of the League's new technologies, the registration platform is expected to be completed late this fall or early winter. Online registration and education are big steps for the League's music programs. With the convenience of online access to registration and a multitude of music resources, it is hoped the shortage of judges will be eased somewhat.

The Music Advisory Committee meets this month, and in addition to the topics already on its to-do list, the group will look at contests in a virtual format in this COVID-19 era. The committee members include Kaus, Christenson, League Clinician Carl Lipke, Kasson-Mantorville's Tony Boldt, North Branch's Tonya Barnes, Wayzata's Mark Gitch and Jen Wieland of Red Lake Falls.

The following Praise Reports were recently sent to the League Office.



**From soccer official Hasan Hindi following a girls game between Fergus Falls and host St. Cloud Tech:**

A player from St. Cloud Tech had trouble keeping her shoelace tied. The second time I asked her if she could tie her shoelace. She answered that she could not because her hands were very cold. Talia Nelson of Fergus Falls asked if the player needed help. The Tech player agreed and thanked her. Talia went down on her knees and tied the shoelaces for her. It was a great display of sportsmanship. The public address announcer acknowledged the act and then clapped and cheered. It was truly a pleasure to see that kind of act. Well done, Talia!

**From soccer official Tye Biasco following a boys game between St. John's Prep and host Zimmerman:**

I was extremely impressed with both team's sportsmanship throughout the game. Players on both sides always checked on opponents when someone fell to the ground and even apologized when contact was the opponent's fault. Both teams were always positive to their teammates, even when mistakes were made. The game was without a doubt the most pleasant soccer match I've officiated in two years.

**From soccer official Aaron Fredrickson following a boys game between Trinity at River Ridge and host Nova Classical Academy:**

I want to report some excellent sportsmanship from the Trinity team and coach Steve Hendrickson. All players and coaches should be complimented regarding their hard work and modeling good sportsmanship. The coach did a great job staying positive and providing instruction to his players. I did not hear one word of disagreement from him during the match. One of his players was injured, and I explained to the coach why there was not a foul. He thanked me for the explanation and did not argue. He also encouraged his players to remain positive and focused regarding the match. I also saw several acts of good sportsmanship that rose to a high level. Examples included picking up a player from the other team who was knocked down during play. There was no dissent whatsoever regarding calls, and the players were encouraging each other to stay focused on the match. I had also verbally warned a player that his exuberance could be perceived and being unsporting. He apologized to me during the match, and after the match he approached me and again stated he understood his excitement for the match could be perceived and being unsporting. This player also thanked me for giving him a warning during the match and providing advice on how to show his passion in an appropriate manner.

Trinity lost the match, but they left the field of play in a professional manner. The coach and several players also thanked me for working the match.

**From soccer official Blaine Turnbull following a girls game between Mounds Park Academy and host Spectrum:**

I want to send some positive praise to everyone involved with the girls soccer game at Spectrum on Aug. 29. Everyone the officials came in contact with was very helpful. Even when we sent our confirmation email for the game, we were given some great directions on how to navigate the road construction to get to their field. When we arrived, the site manager was very accommodating and made sure we had all tools in order to have a great game. He made sure the timekeeper talked to the center official about duties and any new rules. The players, fans, and coaches were all extremely respectful and showed great sportsmanship and enthusiasm throughout a great match. As an official that officiates a handful of sports at many locations, this is the first time I have filled out this form to bring positive praise upon a school. That is how exemplary of an experience it was.

**From Duluth East activities director Shawn Roed sharing a note from Proctor soccer coach Dustin Anderson:**

I wanted to thank you again for last Friday's game. We have never been more welcomed to an opponent's field as we did on Sept. 18. The girls and their families truly loved their names being announced. We generally do not see this at the junior varsity level. The announcer was great, too! I was also impressed with your team as they were walking off the field and they all said, "good game, girls! Well fought!" Their tone was very positive. I know with COVID restrictions and not being able to shake hands, it's tough. From a coaching perspective, I gained much respect for your team during that moment. They fought us tough during the game but with clean play.

**From soccer official David Fergus following a girls game between Rocori and host St. Cloud Tech:**

Last night at a girls varsity soccer match hosted by St. Cloud Tech, the ball handler crew was the first one I observed all year flawlessly performing to the new COVID standard of not picking up the ball, and instead, handling it with their feet consistently throughout the whole game! They paid attention to the match closely and made sure the athletes received a ball for throw in or goal kick expeditiously. They then retrieved the errant ball with their feet as well. The school had obviously spent some time training these girls and then ensuring their motivation to do an excellent job. Well done!

## do you know?

1

In 1991, who was the recipient of the prestigious Walt Disney Dreamers and Doers Award?

2

What is the required minimum depth of water from a platform at the starting end of a pool for competitions?

3

When did the League's Board of Directors adopt a Code of Ethics for contest officials?

4

Who said this in a 1989 interview with the League: "I am a more diverse person as a result of my participation in school activities. I developed many of the skills and self-confidence I now rely on every day."

5

How did Eastview High School in Apple Valley earn its name and nickname?

Answers on page 5



## OCTOBER IS NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES MONTH.

The annual initiative, sponsored by the National Federation of State High School Associations, promotes the values of high school athletics and Fine Arts activities. The program creates awareness and needs of interscholastic activity programs. Here is a look at the promotions for the month of October:

- **Week of Oct. 4-10** --- National Sportsmanship, Fan Appreciation and Public Address Announcers Week
- **Week of Oct. 11-17** --- National Performing Arts Activities and Local State Associations Week
- **Week of Oct. 18-24** --- National Coaches, Athletes, Officials and Sponsors Week
- **Week of Oct. 25-31** --- National Community Service/Youth Awareness Week

You can promote activities at your schools on social media by using #HSActivitiesMonth

For more information National High School Activities Month, go to [www.NFHS.org/hsactivitiesmonth](http://www.NFHS.org/hsactivitiesmonth)



## Eagan Debate members excel

The Eagan High School Debate opened the season by competing virtually in the Mid-America Cup Tournament. The tournament is held annually at West Des Moines Valley High School in Iowa. It is one of the early national circuit tournaments of the season.

Senior Arush Iver, a Lincoln Douglas Debater, earned a Tournament of Champions bid with a finish in the top eight. Finishing in the top four and earning TOC bids were sophomore Policy Debaters Eric Li and Archan Sen. The Tournament of Champions is a national competition held at the University of Kentucky since 1974. Minnesota hosts two TOC-bid tournaments: Apple Valley's Minneapple and Blake's Holiday Tournament.



## Grant to step down as Eden Prairie AD

Longtime Eden Prairie Activities Director Mike Grant plans to step down from his post on Jan. 1. Grant, who has served as Eden Prairie's AD for 19 years, will remain as the school's football coach. He became Eden Prairie's football coach in 1992 and has led the program to a state-best 11 Prep Bowl championships. Prior to becoming Eden Prairie's AD, he taught social studies at the school for 10 years.

## Technology News

### CHECK THIS OUT!

Records pages are in progress on the website at <https://www.mshsl.org/tournaments/records>. Fall Activity Records are completed and available for viewing.

The League catalogs records set in state tournament play, and, is also a partner with member schools and coaches associations to track single game, regular-season and career marks for participants. State tournament records appear at the top of each page followed by school-submitted and association-submitted marks.

Additional Record Pages for other seasons will be built going forward. Check back often!

## quiz answers

### Questions on page 3

1. Pai Yang, St. Paul Como Park High School.
2. Four feet.
3. On Aug. 15, 1989. The Code serves as a standard for all registered officials and defines the expectations and responsibilities of each official.
4. Anoka's Gretchen Carlson, who was crowned Miss America in 1989. In high school, she participated in Drama, Music, Choral Ensembles, Yearbook Staff and Key Club.
5. Eastview was the name of the park across the street from the school that is now Johnny Cake Ridge Park. The building also features a fantastic view to the East as you look out from the Student Commons. Lightning was the winner in a vote for nickname in a vote by students, parents and faculty. Among others considered were Bears and Lions.