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MSHSL DISTRICT FOOTBALL POLICY

Definition: District Football is the official name given to the method of scheduling all regular season football games in Minnesota. In this system, each team is assigned to a district based on geography, enrollment and “like teams” with natural rivalries preserved whenever possible. This system for scheduling covers the regular season only. The post-season Section Football system remains in place.

District Football vs. Section Football: Section classifications are determined by enrollment and geography (as determined by MSHSL Board policy), with a balanced number of teams in each section. These classifications are strictly followed. District scheduling also uses team enrollment as a key factor in placing teams in districts, but Districts are not confined to enrollment classifications, as in section football, and are also not restricted to a specific number of teams, thus allowing each district to be formed in a way the best works for the teams of a similar size in a particular geographical area.

District Assignment and Realignment: Teams will be assigned to Districts every two years, with the assignments finalized no later than the June MSHSL Board Meeting. This will be done in the same cycle following the Competitive Section Placement process. A District Placement Committee is made up of ten AD’s, coaches and/or other administrators, who represent different geographical regions of the state and a variety of school sizes. The committee will be selected by League staff in consultation with the Minnesota Football Coaches Association and the AD’s Association. The final committee will be approved by the MSHSL Board of Directors. After the initial District Assignments in April of 2014, the placement committee will be kept intact for the re-districting process that takes place in 2016. After that process has been completed three or four members of the committee will rotate off each cycle, with each member staying on the committee for at least four years – two rounds of realignment.

Enrollment Data: Enrollment data from October 1 of the school year in which the placement process is completed will be used as criteria for District placement. Enrollments will be calculated using the enrollment for grades 9-12 (grades 8-11 to determine 9-player classification) as provided by the Minnesota Department of Education, less 40% of the free and reduced lunch number.

9-player: Prior to the initial alignment process and for all future realignment processes, teams that qualify for 9-player football must declare if they will compete in 9-player football for the two years for which the new realignment will be in effect. Class A teams who do not qualify for 9-player, may appeal to play 9-player during the regular season. This appeal will go to the District Placement Committee. That committee will make recommendations to the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors, who will make the final decision. Teams allowed to play 9-player during the regular season must play 11-player in the Section playoffs. Teams may appeal to play 9-player football as per current MSHSL Board Policy for appeals.

Team Information and Input: During each realignment process all teams will be given the opportunity to file an information form that will allow them to share specific information about their program; indicate teams that they feel they must play; and provide any other information that will be helpful to the committee during the placement process. These forms must be filed by the established deadline.

Placement Process: The District Placement Committee will meet at least two times to assign teams to Districts. Their final recommendation will go to the Athletic/Activities Directors Advisory Committee for review at their May meeting. The AD's Advisory Committee will review all placements and pass these placements on to the full Board of Directors with any recommended adjustments. The Board will review and give final approval at the June meeting.

The committee will work to place teams according to geography and MSHSL enrollment. While the membership of districts may include teams that are more than twice as big as another team, the Placement Committee recommends that when developing sub-districts, Districts should not place teams with enrollments more than twice as large as another team, in the same sub-district; unless a smaller team approves of that placement, or such a placement will work based on competitive balance.

The goal will be to have Districts with at least sixteen teams (although that may not always be possible), and all will have an even number unless there is an odd number of 9-player teams or an odd number of 11-player teams. When there is an odd number, that district may use the Zero Week concept to make sure that all teams have a full schedule. Another option may be to find a team from an adjacent state to fill in the bye weeks; or teams may choose to have a bye and only play seven games. All teams within a District must have an eight game regular season schedule, unless there is an odd number of teams and the District members decide to only play seven games. Districts will have flexibility in how those schedules are developed.

District Structure: Teams within each District will determine the "structure" of their District and how they will schedule regular season games. Once Districts have been assigned, a District Committee, consisting of Athletic/Activities Directors from the teams of that District shall meet and determine, with the input from all District teams, the best way to form sub-districts. Each District shall have a minimum of two sub-districts, with Sub-Districts named by color; or Sub-districts may be named by direction, for example 9-player South District may name their sub-districts East and West. Final sub-district alignment shall be voted on by all member schools/teams, with a two-thirds majority (of those voting) needed to pass.

Schedules: Regular season schedules will be developed with all of the teams in a sub-district playing each other. Games scheduled to fill out the schedule will be cross-over games with teams in another sub-district of the District to which they are assigned (Intra-District games); or with permission from the MSHSL Placement Committee, these games may be played against teams in another District (Cross-District games). Once the District Committee has determined the schedule for all District teams, all members of the district will have the opportunity to vote on this schedule, with a two-thirds majority (of those voting) necessary in order to approve the schedule. Once the original two-year schedule has been approved, if there is a need to adjust schedules based on changes with co-ops, or schools/teams adding or dropping programs, those adjustments may be made by the District Committee.

Sub-Varsity Schedules: District football governs varsity schedules only. Teams within each District will decide how to schedule sub-varsity levels. These schedules may be aligned with the varsity schedule, or teams may schedule sub-varsity on their own. Sub-varsity schedules are not restricted to District opponents. The procedures for scheduling sub-varsity, and rules and policies to govern sub-varsity shall be included in District Bylaws.

Sub-District Champions: A champion will be determined for each sub-district. Trophies for Sub-District Champions shall be purchased directly from the MSHSL Trophy vendor by the championship teams. Each District may also name an all-district team based on their sub-districts. The criteria for these awards and any other awards (Coach of the Year, MVP, etc.); and how these award winners are selected, is to be determined by the District Committee and included in the District Bylaws. Each District shall determine what the awards

will be (trophies, plaques, certificates, etc.) and shall arrange for the purchase of the awards, with each school/team paying for the individual awards they receive.

District Committee: Membership on the District Committee shall be determined by each District, with equal representation (as close as possible) from each sub-district. The recommendation is to have seven or nine members of the District Committee. Members of the District Committee shall elect a chairperson from those who are on the committee. Each committee shall finalize the Bylaws for their District, as per the model provided by the MSHSL. Bylaws shall be approved by a vote of all members of the District, with a two-thirds majority (of those voting) needed to pass. The Bylaws shall be on file in the MSHSL office. Districts are to operate without having a separate financial structure. If there is a need to collect and disburse funds, a procedure for doing so must be included in the Bylaws. Those funds must be accounted for through the financial operation of a school that is a member of that district.

Resolution of Issues: The District Committee is expected to resolve issues that may occur within their district. They may contact MSHSL staff for guidance. If necessary, the District Placement Committee will mediate and assist in resolving any internal conflicts. Conflicts that cannot be resolved at the District level or with assistance from staff and/or the District Placement Committee will go to the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors. The decision of the Executive Committee is final.

MSHSL member schools/teams who choose to not participate or do not fully cooperate with District Football Policy will not be allowed to participate in the Section Playoffs.