

HISTORY OF THE OKLAHOMA SECONDARY SCHOOL ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATION

The beginning of the Oklahoma Secondary School Activities Association dates back to the year of 1911 when some of the State's most prominent educators met and began to draw up rules that would produce a degree of fairness for competition between schools. The first statewide playoff that led to a state championship was boys' basketball in 1918. A state championship for girls was established in 1919.

The Association of high schools grew steadily during the early years of this century. By 1925 a secretary was employed. In 1927 Mr. Lee K. Anderson was selected to serve as the first full time Executive Secretary. Mr. Anderson served in this capacity for forty years. Mr. Leo Higbie succeeded Mr. Anderson in 1967 after working as his assistant since 1947. Mr. Claude White was employed by the OSSAA in 1967, became the Executive Secretary in 1972, and retired in 1986. Ivan Evans was named as an Interim Executive Secretary during the first six months of 1987. In June of 1987, Mr. H. J. Green assumed the duties of the Executive Secretary position and served until January 1991. Mr. Bill Self was employed as Executive Secretary in January 1991 and served until November 1999. Danny Rennels succeeded Mr. Self as Executive Secretary in November 1999. In 2009, Ed Sheakley was named Executive Secretary, and served in that role for seven years. In the fall of 2017 David Jackson was named the Executive Director.

The early years of the OSSAA's history were primarily devoted to establishing eligibility rules and conducting state championships in basketball. The late 1930's and throughout the 1940's and 50's, the Association's athletic responsibilities grew to include all the sports being offered to boys in Oklahoma's high schools. Girls' sports were primarily limited to girls' basketball in the state's smaller schools and tennis, golf, and swimming in the larger schools. By 1967 there were thirty-eight state championships being conducted in eleven sports.

The expansion of the OSSAA was ignited in the 1960's by two events. In 1962 the OSSAA was changed from an athletic association to an activities association. This change brought music, speech, debate, and drama competitions under the jurisdiction of the OSSAA. The 1960's also saw the expansion of girls' athletics to equal the opportunities that were available to boys. With the addition in 1989 of academic bowl competition and competitive cheerleading, the OSSAA will crown 132 state champions in 27 different areas. Six-player girls' basketball changed to five-member girls' basketball for the entire state in the 1995-96 school year. Over 100,000 students participate in the state's athletic and non-athletic programs.

Management of the OSSAA is vested in a fifteen-member board of directors. This board is made up of an athletic director, high school principals and school district superintendents. It operates under the rules set forth in the OSSAA constitution.

The Executive Director and his Staff are responsible for coordinating, supervising and regulating all activities sponsored by the OSSAA. Each assistant is responsible for meeting with advisory committees and proposing rule changes and adaptations to the board of directors. In addition, plans must be made and arrangements coordinated for the various tournaments and playoff games that are held across the state. Also falling under responsibilities, each assistant, as well as Mr. Jackson, works with local coaches, administrators, and game officials to keep them abreast of rule changes.

The OSSAA is a private, non-profit organization. Funding for the most part is provided by gate admissions charged to the public at the playoff tournaments.



EDUCATION BASED ACTIVITY PROGRAMS

The National Federation of State High School Associations and the Oklahoma Secondary School Activities Association recognize the numerous potential benefits of participation by students in education-based activities. While education-based activities may differ between the stakeholder groups, all should be centered on optimizing the student's scholastic activity experience. Students will change, develop and expand abilities over time; coaches, administrators and parents should not only be cognizant of the fluid process, but also foster a safe, positive environment in which development can occur. Education-based activities must always be viewed as an evolving and unpredictable path.

The NFHS and the OSSAA recognize the influential role played by coaches and directors in all activities, and therefore emphasis should be placed on those individuals to instill and reinforce fundamentals and best practices, not only to minimize risk but also to promote an environment in which a student has the opportunity to reach his or her full potential. The common goal for all the stakeholders involved with education-based activities should be to make the experience enjoyable and rewarding for the all.

While our position is not intended to squelch dreams of achieving a college scholarship or professional or Olympic glory, we do place emphasis on the student's entire scholastic activity experience with the goals of enhancing participation, reducing injury risk, and optimizing performance and success (however defined) during the student's high school career. The ultimate goal; Producing an individual who is competent, confident, connected to his or her peer group and community, and of high character. This essential principle is at the core of the scholastic activity experience and is fundamental to the mission of the OSSAA and NFHS.

