

Competitive Balance Committee

April 14, 2026

The Competitive Balance Review Committee met on April 14, 2026. The committee members in attendance were Juliana Zavala, Chicago (University); Tom Schergen, Chicago (De La Salle); Whitney Martino, West Aurora; Dan Tully, Niles (Notre Dame), Scott Maupin, Wilmington; Katie Cazalet, Dunlap; Tim McConnell, Erie; Chris McGraw, Bloomington (Central Catholic); Brian Brooks, St. Joseph(S.J.-Ogden); Danley Killam, Carlinville; Jason Clay, Vandalia; Barry Creviston, Jacksonville (Routt); and Maurice Young, Hillcrest; Tracie Henry, IHSA Staff; Matt Troha, IHSA Staff; and Craig Anderson, IHSA Staff.

Committee member Brian Hoener, Alton (Marquette) was unable to attend and has requested to be replaced. A replacement for Brian will be made prior to the May meeting.

The committee reviewed several data points requested at the first Competitive Balance Committee meeting including the following:

- State Series results by sport and by school comparing boundary vs. non-boundary school success in the past several years.
- State Series results and the number of transfer students received since collecting transfer data through the Transfer Management System (TMS).
- Enrollment density of schools
- Population density of schools
- Multiplier waiver data for non-boundary schools comparing the current school year to the last two school years.
- A National review of other high school state associations managing boundary vs. non-boundary schools. Here are the responses received to date from this request:
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1HqBog2leX-DkYeDLF-ZKy-HOR0DY0np72CanZfwD9YQ/edit?gid=0#gid=0>

The committee discussed the following discoveries from the data review:

- Approximately 80% of non-boundary schools are located in the Chicagoland area.
- Notable increase in non-boundary schools **not** receiving waivers for the 2025-2026 school year.
- As a result, more non-boundary schools are competing with multiplied enrollment.
- Comparative data discussed from other state associations: Illinois has fewer classifications than many states (notably in basketball and football).
 - Oklahoma: 12 football classifications across 482 schools.
 - Michigan, Georgia, and Ohio identified as most comparable in number of high schools.

The committee reviewed a survey for member schools to complete to help gather additional information for the committee to consider as they move toward potential by-law and/or policy recommendations. The survey will be sent to official representatives with a request for a summary response from each school's administrative team.

The committee requested the following additional data points to help provide clarity on the competitive balance in some sports:

- Number of trophies relative to the number of non-boundary schools participating schools by sport.
 - Example: Girls gymnastics had one non-boundary entry, which resulted in a trophy (100% success rate).
- Comparative analysis:
 - Total number of boundary schools participating vs. percentage of non-boundary schools earning trophies. (flag football, soccer and girls gymnastics referenced)

The committee continues to discuss options from other states along with potential revisions of current IHSA by-laws and policies.

- Continued discussion regarding a potential "Open Division," noting that bordering states allow open enrollment so may not be an equal comparison with Illinois
- Consideration of increasing the number of classifications. (Enrollment cliff in Illinois was referenced. It is likely schools will see decreased enrollment not increased in the near future.)
- Discussion of 30-mile radius rule. (Decrease the 30 mile radius north of I-80 due to population density.)
- Roster transfer concerns:
 - Proposal: If a roster reaches a defined threshold of new transfer students, the team may be ineligible for postseason play.

The committee continues to have conversations on the root cause of a perceived or actual competitive imbalance noting the following:

- Access to student-athletes and competitive success.
- Recruiting (perceived vs. actual).
- Structural differences between boundary and non-boundary schools (student acquisition models).
- Population and enrollment density.
- Variability in access to athletes.
- Emphasis placed on athletics by families.
- Disparities in resources and facilities.

The committee has set the following future meeting dates:

- **May 6, 2026 (In-person)** – 10:00 AM
- **June 3, 2026 (In-person)** – 10:00 AM

The committee has discussed what they are hearing from their member school constituents. Here is a summary of that feedback:

- The multiplier is pushing successful non-boundary schools into higher classifications.
(Team bracketed 4A schools are now facing the greatest challenges)
- Notable feedback following the basketball state finals regarding the success of 4A non-boundary schools.

The committee generally has agreed to focus on avoiding a boundary – non-boundary schools competition split and alternatively consider pursuing by-law/policy adjustments that promote competitive equity within the existing membership structure.