



Pay-to-play

November 2013

Pennsylvania School Boards Association



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Summary

Participation fees continue to gain popularity in Pennsylvania

PSBA's Education Research and Policy Center (ERPC) in partnership with Pennsylvania State Athletic Director's Association (PSADA) has conducted Pennsylvania's first-ever full statewide assessment of fees for students participating in interscholastic athletics in public schools. The 2013 survey followed up on two earlier efforts in 2010 and 2012 to monitor the scope of fees charged to students who participate in athletics and other extracurricular activities. ERPC's most recent look at the issue additionally solicited feedback from all 500 of Pennsylvania's public school districts on fundraising activities, booster clubs, education foundations and local program cuts.

Analysis of the 2013 results shows again that participation fees are becoming an increasingly common way for school districts to ensure the viability of athletic and other extracurricular programming. Because Pennsylvania does not regard athletics, band, student clubs, etc., as part of a guaranteed basic public education, school boards and districts are free to consider the option of charging fees to students interested in participating in these activities. In light of financial difficulties persistent in many parts of the commonwealth, a growing number of districts are regarding participation fees as an appealing funding option especially when compared to the alternative of cutting programs.

In 2010, 13% of surveyed athletic directors in attendance at PSADA's four-day, statewide annual conference indicated their districts charged students fees for participation in athletics. At that time, fees were

generally reported to be relatively modest, ranging between \$5 and \$50 per student, per activity; far below the national average at the time.

In 2012, a second survey of attendees at the same annual conference showed the percentage of districts charging fees for participation had jumped from 13% to 30%. The survey also indicated that the range of the participation fees had risen to between \$10 and \$250 per student, per activity, with an average of \$65 per activity.

ERPC's update for 2013 solicited input directly from school districts in the commonwealth and generated responses from a fairly even distribution of urban, suburban and rural locations. The highest number of responses came from the south eastern, south central, and central western areas of Pennsylvania. This time around, 38% of respondents indicated that



Fees for Participation

District charges fee for participation in interscholastic athletics: Yes – 38% No – 62%

Fee is assessed	Per Sport	Per Year	Other
Percent of responses	39%	52%	9%
Average amount	\$80	\$89	
Minimum amount	\$10	\$20	
Maximum amount	\$200	\$375	\$450 Per Family

their district charges students a fee for participation in interscholastic athletics.

Half of respondents (52%) reported participation fees are assessed on a one-time annual basis for individual students. Thirty-nine percent indicated fees are assessed on an individual per-student, per-activity basis. A few districts charge an annual family fee that covers participation in all activities for all students from a single family.

The average single, annual per-student amount covering participation in all activities is \$89 with a maximum reported amount of \$375. The average individual per-student, per-activity amount is \$80 with a maximum reported amount of \$200. The highest

per-family annual amount reported is \$450. A small number of districts set a limit for the total amount multi-sport students will be required to pay. Twenty-two percent of respondents reported that districts charge fees for other extracurricular activities including band and chorus.

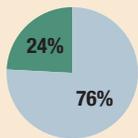
ERPC's survey also asked athletic directors to detail the types of fundraising efforts that are common in districts. While considered standard practice for many, few districts actually require fundraising activities. In most cases, money collected through fundraising efforts is used by the individual group responsible for raising the money.

The survey also found that 25% of districts have established either one-time or ongoing partnerships with corporate sponsors. Twenty-seven percent of corporate sponsorships were reported to be ongoing on an annual basis. Most were reported to be single corporate sponsorship events. The total amount given to the district by the sponsor varied greatly from as little as \$1,000 to more than \$1 million.

Survey results indicated that booster clubs support athletic programs in 90% of district respondents. Most use multiple booster clubs to support the activities of individual programs with an average of 11 booster clubs per district. More than half (63%) of booster clubs are required to have bylaws. Only about half (51%) submit annual financial reports to

Booster Clubs

Multiple booster clubs represent individual athletic programs



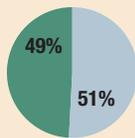
District requires booster club to have bylaws



Booster clubs receive an annual audit



Booster clubs submit financial reports to the business manager



Booster clubs are required to bond the treasurer



Booster clubs represent boys and girls programs equally



■ Yes ■ No

25

– Highest reported number of booster clubs in one district

11

– Average number of booster clubs in one district

the business manager, and only 58% receive annual audits. Most respondents felt that both boys' and girls' programs are equally represented by booster clubs in their district.

The survey asked finally if districts have had to cut athletic programs for financial reasons. Eleven percent of respondents indicated that their district has been forced to cut one or more programs for financial reasons. The average number of program cuts among districts that indicated being forced to cut programs is three, with a reported maximum number of 15. The most commonly cut athletic program identified is basketball, followed by soccer, golf, wrestling, volleyball and cross country. Football, baseball, softball, field hockey and tennis also were identified in surveys as having been eliminated in a few districts.



Most commonly cut district programs

Basketball	32%
Soccer	21%
Golf	16%
Cross Country	11%
Volleyball	11%
Wrestling	11%
Baseball	5%
Field Hockey	5%
Football	5%
Lacrosse	5%
Softball	5%
Tennis	5%

Highlighted Items

- Thirty-eight percent of school districts report charging students fees for participation in interscholastic athletics.
- Twenty-two percent of school districts report charging students fees for participation in other extracurricular activities including band and chorus.
- Most districts charge participants a single annual fee for participation in interscholastic athletics.
- The maximum individual annual amount charged to a single participant is \$375.
- The maximum per-student, per-sport amount charged is \$200. A multi-sport student participating in football, basketball and baseball would pay \$600 per year.
- Eleven percent of districts have had to cut athletic programs for financial reasons. Basketball is the most commonly reported athletic program to be cut.

Participation fees and fundraising activities

Revenue generated from fees is restricted for specific use.....	17%
District charges a fee for participation in other extracurricular activities.....	22%
District requires fundraising activities	12%
Funds generated through fundraising are used for district-wide athletic program	18%
Funds generated through fundraising are used for individual programs within the district	42%
Has your district been forced to cut one or more athletic programs in the last year for financial reasons?	Yes – 11% No – 89%



The PSBA Education Research & Policy Center is an affiliate of the Pennsylvania School Boards Association. The PSBA Education Research & Policy Center is dedicated to the purpose of in-depth research and analysis of issues affecting public education in Pennsylvania.

Questions about pay-to-play may be directed to: PSBA Education Research & Policy Center, (800) 932-0588, ext. 3351.