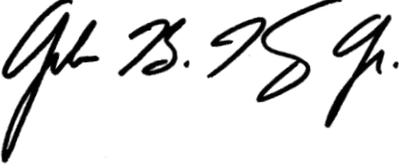




TO: P-12 Education Committee
FROM: Ken Wagner 
SUBJECT: Competitive Cheerleading as an Interscholastic Sport
DATE: April 21, 2014
AUTHORIZATION(S): 
Issue for Decision

Should the Department revise the Extra Class Athletic Activities Guidelines (“Guidelines”), established pursuant to §135.4 of the Commissioner’s regulations, to reflect competitive cheerleading as an interscholastic sport?

Reason(s) for Consideration

Competitive cheerleading is not included as an interscholastic sport in the following Department documents: Guidelines for Coaching Requirements; New York State Selection Classification Program for Interscholastic Athletics Programs; Guidelines for Mixed Competition on Interscholastic Athletic Teams; and the Guidelines for Sport Standards.

In many districts throughout New York State, however, cheerleading has grown beyond the traditional format of sideline spirit and cheer activities. Competitive cheerleading has developed into a competitive sport that involves complex athletic skills. Examples of these skills include pyramid building and/or toss; partner stunts; lifts, jumps, and tumbling. The athleticism of competitive cheerleading requires that coaches are properly trained in stunt spotting and understanding the fundamentals of conditioning.

Additionally, the lack of formal governance and sport standards for competitive cheerleading has resulted in inconsistent standards of participation and competition throughout the state. Currently, there is no limit on the length of seasons, time between contests, or required practice days. In recognition of the evolution of the sport, it is necessary to ensure that coaches are properly trained and that schools follow a common set of participation standards to ensure the safety of student athletes.

Proposed Handling

The proposal to revise the Guidelines to reflect cheerleading as an interscholastic sport will be presented to the P-12 Education Committee for action at the April 2014 meeting.

Procedural History

The proposal to recognize cheerleading as an interscholastic sport was initially presented to the Department in early 2009 by the New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSPHSAA) and the New York State Council of School Superintendents (NYCOSS) Athletics Advisory Committee. In August 2009, NYSPHSAA formed an ad hoc committee to evaluate all aspects of cheerleading, both traditional and competitive. After meeting seven times from 2009 to 2011, the committee concluded that competitive cheerleading should be designated as an interscholastic sport to ensure student safety and the proper training of coaches.

Background Information

In recognition of the evolution of the sport, NYSPHSAA has developed a proposed set of by-laws and eligibility standards for competitive cheerleading. In addition, NYSPHSAA conducted an inaugural Cheerleading Invitational Event competition during the 2012-2013 school year and plans to continue holding a Cheerleading competition event in the 2013-2014 school year. Thirty-four states¹ and the District of Columbia currently recognize competitive cheerleading as a sport.

If approved by the Board, competitive cheerleading shall be defined by the Department as teams performing various athletic activities, including stunts, pyramids and/or tosses, jumps and tumbling, under the direct supervision of a properly certified coach. Competitive cheerleading squads may perform during school functions, as well as properly sanctioned school, sectional, state, and/or national events during a specified season.

Both NYSPHSAA and Department staff recommend that all coaches/advisors of competitive cheerleading be required to complete the same coaching requirements, including all safety provisions, as all interscholastic sports recognized in Department Guidelines, based on Commissioner's Regulation §135.4 (c)(7).

These changes would include adding competitive cheerleading as a defined interscholastic sport in the following Department documents: Guidelines for Coaching Requirements, New York State Selection Classification Program for Interscholastic Athletics Programs, Guidelines for Mixed Competition on Interscholastic Teams and the Guidelines for Sport Standards.

¹ Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Regents take the following action:

VOTED: That the Board approve the recommendation as submitted, and direct Department staff to revise the Extra Class Athletic Activities Guidelines, established pursuant to §135.4 of the Commissioner's regulations, to reflect competitive cheerleading as an interscholastic sport, effective with the 2014-15 winter season.

Timetable for Implementation

If approved by the Board of Regents at the April meeting, recognition of competitive cheerleading as an interscholastic sport would become effective commencing with the 2014-15 winter season.