

October 4, 2011

Common Education Committee
Oklahoma House of Representatives

IS11-072

Interim Study on Eligibility on Participation in
Extracurricular Activities

Rep. Gus Blackwell, District 61

With input from:

The Fischer Family, Hooker, OK
Roger, Marilyn, Sage, Cody, Sidney and Cory

The Arthaud Family, Keyes, OK
Scott, Angela, Luke and Abby

OSSAA

Jenks ordered to forfeit nine football games from 2008

JENKS, Okla. (AP) — The Oklahoma Secondary School Activities Association has ruled Jenks High School must forfeit nine games from the 2008 season after a student-athlete was ruled ineligible.

Read more at:

http://www.usatoday.com/sports/preps/football/2009-08-07-jenks-forfeits_N.htm

Booker T. Washington football coach suspended, team forfeits 2 games

Booker T. Washington football coach and athletic director Antwain Jimmerson has been suspended from those duties for the rest of the year, after a Tulsa Public Schools investigation into the athletic department revealed six student-athletes were ineligible.

Read more at:

http://www.tulsaworld.com/sportsextra/article.aspx?subjectid=227&articleid=20091027_227_0_TulsaP123331

Another program forfeits high school football win

Southmoore has become the seventh Oklahoma high school to forfeit a football game for the use of an ineligible player, OSSAA executive secretary Ed Sheakley said Thursday.

Read more at:

http://www.tulsaworld.com/sportsextra/article.aspx?subjectid=227&articleid=20100107_227_0_Su_hora662350

Verdigris girls must forfeit two soccer titles

The OSSAA rules that sisters were ineligible for 2009, 2010 seasons.

The Verdigris girls soccer program will be forced to vacate the 2009 and 2010 Class 4A state championship titles for participation by two players who have been ruled ineligible.

Read more at:

http://www.tulsaworld.com/sportsextra/highschool/article.aspx?subjectid=402&articleid=20100722_29_B1_TeVrir442050

The State of Alabama's
"Tim Tebow Bill"
"Every Child. Every Opportunity."

Welcome! We are a group of citizens of the great state of Alabama lobbying for our state public education establishment to allow homeschooled students equal access to sports and extracurricular activities. Legislation which would provide this access has been introduced into the Alabama Legislature. This effort began in 2005. Legislation was then submitted in 2006 in the Alabama Senate and House of Representatives.

In 2011 the bill is being sponsored by Senator Shad McGill as Senate Bill 334. The bill is also being co-sponsored by Senators Brewbaker, Glover, Reed, and Waggoner!

We are deeply appreciative for the outstanding legislators who are willing to help our students and schools by sponsoring this legislation.

Our bill derives its name from Tim Tebow (with his family's permission). Tim has attained the highest level of success of any football player in history at this point in his career. He was a homeschooled student who played football for a public high school team in Florida, led Neese High School to the 2005 state championship and played in 2006 as a true freshman on the National Championship Florida Gators team. As the Gators' starting quarterback in 2007, Tim led his team to a very successful season. For his performance and character, Tim, in addition to the Heisman Trophy, also earned the Maxwell Award as the nation's top football player, the Davey O'Brien Award as the nation's best quarterback, and the James E. Sullivan Award as the nation's most outstanding amateur athlete in any sport.

Also, 24 other states support some form of equal access for homeschoolers. It is time for Alabama to step up and support our hard-working homeschool educators, students, and student-athletes as well. We are urging the House and Senate Education Committees to bring these bills out of committee so that a full vote can be taken in the legislature. The passage of this law will not only benefit homeschool

athletes and musicians, but it will also benefit the entire system of education in Alabama. The ultimate goal of any educational system should be to provide the services needed for all students to have a well rounded education. Extracurricular activities are one of those services, beyond academics, that help today's children learn the skills they will need to be tomorrow's leaders. USA Today said in a 2003 article that supporting homeschool choices "benefits children, their parents AND LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS."

Please join us today in our effort to make the future a better place for all students in Alabama!

Please call and write the House and Senate Education Committee members today!

Also, encourage your local public or private high school Alabama High School Athletic Association representative to propose a "rule change" to the AHSAA board which would permit homeschooled athletes in their district to participate in the community's school athletic programs.

Facts & Statistics

Homeschooling is growing rapidly and there are an estimated 2 million homeschooled children in the US.

Alabama has an estimated 25,000 homeschooled children.

Research shows that homeschooled students score well above the national average on standardized tests.

Homeschool parents are tax-payers and voters.

24 other states allow some form of "Equal Access" where homeschooled students participate in extracurricular activities.

325 Homeschooled Athletes are currently playing NCAA Division I-A sports this year.

<http://www.timtebowbill.com/>

Public School Access for Homeschoolers—A Legal Summary

FLORIDA

Home educated students are eligible to participate in the public school's interscholastic extracurricular activities. Florida Statutes § 1006.15.

Florida Statutes ♦ 1006.15

(1) This section may be cited as the "Craig Dickinson Act."

(2) Interscholastic extracurricular student activities are an important complement to the academic curriculum. Participation in a comprehensive extracurricular and academic program contributes to student development of the social and intellectual skills necessary to become a well-rounded adult. As used in this section, the term "extracurricular" means any school-authorized or education-related activity occurring during or outside the regular instructional school day.

(3)(a) To be eligible to participate in interscholastic extracurricular student activities, a student must:

1. Maintain a grade point average of 2.0 or above on a 4.0 scale, or its equivalent, in the previous semester or a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 or above on a 4.0 scale, or its equivalent, in the courses required by s.1003.43(1).

2. Execute and fulfill the requirements of an academic performance contract between the student, the district school board, the appropriate governing association, and the student's parents, if the student's cumulative grade point average falls below 2.0, or its equivalent, on a 4.0 scale in the courses required by s. 1003.43(1) or, for students who entered the 9th grade prior to the 1997-1998 school year, if the student's cumulative grade point average falls below 2.0 on a 4.0 scale, or its equivalent, in the courses required by s. 1003.43(1) that are taken after July 1, 1997. At a minimum, the contract must require that the student attend summer school, or its graded equivalent, between grades 9 and 10 or grades 10 and 11, as necessary.

3. Have a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 or above on a 4.0 scale, or its equivalent, in the courses required by s. 1003.43(1) during his or her junior or senior year.

4. Maintain satisfactory conduct and, if a student is convicted of, or is found to have committed, a felony or a delinquent act which would have been a felony if committed by an adult, regardless of whether adjudication is withheld, the student's participation in interscholastic extracurricular

activities is contingent upon established and published district school board policy.

(b) Any student who is exempt from attending a full school day based on rules adopted by the district school board for double session schools or programs, experimental schools, or schools operating under emergency conditions must maintain the grade point average required by this section and pass each class for which he or she is enrolled.

(c) An individual home education student is eligible to participate at the public school to which the student would be assigned according to district school board attendance area policies or which the student could choose to attend pursuant to district or interdistrict controlled open enrollment provisions, or may develop an agreement to participate at a private school, in the interscholastic extracurricular activities of that school, provided the following conditions are met:

1. The home education student must meet the requirements of the home education program pursuant to s. 1002.41.
2. During the period of participation at a school, the home education student must demonstrate educational progress as required in paragraph (b) in all subjects taken in the home education program by a method of evaluation agreed upon by the parent and the school principal which may include: review of the student's work by a certified teacher chosen by the parent; grades earned through correspondence; grades earned in courses taken at a community college, university, or trade school; standardized test scores above the 35th percentile; or any other method designated in s. 1002.41.
3. The home education student must meet the same residency requirements as other students in the school at which he or she participates.
4. The home education student must meet the same standards of acceptance, behavior, and performance as required of other students in extracurricular activities.
5. The student must register with the school his or her intent to participate in interscholastic extracurricular activities as a representative of the school before the beginning date of the season for the activity in which he or she wishes to participate. A home education student must be able to participate in curricular activities if that is a requirement for an extracurricular activity.

6. A student who transfers from a home education program to a public school before or during the first grading period of the school year is academically eligible to participate in interscholastic extracurricular activities during the first grading period provided the student has a successful evaluation from the previous school year, pursuant to subparagraph 2.

7. Any public school or private school student who has been unable to maintain academic eligibility for participation in interscholastic extracurricular activities is ineligible to participate in such activities as a home education student until the student has successfully completed one grading period in home education pursuant to subparagraph 2. to become eligible to participate as a home education student.

...

(4) The student standards for participation in interscholastic extracurricular activities must be applied beginning with the student's first semester of the 9th grade. Each student must meet such other requirements for participation as may be established by the district school board; however, a district school board may not establish requirements for participation in interscholastic extracurricular activities which make participation in such activities less accessible to home education students than to other students. Except as set forth in paragraph (3)(c), evaluation processes or requirements that are placed on home education student participants may not go beyond those that apply under s. 1002.41 to home education students generally.

(5) Any organization or entity that regulates or governs interscholastic extracurricular activities of public schools:

(a) Shall permit home education associations to join as member schools.

(b) Shall not discriminate against any eligible student based on an educational choice of public, nonpublic, or home education.

(6) Public schools are prohibited from membership in any organization or entity which regulates or governs interscholastic extracurricular activities and discriminates against eligible students in public, nonpublic, or home education.

(7) Any insurance provided by school districts for participants in extracurricular activities shall cover the participating home education student. If there is an additional premium for such coverage, the participating home education student shall pay said premium.

http://hslida.org/laws/Equal_Access/Florida_eq.asp

Down, Set, Study?

With OSSAA throwing the flag on local schools, can athletics and academics still play as a team?

BY AJA J. JUNIOR

July 21, 2010

Remember the cliques throughout high school? Before first period in the morning, they strolled the hallways together. At lunch, the cafeteria sat divided as everyone sat at their relegated tables. After school, you could pinpoint where each group would be. It was a simple existence.

There were the popular girls and the cheerleaders, who often overlapped more often than not. You had the gothic kids who dressed in heavy black make-up and leather, and the drama club students who were always theatrical.

Most importantly, you had the jocks and the nerds -- complete opposite ends of the spectrum. Their existence isn't that simple.

Within the next month, schools will return to normal of having these cliques fill cafeterias and hallways across the area.

Almost the same time last year, though, everything wasn't as normal as most would expect.

Last year, Tulsa was rocked as the city quickly discovered two of its top schools for athletics and academics were failing to bridge the gap. In one of the schools, more than 40 student-athletes were affected, and several administrators as well as coaches and staff were forced to step down from their positions.

The community and its schools started a dialogue that continues until this day: "How do you marry brain and brawn?"

Fouling Out

A few weeks before the 2009-10 school year and football season were, the Oklahoma Secondary School Activities Association ruled that one of Jenks' student-athletes was ineligible due to residency and scholastic violations. In addition, Jenks High School was forced to forfeit nine football games from the 2008 season in which the student-athlete, Jarrett Lake, had participated.

Head Coach Allan Trimble, who led Jenks to nine championships, was suspended indefinitely by the OSSAA after review of the infractions.

Two months later, in late October 2009, speculation arose that Tulsa Public Schools were investigating the eligibility of multiple Booker T. Washington High School athletes.

Just days later, Tulsa Public Schools released a statement that 37 student-athletes were discovered to be ineligible due to their academic standings in four sports, which included softball, volleyball, cross-country and football. The number later escalated to more than 40 students in the sport.

"We are aware of our responsibilities to our honorable association with the OSSAA," said area Superintendent of High Schools Kevin Burr in a news release. "Allowing ineligible athletes to participate put BTW at a competitive advantage to other member schools that chose to participate by the guidelines we all agreed to. We have a responsibility to athletes of competing schools as well as our own."

The football coach and athletic director for the school, Antwain Jimmerson, was suspended from his duties for the rest of the year along with four members of the athletic department and BTW principal Micheal Johnson.

Booker T. Washington was forced to forfeit two football games for the use of an ineligible student-athlete. This past January, Jimmerson resigned as coach and athletics director. On June 1, Trimble, the head coach of Jenks, was reinstated and is allowed to resume his coaching duties at Jenks this year.

"I think the biggest thing we have to remember as adults, educators, coaches, parents is the behavior that we model," said Mike Clark, an administrator for the OSSAA. "Our student-athletes will learn more from our actions than our words... I think kids were wronged to some degree."

Tulsa Public Schools declined to comment. Jenks Public Schools could not be reached for comment.

The fallout of the investigations and controversies brought a greater awareness to surrounding schools in the area, too.

"From day one, (Bixby Superintendant Dr. Kyle Wood) has always questioned (co-athletic director) Stephanie Blackwell and myself on whether we have gotten change-of-school forms and that the paperwork is filed," said Bixby head football coach and athletic director Pat McGrew in an October Tulsa World article. "We've bugged the OSSAA so much, they laugh about it. We also inform our coaches that if they have new student-athletes, make sure to do the research. It's one of the toughest things we deal with, making sure a kid is eligible to compete."

How does the question of eligibility even arise, though? Who makes the rules, and how are they enforced?

Playing By the Rules

The Oklahoma Secondary School Activities Association serves as the governing body for enforcing rules and overseeing the activities of Oklahoma schools. The board of directors who are composed of school officials from across the state create and vote on the rules for schools, coaches, teachers and students to follow.

After the controversies surrounding the two schools, more than 60 percent of the district's principals, athletic directors and coaches reported to a mandatory rules seminar that was hosted by the district as well as the OSSAA.

"As an AD, it's been all about educating people on what they need to do," said Stephanie Spring, athletic director for Tulsa Public Schools and who also sits on the OSSAA board of directors prior to the session. "If they have any questions about eligibility, they need to understand they have to ask them. Rules are rules. They are not optional."

However, many have pointed out that there are a great number of rules to remember as well as a bit of confusion amongst the rules.

"From our end we have seen more schools trying to get a better understanding of the rules," Clark said. "We are going out and doing workshops with schools and administrators to help answer any questions they might have."

Others have expressed that the rules are a few too many for their liking.

"There's no way anyone can know all those rules," former BTW assistant athletic director Ioder "Butch" Fisher told the district in a Tulsa World article. "I can't be expected to memorize all of it."

Down, Set, Study?

According to the eligibility rules of the 37-page rulebook of OSSAA, "If a student does not meet the minimum scholastic standard he/she will not be eligible to participate during the first six weeks of the next 18-week grading period they attend." In fact, the rules concerning eligibility continue for three and a half pages of the book.

As Spring said, the rules are the rules, though, and there have been extreme cases to coaches proving a point of being student-athletes.

Case in point -- Coach Ken Carter. His controversy played out on the big screen in Coach Carter, but in real-life it stirred headlines.

In 1999, Coach Carter locked out his entire varsity basketball team from the gym until their grades improved.

While such drastic measures might not need to be taken for every sport and athlete, there appears to be a need to crack down on athletes and their academics more.

"Athletic directors and coaches at large schools are administrators as much as they are coaches," said Brad Heath, editorial director for *Vype Oklahoma*, a high school athletic magazine. "It's getting to the point where large schools with 80-100 football players need a Compliance Officer to monitor nothing but eligibility. "

Another big factor to consider with student-athletes is their academic eligibility not just for participation but for graduation as well as possible consideration at a college level.

Taking It to the Next Level

"Student athletes know they must maintain their grades to participate in athletics," Heath said. "That is explained to them from the beginning. If you are a student failing a class, you know your eligibility is lost, and you must work to get the grades up, so you can continue to participate."

The same thing can be said if a student-athlete is considering a career at a collegiate level.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association clearly outlines the requirements of student-athletes considering a collegiate athletic career for all divisions (Division I, II and III).

So, for example, if a high school student-athlete would like to earn a scholarship or simply play for a Division I school, they must meet four requirements: they must graduate from high school; complete 16 core courses specified by the NCAA; earn a minimum grade-point average in those courses; and earn a SAT/ACT score that correlates with the grade-point average sliding scale that's specified by the organization.

The list gets more extensive and detailed from there, but there are a number of factors that the NCAA looks at when considering student-athletes for collegiate eligibility. Not to mention, the student still must be accepted to the school of their choosing to move forward.

"A very small percentage of high school athletes receive college scholarships and even smaller yet, is the number of student/athletes who complete four years of athletics," said Clark of the OSSAA.

In fact, the numbers are incredibly small. The chance of a football player graduating and playing collegiate football is 5.8 percent, according to the NCAA. For basketball players, the number decreases to 3.1 percent.

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The opportunity to be the next Sam Bradford or Felix Jones decreases from there. Approximately, 1.7 percent of collegiate football players go from playing in the NCAA to the NFL, compared to 1.2 percent basketball players that go from the NCAA to the professional level. For women NCAA basketball players, the number is 0.9 percent to go from college to the WNBA.

These numbers indicate that students should take their education a bit more serious not only for the next level but to prepare for not going to the next level.

Play Hard, Study Harder

"Academics win every time over athletics," Heath said. "The line should never thin and the grades should never fall below that line," Heath said. "If they do, you don't play. If they knowingly play you, then there should be a price to pay."

Out of last year's debacles, no other school districts reported any other ineligibilities or problems. As previously mentioned, surrounding schools began taking extra precautions to make sure they were using every preventative possible.

For example, Union High School has a mandatory stipulation that all student-athletes fill out a new form for each sport every school year. Owasso High School has set up an enrollment center for students, which requires all new students to go there first. From there, if a new student participates in athletics, the form is duplicated.

"It's been my experience that the majority of the coaches in Oklahoma want their kids to take academics very serious," Heath said, "but if the OSSAA discovers that a team has played ineligible players in a contest, the school can expect to forfeit the games he or she played."

There's nothing that can be corrected regarding last year's problems, but all could learn from the experience and become better leaders and take more seriously the name of "student-athlete."

<http://www.urbantulsa.com/gyrobase/Content?oid=oid%3A31246>

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