

Education: High School Sports Program Eliminated
Senate Bill 5

Article 1:

Hello Budget Cuts, Goodbye Sports: The Threat to Athletics

By: Grace Chen October 8, 2020

Budgets are tight in school districts across America, and when money becomes scarce, tough decisions have to be made. For some schools, the cuts may come in the athletics departments, with a number of districts threatening to significantly decrease the athletic programs available to students or do away with sports altogether. While this is not a choice most schools want to make, what other options do they have when the money simply isn't there? We'll take a look at a number of states across the nation that are facing these questions, and how they are handling the challenge of keeping sports and other extracurricular activities in schools, despite their inability to pay for them.

Cost-Cutting Measures to Begin in Pennsylvania

The governor of this state, Tom Corbett, recently announced a slash to public education in Pennsylvania that will total no less than \$1 billion. The cuts were proposed in response to necessary cost-cutting measures that must be taken due to less money coming into the state. According to a report at the Observer-Reporter, \$550 million of the cuts are slated for public schools, with a focus on special grants that support a variety of educational programs. The other \$625 million would be cut from the budgets of state universities.

As school boards grapple with major cuts to their budgets, one of the first items that appear to be headed for the chopping block is athletic programs. Many predict that middle and junior high schools will be the first to be cut back, with some schools even taking away all of their current athletic programs. Schools might also cut spending by limiting the number of conferences and clinics coaches may attend, as well as the number of post-season tournaments in which the schools can participate. The fees to attend these tournaments can get as high as \$20,000 for popular sports like football.

Other proposed places to cut funds include:

- Doubling up on boys and girls basketball schedules to save on bus fees
- Restricting schedules to playing schools in the immediate surrounding area
- Parents picking up the tab for expenses like athletic physicals and fees to play sports
- Eliminating athletic trainers from schools

The proposed changes could happen very quickly once the budget is passed in the state legislatures. Schools are already preparing for the likelihood that athletics will look very different during the next academic year.

Booster Club Trying to Save Hockey in Hilton

New York is another state that has been hit hard by slashed budgets, and the Hilton school district is feeling the pinch. According to an article at the Democrat & Chronicle, ice hockey is one of the sports

slated to be cut in the initial budget proposal. In addition to hockey, Hilton is also looking at cutting gymnastics, two modified basketball teams, and JV volleyball.

Mike Giruzzi, Hilton Athletic Director, said the proposed cuts were based on student participation, program costs, and opportunities for athletes to compete outside of the school. Giruzzi told the Democrat & Chronicle, "We're in tough economic times. We don't want to cut anything." He added that the proposed cuts were far from final and that the district is in an "ongoing process" to determine how to balance their budget while serving the needs of the majority of their students.

The Hilton Hockey Booster Club has decided not to take the news lying down. This group of parents has organized a "Save Hilton Hockey" movement that is collecting donations to try to keep hockey in the schools. The booster club is circulating a petition, appearing at school board meetings, and participating in a variety of fundraisers while waiting for the school board to determine which cuts they will push through.

No Sports in Duvall? Very Likely

In Florida, things look even grimmer for school athletics. A recent article in the Florida Times-Union reports that Duvall County School Board Chairman W.C. Gentry has announced that the upcoming school year may well be one without sports of any kind, thanks to budget cuts proposed by Florida Governor Rick Scott. With a \$97 million shortfall staring them in the face, this district may have no choice but to do away with athletics of all kinds, including high school football.

"It's a horrible situation," Gentry told the Times-Union. "There's no question we will have to do away with sports. We're fighting just to preserve the accreditation of our schools. There's no good news right now. We've been cutting for the last three years, so this isn't a one-time hit. There simply isn't anything left to cut that isn't part of the core curriculum. It's an ugly picture." Final decisions will be made by the board in the next few weeks after the state legislature votes on the final budget.

A columnist at National Public Radio, Frank Deford, notes that it isn't just athletics that are getting cut at schools across the country. He refers to SAM activities, which are sports, art, and music, that have all been the victims of budget shortfalls in recent years. Deford notes that kids that participate in these activities tend to be the ones that stay in school and perform well. Unfortunately, Deford also notes also that "they're the logical expenses to slash before you take down education basics: reading, writing, arithmetic."

With so many schools struggling with tighter budgets and fewer resources to work with, only time will tell how the face of public education will look like once this economic shakedown is complete.

<https://www.publicschoolreview.com/blog/hello-budget-cuts-goodbye-sports-the-threat-to-athletics>

Article 2:

Elizabethtown School Board decides not to cut sports, music and other activities

By: Katelyn Smith March 23, 2022

ELIZABETHTOWN, Pa. — The Elizabethtown School Board has decided not to drop funding for its extracurricular activities following a lengthy meeting with parents on Tuesday night.

The school board is trying to reduce the district's budget by \$1 million to ease the burden on taxpayers.

The district was considering dropping all non-mandated programs and services, including:

- Sports
- Music programs
- Field trips
- Bus transportation (other than for those with special needs)

However, after a hearing from parents and students. The school board members decided not to vote and say they are going to find a different way to balance the budget.

<https://www.wgal.com/article/elizabethtown-pennsylvania-school-board-will-not-cut-sports-music-other-activities/39511826#>

Article 3:

School Administrators: Consider the 'Cost' Before Cutting Athletics Programs

By: Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald March 12, 2018

Superintendents are well aware that they live on the edge. Bad weather or major budget cuts spell trouble. While most have learned that they have no control over the weather and only minimal influence over the legislature and the budget, school boards and the community tend to hold administrators responsible for both. What superintendents do control is where the money is spent within their districts.

In Delaware, the governor called for "Shared Sacrifice" and "talked tax hikes along with spending cuts in the state government – including schools." Superintendents were faced with a "Herculean task" after last year's cuts. Unfortunately, over the past few years most superintendents have had to make difficult decisions involving budget reductions. With an election year looming, education once again appears to be on the chopping block, and after multiple years of budget reductions, many superintendents have nothing left to cut except people or programs.

When faced with making cuts, the goal of every superintendent is to lessen the impact of any budget cut on "the classroom." Attention then focuses on what is perceived as "non-instructional" programs, which

for too many means cutting athletics, and every superintendent must do what is best for his or her district.

Districts with vibrant Boys and Girls Clubs, community recreational programs, the YMCA or other opportunities may be able to make the argument that middle school students will still have the opportunity to participate. However, the existence of club or AAU programs could make some or all of their high school's athletic programs susceptible to being eliminated.

While cutting athletics programs creates the potential for savings, what is the associated cost? The belief that athletics is "non-instructional" is a misnomer; and before making the decision to drop sports within a program, it is important to carefully look at the impact cutting education-based athletics would have on a school, a district or the community.

First and foremost, athletic programs provide each student-athlete with an identity and a purpose. Secondly, they are some of the most valuable at-risk programs that schools can offer. Lastly, they create a sense of pride for both the school and community.

Many believe that the purpose of education is to create good citizens and to prepare students with the skills necessary to succeed in an ever-changing global economy. A part of this premise is that school-based athletics, which is grounded in the values of good sportsmanship and fair play, is essential to developing the well-rounded citizen.

A school's purpose must be to develop individuals who cannot only handle success and failure, but who understand how to work with others to achieve a common goal. This means developing the individual who loves to compete, but also appreciates the need for having a balance in his or her life. There is no better way to do this than through education-based athletics.

When you walk around school before the "big" game, you feel the electricity. Also, listen to the discussions in the local coffee shop or school cafeteria. Nothing else has such a continual positive effect like high school athletics. This is true not only for the athlete, but for those in the band, on the cheer squad and even the elementary school students who seek role models.

Athletics also impacts the "invisible" student on the fringes of the school setting. This young person may not fit-in, struggling to find an identity, and may exist through the computer. He or she wants to belong, wants to learn to work with others, but hasn't discovered his or her niche. While these students may never be standout players, by being a member of their high school team, they create connections and develop a purpose. Such opportunities just don't exist for these students in the competitive pay-to-play world of club sports.

In times of programmatic cuts, athletics is a tremendous bargain. If utilized properly, high school athletics can also be a highly effective "at-risk" program. There are many examples of coaches having a greater influence on a student staying in school than any teacher or guidance counselor. For these students, athletics provides purpose and direction.

Many educational leaders would like to say that students see the intrinsic value of receiving a high school education. However, most teenagers' minds just don't work that way. They need to have a

reason – one that is immediate and has an impact rather than a promise of a better life because they earned a diploma.

An additional component of education-based athletics is that educators see the value of sports in providing students with a caring and nurturing environment. The purpose is not built around the concept of developing professional athletes or winning championships – those things are by-products of what we do. The objective is to take student-athletes and make them better.

School-based athletics has immeasurable value and has repeatedly proven to be the heart and soul of a community. When tragedy hits, the athletic teams and student-athletes have demonstrated their resilience and have been the rock upon which the community has rebuilt or found solace. In times of financial challenges, what superintendent has not found athletics to be the rallying point needed to pass a levy? And what community doesn't celebrate and take pride in their champions – both past and present?

As fiscal issues continue to dominate the front pages of our local papers, it is vital to remember that education-based athletics provides opportunities for students, communities and superintendents. With each challenge or cut, it's important to keep in mind the words of former Chief Justice Earl Warren, when he spoke of the importance of athletics by saying "each morning I always turn to the sports pages first which records people's accomplishments. The front page has nothing but man's failures."

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work that way. They need to have reason – one that is immediate and has an impact rather than a promise of a better life because they earned a diploma. An additional component of education-based athletics is that educators see the value of sports in providing students with a caring and nurturing environment. The purpose is not built around the concept of developing professional athletes or winning championships– those things are by-products of what we do. The objective is to take student-athletes and make them better. School-based athletics has immeasurable value and has repeatedly proven to be the heart and soul of a community. When tragedy hits, the athletic teams and student-athletes have demonstrated their resilience and have been the rock upon which the community has rebuilt or found solace. In times of financial challenges, what superintendent has not found athletics to be the rallying point needed to pass a levy? And what community doesn't celebrate and take pride in their champions – both past and present? As fiscal issues continue to dominate the front pages of our local papers, it is vital to remember that education-based athletics provides opportunities for students, communities and superintendents. With each challenge or cut, it's important to keep in mind the words of former Chief Justice Earl Warren, when he spoke of the importance of athletics by saying "each morning I always turn to the sports pages first which records people's accomplishments. The front page has nothing but man's failures. "School administrators would be wise to keep the doors of opportunity open for our young people to continue setting records and achieving goals through education-based high school athletics.

<https://www.nfhs.org/articles/school-administrators-consider-the-cost-before-cutting-athletics-programs/>