



# Texas High School Coaches Association, Inc.

P.O. Drawer 1138 ☆ San Marcos 78667-1138 ☆ Organized in 1930 ☆ Telephone 512-392-3741 ☆ FAX 512-392-3762

**DATE:** July 17, 2008

**TO:** Texas State Board of Education

**FROM:** D.W. Rutledge, Executive Director  
Texas High School Coaches Association

**RE:** Proposed amendment to add Athletics for one to four credits to the approved list of elective credits for graduation.  
(COMMITTEE OF THE FULL BOARD – Discussion of Proposed Amendment to 19 TAC Chapter 74, Curriculum Requirements, Subchapter F, Graduation Requirements, Beginning with School Year 2007-2008, 74.61, High School Graduation Requirements)

The Texas High School Coaches Association is asking the State Board of Education to consider amending the approved list of elective credits for graduation, to include Athletics.

With the new 4x4 Requirements establishing 26 credits to graduate starting with the graduating class of 2011, students who participate in Athletics but only receive two credits will be placed in a difficult situation if they have a goal of graduating on the Distinguished Plan. Athletes do not have enough room in their schedules to participate in Athletics for all four years of high school and take dual credit classes during their junior and senior years. This generates a serious problem. Not receiving credit for Athletics in their junior and senior years will prohibit them from having enough credits to graduate in the advanced graduation plans. Athletics is the only elective that receives only two credits for four years of participation. Prior to the new 4x4 requirements, enough room existed in an athlete's schedule to participate in Athletics all four years and only receive two credits. Now, the extra room in their schedule has been eliminated.

The two groups of student-athletes who will be most affected if the current system is not changed, will be the upper-level students who have to manipulate their schedules to take dual-credit classes and the at-risk students who sometimes have to repeat classes due to failing grades. This could negatively impact the most effective at-risk program that we currently have in place.

The current system of only awarding two Physical Education credits for four years of participation in Athletics is not fair and equitable, especially when you consider all other electives, (including JROTC, Dance & Band) receive four credits for four years.

We believe that all of our electives are very important, but the current system is unfair to Athletics.

Interscholastic sports are an integral part of the educational process. Sound athletic programs can provide valuable lessons for practical situations. The daily influential power of a positive Athletic program and coach can be life changing for many of our young people. Student-athletes experience daily victories, discovering within themselves the ability to overcome adversity, to develop leadership skills, to develop winning attitudes, to be hard workers and to be a part of a team which requires sacrifice and service to others. These things are a direct result of a quality athletic program and the value of coaching kids every day. A quality athletic program has the power to combat everything from racism, to the high drop-out rate, to low self-esteem.

### **Positive Educational Outcomes of a Strong Athletic Program**

There is a huge volume of scientific evidence that provides a relatively consistent association between participation in high school athletics and many positive educational outcomes. Research has noted that athletic participation has a significant positive correlation with:

1. Academic achievement
2. Good school attendance
3. Good self-concept
4. Sociability

5. High self-expectations
6. Formation of educational goals
7. Prospects for college attendance
8. A high rate of retention (staying in school)
9. Good conduct
10. Optimum physical fitness
11. Self-confidence
12. Leadership skills
13. Better habits of eating, sleeping and exercise
14. Calmness and poise under pressure
15. The ability to work with others towards a common goal
16. The ability to sacrifice for the common good
17. Pride and graciousness in achievement
18. The ability to overcome adversity
19. Later success in life

The most important things that take place in the Athletic period is not about winning a game or teaching skills. It is about the intangibles that we have the opportunity to teach like no other place in our educational system. Our Athletic programs instill a sense of pride in community; teach life long lessons of teamwork, self-discipline and leadership skills, and facilitate the physical and emotional development of our young people in Texas.

#### **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Guidelines for Physical Activity**

The new, first ever, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Guidelines for Physical Activity are in final draft and due to be published in October of 2008. The Guidelines will focus on promoting moderate to vigorous physical activity for all individuals. One of the recommendations, from the advisory committee that is drafting the Physical Activity Guidelines, will be an endorsement of sports participation as an effective way to promote physical activity for all individuals. In addition, the long term health benefits of physical activity as it relates to intensity, duration and frequency will be addressed in their report. The publication of the new Guidelines will provide teachers, coaches, and administrators in schools a unique opportunity to develop curricula based on

the recommendations of the advisory committee to promote physical activity and health for students and we believe that Athletics can play a major role in that.

### **SB 530**

The implementation of SB 530 included a groundbreaking physical fitness assessment of almost 2.6 million Texas students in grades 3-12. Preliminary results of the “FITNESSGRAM” test show that 70% of our 3rd graders fall below the “Healthy Fitness Zone” and over 90% of our seniors fall below of the “Healthy Fitness Zone”. The test shows us that fitness levels decline with each passing grade level. This corresponds with decreasing emphasis on physical education in our upper grades. Dr. Kenneth Cooper founder of The Cooper Institute said, “I hope these results shock the state into reality and into action”.

Emerging scientific evidence suggests that we should also encourage youth to engage in a variety of types of physical activities and exercise during regular school hours and before or after school hours. Youth who adopt a physically active lifestyle including sports program participation, often remain more physically active as adults compared to non-participants. By being more physically active, experts believe that students can gain knowledge, develop specific skills, and engage in effective behaviors that allow them to acquire successful strategies to avoid the ills of adult physical inactivity.

**Optimizing Athletic Performance – A New Approach in Physical Education/Sports**  
Currently in Texas, student/athletes can acquire two years of credit for Physical Education by participating in Athletics. Students who must participate in Physical Education (that do not have an extra curricular exemption) can choose from Foundations of Personal Fitness, Adventure/Outdoor Education, Aerobic Activities, Individual Sports, and/or Team Sports for credit. We are proposing that student/athletes can get up to an additional two years of credits for athletic participation by participating in Athletics and completing the following two Athletic courses: (1) *Optimizing Athletics Performance through Physical Activity, Health and Character Development* (2) *Optimizing Athletic*

*Performance through Physical Activity, Leadership Skills and Life Skills.* Both of these Athletic courses would be designed to be consistent with the new 2008 U.S. Physical Activity Guidelines and recommendations.

The general requirements for each course would require participation by each student/athlete that would include the same following components with the appropriate course credit perspective. (We are currently working on TEKS which will describe these components in more detail).

- Movement: Athletics and Effective Physical Activity
- Athletics and Health
- Injury Prevention/Coping
- Nutrition/ Effective Weight Control
- Applying Training Principles
- Physical Assessments
- Rest and Restoration
- Stress Management
- Character Development/Leadership
- Community Involvement

Optimizing Athletic Performance represents a new approach in physical education/sports and the concept of developing effective strategies to improve athletic performance and health using current concepts from the academic areas of exercise physiology, nutrition, sports medicine, rehabilitation, character development, and leadership. The basic purpose of the course is to motivate student/athletes to learn and implement concepts that help them reach a higher level of physical activity and health goals as compared to non-athletes. The knowledge and skills taught in this course include teaching student/athletes about the basic challenges unique to being a student/athlete. The concept of teaching student/athletes to safely optimize their health and their athletic performances is the corner stone of this course.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this amendment.