

Section 1478: SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADE ATHLETIC PLAN

- (a) **PURPOSES.** The League is vitally interested in the welfare and development of every youngster. A properly administered athletic program can enhance their overall education. Junior high programs need to take into consideration the substantial range in individual differences among seventh and eighth grade students, i.e., age, body build, interests, ability, experience, health, and stages of physiological, emotional and social maturity. Exploring a wide range of activities rather than specializing in one area, and what is best for the greatest number of participants involved should be emphasized. Each local district has final responsibility for enforcement of all objectives, guidelines and codes in the junior high program of competition. The purposes of the junior high athletic program of the UIL include the following.
- (1) To conduct the athletic program so that educational objectives are achieved, highest details of sportsmanship are upheld, and no single phase of the athletic program is promoted at the expense of other programs.
  - (2) To provide broad and varied athletic programs with an opportunity for equitable competition for all students. A desirable program involves participation in intramural competition at several ability levels and interschool competition for the more advanced students.
  - (3) To equalize competition and administer the programs so that mismatching of teams or individuals is not permitted. Individual schools shall have the final responsibility of enforcing this concept.
  - (4) To integrate the athletic program with all other activities essential to junior high school youth, avoiding an excessive activity load for any student.
  - (5) To require that participants are properly examined, approved, equipped, classified, instructed and supervised.
  - (6) To administer the program so that there will be a minimum loss of school time, proper but minimal publicity, competent officiating, limited awards, and the program kept in its proper perspective.
  - (7) To provide qualified faculty leadership who understand this adolescent age group, the objective of this modified sports program, and the emphasis on safety and welfare of the student.
  - (8) To foster proper respect for authority and avoidance of all evidences of undesirable athletic mannerisms.
  - (9) To compete within the spirit of the rules, giving every opponent due credit and respect, and making every effort to be gracious in victory or loss.
- (b) **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADE PARTICIPANTS.** An individual may participate in League athletic competition or contests as a representative of a participant school if he/she:
- (1) Has met the requirements of Section 1400 (a) regarding general eligibility:
  - (2) For seventh grade athletic competition, has not reached his/her 14th birthday on or before September 1, and has not enrolled in the ninth grade.
  - (3) For eighth grade athletic competition, has not reached his/her 15th birthday on or before September 1, and has not enrolled in the ninth grade.
  - (4) A student who initially entered the seventh or eighth grade the current school year and is too old for seventh or eighth grade participation may participate according to age, that is, seventh graders on the eighth grade, ninth grade, high school junior varsity or high school varsity team, and eighth graders on the ninth grade, high school junior varsity or high school varsity team.
    - (A) *Four Consecutive Years.* A student has only four consecutive calendar years to complete high school varsity eligibility. Exception: See Section 463.
    - (B) *Athletic Class.* Overage junior high school students who have reached their 15th birthday on or before September 1 of that school year may be assigned to high school athletic periods if they are participating with the high school sub-varsity or varsity. Otherwise seventh and eighth grade students remain in their junior high school athletic class throughout the school year.
    - (C) *Full Participation Allowed.* Only seventh and eighth grade students who are too old to represent the eighth grade team may participate on the high school's athletic team. Overage junior high school students who participate with a high school ninth grade, sub-varsity or varsity team, may participate fully under the rules for high school athletes in that sport, including, but not limited to, rules governing number of games, post-season games, etc.
  - (5) Is a full-time student in grade seven or eight at the school he/she represents. Exception: Seventh and eighth grade students from public K-8 ISDs that do not field a team, may participate on the seventh and eighth grade baseball, basketball, football, soccer, softball and/or volleyball teams at the junior high school in the attendance area where they

reside or which is a part of the designated receiving school district. (Parochial, private, and home schooled students are not eligible.)

- (6) Has been in attendance and has passed the number of courses required by state law and by rules of the State Board of Education, and is passing the number of courses required by state law and by rules of the State Board of Education.
- (7) Has not repeated the seventh or eighth grade for athletic purposes. A student who repeats the seventh or eighth grade for athletic purposes shall be eligible for only two consecutive years in seventh and eighth grade athletic competition after the first enrollment in the seventh grade. A student held back one year in the seventh or eighth grade for athletic purposes shall lose the fourth year of eligibility after entering the ninth grade. A student held back for two years for athletic purposes shall lose the third and fourth years of eligibility after entering the ninth grade.
- (8) Has not changed schools for athletic purposes.

Note for (7) and (8): Eligibility is lost for one to three years for seventh grade "A" team, eighth grade "A" team or combined seventh and eighth grade "A" team. An "A" team is the same as a high school varsity team.

(c) **SIXTH GRADE PARTICIPATION.**

(1) *No Interscholastic Athletic Competition Below Seventh Grade.* With only the exceptions noted below, no interscholastic athletic practice or competition is allowed in any conference for teams in the sixth grade and below. Sixth grade students may not practice with or against junior high students. This does not apply to annual inter-school elementary field days, assuming there is no awarding of place ribbons or determination of team champions.

(2) *Student's Eligibility.* A sixth grader may participate in League competition or contests as a representative of a participant school only if he/she:

- (A) Is a student with a disability which delayed his or her education by at least a year and therefore will be too old to participate the following year as a seventh grader; and
- (B) Has met the requirements of Section 1400 (a) regarding general eligibility;
- (C) Is a full-time student in grade six at the school he/she represents;
- (D) Has been in attendance and has passed the number of courses required by state law and by rules of the State Board of Education, and is passing the number of courses required by state law and by rules of the State Board of Education; and
- (E) Has not changed schools for athletic purposes.

(3) *Exceptions.* A sixth grader may also participate in League competition or contests as a representative of a participant school under the following circumstances.

(A) In Conference 1A and 2A schools or in small junior high schools whose enrollment corresponds to Conference 1A and 2A enrollment, sixth graders may be used when their participation is vital to field one combined seventh and eighth grade baseball, basketball, football, soccer, softball or volleyball team on the first day of the season. Sixth graders may not be used on either team when a school has more than one team playing. The first day of the season is defined as the first day of practice outside the school day or the day of the first competition, whichever occurs sooner. If fewer than the below listed number of seventh and eighth grade students report the first day of the season, then sixth graders shall be notified the next day that they may try out for the combined seventh and eighth grade team and may participate for the entire season. If the number of seventh and eighth graders reporting the first day of the season meets or exceeds the number listed below, then sixth graders shall not be used anytime during the entire season.

- Baseball - 18
- Basketball - 10
- Football: 6-man - 12
- Football: 11-man - 22
- Soccer - 22
- Softball - 18
- Volleyball - 12

If a coach intentionally prevents seventh or eighth graders from reporting at the beginning of the season (so as to permit sixth graders to participate) it will be considered a violation of the Athletic Codes and subject to penalty.

(B) *Individual Sports.* Sixth graders shall not represent a UIL seventh and eighth school in individual sports (cross country, golf, swimming, tennis, track and field and wrestling), except students with disabilities who meet the criteria of the provisions of Section 1478 (c) (2).

(d) **GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR ATHLETIC COMPETITION.** Prior to all athletic games, meets, matches and practices the following shall be adhered to, if applicable.

- (1) *Scheduling.* No game, contest, scrimmage or tournament, including district competition, shall begin prior to the end of the academic school day for all participants. See 1478 (b) (4) for junior high students who participate on a high school team and for scheduling athletic classes.
- (2) *No Post-district Competition.* There shall be no post-season playoffs or competition in any athletic event.
- (3) *Non-Discrimination Policy In UIL Junior High School Contest Plans.* Refer to Section 360 of the Constitution.
- (4) *Pre-Participation Physical Examination.* Upon entering the first year in junior high athletics a physical examination signed by a physician, a physician assistant licensed by a state board of physician assistant examiners, a registered nurse recognized as an advanced practice nurse by the board of nurse examiners or a doctor of chiropractic is required. Standardized pre-participation physical examination forms, available from the League office and authorized by the UIL Medical Advisory Committee are required.
- (5) *Medical History Form.* Each year prior to any practice or participation a UIL medical history form signed by both student and a parent or guardian is required. A medical history form shall accompany each physical examination and shall be signed by both student and a parent or guardian.
- (6) *Concussion Acknowledgement Form.* According to section 38.155 of the Texas Education Code, ‘a student may not participate in an interscholastic athletic activity for a school year until both the student and the student’s parent or guardian or another person with legal authority to make medical decisions for the student have signed a form for that school year that acknowledges receiving and reading written information that explains concussion prevention, symptoms, treatment, and oversight and that includes guidelines for safely resuming participation in an athletic activity following a concussion .....’ This section also applies to students participating in the cheerleading program at the school.
- (7) *Sudden Cardiac Arrest Awareness Form.* Each year prior to any practice or participation in athletics, a UIL Sudden Cardiac Arrest Awareness form signed by both student and a parent or guardian is required.
- (8) *Sunday Participation.* No League participant school shall sponsor individuals or teams in any contest or school competition on a Sunday in a League contest or a contest similar to one offered by the League. Schools shall not conduct practices or teach any plays, formations or skills on Sunday. Any showing of films to or meetings of athletes for the purpose of instruction or reviewing of plays, formations or skills in any sport will be construed as a violation. This does not prevent coaches from meeting on Sunday or from seeing films or planning an instructional program, provided that no student athletes are involved in the meeting.
- (9) *Holiday Restriction.* A school shall not conduct contests or practices, use school facilities, personnel or equipment during five consecutive days of December. Any organized or required practice will be a violation of this regulation. Schools may choose any five consecutive days which include December 24, 25 and 26, with the following exceptions.
  - (A) When December 26 falls on a Thursday, schools may participate in a tournament game on December 26.
  - (B) When December 26 falls on a Thursday, schools shall still follow a five consecutive day restriction, including December 24 and 25.
  - (C) No practice shall be permitted on any of the five consecutive days.
  - (D) Travel is permitted on the 26th if a tournament game is scheduled on December 27; however, no practice shall be permitted on the 26th.
  - (E) Travel will not be permitted on December 25.
  - (F) A team that has a game on December 23 could travel home on December 24 and still be in compliance with this section.
- (10) *Officials.*
  - (A) *Responsible School.* Home school is responsible for obtaining officials. Unless mutually decided otherwise UIL member schools shall use UIL registered officials for non-varsity games.
  - (B) *Fee Schedule.* The schedule of fees shall not exceed that of the fee schedule as listed in the high school athletic plan, Section 1204 (m).
- (11) *Tournament Regulations.* Definition: at least three teams assembled on days other than Sunday for an elimination contest. Tournament games shall not begin prior to the end of the academic school day for all participants. Games do not have to be scheduled on consecutive days. Round robin tournaments limited to four teams and pool play tournaments limited to 16 teams shall be permitted. Refer to team sports plans for further regulations.
- (12) *Recommended Standards.* It is recommended that seventh and eighth grade activities be held on a Saturday or on a non-school night, or end competition to allow students to be back at home no later than 10 p.m. on a school night. It is highly recommended that no contest be scheduled on a night prior to a semester or a six-weeks exam.
- (13) *Physical Education/Athletic Periods.* No student shall be enrolled in more than one physical education or athletics class per school day. Schools may use a seventh, eighth or zero period concept for athletics, provided no student enrolled in the class is enrolled in any other physical education/athletics class. This period shall not exceed 60

minutes per day (or 300 minutes per week on a block schedule) and the allotted time includes time for dressing and re-dressing in street clothes. See Section 1206 (d).

(e) **ADDITIONAL REGULATIONS FOR TEAM SPORTS: BASEBALL, BASKETBALL, FOOTBALL, SOCCER, SOFTBALL AND VOLLEYBALL.**

- (1) *Coaches Involvement with Non-school Teams.* For non-school competition seventh- and eighth-grade school coaches shall not schedule matched games for students in grades 7-12 from their attendance zone during the school year. Coaches may assist in organizing, selecting players and coaches, and supervising facilities for non-school league play. School coaches shall not coach or instruct students from their school district attendance zone, except their own adopted or birth children.
- (2) *Rule Modification.* Any extension of a game in baseball, softball, basketball, football or soccer shall involve different players from those who participated in the earlier contest. Any extension means any additional time, i.e., another quarter played at the end of the regulation junior high contest. The additional play shall count as one of the allowable contests per school week, calendar week, and season for the individuals participating. Schools shall count the contest as one of the allowable B team contests in that sport. Schools are allowed to pay an additional partial game fee to officials.
- (3) *Summer Camps.* See Section 1209.
- (4) *Prescheduled District Tournaments - Baseball, Basketball, Soccer, Softball and Volleyball.* Junior high prescheduled district baseball, basketball, soccer, softball and volleyball tournaments may be played in addition to invitational tournament(s) provided each game/match in the prescheduled tournament is counted as a game/match on the regular season record. Example: A junior high school could participate in nine regular season basketball games, two invitational tournaments and a three game district tournament. Schools need to save enough games/matches to cover all possible district tournament games.

(f) **BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL.**

- (1) *Number of Games.* No team or individual shall compete in more than 12 games and 2 invitational or district tournaments. Two games may be substituted in place of a tournament. A scrimmage counts as one of the 12 contests.
- (2) *Number of Games Per Week.* One game or scrimmage may be played per calendar week. A tournament may be played in the same calendar week of a game.
- (3) *Number of Tournament Games Per Day.* Contestants or teams shall play no more than two tournament games per calendar day, except contestants or teams may play in three games in a one-day tournament scheduled on a Saturday.
- (4) *Season for Workouts and Games.* Schools shall have 97 consecutive calendar days to practice outside the school day; 76 of the 97 consecutive calendar days may be used to complete scrimmages and games. The season can be held anytime during the school year, provided it does not exceed the number of consecutive calendar days listed above.

(g) **BASKETBALL.**

- (1) *Number of Games.* No team or student shall compete in more than 12 games and two invitational or district tournaments. Two games may be substituted in place of a tournament. If a team or student does not play in any invitational or district tournaments, four additional games may be played. A scrimmage counts as one of the 12 games.
- (2) *Number of Games Per Week.* One game or scrimmage may be played per calendar week. A tournament may be played in the same calendar week of a game.
- (3) *Number of Tournament Games Per Day.* Contestants or teams shall play no more than two tournament games per calendar day, except contestants or teams may play in three games in a one-day tournament scheduled on a Saturday.
- (4) *Season for Workouts and Games.* Schools shall have 121 consecutive calendar days to practice outside the school day; 93 of the 121 consecutive calendar days may be used to complete scrimmages and games. The season can be held anytime during the school year, provided it does not exceed the number of consecutive calendar days listed above.
- (5) *Eight Minute Quarters.* Junior high schools may, by mutual consent, play eight minute quarters. See Basketball Manual.

(h) **FOOTBALL.**

- (1) *Number of Games.* No team or student shall compete in more than nine (but recommend eight) football games. A scrimmage counts as one of the allowable games.
- (2) *Number of Games Per Week.* One game or scrimmage may be played per calendar week. There shall be a minimum of five days between contests.
- (3) *Season for Workouts and Games.*
  - (A) *Traditional School Years.* Practice shall not begin prior to the first day of school. Football equipment may be checked out to the players on any one day during the week preceding the first day of school. The first four days of practice shall be conducted without any contact equipment except helmets. During the first four days, only

shoes, socks, T-shirts, shorts and helmets may be worn. During the four-day acclimatization period, no contact activities shall be permitted. All student athletes who arrive after the first day of practice are required to undergo a four-day acclimatization period. No interschool scrimmages or games shall be allowed until after a period of at least seven days of contact football.

- (B) From the first day of school, schools shall have 80 consecutive calendar days to practice outside the school day; 63 of the 80 consecutive calendar days may be used to complete scrimmages and games.
  - (C) *Non-traditional School Years.* The beginning date for practice outside the school day shall coincide with the day other schools in the UIL playing district begin their traditional school year.
  - (D) During the season, football players are not allowed to participate in more than ninety (90) minutes of full contact practice per week. See the Junior High Coaches Manual for explanations of full contact.
- (4) *Off-Season Workouts.* Accelerated physical education activities, calisthenics, individual football skills, strength training or conditioning exercises may be conducted during the school term within the school day, (provided such activities do not exceed one regular class period not to exceed 60 minutes per day (or 300 minutes per week on a block schedule). Practice may include 11-on-11 drills without contact equipment or activities. Activities before or after school or during the lunch period are specifically prohibited. Allowed equipment is limited to a football, shoes with cleats, passing and punting machines and physical education attire. Air or padded blocking dummies or devices, and other similar devices are prohibited. See Section 1206 (d).
- (5) *Preseason or Summer Practice for Junior High or Elementary School Students.*
- (A) *Eighth Grade and Below Pre-Season Practice Prohibited.* Schools shall not hold any preseason football practice in junior high school (eighth grade and below) or elementary school, individual or team, prior to the opening day of school.
  - (B) *Eighth Grade and Below Spring Training Prohibited.* Schools shall not conduct any spring training either in elementary school or junior high school (eighth grade and below) the preceding spring.
  - (C) *Exception for Ninth Graders Not on High School Campus.* Students in the ninth grade may participate in spring training in Conference AAAAA and AAAA schools provided that such participation is on a site and at the same time as the high school squad practices and that said high school is the one which the ninth grade students will attend the following fall.
  - (D) *Violations.* Penalty for violations shall be assessed by the appropriate executive committee.
- (6) *Tied Games.* The NCAA tie breaker system shall not be used by junior high school teams.
- (i) **SOCCKER.**
- (1) *Number of Games.* No team or student shall compete in more than 10 games and two invitational or district tournaments. Two games may be substituted in place of a tournament. A scrimmage counts as one of the 10 games.
  - (2) *Number of Games Per Week.* One game or scrimmage may be played per calendar week. A tournament may be played in the same calendar week of a game.
  - (3) *Number of Tournament Games Per Day.* Contestants or teams shall play no more than two tournament games per calendar day, except contestants or teams may play in three games in a one-day tournament scheduled on a Saturday.
  - (4) *Season for Workouts and Games.* Schools shall have 86 consecutive calendar days to practice outside the school day; 76 of the 86 consecutive calendar days may be used to complete scrimmages and games. The season can be held anytime during the school year, provided it does not exceed the number of consecutive calendar days listed above.
- (j) **VOLLEYBALL.**
- (1) *Number of Matches.* No team or girl shall compete in more than 12 matches and two invitational or district tournaments. Two matches may be substituted in place of a tournament. If a team or student does not play in any invitational or district tournaments, four additional matches may be played. A scrimmage counts as one of the 12 matches.
  - (2) *Number of Matches Per Week.* One match or dual match or scrimmage may be played per calendar week. A tournament may be played in the same calendar week of a match.
  - (3) *Number of Tournament Matches Per Day.* Contestants or teams shall play no more than three tournament matches per calendar day, except contestants or teams may play in four matches per calendar day in a one day tournament scheduled on a Saturday.
  - (4) *Season for Workouts and Matches.*
    - (A) *Traditional School Years.* Practice shall not begin prior to the first day of school. Schools shall have 86 consecutive calendar days to practice outside the school day; 79 of the 86 consecutive calendar days may be used to complete scrimmages and matches. Volleyball equipment may be checked out to the players on any one day during the week preceding the first day of school. The season can be held anytime during the school

year, provided it does not exceed the number of consecutive calendar days listed above.

(B) *Non-traditional School Years.* Schools should schedule their season to coincide with the schools in the UIL playing district they will compete against.

(k) **ADDITIONAL REGULATIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL SPORTS: CROSS COUNTRY, GOLF, SWIMMING, TENNIS, TRACK AND FIELD AND WRESTLING.**

(1) *Number of Meets/Tournaments.* No team or student shall compete in more than six meets or tournaments, including the district meet/tournament.

(2) *Exception to Six Meet/Tournament Limitation.*

(A) *Cross Country, Golf, Swimming, Track and Field and Wrestling.* Schools may also hold competitions with three or fewer schools provided there is no loss of school time.

(B) *Tennis.* If four teams meet for the purpose of playing tennis dual matches, it shall not be counted as one of the six tournaments allowed the team or the individual if no school time is lost and if no tournament draw is set to determine a champion.

(3) *Number of Contests Per Week.* Individual sport participants are limited to one contest, meet or tournament per calendar week.

(4) *Season for Meets/Tournaments and Workouts.* Practice and/or competition shall not begin prior to the first day of school. There is no mandated season length however, there is the limitation of six meets/tournaments per school year.

(l) **TRACK AND FIELD EVENTS.** The recommended track and field events and order of events, is as follows. The district executive committee may by majority vote, alter the distance of certain events or authorize additional events.

(1) *Boys' and Girls' Running Events.*

Girls' 2400-meter run,\*

Boys' 2400-meter run\*

Girls' 400-meter relay

Boys' 400-meter relay

Girls' 800-meter run

Boys' 800-meter run

Girls' 100-meter hurdles 30"

Boys' 110-meter hurdles 36"

Girls' 100-meter dash\*

Boys' 100-meter dash\*

Girls' 800-meter relay\*

Boys' 800-meter relay\*

Girls' 400-meter dash

Boys' 400-meter dash

Girls' 200-meter low hurdles

Boys' 200-meter low hurdles

Girls' 200-meter dash

Boys' 200-meter dash

Girls' 1600-meter run

Boys' 1600-meter run

Girls' 1600-meter relay

Boys' 1600-meter relay

\*These events shall be run at the metric distance only. All other events may be run in yard equivalents.

(2) *Boys' and Girls' Field Events.*

Girls' Pole vault

Girls' 6-pound shot put

Girls' Discus

Girls' High jump

Girls' Long jump

Girls' Triple jump

Boys' Pole vault

Boys' High jump

Boys' 4-kilo shot put

Boys' Long jump

Boys' Discus

Boys' Triple jump

(3) *Event Limitations.*

(A) No contestant shall be allowed to compete in more than three running events, including the relays, or in more than five total events.

(B) No contestant shall be allowed to enter more than two of the following events: 400-meter dash, 800-meter run, 1600-meter run or 2400-meter run. This does not prevent a 400, 800, 1600 or 2400-meter contestant from running on the relays provided he/she is entered in no more than three total running events.

(C) Contestants may enter a maximum of five field events provided they are not entered in any running events.

(4) *Day of Week and Starting Time.* Students or teams representing a participant school are permitted to participate in a track and field meet only after the end of the academic day for all participants.

(m) **CHEERLEADERS; SPIRIT GROUPS.** All cheer and spirit performances at any UIL activity shall be in accordance with safety standards as prescribed by the National Federation High School Spirit Handbook. Cheerleading sponsors are required to complete a course regarding Safety Risk Minimization for Cheerleading and present proof of course completion to the school district.

(n) **CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT PROTOCOL.** At all UIL athletic activities (including practices and contests), including cheerleading, schools shall implement and follow a concussion management protocol as prescribed by Texas Education Code Section 38.155 Subchapter D. \* This section also applies to students participating in the cheerleading program at the school.