



## PIAA Competition Formula Overview

In 2018, PIAA developed a competition formula after member schools and the Pennsylvania Athletic Oversight Committee expressed concerns about students transferring for athletic purposes. A number of items were implemented including development of the transfer portal, required reporting of schools' eligibility lists, changes to the transfer waiver request form and changes to the transfer rules, which included an in-season and post-season sit-out for transfers that occurred during those periods. PIAA did meticulous research in developing the Formula, including discussions with fellow NFHS members regarding similar formulas utilized in their states.

The current Competition Formula is for all Team Sports and takes into account a school's enrollment classification, success in post-season playoffs and the number of transfers received. After taking into account these factors, a Team receives its Competition classification for that cycle.

By way of further explanation, the Competition Formula identifies potential transfers by comparing school-submitted eligibility lists for each respective sport within the two-year cycle. Each school provides source documentation to determine the potential transfers received and success obtained in a sport, which, when combined, determines the classification in which the school will compete in the subsequent classification cycle.

To move up a classification under the Competition Formula, PIAA Member Schools must have the following:

- Sport (Enrollment) Classification + Success Factor + Athletic Transfer(s) = Competition Classification.
- In football, for instance, 6 or more success points and 3 or more athletic transfers are needed to move up a classification.

To maintain objectivity, a transfer need not be materially motivated by an athletic purpose to count as a transfer for purposes of this policy. The term is intended to pertain to ALL students who transfer in and who then participate in a particular sport at the receiving school. Appeals to the Board of Directors are limited to a mathematical error in the assignment of Success Points or asserted errors in the assignment of the number of transfers.

Since the Competition Formula's adoption by the PIAA Board of Directors in 2018, 87 schools have been identified. In 2023, the Board of Directors expanded the Competition Formula to include all team sports. At this time, ten PIAA sports are governed by the Competition Formula. This is the third classification cycle since the Competition Formula has been in effect.

In 2018, the Competition Formula was shared with the Pennsylvania Athletic Oversight Committee, and was unanimously supported by all committee members. Since that time, the PAOC has further supported the formula. The Formula was challenged in Federal court in 2020 and the Court found in PIAA's favor stating that since the formula is consistently and evenly applied to all schools, it is not unfair.

This fall, 56 PIAA Member Schools were identified by the Competition Formula. Of those 56 schools, 45 schools provided documentation to support their retention in the current classification. Eleven schools, however, were slated to rise in classification; 6 of those 11 schools appealed to the PIAA Board of Directors to request that they remain in their current classification. Of those 6 appealing schools, 5 remained reclassified consistent with the Competition Formula and one school prevailed in its appeal due to a rare occurrence of an international student being counted as a transfer.

Since its inception, the Formula has worked remarkably well. One football team has moved up from 3A to 6A, and shows no sign of being competitively overwhelmed at that level. The Board feels there is not health or safety concerns with moving up in classification when there is a high level of success achieved at the previous classification as measured by the overwhelming, seasons-long success over their opponents, which in many cases includes dominance over schools in higher classifications with whom they compete during the regular season. On a related note, health and safety concerns have not been implicated in any instance where a school is reclassified (which is not to say there will be no injuries while competing in football at any level) and no data exists to suggest otherwise.

Specific to Aliquippa HS, we have discovered their tremendous competitive advantage over schools in their classification, as illustrated by their won/loss record of 1 loss in 2 years (27-1) and 2 losses in 3 years (40-2). Aliquippa has played in every district championship game since 2008 – at various classification levels - and has scored 1132 points and only allowed 394 points in the past two seasons.

In reviewing the school's published roster, Aliquippa HS far exceeds the size of their opponents. In 2022, they had 11 players over 240 pounds on their roster and 9 players over 240 pounds in 2023. This year, they had the 4A player of the year (a junior committed to Penn State) and 5 players on the 4A all-state team as selected by the statewide football media. This year their opponent, Dallas HS, had only 3 similar players of 240 pounds and above and Peters Township HS in the 5A classification championship game from the same PIAA district had only 3 players 240 pounds and above. Last year's 4A championship game opponent, Bishop McDevitt HS also earned enough success points (7) to move up in classification and did so without appeal.

Equally telling, because football is the only fall sport available to Aliquippa's male students, their 2023 roster consisted of 54 athletes. This level of participation far exceeds turnout rates at schools of similar size, and puts Aliquippa well within a range to play "up" in competition.

Finally, in reviewing a four year history of the school's male enrollment and undisputed transfers, it illustrates the total enrollment was  $118 + 156 = 274$ ; Aliquippa had  $8 + 5 = 13$  transfers which equates to only 4.7% of their male enrollment being transfer students. This dispels the notion, espoused in some corners, that Aliquippa's families are more transient than many communities which transience should be taken into account when applying the Competition Formula.

Everyone involved in interscholastic athletics understands the emotions that athletics produce, but the simple fact is there is no punishment or ulterior motive in moving schools up in classification due to the competitive balance formula. Its purpose is to keep the playing field as level as possible for all member schools in competition.