



## The Principals' Partnership

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### Research Brief

## Academic requirements for eligibility

### Questions:

- Does increasing the academic requirements for eligibility increase the performance of involved students?
- Or does increasing the academic requirements for eligibility simply prevent students from participating who might benefit?

### Summary of Findings:

There is a lot written about eligibility requirements, but almost all of it is about NCAA first year eligibility requirements and their impact on high schools. These range from the NCAA's undue influence on high school curriculum to a warning to principals to be aware of the rules to avoid unwanted liability and lawsuits. The up side is that "The National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Collegiate Athletic Association, and the National Federation of State High School Associations are working together to ensure that all student athletes are prepared academically to complete all coursework required to earn a college diploma" (Dickman & Lammel, 2000).

Much less is written about high school eligibility requirements and their impact on student performance. Coaches, parents, and educators offer many reasons for there to be lax or no academic eligibility requirements. These reasons include the fear that students who couldn't participate in athletics might drop out of school, or that all students, regardless of grade point average, should be able to play.

But studies suggest that athletes have higher grades than nonathletes and that participation in athletics has a positive influence on adolescents' academic outcomes. According to Bukowski (2001), "In schools that had strong academic requirements, athletic directors reported students adjusted to the requirements once they were set in place." Bukowski goes on to say:

In a time when public school educational programs are under heavy scrutiny, athletic programs with low academic standards are only hurting themselves by letting their athletes just get by. The athletic programs in this study that have challenged their students in the classroom with higher academic standards over a longer period of time have been successful in improving the students' grade point averages. Students adjusted to the academic demands set by the athletic programs and the number of students that were declared ineligible was consistent with the number that were declared ineligible under the lower academic requirement.

Students who participate in support systems, such as the PASS (Promoting Achievement in School through Sports) program, are more likely to improve their grades and are more likely to restore eligibility to participate in sports.

### Online Resources:

(Note: ERIC documents can be found by going to <http://www.eric.ed.gov/> and entering the ERIC ID#)

### **A Comparison of Academic Athletic Eligibility in Interscholastic Sports in American High Schools**

By: Dr. Bruce J. Bukowski

Academic eligibility for student-athletes in public high schools athletic programs across America has many variations and has been changing over the past twenty years. But how far have we come in motivating



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athletes in the classroom? As this study indicates, only a small percentage of high schools in the United States have attached a minimum GPA to their academic requirements for athletic eligibility. In schools that had strong academic requirements, athletic directors reported students adjusted to the requirements once they were set in place. In a time when public school educational programs are under heavy scrutiny, athletic programs with low academic standards are only hurting themselves by letting their athletes just get by. <http://www.thesportjournal.org/2001Journal/spring/athletic-eligibility.htm>

#### **Getting to the Core of Student Athletic Standards.**

Dickman, Diane; Lammel, John A.;

Principal Leadership, v1 n2 p30-32 Oct 2000

The National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Collegiate Athletic Association, and the National Federation of State High School Associations are working together to ensure that all student athletes are prepared academically to complete all coursework required to earn a college diploma. Eligibility processes are discussed.

ERIC #: EJ616264

#### **Promoting Achievement in School through Sports. Third-Year Impact Study.**

This study examined the impact of the PASS (Promoting Achievement in School through Sports) program on 59 high school students in 4 schools. The PASS program helps athletes to see the connections between athletic and academic success, and focuses on eight fundamental keys to success, including concentration, balance, relaxation, power, rhythm, flexibility, instinct, and attitude. The study found that, compared to control students, students who had completed a year of PASS were more likely to improve their grades and were more likely to restore eligibility to participate in sports. The paper concludes that the third-year impact study, as did the first and second year studies, confirms that PASS improves academic performance as measured by overall grade point average. It supports the premise of PASS that in order to improve academic performance for those students involved in athletics, there needs to be an increased, not a decreased, emphasis on the appropriate study and practice of sports. A statement of the goals of the American Sports Institute related to the PASS program is attached.

ERIC #: ED366555

#### **Athletic Eligibility: Right or Privilege?**

Reeves, Kimberly;

School Administrator, v55 n10 p6-12 Nov 1998

Berkeley High School, with the nation's largest sports program, had numerous student eligibility violations in 1997. Many districts are defending the validity of their eligibility practices, as parents push harder for their children's right to compete on school teams. This article covers legal battles, competitive environments, legislative interference, foreign-exchange athletes, and policy recommendations.

ERIC #: EJ575186

#### **The NCAA: Major Barrier to High School Reform.**

Nathan, Joe;

Phi Delta Kappan, v79 n10 p764-68 Jun 1998

Many educators, parents, and students are upset with the National Collegiate Athletic Association Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse's rejection of some high school graduates' acceptable coursework. The NCAA should stop trying to dictate high school course content, increase scrutiny of its members, tighten academic requirements for on-campus athletes, and compensate underserved disabled students.

ERIC #: EJ566241



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#### **Implementing NCAA Rule 48: The Principal's Role.**

Jenkins, Gene; And Others

NASSP Bulletin, v70 n492 p10-11,14 Oct 1986

Reviews the implications (for high school principals) of the National Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA) adoption of Rule 48 establishing eligibility criteria for freshmen students receiving athletic grants-in-aid from Division I colleges and universities. Failure of a student to be admitted due to a high school's ignorance of the rule's requirements could put a principal in legal jeopardy.

ERIC #: EJ342494

#### **The NCAA's Misguided Role in School Reform.**

Nathan, Joe;

School Administrator, v55 n10 p14-16 Nov 1998

Through its recent attempts to establish national curriculum standards, the National Collegiate Athletic Association is creating enormous problems for high school students, parents, and educators. Good grades are no longer enough. The NCAA has opted to specify content of acceptable high school courses to standardize college-entrance requirements nationwide, confusing rigidity with rigor.

ERIC #: EJ575187

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