

My name is Michael Church. I am a resident of Wichita, KS. I grew up in Wichita Public Schools where I not only attained a good education at Wichita South High School, but I was allowed the opportunity to compete in athletics. I participated in wrestling, football, and baseball. I was a multi-year medalist in the sport of wrestling with my career ending in a 1997 6A State Championship. I then went to college and competed through my eligibility while earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Special Education. After college, it was only natural to want to come back to the school district that I was a part of where I had a successful teaching and coaching career. I was blessed with a 13-year coaching career that included a 2011 State Championship Wrestling Team. However, I also coached baseball, football, and softball at different points during that 13-year tenure. In 2010 I completed my Master's in Educational Leadership at Wichita State University. In 2015 I left the classroom to take a position with Wichita Public Schools as an Athletic Director. I am currently serving as the Athletic Director at Wichita Heights High School in the Greater Wichita Athletic League.

The classification proposal brought forth by the KSHSAA and Kansas Department of Education unnecessarily punishes student athletes at private schools, many which are faith-based institutions. The families of these students are tax paying citizens just like those in public schools. The families of these students work just as hard as parents in public schools to provide their children with the best education and student-athlete experience as they can.

The league that I am a part of voted 9-0 against a multiplier that only targets the success of private school institutions. Taking the action of a multiplier towards only private schools does the following in our opinion:

1. Wrongfully targets private school communities only for their success in athletics.
2. Does not take into consideration individual programs of each school.
3. Does little to nothing to close the achievement gaps of student athletes as a whole.

We are in a world where our culture is trying harder than ever to divide us from what is important, "Faith, Family, and Community". A fact we know about children is that if we raise the bar or the difficulty level, they tend to want to work harder to achieve their goals. However, this version of the multiplier only waters down the competitive sphere of interscholastic athletics. I come from a background that states, if you want to move up or win you have to out work all of your competitors. However, there are times when this is not possible. This is very reflective of how life works. You are not always going to get the promotion you want, job you want, the outcome you want etc. That is the beauty of sports and activities.

You may not always win the championship. In fact, you may never win at all, but the lessons learned from the training and work put into trying to win a championship are what interscholastic athletics are about. At the end of the year, there is one state champion in each division. That does not take away from the experience that each individual student athlete obtained through the experiences provided by their school and community. Whether you are a student that is on free-reduced lunches from a less affluent neighborhood, or you are from a family that lives in a multi-million-dollar neighborhood we all have one thing in common. We want our kids to be treated equally and not be divided.

What we are doing here is dividing those that have obtained optimal success from those who have yet to receive that success. It is my belief that this movement is not based on the majority of what most private institutions are like. I would in fact say, that the reason this entire issue is being discussed is an outlier. And because of that outlier, maybe instead of a drastic measure of dividing the perceived “haves from have nots”, we instead revisit this topic while looking at the entire scope under one blanket and not just private schools.

In closing, it is my belief that this policy will only hurt children’s ability to reach their full potential. It is not our purpose to lower the bar to win a championship. Instead it is our job to raise our kids to a higher standard to win a championship which gives them a better chance to win in life.

Respectfully,

Michael Church
Wichita Heights High School
Athletic Director
316.973.1430
mchurch@usd259.net