

PENNSYLVANIA GIRLS WRESTLING SANCTIONING INITIATIVE INFORMATIONAL PACKET



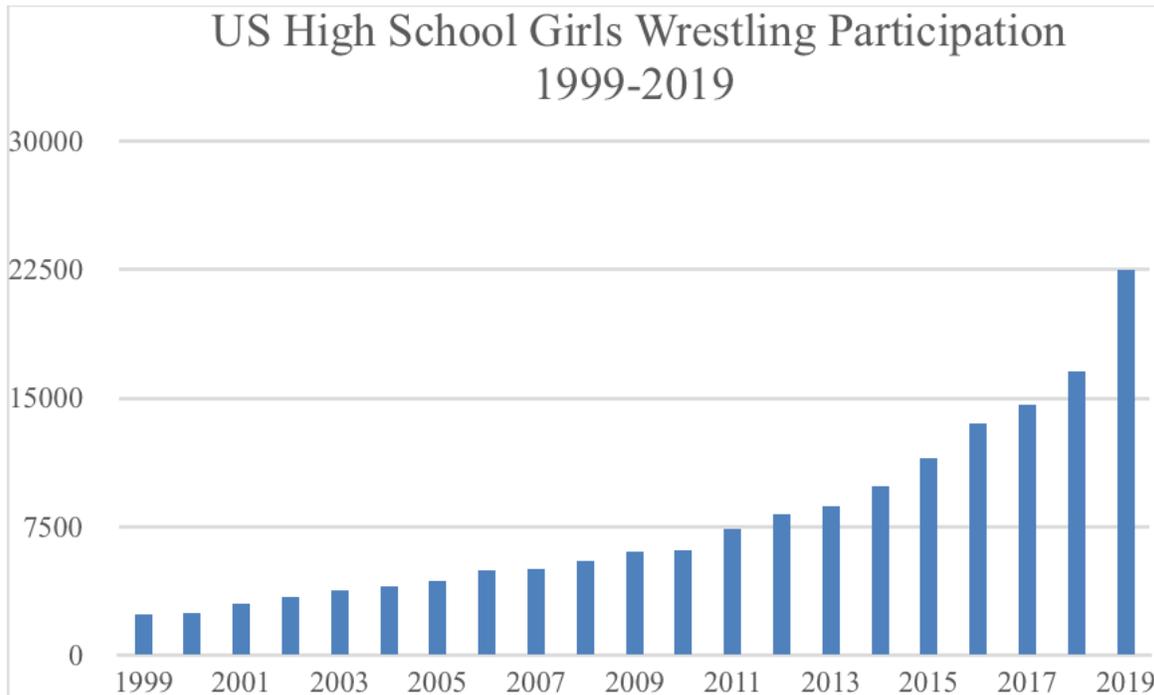
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CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

For the past five years, girls wrestling has been the fastest growing high school sport in the country. At a time when participation in youth sports is declining, girls wrestling has gone against that trend. Wrestling team participation among high school girls has grown for 28 consecutive years (since 1990), with the number of high school girls wrestling increasing by nearly 500% between 2001-02 and 2017-18 (National Federation of State High School Athletics, 1970, 2018). According to the OPC weight management system, for the 2018-19 season there were over 23,000 young ladies wrestling at the high school level, and preliminary numbers using the same system are projecting over 27,000 wrestlers for the 2019-20 season. Currently, there are 21 state high school associations sanctioning a girls state championship and the number continues to increase each year.



In addition to growth on the high school level, colleges continue to add girls programs at an accelerated pace each year. There are now over 70 varsity college women's wrestling programs. They are affiliated with the NCAA, NAIA, and Jr. College programs. At the Olympic Games, women's wrestling has been a part of the competition since 2004. The U.S. has climbed the ladder of success and is now one of the top powers in the world in women's wrestling. Our team members have won gold,

silver, and bronze medals at both the Olympic and World Championships. USA Wrestling, the governing body for the Olympic sport, has seen more than 20 straight years of increase in girls and women's wrestling memberships spanning youth to high performance athletes.

In just the past 5 years across the United States, girls wrestling has grown by 100% in and Pennsylvania girls high school wrestling has grown too!!

¹Why Women's Wrestling, Why Now: White paper on the current state of wrestling and the benefits of developing women's wrestling programs



CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING ACROSS PENNSYLVANIA

Mirroring the national statistics, Pennsylvania high school wrestling has experienced a 100% growth increase of girls on high school boys teams in the past 5 years. The PA numbers have grown from 102 to 229 (2019-20), with those female wrestling athletes representing over 130 PIAA-member schools. All 12 PIAA district areas have girls wrestling within their area. Additionally, USA Wrestling membership cards show there are over 300 girls wrestling, some of whom have opted NOT to participate on PIAA teams due to lack of inclusion.

Further, there are even more girls coming up through elementary and middle school programs. For example, at last year's Pennsylvania Junior Wrestling (PJW), there was an increase of over 25% from the previous year as 279 girls participated in the qualifying events. Additionally, PIAA junior high schools saw a 33% increase from last season to the current 2019-20 season. There are currently 285 girls on PIAA junior high teams. Those numbers do not even represent the full number of girls wrestling in youth programs, as we do not have a method to officially tally those participants.



Looking at the number of girls coming up through the elementary and middle school system is another reason to support girls wrestling at the scholastic level - so that these girls will have teams to wrestle on and an official sport to be a part of. Having a sanctioned sport at the high school level will also better enable Pennsylvania to support larger numbers of participants at the collegiate and international levels.

GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING GROWTH AND FORECASTED GROWTH PROJECTIONS

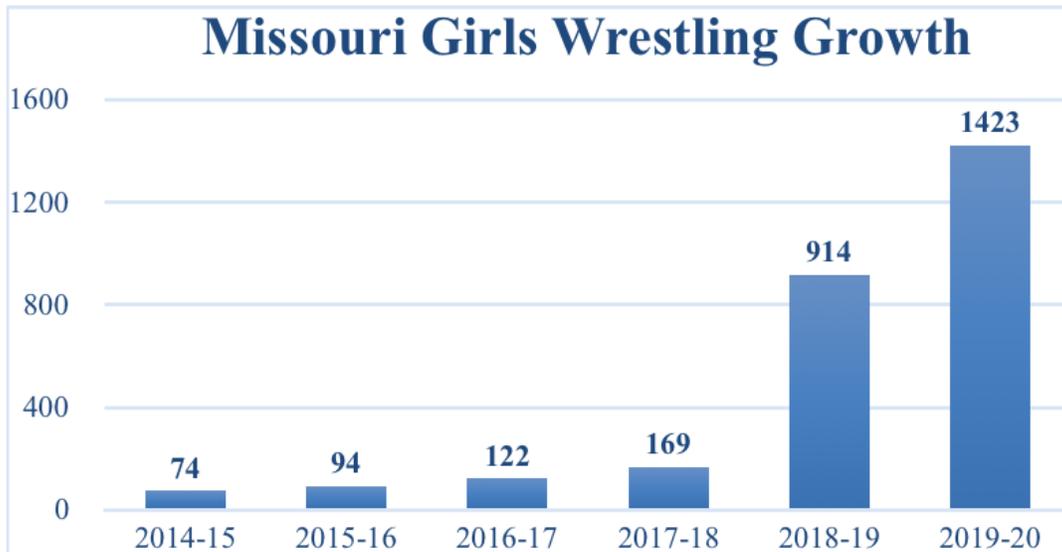
Wrestling participation among high school girls has grown for 28 consecutive years (since 1990), with the number of high school girls wrestling increasing by nearly 500% between 2001-02 and 2018-19 (National Federation of State High School Athletics, 1970, 2019). A projected 14% growth rate over the next 5 years will result in over 36,000 girls participating in high school wrestling in 2022-23.

Further, the data shows that girls would prefer to wrestle and compete against girls². When given the opportunity to do so, participation numbers grow tremendously in a short period of time. States that recently added an official state-association sanctioned girls state championship, such as Missouri³, have seen growth as high as 400% following sanctioning, and every sanctioned state saw a marked increase in their female wrestling participation numbers. When provided the opportunity, girls will come out and wrestle, which strengthens the sport as a whole.

²Why Women's Wrestling, Why Now: White paper on the current state of wrestling and the benefits of developing women's wrestling programs

³Why Women's Wrestling, Why Now: White paper on the current state of wrestling and the benefits of developing women's wrestling programs





Missouri sanctioned girl's wrestling for the 2018-19 season.

GIRLS WRESTLING OPPORTUNITIES BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL

At the collegiate level, there are now over 70 varsity college women's wrestling programs across the NCAA, NAIA, and Junior College Programs, five of which are located in Pennsylvania, including:

- East Stroudsburg (State Institution)
- Gannon University (Private Institution)
- Lackawanna Junior College (Private Institution)
- Lock Haven University (State Institution)
- Delaware Valley University (Private Institution)

Women's wrestling also recently received NCAA Emerging Sport Status approval from NCAA Division II and Division III (Division I votes in April 2020) and there are currently many schools looking to fill rosters and offer scholarships. Women's wrestling is also close to reaching the 40 program threshold which is required to conduct an official NCAA Championship. Currently, the NAIA conducts an official NAIA Invitational Championship for women's wrestling.

At the collegiate level in 2020, it is projected that there will be about 2.93 million more females than males enrolled in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, and that number is expected to increase to nearly 3.3 million in 2026 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2017). Therefore, adding women's wrestling to college athletic programs would be a useful strategy for maintaining Title IX compliance, meeting increased demand for opportunities, and providing proportional participation opportunities for female students. Seeing this trend, it is no surprise that the NCAA has

granted Emerging Sport Status to women's wrestling. At the Olympic level, women's wrestling has been a part of the Olympic Games since 2004 and at the World Championships since 1989. The United States is one of the top powers in the world in women's wrestling, with accomplished female wrestlers like Olympic Silver Medalist, Sara McMann, having wrestled and earned her undergraduate degree from Lock Haven University.



WHY SHOULD YOU ADD GIRLS WRESTLING?

There are many reasons why girls should be provided the opportunity to wrestle and why Pennsylvania high schools are the perfect place to do this.

SELF-IMPROVEMENT

Wrestling strengthens the fabric of America by instilling in its participants the value of grit, tenacity, resilience, teamwork and camaraderie, to name a few - the foundation of any solid leader. The personal growth experienced on the wrestling mat is well known, and reflected in the resumes of many notable leaders from Pennsylvania to Washington D.C., and [across corporate America](#).

Opening the doors for girls to wrestle in the state of Pennsylvania will have a positive impact at-large, and will create the opportunity for girls to wrestle other girls, which has shown to increase participation numbers and self-confidence, while also decreasing injury rates. Studies have shown that girls who wrestle are provided a path for increased educational, social, and financial mobility⁴. By adding girls wrestling, you are also setting up girls for future opportunities for post-secondary education. Women's wrestling has been given Emerging Sport Status by the NCAA at the Division II and III levels (Division I votes in April) and there are currently many schools looking to fill rosters and offer scholarships.

Further, As Kirby, Roberts, Coakley, Stanec, and Gormley wrote, "Sports are recognized for their potential to build character, confidence, self-esteem and leadership in athletes of all ages (Sabo & Veliz, 2008; Staurowsky et al., 2015; Zarrett, Veliz, & Sabo, 2018). Combat sports, including wrestling and martial arts, have been specifically recognized and documented as activities that empower girls and women (Macro, Viveiros, & Cipriano, 2009). They are safe, effective, and inclusive vehicles through which to teach character development in physical education (Destani, Hannon, Podlog, & Brusseau, 2014), and to inspire young women to improve complex social injustices and disparities existing worldwide."

INCREASE WINTER SPORT OPTIONS

Wrestling provides a unique opportunity to attract new students to a sport. Data exists to suggest that girls who wrestle may be girls who were not previously active in another sport. We are finding more and more that wrestling provides female athletes, some of whom were once invisible and lacked sport inclusion, a sport to participate in and a place to belong. By having girls join wrestling, the school's and PIAA's participation numbers will grow. Also, with 6000 less participation opportunities for girls during the winter months, wrestling gives another opportunity for girls to participate in sports during the winter season.

Currently, the only other winter sport options available to girls include bowling, indoor track, swimming and basketball. Adding wrestling increases the winter sports options for girls by 25%. With approximately 500 boys teams, it provides a built-in system to quickly add a girls team and increase participation. Like boys wrestling, girls wrestling also provides the opportunity for girls of all physical sizes and backgrounds to compete.

As opportunities are added, the growth of the sport will simply continue across all levels. "Access to participation opportunities and the growth of women's wrestling are closely tied.

⁴Why Women's Wrestling, Why Now: White paper on the current state of wrestling and the benefits of developing women's wrestling programs



Girls and women have traditionally had no school sponsored opportunities to participate in combat sports (Stuart & Whaley, 2005), but as wrestling teams for girls and women have been offered in schools where administrators are responsive to emerging sport participation preferences among girls and women, participation has increased at consistently impressive rates.”

COST EFFECTIVE

Wrestling is also highly cost effective. The expenditures for wrestling are minimal, especially when a boys team is already in existence.

POST-SECONDARY OPPORTUNITIES

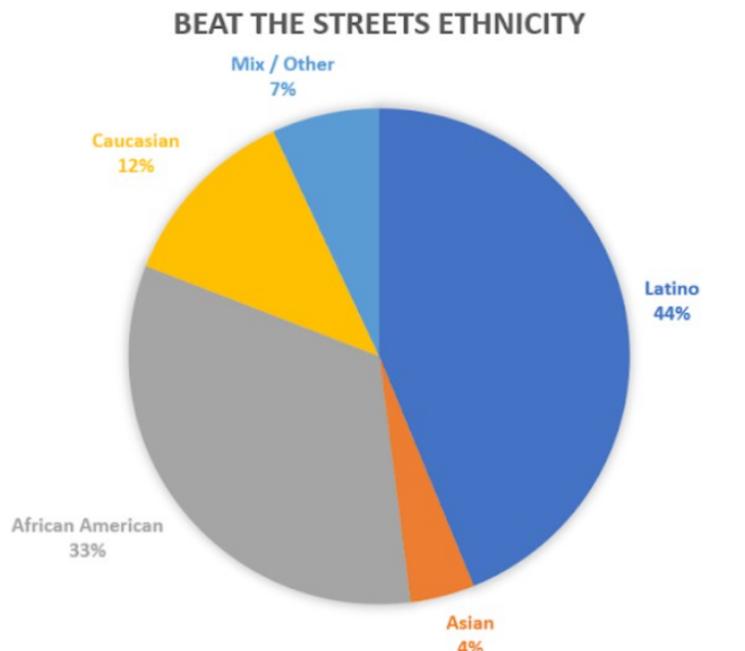
At the collegiate level, there are now over 70 varsity college women’s wrestling programs, across the NCAA, NAIA, and Junior College Programs, five of which are located in Pennsylvania (East Stroudsburg, Gannon University, Lackawanna Junior College, Lock Haven University, Delaware Valley University).

To the east, Columbia has established a women’s wrestling club and is now utilizing the New York City RTC to help their student- athletes reach the international level competitively.

Further, women’s wrestling also recently received NCAA Emerging Sport Status approval from NCAA Division II and Division III (Division I votes in April 2020) and there are currently many schools looking to fill rosters and offer scholarships.

DIVERSIFY ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT

Girls wrestling has the potential to bring a diverse population of students into your athletic department. This is [highlighted by national data provided by Beat the Streets](#) displaying the current ethnic breakdown of their student-athletes. (Beat the Streets is a non-profit sports-based youth development organization that utilizes wrestling as a vehicle to teach important life skills.)



SUSTAINABILITY OF BOYS WRESTLING

Adding girls wrestling will also help support the long-term sustainability of boys wrestling. The growth of boys wrestling programs was slow during the years before 2007, but growth accelerated as the number of women's teams grew. Analysis of college and university athletic departments indicates the following:

- “While 65 women’s collegiate wrestling programs were established over the past decade, 126 men’s teams were also added to college sport programs.
- 75 of the 76 collegiate institutions that currently have a women’s wrestling team also have a men’s team at the same or higher level.
- Between 2007 and 2019, none of the 46 institutions that dropped men’s wrestling had a women’s program.
- The existence of a women’s wrestling programs potentially allows men’s programs to raise roster caps that were imposed to comply with Title IX regulations.
- Overall, the evidence shows that the addition of women’s programs goes hand-in-hand with the growth and security of men’s wrestling programs in athletic departments (Kirby, Roberts, Coakley, Stanec, and Gormley).”

ADDITIONAL OUTCOMES OF ADDING A PROGRAM

- Bring new donors, volunteers, community supports to the School, Athletic Department, and Boys Wrestling program
- Expansion of fan base for the Boys Wrestling program as well as other school sports
- Increase number of individual State Champions and make a team State Championship title possible
- Immediate positive response and attention on social media to school as well as boys wrestling program
- Increase positive local and even national attention to school as well as boys wrestling program
- Increase perception of school as an inclusive campus that leads by example
- A place in the history books for the School Board, Athletic Director, Superintendent, Principal, Men’s Wrestling program coaching staff, and supporting staff



For an additional perspective on the value of adding girls wrestling, please see national USA women’s team coach Terry Steiner’s article, [Why Women's Wrestling](#).

*Adding girls wrestling will make Pennsylvania stronger,
and by virtue, our nation stronger.
It’s not boys wrestling versus girls wrestling, but rather a
new structure that allows wrestling for all.*



THE 3-YEAR STRATEGY

1- YEAR: 2020 - 2021 STRATEGY

- 25 official girls teams that have been recognized by the local school board.
- Establish a schedule of events that includes two (2) events per month for a total of 6 girls competitions that supports officially designated girls teams.

With the starting goal of 25 teams, this will provide opportunities for girls to compete as an official girls team a minimum of 12 times.

2-YEAR: 2021 - 2022 STRATEGY

- 50 official girls teams that have been recognized by the local school board.
- Establish a schedule of events that includes two (2) events per month for a total of 6 girls competitions that supports officially designated girls teams.

With 50 teams, this will provide opportunities for girls to compete as an official girls team a minimum of 12 times.

3-YEAR: 2022 - 2023 STRATEGY

- 100 official girls teams that have been recognized by the local school board.
- Establish a schedule of events that includes two (2) events per month for a total of 6 girls competitions that supports officially designated girls teams.

With 100 teams, this will provide opportunities for girls to compete as an official girls team a minimum of 12 times.



FORMATION OF GIRLS WRESTLING TEAMS: OVERVIEW

HOW DO I START AN OFFICIAL GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING PROGRAM?

Adding a girls wrestling program is easy, especially if a boys program is already in existence.

1. Recruit girls to the team. *Note that there is NO minimum number of girls required to start a team and teams CAN be proposed before having girls identified for the team.
2. Talk to your AD and propose the formation of the team to the school board. (This packet can be used to provide stakeholders with information they may be interested in when considering a proposal)
3. Get the girls team approved by the school board as an official team.
4. Start practicing and competing!
 - a. Practices can be held with the boys team
 - b. The rules for girls wrestling are the same as boys wrestling, and like other individual sports at your school, the same coach can coach both boys and girls wrestling programs or you can have separate coaches
 - c. Identify competitions for the girls to compete in (Please see ideas for competitions on the last page of this packet)

TIP

When trying to build team numbers, recruiting girls in pairs is optimal, that way they can be training partners at practice. Think in terms of two. That way you can grow your team twice as fast. Recruit 2, then 2 more, then 2 more and pretty soon you have 10 instead of 5.

Key points for recruiting wrestlers:

- Wrestling is for everyBODY
- Recruit in pairs so girls can have a workout partner and friend on the team
- Other combat sports are a great feeder for wrestling
- Actively recruiting wrestling athletes secures more participants than passive recruiting

HOW WILL GIRLS WRESTLING BECOME AN OFFICIAL SANCTIONED SPORT IN PA?

The first step in getting girls wrestling sanctioned as an official sport is to have individual school boards (at the school district level) approve girls wrestling as an official team at their school. With current PIAA by-laws, once 100 teams are formed and competing in 11 competition points, the PIAA Board can consider a motion to sanction girls wrestling as an official sport.



The governing athletic association in PA is comprised of representatives of your schools. Therefore it can't be stated enough that a grassroots initiative at local levels can go a long way in this sanctioning process. It might be more beneficial to think in terms of a bottom up and not top down approach.

WHAT ARE THE COST RAMIFICATIONS OF ADDING GIRLS WRESTLING?

The cost ramifications for girls wrestling can be extremely minimal or almost nonexistent if you have an existing boys team. For example:

- If you already have a boys team, you already have a mat and practice space, so there is no additional cost in these areas just because a girls team is created.
- If you already have a boys team, you already have coaches that could also function as the girls coaches. While a school can create a new coaching staff, the staff can also be the same as the boys team, thereby eliminating any additional coaching stipend expenditures.
- Singlets for the girls – If you already have had girls wrestling for your boys team, this won't even be an additional cost to what the school is currently paying because you are already outfitting them. As more girls join, they will need singlets, so this will be a very minimal additional cost. (Note: while girls-cut singlets are great to have, many teams order boys-cut singlets and the girls wear those with a compression shirt underneath.)
- Travel for competition and events – there are ways to minimize additional travel costs specifically for the girls team (e.g., follow boys schedule), therefore significantly limiting any additional cost for travel. Please see question 3 in the FAQ as well as the last page of this document for scheduling ideas.



WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO START A PROGRAM?

There are a lot of great resources available to help get you started with your program. Organizations such as The National Wrestling Coaches Association, USA Wrestling, and Wrestle Like A Girl are all positioned to support in different ways, and resources include:

- Best practices for coaching females in wrestling
- How to introduce girls wrestling to your boys team
- Risk management
- Recruiting posters
- Wrestle Like a Girl: wrestlelikeagirl.org
Click the “Resources” tab
- USA Wrestling: [Recruiting and Coaching Women](#)
- USA Wrestling: Terry Steiner: [Why Women's Wrestling](#)
- USA Wrestling: [General Coaching Education Resources](#)
- NWCA: [Coaching Development Resources](#)



WHAT IS THE ULTIMATE GOAL? WHY DO YOU WANT US TO ADD GIRLS WRESTLING?

The ultimate goal is to have the PIAA Sanction Girls Wrestling as a sport and to first be considered, **100 schools need official girls high school wrestling programs that are approved by their local school board.** *Official girls teams that have been approved by the school board will compete for the Girls Competition Team points. If a separate girls team is not designated as official, then they will collect competition points for the boys team.

PENNSYLVANIA GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING COMPETITION OPPORTUNITIES:

We are currently working with several school districts and tournament directors to iron out girls tournament dates for next year. Once these are finalized, we will issue a list of existing girls events that any girls team could enter for competition points. For more information and ideas on competition opportunities, please see question 3 of the FAQ as well as the last page of this document.

NOTABLE FEMALE WRESTLERS WITH TIES TO PENNSYLVANIA:

- Sara McMann - Olympic Silver Medalist and current UFC fighter (Graduated from Lock Haven University)
- Jenny Wong - 2x World Bronze Medalist (Graduated from Lock Haven University)
- Erin Tomeo - Graduate high school from Grove City HS, and is the current head coach for Wyoming Seminary's year-round girls freestyle wrestling program.
- Emma Randall - 2016 Assistant Olympic Coach (Graduated from Lock Haven University)

WHAT GIRLS WILL WRESTLE?

Wrestling provides a unique opportunity to attract new students to a sport. As previously mentioned, data exists to suggest that girls who wrestle may be girls who were not previously active in another sport. With 6000 less participation opportunities for girls during the winter months, wrestling gives another opportunity to participate in sports during the winter months. With approximately 500 boys teams, it provides a built-in system to quickly add a girls team and increase participation. Like boys wrestling, girls wrestling also provides the opportunity for girls of all physical sizes and backgrounds to compete.

HOW DO WE GET MORE INFORMATION?

If your questions are not answered within this document, please contact the Sanctioning Committee point person, Brooke Zumus, and she will address your inquiry or connect you with another individual who can. Brooke can be reached at sanctionPA@gmail.com or 610-657-5821.



GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING IN THE NEWS/MEDIA

The media attention on girls wrestling across the country has been active and supremely positive. States that have added girls wrestling have received national attention and school teams have received local, state-wide, and even national attention. Below are just some examples of the articles and social media posts that have been published.



PHOTO BY: APRIL GAMIZ/THE MORNING CALL



PHOTO BY: TONI L. SANDYS/THE WASHINGTON POST

Parkland vs. Easton Girls Match 20-second Video Clip

- Received more than 8k views on Facebook
- Received more than 4k views and 1k likes on Instagram

Parkland girls wrestling: From curious hallway strangers to a band of sisters in singlets

- <https://www.mcall.com/sports/varsity/wrestling/mc-spt-parkland-girls-wrestling-story-20191217-rcmzxwbq3jgqbfshdcwzyx5uxm-story.html>

A sport of their own: A high school wrestler from Kansas spent four years fighting to give girls the opportunity to compete in an official state sport.

- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/sports/girls-wrestling-high-school-mya-kretzer/>

Ohio girls wrestling makes history at Miami East: “It was amazing.”

- <https://www.daytondailynews.com/sports/ohio-girls-wrestling-makes-history-miami-east-was-amazing/ZlfBYkktHBZ39auSwW2IoM/>

Role models: Gettysburg’s Montana DeLawder, West York’s Carly Gross embrace the challenge of wrestling (and beating) boys.

- <https://www.pennlive.com/highschoolsports/wrestling/2019/12/role-models-gettysburgs-montana-delawder-west-yorks-carly-gross-embrace-the-challenge-of-wrestling-and-beating-boys.html>

West Henderson female wrestling team makes history

- <https://wlos.com/news/local/west-henderson-female-wrestling-team-makes-history>



FORMATION OF GIRLS WRESTLING TEAMS AT HIGH SCHOOLS

COACH, ATHLETIC DIRECTOR, SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED STAKEHOLDER FAQ

Current PIAA Policy: The current PIAA policy for a new sport to be adopted for PIAA Sanctioning requires a minimum of 100 schools that compete in 50% of the allowable competition points for the sport.

1. PIAA policy states that for a sport to be in consideration for sanctioning, the sport must demonstrate they have a minimum of 100 teams. What does this mean?

There would need to be a minimum number of official girls teams as outlined above and in addition, those 100 teams MUST compete in a minimum of 50% of the number of allowable competition points. The current number of varsity competition points for wrestling is 22.

2. Currently, in Pennsylvania there are over 200 girls on over 100 boys teams, does that count as meeting the 100 teams threshold?

No, while we are excited that there are over 100 schools with girls on the roster, the girls are not on a separate girls team.

3. What would a schedule look like to get to 11 competition points?

Please see the last page of this packet for expanded ideas on ways to get to 11 competition points. In short, there are several methods to achieve this threshold. Some of these ideas include having your girls team follow a portion of the boys schedule. For example, having the girls team wrestle other schools' girls teams right before the scheduled boys varsity duals and/or entering some of the same tournaments that the boys are entering. This method really limits or even eliminates additional transportation costs and various logistical hurdles. It is also possible to have girls attend PIAA sanctioned tournaments, whether girls-only or mixed, anywhere in the state. Girls teams could also attend NFHS sanctioned tournaments in any other state. Any combination of the above ideas also works!

4. Can a girls team enter a PIAA event against boys teams and have that count as competition points?

Yes. Even once your girls team is formed, the girls can still wrestle against boys teams – for example, they could schedule a dual or enter tournaments with boys teams. They don't just have to wrestle other girls teams.

5. Can we go out-of-state to NFHS sanctioned tournaments and have that count as competition points?

Yes. Surrounding states hold many NFHS girls events, including New Jersey.

6. Can we wrestle the boys team at our school in a dual meet and have that count as competition points?

Yes.

7. Do JV tournaments count as competition points? Could we go to those?

JV tournaments would not count as varsity competition points for the girls team. 11 varsity competition points are needed.



8. Can we wrestle against a girls team right before a boys varsity dual and have it count as competition points?

Yes! This might be one of the easiest ways to get competition points. Have your girls team wrestle the other school's girls team right before the boys team dual. This keeps scheduling easy, logistics easy (boys and girls coaching staff can be the same and will already be there), and transportation easy (girls go on the bus with the boys, just as they would have if they were a part of the boys team).

9. Do we earn competition points even if we do not roster a full girls team? For example, can our girls team wrestle a dual against another team and still get the competition points if we do not have a full line-up and therefore several forfeits?

Absolutely. This is the same for boys teams. Even boys teams that enter events/duals and have forfeits still earn competition points.

10. Our school has an official girls team but can a girl still wrestle with the boys team?

Yes, if the school has both a boys and girls team, a girl could compete on the boys team per Article XVI Section 4 Item A in the PIAA by-laws. There is a provision that would allow this based on a school by school decision. A girl **would not** be permitted to compete on both the boys and girls team in the same season.

11. So until girls wrestling is sanctioned, can we have 100 schools designate one girl for their girls team and keep the rest of their girls on the boys team so they can continue to compete together?

While you could technically do this, girls wrestling will likely have a much easier time getting sanctioned if there are girls competing for that team. Also, once you form the girls team, many of the same events, they'll just be earning different varsity competition points. See question 3 as well as the last page of this packet regarding ideas for ways to create the girls schedule.

12. Can we host a girls division as part of a PIAA Sanctioned Event?

Yes, you can host a girls only division, HOWEVER, in the absence of a girls only team any schools that participate in this event would have to use boys varsity competition points to do so. Once a team has a girls only team then the points would not count against the boys team. In addition, this would eliminate any 'open' wrestlers from competing in your event.

Example: If there are six schools competing in an event, Schools A, B, and C all have separate girls teams while teams D, E, and F still have a boys team only, competition points for schools A, B and C would be applied to the girls team while competition points for teams D, E and F would be applied to the boys team.

13. If PIAA Sanctioned a girls event and my school only has a co-ed team, can the girl on my team declare which post-season event she would enter?

In the future, if there is a PIAA sanctioned girls state championship, if my school is a coed program, without a separate boys or girls team, then my girls can declare to either enter the girls or boys championships. This is a precedent that is already set in a sport like golf.

14. I have girls on my roster, can I send them to a NFHS Sanctioned event in another state without it impacting my varsity points count?

Girls can compete in these events but if the girl(s) are on your boys roster, then the competition points for competing in these events will count towards your boys team. Once you have a girls only team then the points would count towards your girls team.



15. Can the girls on my roster enter an open event during the season and not have it count against the team competition points?

YES, you can send your girls to any open event that is run in the state without it impacting your school's competition points. However, the girls must be competing independently of their school. They would need to represent their club or hometown. In addition, anyone can coach as long as they are serving not in an official capacity as school coach at that event. In other words, they need to be serving as a private citizen and not as a coach of 'said' high school. This rule is exactly the same for boys as well.

16. What are the cost ramifications of adding girls wrestling?

The cost ramifications for girls wrestling can be extremely minimal or almost nonexistent if you have an existing boys team. For example:

- If you already have a boys team, you already have a mat and practice space, so there is no additional cost in these areas just because a girls team is created.
- If you already have a boys team, you already have coaches that could also function as the girls coaches. While a school can create a new coaching staff, the staff can also be the same as the boys team, thereby eliminating any additional coaching stipend expenditures.
- Singlets for the girls – If you already have had girls wrestling for your boys team, this won't even be an additional cost to what the school is currently paying because you are currently outfitting them. As more girls join, they will need singlets, so this will be a very minimal additional cost. (Note: while girls-cut singlets are great to have, many teams order boys-cut singlets and the girls wear those with a compression shirt underneath.)
- Travel for competition and events – there are ways to minimize additional travel specifically for the girls team (e.g., follow boys schedule), therefore significantly limiting additional cost for travel. Please see question 3 in the FAQ as well as the last page of this document for competition ideas.

17. Can the boys team coaching staff also coach the girls team?

Yes! You can also have totally different coaches or a mixture – for example, the same head coach but different assistants.



18. Can male coaches coach female athletes?

Yes! There are thousands of male wrestling coaches across the country who are coaching female wrestlers. In fact, the majority of girls teams are coached by male coaches. While having a female coach on staff can certainly be positive, not having a female head or assistant coach should not be a limiting factor in the creation of a team. Some male coaches may question whether liability increases when coaching females. The fact is, all coaches, in any sport, working with the same sex or with the opposite sex, must engage professionally with athletes at all times. Guidance from USA Wrestling, the PIAA, and other governing bodies tells coaches not to drive athletes alone, not to room with athletes, not to be in spaces (e.g., the wrestling room) alone with athletes, etc. Your school may also have additional policies regarding coach behavior. These types of regulations apply to ALL coaching situations – males coaching males, males coaching females, females coaching males, and females coaching females. Liability does not inherently increase just because a coach and an athlete are not the same sex. There are already hundreds of coaches right here in PA that have started coaching females, such as Jon Trengge, a 3x NCAA Division I All-American who now coaches at Parkland High School. Other coaches on the national scene include the Brands brothers who are coaching females through the Hawkeye Wrestling Club at the University of Iowa, Terry Steiner who coaches the US Women's team, and Valentin Kalika who was Helen Maroulis' personal coach. These examples are in addition to thousands of male high school wrestling coaches that are coaching females across the country. The examples are endless! For more information in this area, please see [Recruiting and Coaching Women](#)

19. Can the boys and girls team practice together?

Yes. There is no PIAA policy to prevent the boys and girls teams from practicing together. The PIAA does require that teams practicing together are at the same level (i.e., both high school teams), which the boys and girls teams would be. Joint practices across male and female teams does not happen in every sport but is common in certain sports, including track and field, cross country, swimming, etc. For wrestling, joint practices will likely make the most sense and be the easiest to implement for most schools, and that is fully acceptable.

20. Will having a girls team create a lot of additional work for the existing coaches?

If you choose to use the same coaches for the girls and boys team, the coaches will have some additional responsibilities through leading the girls team, but these responsibilities and the corresponding time investment may be much more minimal than you might expect. Also, if the girls are already on your boys team, you're already putting in some of that time investment. We recognize that each coach and team make individual decisions about how much time they invest and that there can be vast individual differences in this area. With that said, if a boys coaching staff is considering a girls team and already feels taxed, a girls team can be added and supported without massive increases in time/effort put forth. For example, boys and girls practices can be held at the same time and in the same space – in other words, you can have joint practices every day. Regarding equipment, you will need to order additional singlets for the girls, but you would have needed to do that anyway if they were members of your boys team. For competitions, once an official girls team is formed, you'll need to get the girls team to reach 11 competition points but one way to do that is to take the girls to some of the tournaments the boys go to and/or have the girls wrestle an opponent's girls team right before the boys dual. That way the girls and boys would travel to duals together and the coaching staff would already have planned to be there for the boys dual. While these are just some examples of how to manage time, there are many others, and anecdotally, we believe the vast majority of girls-team coaches would tell you that adding girls was much easier than they anticipated.



21. What impact would this have on the boys team? Would they be negatively impacted?

Not only is there a lack of evidence that adding a girls team would have a negative impact on the boys team, there is actually evidence that adding a girls team would positively impact the existing boys team. Adding girls teams can help protect the sustainability of boys programs. Further, adding a girls team can grow the school's wrestling fan base, expand its supporters, and bring additional volunteers, booster club members, community partners, and even donors to both the girls and boys program. While some people may argue that a coach's time may then be split between the boys and girls in the room, effective management of all athletes will be required whether an official girls team is formed or if they're simply a part of the existing boys team. Some people have also questioned whether booster club and related funds would be split and therefore lessen what the boys receive. In reality, new booster club volunteers would become involved and more fundraising potential would exist. (Plus, girls wrestling really does not need to cost the school any significant additional money. See question 16.)

“Research also indicates that female wrestlers in high school and college feel well supported and accepted by their male wrestling peers (Macro, Viveiros, & Cipriano, 2009). As women train and compete alongside men, male wrestlers develop respect for their female teammates, through observation of their female peers working hard and being committed to the sport (Sisjord & Kristiansen, 2009; Kirby, Roberts, Coakley, Stanec, and Gormley).”

22. Will it be hard to recruit girls to wrestle?

The data and trends show that if you create a girls program, it is very easy to attract girls to the sport. You will also be able to attract new girls to your sport who might never have participated in sports before. With just a little bit of recruiting and opening up the opportunity, you can get plenty of girls out for your team. For more information in this area, please see [Recruiting and Coaching Women](#).

23. Do you have specific ideas on how to recruit girls?

Lots of different methods have been used to interest girls into entering the wrestling room.

- One of these methods includes holding a “Bring Your Sister” or “Bring Your Friend” to practice day. Set up a day where you task each current wrestler with bringing at least one girl with them to practice (you can even then ask each girl to bring a friend as well). Plan an introductory practice that day with fun activities/games (e.g., cowboy/brahma bull, sumo), general physical challenges (e.g., balance exercises), or basic moves (e.g., arm drag, inside ties and push drill). Give them some general information about the sport (make it simple, explain rules in less than 30 seconds), show a short clip of wrestling, and consider sending them home with a flyer with more information.
- Consider announcements on the school news station, daily morning announcements, or the equivalent at your school. Do it more than once! Emphasize the benefits of the sport (e.g., it's fun!) and that any girl can do it, including current athletes of other sports, girls that have never done a sport, and girls that are currently in other combat sports (e.g., jiu-jitsu). Provide a pre-season meeting date for the girls and put this in the announcement!
- If you were already going to hold some pre-season practices, consider trying to recruit girls to these practices. Hold your initial meeting about girls wrestling before pre-season practices start and describe pre-season practices at that meeting. Then once the practices start, use those practices to introduce the girls to the sport and catch them up on some basic technique before the season. If they continue, then they'll at least have a basic understanding of how the sport works and will better be able to keep up with workouts.
- Try to establish a point person in the building who you can point girls to if they have any questions. (If one of your coaches works in the building, this would be the ideal person.)



Once you have some girls at your practices, it's important to try and give them the best chance possible of wanting to come back. You can do this by implementing a few strategies:

- Pay attention to them. If the girls aren't wanted there by the coaches, they will feel that. Welcome them, get to know them, and take an interest in their progress, just as you would for the boys.
- Consider reducing the number of required practices for girls during the season (or any beginner wrestlers, whether male or female). This gives beginners a chance to ease into the sport and not suddenly be thrust into a 6-days a week practice schedule that burns them out. It also respects other possible extracurricular obligations that they may have developed, which long-time wrestlers may not have during season (e.g., participation in band, travel club team with another sport, etc.).
- Try to pair girls with other girls during the first couple weeks so they are not forced to try and wrestle someone else with vastly greater experience than them.
- Share information with the girls and their parents to help them begin to connect with the sport. We all agree this is the best sport in the world and remembering to help new wrestlers connect to this culture is really helpful in building a bigger sense of community and ties to wrestling. For example, encourage them to follow various wrestlers (including female wrestlers, which gives them great role models) or outlets (e.g., FloWrestling) on social media, tell them about any great college matches coming up on TV, or even schedule a night to meet as a team at a local college match. Do whatever you can to connect them to this sport – you'll have a greater chance of getting them hooked. This goes for your guys as well.

24. What do girls wear when they wrestle?

Like boys, girls wear singlets when they wrestle. Many teams have continued to order boys cut singlets, but there are also girls cut singlets that could be purchased. No matter which type of singlet is used, rules require “all contestants wearing a one-piece singlet shall wear a suitable undergarment that completely covers the buttocks and groin area. Female wrestlers wearing a one-piece singlet shall wear a form-fitted compression undergarment that completely covers their breasts.” This means that compression shorts under the singlet as well as a sports bra would meet this criterion. Many girls also choose to wear a compression shirt under their singlet. (Note that the rule about suitable undergarments also applies to boys. For boys, black compression briefs/shorts are one solution.)

25. What do girls have to do with their hair when they wrestle?

For competitions, rules require that “hair shall not extend below the top of an ordinary shirt collar in the back; and on the sides, the hair shall not extend below earlobe level; in the front, the hair shall not extend below the eyebrows. If an individual has hair longer than allowed by rule, it shall be contained in a cover so that the hair rule is satisfied. Physical hair treatment items that are hard and /or abrasive such as (beads, bobby pins, barrettes, pins, hair clips, etc. or any other hair control device) shall not be permitted. A legal hair- controlled device such as rubber band(s) shall be secured so as not to come out readily during wrestling. The legal cover shall be attached to the ear guards...at the site.” In plain words this means that girls need to either put their hair up and secure it using rubber bands or use a hair cover. Note that this is the exact same rule that applies to any boys with longer hair.

26. Are weigh-ins or weight certifications different?

Girls follow the same weight certification procedures as the boys. Weigh-ins are also conducted the same way as the boys, they are simply held separately – i.e., girls enter when boys are done or boys enter when girls are done. If you already have girls on your boys team, creating a girls team would not change what you are currently doing in this regard – you are already holding separate weigh-ins.



27. Does Pennsylvania have an option to accelerate sanctioning through a concept of “Emerging Sport Status”?

The PIAA does not have a provision called “Emerging Sport Status.” The current policy to be sanctioned is to meet the threshold set by the PIAA policy. If you have heard the term “Emerging Sport Status” before, it was likely in reference to women’s wrestling at the NCAA level. In January 2020, women’s wrestling was granted Emerging Sport Status at the NCAA level.

28. Can the PIAA Wrestling Steering Committee make a change to the current PIAA Policy regarding sanctioning requirements and or how competition points are calculated?

The PIAA Steering committee could make recommendations to the Board of Directors. For changes to occur, it would require a vote by the full Board.

29. Could the wrestling steering committee give approval to allow girls only competitions without it impacting the boys points as the sport work towards the 100 team threshold?

The steering committee could make a recommendation to allow coed teams to have separate competition points for the girls and boys but it would require a board action to be put in place.

30. How do I start an official girls high school wrestling program?

Adding a girls wrestling program is easy, especially if a boys program is already in existence. To make an official team, the girls team must be approved by the school board as an official team. To get the school board to review it, we recommend reaching out to your AD first and they will likely help steer the next steps (i.e., getting it on the Board agenda). School boards, AD’s, and other school administrators may like more information on girls wrestling. Using any and all of these materials is welcome. No matter what your role is in the process, please reach out if you have additional questions after reading this document.



PHOTO BY: VICTORIA DIAZ

31. What documentation would be needed by the PIAA to prove a school formed a girls team? Is there something that Board/AD would need to issue?

There is not an official form, etc. that a school needs to fill out to signify that a girls team has been formed. However, *we recommend that as soon as a school district forms a girls team, that they issue a dated letter stating the formation of the girls team and submit it to their PIAA District point person as well as to the Sanctioning Committee at SanctionPA@gmail.com. This will ensure that the number of established teams is known and can easily be communicated to the PIAA.* Once competitions are planned, submitting a competition schedule that includes enough events to reach 11 competition points would also be helpful.

32. Once we have 100 schools competing in at least 11 competition points, what are the next steps?

Once this threshold is met, a District committee or the steering committee can make a recommendation to the full board for the sport to be added.

33. What resources are available to start a program?

There are a lot of great resources available to help get you started with your program. Organizations such as The National Wrestling Coaches Association, USA Wrestling, and Wrestle Like A Girl are all positioned to support in different ways, and resources include:

- Best practices for coaching females in wrestling
- How to introduce girls wrestling to your boys team
- Risk management
- Recruiting posters

Wrestle Like a Girl: wrestlelikeagirl.org Click the “Resources” tab

USA Wrestling: [Recruiting and Coaching Women](#)

USA Wrestling: [Terry Steiner: Why Women's Wrestling](#)

USA Wrestling: [General Coaching Education Resources](#)

NWCA: [Coaching Development Resources](#)

34. In addition to starting a program, what else can we do to show support for girls wrestling and help make progress in PA?

To get girls wrestling sanctioned, the most important thing you can do is start a girls program and recruit girls to your team. In addition, you should communicate to your district wrestling rep on the steering committee to discuss your support regarding girls wrestling. If every coach did this, the issue of girls wrestling would be represented to the steering committee members and they would be able to take various voices into account. They can't do that if they don't hear from you. Not sure who your rep is? See below.

Name	School	District
Dennis Kellon	150 Larkin Ln., Collegeville 19426	1
Jay Starnes	Wallenpaupak H.S., 2552 Route 6, Hawley 18428	2
Michael Craig	Cumberland Valley HS, 6746 Carlisle Pike, Mechanicsburg 17050	3
Greg Goldthorp	Central Dauphin East H.S., 626 Rutherford Dr., Harrisburg 17109	
Dave Campbell	Line Mountain SD, 185 Line Mountain Rd., Herndon 17830	4
Thad Kiesnowski	North Star HS, 400 Ohio St, Boswell 15531	5
Dr. David Crumrine	Central HS, 718 Central Rd., Martinsburg 16662	6
Frank Vulcano	Canon-McMillan HS, 314 Elm St Ext, Canonsburg 15317	7
Michael A. Gavlik	Pittsburgh Public Schools, South Annex, 625 South 10th St., Room 105A, Pittsburgh 15203	8
Randy Cathcart	Clarion Area H.S., 219 Liberty Street, Clarion 16214	9
Steve Hoover	Mercer Area S.D., 545 West Butler St., Mercer 16137	10
Robert F. Hartman	Whitehall HS, 3800 Mechanicsville Rd., Whitehall 18052	11
Barry Strube	West Philadelphia HS, 4700 Walnut St., Philadelphia 19139	12



35. How do we get more information?

If your questions are not answered within this document, please contact the Sanctioning Committee point person, Brooke Zumas, and she will address your inquiry or connect you with another individual who can. Brooke can be reached at sanctionPA@gmail.com or 610-657-5821.

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PHOTO BY: VICTORIA DIAZ

GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING TEAM COMPETITION POINT SOURCES

Because boys wrestling has a maximum of 22 competition points a season and a minimum of 11, it is likely that girls wrestling, once sanctioned, will be given the same parameters. In order to hit the PIAA threshold of 11 varsity competition points for a newly formed girls team, there are several ways that schools can design their schedule. The following are some examples. *PLEASE NOTE that until girls wrestling is officially sanctioned, you will not be required to hit 11 competition points, so concerns about initially reaching 11 should not be a deterrent to forming a team, but we do highly recommend thinking about and planning ways to get to 11 as soon as you can, since that will likely be the requirement once sanctioning occurs.

OPTION 1

- Have your school's girls team wrestle other schools' girls teams right before scheduled boys varsity duals. This keeps scheduling easy, logistics easy (boys and girls coaching staff can be the same and will already be there), and transportation easy (girls go on the bus with the boys, just as they would have if they were a part of the boys team). A team would need 11 of these duals to meet the competition points. Note that the other team would need to have a girls team as well.

OPTION 2

- Enter your girls team in some of the same tournaments that you are entering your boys team in. Some of these tournaments may have a separate girls division which the girls team could enter and some don't – if there is not a separate girls division, the girls can simply enter the main division. Either way, they will get competition points. Trying to enter some of the same tournaments that the boys team travels to can make logistics and transportation relatively seamless. Assuming one-day tournaments with at least 9 schools competing if bracketed or at least 6 schools competing if it's a round robin, then a girls team would need 4 such events to meet the competition points.

OPTION 3

- If a school wants to develop a separate schedule for the girls/attend tournaments the boys don't attend, the girls team could go to girls tournaments **anywhere in the state** as long as they are PIAA sanctioned events. A girls team would need to attend 4 such events to meet the competition points. If four weekends sounds like a hurdle, consider doing tournaments on back to back days (e.g., Saturday and Sunday), thereby only requiring two weekends.

OPTION 4

- If a school wants to develop a separate schedule for the girls/attend tournaments the boys don't attend, the girls team could go to girls tournaments **in any other state** as long as it's an NFHS sanctioned event. A girls team would need to attend 4 such events to meet the competition points. If four weekends sounds like a hurdle, consider doing tournaments on back to back days (e.g., Saturday and Sunday), thereby only requiring two weekends.



OPTION 5

- Wrestle your own school's boys team! This would count as one competition point for the girls team. Note that it would also count as one competition point for the boys team.

OPTION 6

- Any combination of the above!

We are currently working with several school districts and tournament directors to iron out girls tournament dates for next year. Once these are finalized, we will issue a list of existing girls events that any girls team could enter for competition points.



PHOTO BY: VICTORIA DIAZ