

GEORGIA HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATION (GHSA) CLASSIFICATIONS

CHALLENGES:

Dalton High School's reclassification from a local region several years ago into a higher classification has had serious ramifications for students, coaches and the school. The extensive travel time for student athletes and coaches is demanding and disruptive to the school day. When school competitions are held at region schools, student athletes and coaches must miss significant class time due to the distance they must travel which is compounded by the unpredictable traffic congestion in metro Atlanta. For those sports that have multiple competitions each week during their season, such as basketball, tennis and soccer, the travel can have an adverse effect on the academic performance of the student athlete and the students in the class of a teacher/coach who left school early and missed instructional time during the school day. Students and coaches also sacrifice significant personal time with family due to the time requirements of playing in this higher classification as they get home from away competition often well after midnight. The time commitment also affects the school's ability to retain and recruit quality coaches. Families of student athletes, along with fans and supporters must incur higher costs in traveling to competitions and this results in fewer fans attending events to cheer on student athletes. Also, the financial burden of having to pay for extensive travel has negative consequences for the resources available to the school and its sports programs.

GHSA

The GHSA is responsible for classifying high schools in Georgia for GHSA-sanctioned events, including extracurricular athletic and academic activities. The classification is based on the Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) numbers routinely submitted annually by school districts to the Georgia Department of Education (GADOE) for enrollment.

Beginning in 2016-17, GHSA began using a four-year cycle to conduct reclassifications. A review of FTE numbers is conducted the year before the four-year cycle when classifications are set. The numbers used during this current four-year cycle were taken from the October 2015 FTE count.

In October 2015, Dalton High School reported an enrollment of 1829 students. Based on that number, GHSA determined that Dalton High would be in the 6A classification. Barring any significant changes in enrollment (increases of more than 20 percent or decreases of more than 20 percent), Dalton High would remain in Class 6A through school year 2019-2020. There are no known circumstances that could impact the classification of 6A for Dalton High School for the 2017-2018 school year, either moving up or down in classifications.

GHSA does provide for a review in 2 years, at the mid-point of the four year cycle. The school will look at FTE numbers to see if there are any increases of more than 20 percent or decreases of more than 20 percent in a school's enrollment that would initiate a possible change in the classification. GHSA would review all information, including any district provided enrollment projections, to determine if a classification change is warranted. If at any time projected numbers are used for classification and if the school grows by more than 10% of the projection for a given year, the school's teams can be banned from participating in post-season play. The next mid-cycle review will consider FTE numbers from the October 2017 submission to GADOE. There are no foreseen circumstances that could cause Dalton High's student enrollment to exceed the 20

percent above FTE enrollment threshold of 2195 students or go below the 20 percent below FTE enrollment threshold of 1463 students.

GHSA has stated that all ninth grade students are counted in some high school's enrollment count for re-classification purposes. In the event ninth grade students are housed and enrolled in a designated school; such as a grade 6-9 school, a grade 8-9 school, or a grade 9 Academy; the Georgia Department of Education will record and report the ninth grade students as being enrolled in that school and will play no role in determining how or in which high school the student's enrollments would be counted for GHSA purposes.

At this time, in the event ninth grade students were enrolled in a designated school by DOE, such as a grade 6-9 school, a grade 8-9 school, or a grade 9 Academy, GHSA does not know how and in which high school the student's enrollments would be counted. A formal proposal would need to be presented to the Executive Director of GHSA who would probably take the proposal before the Re-Classification Committee.

The district's current projection for Dalton High School for the 2017-18 enrollment is 1972 students. Staff plans and budgets will be based on this student forecast.

The existing maximum student enrollment for high schools in Region 4A is 1375 students. However, this number can change each classification period as it is based upon enrollment comparisons of all high schools in Georgia.

GHSA will use the FTE count in October 2019 to determine reclassification for the next four-year cycle.

GADOE

According to Georgia Department of Education guidance, a student's primary enrollment when attending two different schools is determined by the location where they spend the majority (51 percent) of their day.

Each school must have a unique school code and separate address with the Georgia Department of Education to be considered a separate school. A school is required to meet certain measures, accountabilities, and criteria with assigned personnel and services to be considered a school.

The Georgia Department of Education is unable to grant an additional school code, provide specific guidance, direction on enrollment, or potential waiver options without a detailed proposal.