

ARTICLE 33

POSITION STATEMENTS OF THE RHODE ISLAND INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE

Section 1. GENDER EQUITY

It is the policy of the Rhode Island Interscholastic League Principals' Committee on Athletics to provide equal opportunity for participation in athletics without discrimination because of gender.

Approximately forty-three percent (43%) of student-athletes participating on Rhode Island Interscholastic League member school athletic teams are female.

The values of female role models and future opportunities for women are important to high school athletic programs and their governance. Girls should see women in leadership and decision-making positions. This role modeling will demonstrate to girls that they too can become leaders who will have an impact on life and upon the lives of others. Adult women should inspire female student-athletes in a manner that will ensure broadened participation of women in future programs.

Therefore, the Rhode Island Interscholastic League's policy is to prohibit discrimination in athletics by gender, and to promote the full realization of equal opportunity in athletics through a continuing affirmative action program in all athletic programs under the auspices of the Rhode Island Interscholastic League.

Gender equity is important to the leadership of the Rhode Island Interscholastic League.

Section 2. USE OF ALCOHOL & TOBACCO PRODUCTS AT AWARD BANQUETS

The Committee on Athletics takes the following position relative to the use of alcohol and tobacco products at awards banquets:

"The Rhode Island Interscholastic League takes the position that the use of alcohol and tobacco products at athletic events, including banquets and awards programs, is inappropriate. The Rhode Island Interscholastic League, therefore, encourages schools and associated athletic groups to discourage the use of these products at these events."

Section 3. TOBACCO USE

The Rhode Island Interscholastic League, in compliance with the 1999 Rhode Island House of Representatives Resolution 72 about the dangers of chewing and smoking tobacco, request that the athletic directors in each city and town inform student-athletes at the beginning of each season about the dangers of chewing and smoking tobacco as follows:

Chewing, dipping or smoking tobacco is harmful to the body. All forms of tobacco use cause damage. It can cause severe medical problems and worsen many other medical conditions including heart disease, strokes, vascular disease, pulmonary disease, emphysema, and cancer. One of the effects of chewing and dipping is called leukoplakia which causes white leathery patches inside the mouth. Sometimes these patches turn into cancer and often prove fatal.

Chewing or dipping can cause teeth to wear down or decay. It can also make the gums recede or move back. This leaves teeth exposed to more decay and means more trips to the dentist. The tobacco chewer or dipper will lose much of his sense of taste. S/he has trouble tasting foods that are bitter, sweet or salty.

Nicotine is found in all forms of tobacco. Nicotine causes the user to feel good for a very short time. When the nicotine wears off, the chewer, dipper or smoker feels let down. Once the nicotine user is addicted, s/he must have more tobacco every 20 to 30 minutes to maintain a normal feeling. At this point, s/he is addicted to the nicotine. Nicotine also causes blood vessels to get smaller. The heart begins to pump harder and faster to get blood through the narrow vessels.

Any form of tobacco, whether it is chewed or smoked, is both harmful and addictive. To stay healthy, stay away from any form of tobacco.

The Rhode Island Interscholastic League promotes health and well-being for student-athletes and seeks to instill respect for a healthy mind and body. Recognizing that the carcinogens and carbon monoxide that result from tobacco use are dangerous to the athlete's health and to those around him or her; the League recommends that all school districts adopt a non-tobacco use policy at all sport functions, competitive events, and school-sponsored banquets regardless of location and time of day. This policy applies to all employees, coaches, players, parents, volunteers or guests.

Section 4. – PAY-TO-PLAY

The RIIL Principals' Committee on Athletics is of the opinion that students should not be assessed fees for the privilege of participating in high school athletics which have been traditionally recognized as integral and meaningful in the total school program. Interscholastic sports have through the years provided immediate and long-range benefits to participants as well as to schools. In the opinion of the Principals' Committee on Athletics requiring "pay-to-play" is a shortsighted educational policy and can be discriminatory to the needy.

