

BCSS MEMBER SCHOOLS' COMMITTEE UPDATES

*Updates on the work of the:
BCSS Competitive Fairness Committee
BCSS Governance Ad-Hoc Committee*



November 7th, 2019

Introduction

The BC School Sports (BCSS) Board of Directors has requested a member wide update be published on the work of the BCSS Competitive Fairness Committee and the BCSS Governance Ad-Hoc Committee. These committees are working to provide recommendations in areas that could have significant impacts on our school sports community. As the Board is expecting committee recommendations in January, the Board felt it would be appropriate to provide an update prior to final recommendations going out to the membership in February. It should be noted that the level of detail the committees have gone into in these topics is far deeper than what this document will summarize. We endeavour to provide as much context as possible while ensuring the document remains readable.

This document is intended to be reviewed by all BCSS stakeholders including Superintendents, School Administrators, Athletic Directors, and Coaches. The Board of Directors noted that despite continued efforts to educate and engage our stakeholders in the rezoning process that began in October 2016 through to its implementation in September 2019, there were still people unaware of the changes, and the process that led to those changes. We encourage you to share this document freely amongst your networks.

BCSS Competitive Fairness Committee

Why does this committee exist?

Over the past few years, BCSS had received anecdotal comments about the imbalance between different types of schools and the competitive imbalance that existed. Sometimes the imbalance referred to was urban schools versus those in remote locations, sometimes the comments were referring to independent schools versus public schools or some combination of those factors.

In an effort to truly understand the issue and to quantify the problem if any existed, BCSS conducted a research sample looking back at many of our sports over the past 4-7 years, broken down by tier and gender. We looked at three data points:

- i. The balance of the teams registered in a particular tier relative to their independent or public status
- ii. Of the teams that qualified for provincials, the balance of teams from independent and public schools
- iii. Of the teams that finished in the top 4 at provincials, the balance of teams from independent and public schools

The results were quite informative, and clearly indicated some form of imbalance. While anyone could speculate to various causes for the results of the research, the Board of Directors found it was clear that the data indicated an imbalance existed but had no insight into what was causing the imbalance. The Board then decided a committee would be required to try and assess the causes and potential solutions for addressing competitive fairness that is an outcome of systemic or structural differences.

Committee Structure and Members

The Board took great care in ensuring there was a diverse group of people appointed to this committee. It should be noted that the representatives from independent schools have been very engaged and supportive throughout this process.

The 2019-2020 Competitive Fairness Committee consists of:

COMPETITIVE FAIRNESS COMMITTEE		
COMMITTEE ROLE	NAME	SCHOOL/DISTRICT
BCSS Board Member (Chair)	Brent Sweeney	South Delta
BCSS Executive Director	Jordan Abney	BCSS
ISABC Executive Director	Dr. Elizabeth Moore	ISABC
District Administrator	Todd Manuel	SD 67 (Okanagan-Skaha)
ISABC School Head	Andy Rodford	SMUS
District Athletic Coordinator	Harp Sohi	SD 39 (Vancouver)
Public School Administrator	Veronika Farnell	Centennial
BCSS Sport Commissioner	Joe Moreira	Mt. Sentinel
AD: non-ISABC Ind. School	Shauna Stam	Credo Christian
AD: ISABC Ind. School	Blake Gage	Brentwood
AD: A/AA Public School	Marie Giesbrecht	Clearwater
AD: AAA/AAAA Public School	Chris Carter	Mt. Boucherie

Mandate:

The Competitive Fairness Committee shall solicit feedback, engage in research and discussion with internal and external stakeholders with the goal of making informed recommendations to the membership. Areas of focus should include, but are not limited to the differences of rural versus urban schools, independent schools versus public schools, the effect of international students or boarding students on competitive balance, BCSS tiering structures and philosophy, and any other policy or absence of a policy that has an impact on the ability for all schools to have an equitable opportunity to succeed. This committee does not have the authority to change policy but is tasked with making expert recommendations to the membership for changes they believe to be in alignment with the values and goals of BC School Sports.

Committee Process:

The Competitive Fairness Committee (CFC) is committed to gaining a full understanding of the issues at hand without making uninformed assumptions and using data wherever possible to inform decisions. The committee also recognized, if using data for any sort of tool to modify imbalances, the data had to be easily attainable across the membership, and repeatable from year to year to ensure consistency.

The CFC also remains committed to exploring areas where there are structural or systemic imbalances and are not targeting schools or programs which achieve high levels of success based on good programs and athletic culture in their school.

The CFC looked at various models used by other school sport governing bodies. Roughly half of the high school state associations in the United States have some form of adjustment factor applied.

The committee then identified a number of possible areas that may be contributing to a systemic imbalance within BCSS. The staff were then tasked to obtain data related to the various topics for potential inclusion. These potential areas included:

- i. Socio-economic status
- ii. International students
- iii. Facilities
- iv. School Resources
- v. Scholarships/Financial Aid
- vi. Coaching
- vii. Lack of Catchments or District Boundaries
- viii. Remote or Rural Schools

The Committee felt that the socio-economic status was likely the best indicator and could cover a lot of the other areas identified. It is also the most commonly used indicator in the United States. However, unlike the US where there is a very easy standard of measurement (School Lunches provided to Students, as mandated by state laws) there is no such measurement in BC. The staff even inquired with the Ministry of Education as to what data might be available but nothing suiting the needs of BCSS exists. The committee moved on to explore other areas.

Ultimately, the committee arrived at three areas that likely provided the best opportunities to focus on to address the imbalances:

- i. Coaching (the ability to ask about coaching during an interview, the ability mandate extra-curricular involvement in an employment agreement, and finally the ability to pay coaches)
- ii. Urban/Rural (access to quality coaches, access to club programs, camps and other development opportunities, access to diverse competition, travel costs to attend competition)
- iii. Independent/Public Schools (Generally, public schools are restricted by catchments and district boundaries where independent schools are not.)

Building of a Multiplier System

The committee is still working through this phase and experimenting with how to use data obtained in these three areas to create the best system. The concept looks at taking the enrollment numbers used by each school for tiering purposes and applying a multiplier in some or all of the areas noted above. Which if done correctly, would see schools that have advantages in these areas have some multiplier applied to their enrollment number. That new number would be used for tiering classifications, which in some cases would result in that school playing in a higher tier. This isn't to say that these schools wouldn't still be competitive in those larger tiers but the data suggests that playing in a larger tier against schools with a larger student body and deeper talent pools allows for a more competitive experience as schools at similar competitive levels competing against each other leads to a more positive experience for all involved.

Urban/Rural Split at Single-A (1A) level

There has also been some discussion and preliminary research done about the idea of splitting the 1A classification into Urban and Rural classifications. This would mean two separate championships in this classification based on the definition created. The data has shown while there is an imbalance at all levels, it is most profound at the 1A level, and some discussion within the committee has revolved around using a multiplier tool for 2A-4A while creating a 1A-Urban and 1A-Rural. This concept is used in some states as well. The CFC distributed a survey to all 1A schools asking for some early feedback on the idea. The survey received a great response with many great questions and suggestions for consideration. The result of the survey indicated the schools would be interested in seeing more details. It should be noted this very well may not end up being part of the recommendation after further exploration, but the committee is investigating the merits of this idea and felt it should be included.

Tiering

The final issue the committee is exploring is how BCSS does tiering. The concept of tiering is based on the philosophy that schools with similar-sized student bodies generally should compete against each other because the opportunity to field a team is generally equal, before considering other factors. The committee recognizes the importance of tiering in maintaining competitive fairness and is considering this issue as well. A lot of the concepts being explored by the committee are more easily implemented in the school-based tiering model, where there is one set of tiering numbers and a school is the same tier in all sports (opting up, is generally still available) rather than have differing tiering numbers for different sports. The school-based tiering is far more common in North America, although there are a few states that do use a version of sport-based tiering, however in those cases they are more standardized than the version we currently use. This conversation has also led the committee to discuss the philosophy and purpose of tiering and if it is currently achieving its intended purpose. No direction or consensus on this specific topic has been reached to date.

Next Steps

The Committee will continue to work towards a formal recommendation that will come in the form of a report to the Board of Directors in January that will then be brought to the membership for review and eventually a membership vote.

BCSS Governance Ad-Hoc Committee

Why is this committee necessary?

Governance is the structure for which the organization operates. It is the mechanism for managing decision making and policy. Our governance structure is unique to any of the other provincial or state school-sport governing bodies in North America. This was also very apparent in the Strategic Planning process and feedback received from the membership engagement. The member schools themselves identified it as the number one priority for the organization. The Board has worked hard to build goodwill and trust in their leadership and feel that based on the number of schools indicating this needed to be addressed, combined with a general sense of support for the direction of BCSS, now was an appropriate time to tackle this large challenge.

Secondarily, BCSS does not receive core government funding. We are the only school sport governing body in Canada that is not core funded by their provincial government. While that is a focus of the Board and staff moving forward, in the meantime, we rely on receiving our gaming funds which we must apply for on an annual basis and if received, are very restricted in their use. BCSS received notification this past year that due to a change in the application of gaming guidelines, we may no longer meet the criteria for gaming funds in our current state. In our meetings with the gaming branch, some of these issues have been resolved through education and discussion, while others will require structural change. Two of the more significant items are:

- i. An Open Membership
The Gaming Guidelines suggest funding organizations where any citizen of BC can be a member and participate in its decision making and governance.
- ii. Direct Delivery of Programs
The Gaming Guidelines suggest that an eligible program must be directly delivered. Currently, our commissions deliver programs and while they are listed as standing committees in the Policies of BCSS, they operate at varying levels of autonomy, with their own decision-making procedures, bank accounts and even in some cases are their own legal entities themselves. A quick examination of our financial statements quickly reveals that we do not directly incur the costs of our championships and it is clear we do not directly deliver these championships which is a critical factor in receiving gaming funding
- iii. Scholarship Programs
The Gaming Guidelines state that to be eligible for gaming funding, if an organization wishes to award scholarships it must be listed in their Constitution as one of the core purposes of the organization. While it is certainly nice to provide students with some aid as they move into post-secondary school, it certainly is not a core purpose of BCSS or our Commissions and this practice needs to be reviewed.

Lastly, the current business model of BCSS is not sustainable. The biggest properties any provincial/state governing body has for revenue generation purposes is their championships. Currently, BCSS does not receive any revenue generated from any of the avenues available to most organizations through this. In fact, we subsidize the championships to approximately \$140,000 each

year. Compare this to Alberta, where school-based championships are bid on and ASAA receives all revenue for streaming, as well as merchandise and corporate sponsorships. In Ontario, OFSAA licenses the championships to schools for a hosting fee (approximately \$50,000 per year in total) and charges an athlete fee that goes directly to OFSAA (\$3-\$5 per athlete) and then additional profits (gate, local sponsorship etc) are split between the host school and OFSAA. Our commissions, generally speaking, do a wonderful job hosting the championships and provide a great experience to our student-athletes. However, there is a lack of continuity across championships and the BCSS brand is not featured which compromises the ability to generate revenues from corporate partners across multiple sports, which is standard practice in North America. To add to this, BCSS office staff end up providing a lot of support and resources in the office to our commissions or have to react to their decisions that sometimes are not congruent with the overall direction of BCSS. To maintain the current trajectory would likely result in significant increases to dues or reduction in services to the members when in reality we need to be providing our member schools with more support and resources to deliver school sport.

As a result, the Board felt it was the appropriate time to create the Governance Ad-Hoc Committee. This committee was formed in January 2019 and has been working for nearly a year on the various aspects. The Board felt having an outside unbiased third party would be advantageous to the process and as such engaged DACATA Performance Group to lead the process. However, instead of an independent process, they have been asked to lead the committee through a process to ensure there are appropriate discussions, viewpoints and perspectives presented.

Committee Structure and Members:

The Committee Members are:

GOVERNANCE AD-HOC COMMITTEE			
COMMITTEE ROLE	NAME	SCHOOL/DISTRICT	POSITION
External Consultant (Chair)	Kim Senecal	DACATA	External Consultant
BCSS Board Member	Rick Thiessen	MEI	Athletic Director/VP
District Administrator	Greg Kitchen	Victoria (SD 61)	Asst. Superintendent
BCSS Executive Director	Jordan Abney	BCSS	Executive Director
BCSS Sport Commission	James Johnston	Semiahmoo	Principal
Athletic Association Pres	Lindsay Brooke	SMUS	Athletic Director
Member School Principal	Troy White	Kelowna Sec	Principal
Member School AD	Mark Fenn	Sentinel	Athletic Director

Mandate:

The Governance Ad-Hoc Committee shall solicit feedback, engage in discussion with internal and external stakeholders, examine best practices and conduct research where necessary with the goal of making informed recommendations. Areas of focus should include but are not limited to any areas to Membership Classes, General Meetings, Board Composition, Voting Rights, Sport Commissions, Local Associations and Zones. This committee does not have the authority to change policy. This committee is tasked with making expert recommendations to the BCSS Board of Directors they believe to be in alignment with the values and goals of BC School Sports. This committee, in making expert recommendations, must also consider the ramifications of the Society Act (Provincial), the Charity Law (Federal), and the BC Gaming Funding Guidelines to ensure compliance is maintained or enhanced.

Committee Process:Current Structure Review

The committee began by conducting a review of the current BCSS Governance structure. It looked at the impacts of the structure in a variety of areas such as:

- i. Voting Rights and Structure
- ii. Affiliated or Partner Organizations
- iii. School Athletics as an Educational Tool
- iv. Broad multi-sport focus versus narrow single sport focus
- v. Operating Efficiencies
- vi. Policy Debate and Approval Structure
- vii. People (Volunteer impacts, turnover and retention)
- viii. Financial Impacts

Examination of other school sport governing bodies

The next step for the committee was to look at other provincial and state governing bodies. Many were looked at casually, while a comprehensive examination was done on eight governing bodies (3 Canadian, 5 American) with similar sizes and cultures to BC. (i.e. Alberta, Ontario, Washington, Oregon etc.)

The committee used these reviews to look for commonalities, themes and best practices across the various governing bodies. When comparing the organizations, the committee looked at the following:

- i. Legislative Body (Responsibilities, Size, Process etc.)
- ii. Executive Body (Responsibilities, Size, Process etc.)
- iii. Voting Procedures and Requirements
- iv. Sport Specific Requirements and Operating Procedures
- v. Geographic/Regional, Gender and Minority Diversity and Representation
- vi. Level of Administration leadership/involvement
- vii. Tiering Structures and Cycle Length

What became apparent very quickly to the committee is that our structure is significantly different from what is generally accepted as current best practice.

Agreed Upon Principles

The committee then looked to find some high-level agreed-upon guidelines and targets to facilitate the development of a potential new structure. The committee agreed upon the following:

- i. Voting Body: Not a single jurisdiction investigated has the entire membership as the voting bodies. Based on best practice, the committee agreed the legislative body should be between 40-60 persons. Zones should have equal representation.
- ii. Executive Body: The committee feels an Executive Body of 7-9 persons would be most appropriate
- iii. Diversity: It was noted that almost every governing body has a very direct and targeted approach to ensuring diversity, whether that be geographical, gender or ethnic amongst decision-makers. The committee agreed upon ensuring that in our new system there should be a targeted focus to ensure appropriate diversity among the groups.
- iv. Administration: The committee noted the significantly higher levels of administration involvement, not just in the US, but even in Canada, where in Alberta and Ontario, the President must be a School Principal. In Manitoba, it has to be a district administrator. The committee concluded that having some administration presence is required, but not at the expense of AD's. There needs to be a balance.

Reviewing potential scenarios

The consultant then led the development of different potential structures for review by the committee. The consultant presented options varied in structure and approach that facilitated discussion by the committee.

The committee has tentatively agreed on an executive structure and some committee structures, but is still working through some significant details as it pertains to sport leadership committees and their functioning as a piece of the governance structure.

Next Steps

The Committee will continue to work towards a formal recommendation that will come in the form of a report to the Board of Directors in January that will then be brought to the membership for review.

Implementation

Any changes will need to be approved by the membership, consistent with our Bylaws and Policies. The Board of Directors, in conjunction with the Governance Committee, will likely establish the best path forward on the timing of the implementation. It is likely that portions of these changes would be in front of the membership for consideration at the April 2020 AGM and, if passed, would become effective in September 2020. However, other pieces may be implemented in stages, similar to how the zone transition worked over a period of 16 months. It will ultimately depend on the complexity of the changes recommended by the committee and the ability for the membership to implement the changes.

Conclusion

It is the hope of the Board of Directors that this document serves as an educational tool to help inform the membership of the critical work that these committees are doing. The Board continues to be committed to working in a transparent way to further the organization and hopes this will further reduce any surprise as a result of the proposed changes in the spring.

Ideally, the membership will feel they understand the exhaustive process that has led us to this point, and eventually to some recommendations, which will then lead to a wholesome, and educated discussion on the merits of the recommendations.