



Alignment Committee Minutes

April 8, 2014 – 10:00 a.m.

Members Present: Dave Jeck, Chairman, Fauquier County Schools; 6A North, Matt Ragone, Langley High School; 6A South, David Cassady, C. D. Hylton High School; 5A North, Joe Pisani, Massaponax High School; 5A South, Ryan Molloy, Mills Godwin High School (alternate for Dave Kannewurf); 4A North, Ron Petrella, Heritage (LC) High School; 4A South, Randy Johnson, Dinwiddie High School; 3A East, Buddy Herndon, Spotsylvania High School; 3A West, Steve Leaman, Spotswood High School; 2A East, Dan Jones, King William High School; 2A West, Ed Dike, Buckingham County High School; 1A East, Stan Latham, Sussex Central High School; 1A West, Stan Dunham, Northwood High School; Ken Tilley, VHSL. Also in attendance were Lora Bickley, recording secretary, Joyce Sisson, Tom Dolan, Shawn Knight, VHSL; Bob Rose, Colonial Heights High School, Jim Long and David Rhodes, Virginia Beach Schools; Brian Collier, William Monroe High School; and Sal Colangelo, C. D. Hylton High school.

- I. **Minutes of January 14 Conference Call:** Randy Johnson moved, Stan Latham seconded and the committee voted 12-0 to accept the minutes as presented.

- II. **Agenda Approval:** Buddy Herndon moved, Dan Jones seconded and the committee voted 12-0 to accept the agenda as presented.

- III. **Purpose of Committee and Meeting:**
 - A. Review the 2014 VHSL Alignment Survey Results as well as the February 2014 VSBA/VHSL Survey Results.
 - B. Discuss a proposal to align every four years instead of every two years. See Handbook attachment, Section 10: CLASSIFICATION with proposed change.
 - C. Consider ways to reduce travel and cut costs (e.g., sectional bracketing for playoffs).
 - D. Discuss Multi-class Tournament formats.

- IV. **Items included for Review:**
 - A. January 14 Conference Call Minutes
 - B. 2014 VHSL Alignment Survey Results
 - C. February 2014 VSBA/VHSL Survey Results
 - D. March 31, 2012 ADM Figures
 - E. VHSL Multi-class Championships (attached)
 - F. VHSL By-Laws, Section 10: CLASSIFICATION (includes amendment proposal)

- V. **Review of the 2014 Alignment Survey Results:** The overall aggregated survey results were reviewed and it was noted that each region representative received a copy of their region's individual responses.

Region representatives reviewed their respective region's concerns.

- 6A South – Dave Cassady** The bottom line from his region were concerns about certain multi-class championships and finding ways to cut travel costs.
- 6A North – Matt Ragone** His region has concerns with multi-class tournaments. The region wants the districts aligned with the conferences without affecting the rest of the state. Their region make-up would allow this concept, and it would be more cost effective for them. They are in favor of the four-year alignment with prescribed mid-cycle adjustments.
- 5A South – Ryan Molloy** They prefer the four-year alignment plan with provisions for increase/decrease in enrollments. The region has set up playoff brackets and seedings that help reduce costs. Even though there are a few isolated issues, the region as a whole is happy with the region/conference set up. Their biggest concern is with having one state championship for boys volleyball.
- 5A North – Joe Pisani** Approximately 90% of the schools in his region want to stay where they are currently. Many schools want to stay within their conferences and play and preserve local rivals. They have issues also with some multi-class tournaments and travel costs.
- 4A North – Ron Petrella** His region also is 90% satisfied with the new classification and where they are placed. There will be movement in his region due to a new school opening in 2014, and that school will draw from Freedom (SR). Only a few schools will likely ask to change. The region can work to improve travel. The region is in favor of the two-year alignment cycle. They feel that a four-year alignment will upset balance.
- 4A South – Randy Johnson** The multi-class boys volleyball tournament is the biggest concern. Powhatan High School is the only school that has requested to switch conferences. They are also concerned over loss of instructional time, particularly the schools with accreditation issues.
- 3A East – Buddy Herndon** His region has concerns over how multi-class tournaments are run and communication issues. Field Hockey was not a good experience for their schools – they were not aware where they were playing, and there was no one to take the lead for this event. The region is 60/40 in favor of the four-year alignment. They have difficulty scheduling outside the district and have experienced travel issues.
- 3A West – Steve Leaman** Most schools in his region are satisfied with the new alignment. However, there are concerns with schools from 2A – 6A in some districts. The majority of the schools favor the four-year alignment but

we have to be sensitive to the minority of schools that are on the bubble. We need to look out for them. If we go to the four-year alignment, we need to consider the impact on districts/conferences when schools move up or down due to enrollment. We need to have guidelines in place. There is also a disparity in the number of conference representatives going to region events – some conferences have eight schools vying for two spots and other conferences only have five schools vying for two spots. They are supportive of combination championships.

2A East – Dan Jones

Ninety percent of his schools are okay with the new alignment. Concerns center on conference/post season play. Initially, it was determined that districts would remain intact for regular season play, so conferences do not have authority to dictate scheduling to districts. His region is in favor of the two-year cycle. They also know that the highest region is in control of multi-class tournaments. In regard to the new proposed basketball model, they like the six games in six days. They prefer a divisional split if the games are split. They are in favor of having the 1A State Track Meet on one day followed by the 2A State Track Meet the next day.

2A West – Ed Dike

Two of their conferences are essentially districts and are far west. The other two conferences are as far as five hours away from the western end. Travel is a definite issue in their region. Their region wants clarification as to why have district play since advancement is through conference play. (Note: The current alignment was developed with the stipulation that districts would be preserved for regular season play and scheduling purposes.) Their region favors the two-year alignment cycle. There is also concern about the consolidation of the two Dickenson schools and their placement in the region and how that placement will affect the current 2A West Region schools.

1A East – Stan Latham

Their region is satisfied with the new alignment. Two schools asked for possible reassignment, but now it is down to only one. They are unanimous in their support of the four-year alignment cycle. They do have concerns with multi-class tournaments.

1A West – Stan Dunham

Their region is pleased with the current alignment system as more schools are advancing to championships, thus giving more students an opportunity for post-season play. The region has concerns with the multi-class tournaments, needing more equal representation and better communication. These issues need to be “polished”. They are in favor of eliminating districts and only have conferences. Bland/Rocky Gap continue to combine for sports. They have travel issues but are used to that. There also seem to be some issues with seedings of conferences.

- A. **Review of VHSL Survey as well as VSBA/VHSL Survey:** The VHSL survey indicated that nearly 70% of the responses were in favor of going to a four-year alignment cycle, but the relevant survey question itself may have biased the vote.

After much discussion, it was decided not to recommend a four-year cycle at this time.

Dave Cassidy mentioned the travel issue is a huge concern. Half of the schools in Prince William County are in 6A North and the other half are in 6A South. This causes financial issues when trying to schedule games. They would prefer to have all the Prince William schools in one region.

Steve Leaman reminded the committee that balance was a major factor in the current alignment. Also, if schools play conference schedules rather than district schedules for regular season, they may be increasing travel issues.

It was the consensus of the committee to stay with the current parameters for the 2015-16 and 2016-17 alignment cycle. They requested that staff also prepare for review how much the alignment would be impacted if we use the 10% threshold above and below the March 31, 2012 ADM figures when the March 31, 2014 ADM figures are released.

The committee then discussed the VSBA Survey that was sent to school board members. Ken has a meeting with the executive director of the VSBA later this month. He hopes to gather more insight on this survey and also will emphasize the efforts that the League is making to address concerns by some school boards.

- B. **Consider ways to reduce travel and cut costs (e.g., sectional bracketing for playoffs):** The following suggestions were noted.

Ryan Molloy reported that 5A South used bracketing in sub-regional play for football. Two conferences were in the Virginia Beach area and two conferences were in Richmond area. They still had a 16-team bracket, but the best eight from the Virginia Beach conferences advance and the eight best from the Richmond conferences advance. They have a rotation plan in place for who hosts championships. Sub-regional play was driven by financial concerns. They plan to try a jubilee concept for spring events. They also schedule double-headers to help reduce costs.

Ron Petrella noted that they have county championships in lieu of district championships. Others reported that they had modified their district championships while others have eliminated it completely. The disparity causes problems mostly in football.

Some regions have neutral sites for their semifinals and finals. 2A East played the semis in basketball at Hanover High School and the finals at Orange High School. Next year they will flip-flop the sites. 5A South reported that for non-revenue sports, they play at neutral sites – Williamsburg or Newport News.

In regard to the decline in attendance, the committee concluded that the newness (with not a clear understanding of the concept) contributed to the decline. Once some new rivalries get established, this may help with attendance.

Randy Johnson indicated that 4A South got off to a rocky start with a lot of resistance to the new alignment. They have worked diligently during the year, and he feels they are on the right track and they are now working together much better.

Steve Leaman asked if the VHSL had looked at adjusting the percentage regions send to VHSL. Ken indicated this has been discussed, that we have no definite figures to go on at this time and still have the spring season ahead of us. The Foundation and corporate sponsors are generating additional funds, and we hope to give back lump sums to each region at some point. He noted that hiring an additional staff employee, with an emphasis on generating some revenue to return to the conferences or regions, would be one way to assist member schools. Mr. Leaman suggested that the membership should be advised that corporate sponsorship is up, the NFHS Network is a new source of revenue, and the Foundation is growing.

Ken and others on the committee felt the breakout session at the Membership Meeting on alignment was well attended and beneficial.

- C. **Multi-Class Tournaments:** Tom Dolan reported that the staff is working on making recommendations in regard to format changes in cheer, track, wrestling and swim (having standards will be of assistance). The question was asked if this was the right committee to deal with these issues. It was the consensus of the committee for staff to draw up recommendations describing possible format changes in designated sports, post them on line and report them to the Executive Committee in May.

The proposal sent in by Deep Creek was reviewed by the committee in regard to having three state championships in boys volleyball. Stan Latham moved, Randy Johnson seconded and the committee voted 11-0 (Cassady absent for vote) to have three state championships in boys volleyball – 6A, 5A and 1A through 4A.

The committee reviewed Dan Barner's request to separate diving from the 3A championships only. No action was taken on this issue. Mr. Barner has requested that this item be placed on the May Executive Committee agenda.

VI. **Alignment Committee Proposed Timeline:**

- March 31 ADM figures will be used, but these numbers will likely not be available until mid or late May. The committee will meet on Tuesday, June 24, at 9:00 a.m. to determine initial alignment plan which will be posted.
- Appeals would then be requested and will be heard by the Alignment Committee on Monday, August 11, at 10:00 a.m.
- A final recommended Alignment Plan as amended following appeals would then be presented to the Executive Committee for final approval at its September 17, 2014 meeting.

- VII. **Initial Parameters Regarding Classification:** Since the committee took action earlier in the day to continue with the current two-year alignment cycle, the following guidelines should be the basis in determining the upcoming 2015-16 and 2016-17 cycle.

- A. Excerpts from Ad Hoc Task Force dealing with VHSL Classification meeting December 19, 2011 and subsequently endorsed by VHSL Executive Committee.
- Regarding the primary purpose of “Classification,” the Task Force agreed that it is to equalize competitive fairness and the respective size of schools in VHSL sports and activities.
 - The ceiling for 1A be set at ADM of 475 rather than a designated number (e.g., 48) of schools.
 - After designating the smallest class (1A), the remaining schools would be equally divided into fifths with any additional schools placed in the largest classification. In the case of ties, between 1A and 2A the schools would go down in classification; between classes 2A/3A and above through 5A/6A, the schools would go up in classification.
- B. Excerpt from November 13, 2012 Alignment Committee and subsequently endorsed by VHSL Executive Committee.
- For the next cycle (2015-16 and 2016-17) adhere to conferences having between 5-8 members and region size being 24-28 members.
- VIII. **Action and Recommendations by Committee:** No additional action beyond V. C. above.
- IX. **Business from the Floor:** None.
- X. **Adjournment:** There being no further business, the committee adjourned at 2:12 p.m.