

Ad Hoc Task Force Minutes

VHSL Classification - Monday, December 19, 2011 – 4PM

Members Present: Tom Horn, Chairman, George Mason High School; Dante Lee, VHSL Chairman, Eastside High School; Lee Brannon, Wythe County Schools; Susan Bechtol, VHSL Chair-elect, Churchland High School; Mark Dorsey, West Point High School; Alvera Parrish, Petersburg City Schools; Thomas Taylor, Charlottesville High School; Ken Tilley and Lora Bickley, VHSL.

I. The Task Force clarified its purpose, goals and boundaries as follows:

A. Purpose:

- Assist the Redistricting and Reclassification (R&R) Committee by establishing the framework, parameters and guidelines within which the committee can complete its work.
- Affirm that the initial three-classification alignment plan proposed by the R&R Committee on November 29 is null and void, to be supplanted by a four-, five-, or six-classification model as directed by the Executive Committee.
- Communicate the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Task Force to the Executive Committee for its approval.

B. Goals:

- Provide decision making that is as unbiased as possible, reflecting the interests of the membership as a whole.
- Suggest a narrower focus by selecting the classification model that can best address schools' concerns and that will be consistent with the objective of classification (i.e., to equalize competitive opportunities based on school size).
- Develop a formula by which classifications are determined.

C. Boundaries (what is **not** our task)

- Acknowledge that the Task Force is not responsible for aligning schools.
- Acknowledge that the Executive Committee is responsible for Handbook changes.

II. Based on input from regions, correspondence and survey results, the Task Force then identified critical issues and concerns with the current classification system as listed below:

- Enrollment disparity within classes
- Enrollment disparity within and among regions based on divisions
- Geography in certain areas
- Balance, or imbalance in certain cases
- The practice of allowing schools to play up, creating inequities

During this review of critical issues and concerns, the Task Force concluded that:

- Now might be the best time to eliminate regions in favor of a section, or pod, or quadrant concept.
- Similarly, it might be the best time to eliminate the term district in favor of conference or some similar new terminology.
- The needs of the greater number of schools should take precedence over individual interests (or the smaller number of schools) – the concept of what is best for the League as a whole.
- This time in the League’s history is an ideal opportunity to consider fresh, non-traditional ideas.

III. 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. Discussion then focused on which model would best address the membership’s concerns while meeting the primary purpose of Classification. The group considered what number of schools might best accomplish more equitable opportunities, reduce enrollment disparities and be conducive to competing for a state championship.

Thomas Taylor moved, Dante Lee seconded and the committee voted 7-0 that the R&R Committee should develop a six-classification plan. For classification purposes, the smallest class (1A) will consist of 48 schools (See NOTE 1 under Addendum to these minutes) with the remainder 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.

Mark Dorsey moved, Dante Lee seconded and the committee voted 6-0 (Taylor absent for vote) that the R&R Committee should use the March 31 figures of the latest year (March 31, 2012) to develop the final plan for aligning schools into six classes for the 2013-14 and 2014-15 cycle. If there is a subsequent substantial change in a school’s numbers as a result of consolidation or new schools opening, the Executive Committee can hear appeal(s) to change classification.

IV. Regarding “Redistricting,” the Task Force recommends that the R&R Committee align schools into conferences (districts) that are not inherently tied to classification.

The R&R Committee will place schools in conferences (districts) for regular season play based on balance, geography and preferences. Enrollment disparity will no longer be crucial as a determining factor. In the new conferences, however, there should be no more than a spread of three classifications. The R&R Committee will use the existing alignment as a starting point with schools having opportunities to request specific changes.

V. Regarding “Playoffs” (getting to a championship), the Task Force recommends that the Executive Committee form a committee that will develop parameters to determine the number of state championships in activities and athletics. The current Football Ratings Committee might be the best group to work with that sport. The general rule of thumb for others might be that activities/athletics can have up to six championships if participation numbers warrant. A set percentage of schools in a class must participate in specific activities/athletics; the percentage number should probably be set relatively high. A class would combine with the next higher class for playoffs if the percentage is not met.

VI. Regarding "Governance," the Executive Committee would need to adopt legislation to address changes. This item will be included in Strategic Planning discussions. (See NOTE 2 below.)

VII. Timeline:

- December 21 – Minutes of Ad Hoc Task Force emailed to members
- December 28 – Deadline for Task Force to make changes to minutes
- December 29 – Release minutes to Executive Committee to make sure the Ad Hoc Task Force met the guidelines as requested by the Executive Committee
- January 3 – Responses due back from Executive Committee
- January 4 – A.M. – Release minutes to the Redistricting and Reclassification Committee
NOON – Release minutes to the membership

VIII. Adjournment: There being no further business, the Task Force adjourned at 9:21 p.m.

Addendum to minutes: In further discussions on Tuesday morning concerning the new format (and following further consideration of criteria for the smallest classification):

- It was determined that one of the talking points should be an emphasis on the fact that R&R's major function is looking at issues and assigning schools for regular season competition.
- Change the names of existing districts to conferences.
- Lee Brannon asked the League to examine the existing reimbursement formula. This can be addressed by the "playoff" committee, the Finance Committee, or a separate group.
- Ad Hoc Task Force members were asked to touch base with the other group board officers, superintendents and athletic directors to request any feedback on the new format prior to the February Executive Committee meeting (make contact on February 17 or 20 – after most regions have met).
- If feedback warrants a meeting of the Ad Hoc Task Force prior to the Executive Committee meeting on February 22, it would meet late afternoon on February 21.
- NOTE 1: Since the current Group A schools have spent considerable time debating a cap in the enrollment for the largest school, and there was agreement that the cap should be 475, the Task Force recommends that the ceiling for 1A be set at 475 rather than a designated number (e.g., 48) of schools.
- NOTE 2: One approach to governance might be to consider regions based on the existing eight superintendents regions. There are eight superintendents, 12 principals, and three athletic directors currently on the Executive Committee (total of 23). If we keep the current eight superintendents and have eight principals and eight athletic directors (one from each VASS region), that would be 24 total.
- NOTE 3: Using March 31, 2012 figures would alter the timeline such that the R&R Committee would likely meet in August to determine the alignment plan, hear appeals in early September and present the final plan for approval to the Executive Committee later in September.