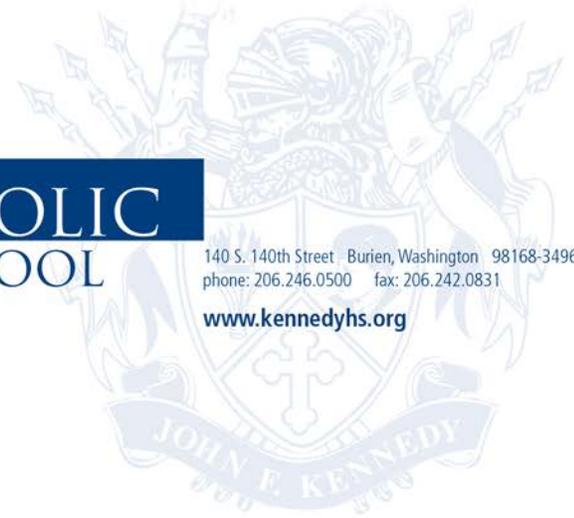


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Those interested in high school sports likely saw some of the news associated with a pair of classification-related amendments passed by the WIAA on Tuesday. Depending on the publication, these changes were billed as “big” and set to “[dramatically shake up](#)” the classification system. Given that I’ve received some questions from staff, families and student-athletes alike, I wanted to take a few minutes to share my thoughts and what they may actually mean for us at Kennedy Catholic.

There are two separate amendments, the first **(4.2.0) changes the distribution of schools in 4A/3A/2A, etc.** Currently there is a “hard cap” on the number of schools in each classification, ensuring balance across each (around 64 schools in each of the divisions) and an equitable path into state competition (the most common being a 16-team bracket in most team sports). This amendment gets rid of that cap, letting schools fall where they may based on 1) enrollment numbers, and 2) the option to “opt-up” to a higher classification. The enrollment numbers have always been there, but what has happened is when schools opted-up (like we do at Kennedy Catholic), it would push the bottom of a classification down to the one below, forcing that school to decide to play at the lower classification or opt-up themselves. That cycle would then continue and continue with schools, districts and leagues scrambling to make last minute decisions. When the new amendment goes into effect for the next classification cycle, there will be no schools “pushed down”. **Schools like ours can still opt-up if they choose.** What is likely to happen now is that certain classifications will end up larger than others, which is where the second part of the amendment comes into play. The WIAA will use what amounts to an approximate 4:1 ratio of schools to state tournament entries, and then draw a bracket based on that. So, 4A may have a 24-team bracket while 3A may have a 12-team one, but the opportunity to play “in State” will be theoretically the same for all.

The second, and the one that has received the most press regionally, **takes socio-economic factors into play when determining enrollment (4.3.0).** The version of the amendment that passed – and there were lots of iterations mulled over the past year – basically gives an “enrollment credit” to public schools who have a “free-and-reduced lunch rate” greater than the state average (currently 42%). The [free-and-reduced lunch program](#) is a federal program offered to public school families who have household incomes below a certain level. With this amendment, the WIAA is trying to support the concept that not all enrollment numbers are created equal. The thinking, with merit, is that a school from an affluent area with 1,500 kids often has more infrastructure to build successful programs than a 1,500 person school in a high-poverty area. Using that number as an example, this amendment would allow a school with 1,500 students and a 62% free-and-reduced lunch rate to deduct 20% of their enrollment when

determining what classification they will play in. In this example, it would move their number to 1,200 and bring them down from 4A to 3A numbers.

All of that said, I personally do not expect this to create as big of a ripple across the state as some do. Having worked in public school administration before, there is a lot more that goes into making decisions for large school districts than individual school numbers. Some districts will be hesitant to split their schools into different classifications, and therefore potentially different leagues, as it could greatly impact transportation costs and further divide perception issues across the schools in that district. It gives certain schools options, yes, and that could be valuable in individual communities and certain programs. **For the private schools in the state, this amendment will have no direct impact**, as we do not collect or report free-and-reduced lunch numbers.

Putting these two amendments together however, will likely lead to another round of lively conversations next fall when we prepare to make decisions about the next 4-year classification cycle (which begins with the 2020-2021 school year). It was at this time prior to the last cycle that the WIAA changed from a 2-year classification period to a 4-year version and sent shockwaves through the state, leading to many league shakeups and changes – including Kennedy Catholic opting up to 4A and the reformation of the North Puget Sound League. With these amendments now in place to guide us, I will be working with each of our head coaches, school administration and our community-at-large to ensure that Lancer Athletics is in the best position to continue to build a Championship Culture in each and every program.

Please feel free to reach out with any questions,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Reed', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sam Reed
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