

Office of Chief Operating Officer
Interscholastic Athletics
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

November 20, 2017

MEMORANDUM

To: Athletic Directors

From:  Jeffrey K. Sullivan, Director, Systemwide Athletics

Subject: Girls' Tennis Workgroup Recommendations

Background

A workgroup was established to provide recommendations to facilitate the transition of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) girls' tennis from the fall season to the spring season in order to comply with a regulation passed by the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA). The regulation, which takes effect in the 2018–19 school year, states that “student-athletes may only participate in MPSSAA post season events when their regular season coincides with the season in which the state championship is held.” Therefore, in order for MCPS tennis players to be eligible for region and state competition, both the boys' and girls' tennis seasons must be conducted in the spring season. Moving forward with this seasonal adjustment aligns with the MCPS Athletics core values of equity, access, and spirited competition.

Workgroup Composition

Schools in all four MCPS tennis divisions and all geographical regions of the county were represented on the workgroup to ensure diverse representation. Additionally, a variety of stakeholders across the MCPS athletics program were included. The following individuals served on the workgroup:

Jeff Sullivan	Director, Systemwide Athletics
Kathy Green	Athletics Specialist
Alan Goodwin	Principal, Walt Whitman HS
Marco Fuggitti	Athletic Director, Northwood HS
Donna Considine	Athletic Director, Bethesda-Chevy Chase HS
Judy Rothstein	Sport Director and State Rep for Tennis, Paint Branch HS
Nia Cresham	Boys' & Girls' Tennis Coach, Thomas S. Wootton HS
David Ngbea	Boys' & Girls' Tennis Coach, Montgomery Blair HS
Linda Akli	Girls' Tennis Parent, Wheaton HS
John Slaughter	Boys' Tennis Parent, Northwest HS
Student-Athlete	Girls' Tennis, Sherwood HS
Student-Athlete	Boys' Tennis, Winston Churchill HS

Methodology

The workgroup convened two times to analyze the logistics associated with the seasonal adjustment for girls' tennis. Data sources that were used by the workgroup included:

1. A survey that summarized the structure and format of the tennis programs in other public school districts in Maryland
2. A survey that was created by the workgroup and was administered to coaches at the postseason seeding meeting on October 12, 2017
3. A summary of tennis courts located at MCPS high school and middle school campuses
4. A summary of 5-year participation figures for the MCPS boys' and girls' tennis programs
5. Information and feedback from community members and stakeholders received in various forms by workgroup members.

The workgroup utilized three key questions to drive decision-making that reflected the core values of the MCPS athletics program:

1. Access – which model maximizes participation for student-athletes?
2. Equity – which model provides equitable opportunities for both male and female student-athletes?
3. Spirited, Safe Competition – which model provides student-athletes with the greatest opportunities to compete at the county region, and state levels?

The workgroup analyzed a variety of models and structures for the tennis program including two varsity teams (boys' and girls'), coed teams (varsity and JV), and corollary tennis.

Recommendations

Following a thorough review of data, consideration of models, and discussion, the unanimous recommendation of the workgroup is that MCPS move the girls' tennis season to the spring and keep the same existing structure of separate boys' and girls' varsity teams. Additionally, the workgroup unanimously recommends keeping the same program structure in regard to the format of matches (4 singles and 3 doubles) and the administration of the county tournaments. Some of the rationale for the workgroup's recommendations include:

1. For 50 years, the MCPS tennis program has featured a structure that has been well-received, successful, and has maximized varsity participation opportunities for student-athletes. The workgroup wanted to preserve as much of the current structure of tennis as possible.
2. The workgroup agreed that keeping the current structure and simply moving girls' tennis to the spring has the least amount of impact on student-athletes.
3. Coaches strongly supported the model of separate boys' and girls' varsity teams in order to maximize participation opportunities for student-athletes.
4. Precisely the same number of varsity participation opportunities are provided for student-athletes with this recommended structure.
5. There are enough courts on MCPS high school and middle school campuses to accommodate practices for two teams during the spring season. 20 of 25 MCPS high schools have at least six courts on campus (including the finished courts on schools undergoing modernization). Additionally, there are a total of 190 tennis courts available on the 40 middle school campuses

across the county. Furthermore, there are additional courts available at other Parks and county facilities. Schools would also have the option to conduct two practices back-to-back on campus. Similar to other sports in the MCPS athletics program, it would be a local school decision on how to best effectively conduct practices.

6. The same format of county tournaments can be administered. Due to the high number of matches, the start dates of the county tournaments may need to be staggered by one or two days.

Outcomes

Some of the outcomes of the workgroup's recommendation include:

1. Students – there is no impact on the number of varsity participation opportunities for boys' and girls' tennis. Student-athletes will be able to compete in county, region, and state competition. Girls who have previously played a spring sport will need to make a choice between that sport and tennis; however, the fall season now becomes a participation opportunity for these impacted students.
2. Sport offerings – with girls' tennis in the fall, there were nine sport offerings for girls in the fall and six sport offerings for girls in the spring. By moving girl's tennis to the spring, these numbers become more balanced, with eight sport offerings in the fall and seven in the spring.
3. Coaches – coaches who currently coach both the boys' and girls' tennis teams at their schools will need to select one team to coach, which will require these schools to hire an additional tennis coach.
4. Divisions – the workgroup recommends utilizing the existing MCPS process for creating divisions and establishing opponents that is used for other sports. This includes collecting school preferences, establishing a scheduling committee, and creating a recommendation for school approval. This process would occur after the 2018 boys' tennis season.

Action

The recommendations of the workgroup should be shared with tennis coaches, principals, and the tennis community. The following timeline summarizes the approval process for MCPS:

December 21, 2017	Discussion/Endorsement – Athletic Directors Meeting
January 18, 2018	Discussion/Endorsement – Montgomery County Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MCPSSAA) Meeting of Principals
January/February 2018	Final Review/Approval – Chief Operating Officer and Superintendent

Questions regarding the workgroup's recommendations should be directed to Jeffrey K. Sullivan, director of systemwide athletics, via Outlook email, Jeffrey_K_Sullivan@mcpsmd.org or phone, 240-453-2594.

JKS:rtm

Copy to:

Dr. Zuckerman

Ms. Green

High School Boys' Tennis Coaches

High School Girls' Tennis Coaches

High School Principals

Workgroup Members