

Montgomery Advertiser

HIGH SCHOOL

AHSAA discussing public-private split for championship competition

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Key Points

- The Alabama High School Athletic Association is considering a proposal to separate public and private schools.
 - Under the potential model, independent schools would compete in their own league for postseason play.
 - The discussion follows growing tensions and formal concerns raised by private schools over policies they view as disproportionate.
 - A final decision on the reclassification structure could come at a rescheduled AHSAA meeting on January 23.
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The [Alabama High School Athletic Association](#) is discussing a split between public and private schools, a source with direct knowledge of the situation told The Montgomery Advertiser.

The AHSAA appears to be exploring a reclassification model that would separate [private schools](#) into a standalone league, removing them from competition against public schools at least for postseason play.

The AHSAA recently moved its reclassification meeting from Dec. 15 to Jan. 23 following months of growing tension between independent schools and the state high school athletics governing board.

The AHSAA has not announced or confirmed a change to a public-private split, and AHSAA Director Heath Harmon was not available to request for comment, according to an AHSAA spokesperson. The public-private split model, if implemented, would represent one of the biggest sweeping shifts in AHSAA competition structure in recent memory.

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OCTOBER MEETING: [What AHSAA private schools discussed in private after meeting with state organization](#)

Representatives from AHSAA member private schools [formally presented concerns to the AHSAA's](#) Central Board of Control on Dec. 15. The concerns regarded policies private schools believe disproportionately affect them, including the 1.35 enrollment multiplier, the competitive-balance formula, interpretation of the CHOOSE Act, scheduling restrictions against playing AISA schools and the lack of private-school representation on the board.

The CHOOSE Act, enacted in March 2024, makes refundable income tax credits available to pay private-school tuition, fees and other expenses, according to the Alabama Department of Revenue's website.

Private school leaders argue that some AHSAA policies are based on misconceptions about private schools having greater resources or competitive advantages. They believe that enrollment multipliers and postseason-based classification movement force smaller programs to compete against significantly larger public schools.

A separate private school league within the AHSAA would fundamentally alter that dynamic, though it remains unclear how the system would address disparities among private schools, which range widely in enrollment, geography and resources. There are fewer than 60 private schools among the 420 member high schools in the AHSAA from the 2024 classification process.

Member independent schools currently compete across all classifications within the AHSAA, from 1A-7A.

The Jan. 23 AHSAA meeting is expected to produce reclassification for the 2026-27 and 2027-28 school years. Classifications determine groupings of schools for championship competition and also divide schools into regions and areas for competition to determine advancement to postseason play.

Some private school representatives are hopeful they will remain in the organization, as opposed to leaving, whether forcefully or out of protest.

"I hope that we do stay simply because it gives us a broader field of schools to play against," said an athletics director at a private school who preferred to remain anonymous. "While private schools have multiplier and

competitive balance put forth by the state, that hasn't deterred any private schools from joining the AHSAA.

“If it's a separation in championship play, I would still be thankful for that, because our pools of teams to play will still be a wide range of schools. That's what makes it nice, because to win a state championship is hard, so if you do that in the AHSAA, where a majority of schools are, that really means something.”

The Montgomery Advertiser granted anonymity to sources to allow them to speak on the topic due to fear of reprisal.

“I get the sense from others that there's a real question of, if they are not going to treat our schools like every other school, all the public schools, then why must we follow their rules? And I think that's going to be the big question,” said a leader of an AHSAA private school who preferred to remain anonymous.