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HIGH SCHOOL

Inside AHSAA 2025 discussions with public-private split possibly looming



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Key Points

- The Alabama High School Athletic Association (AHSAA) is set to announce its reclassification on January 23.
 - Reclassification, which occurs every two years, assigns schools to athletic classes based on student enrollment numbers.
 - Private schools are subject to an enrollment multiplier and a competitive-balance formula based on postseason success.
 - A potential split between public and private schools is being discussed, which could be one of the biggest decisions in the organization's history.
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An important date in Alabama high school sports is approaching with [AHSAA reclassification expected](#) to be announced on Friday, Jan. 23

The [initial reclassification date of Dec. 15](#) was moved back by the AHSAA, citing current mediation as the reason for move. The AHSAA did not say who the mediation was with, or what was the mediation was about, but the organization is facing a lawsuit filed by Gov. Kay Ivey over the AHSAA's

interpretation of the CHOOSE Act in requiring students who transfer schools while accepting funds from that act to sit out a year before participating in athletics.

With the [AHSAA discussing a potential](#) private-public school split in its membership, the upcoming reclassification has the potential to be among the biggest decisions in the organization's history.

Whether the reclassification will be a private-public split or the ordinary process that involves schools being assigned to new regions or classes, the decision will impact AHSAA schools large and small. So what is the process the AHSAA Central Board of Control and the reclassification committee undergo, and how does it work?

What goes into AHSAA reclassification?

The reclassification process for the 2024-25 and 2025-26 school years used the average daily membership average (ADM) furnished by the State Department of Education for grades 9 through 11, including eighth-grade hold-back students. Member schools report that data directly to the AHSAA.

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A multiplier is applied to member private school enrollment numbers, meaning each private school student counts as 1.35 to offset private schools being able to enroll students from anywhere, while public schools have physical zones from which they draw students.

Alongside the multiplier, a competitive-balance success factor is applied to member private schools. The competitive balance formula is a point system that ties directly to postseason success.

In single-gender sports, the threshold is four points to be eligible to move up a classification; in coed sports, that threshold is seven points. For private schools to remain in their classification in single-gender sports, the school must land in the one- to four-point range; for coed sports, they must stay within two to seven points. To move down a classification, in single-gender sports the school has to fall below one point and in coed, it must fall below two points.

Schools are then put into respective classifications based on the enrollment numbers and adjusted for factors applied to private schools. The 32 schools with the highest enrollment numbers are placed in 7A with numbers being spread out from there over the other six classifications.

Once placed in a classification, regions and areas are formed within classifications with the goal for competitive balance and financial considerations when looking at factors like travel.

A vote is then taken by Central Board of Control members to stamp final approval for reclassification for the next two upcoming school years.

Inside reclassification committee's 2025 meetings

A 13-member reclassification committee made up of representatives from member private and public schools offers the board of control perspectives on concerns and challenges schools face.

Montgomery Catholic president Justin Castanza recalled his reaction when AHSAA executive director Heath Harmon asked him to be on the reclassification committee.

"My thought is that they probably want to have as diverse a group as possible to be able to represent as many schools as possible. It might be the type of school, size of school, the regional location of the school, all those things are factors," Castanza told the Montgomery Advertiser.

"I was proud to do that, and I was grateful to Heath Harmon when he selected me to do that."

The reclassification committee meets twice during a reclassification year, and after the first meeting in June, Madison Academy president Casey Farris left feeling encouraged.

Discussions about eliminating the private-school multiplier, tweaking competitive balance and possibly exploring a model that applied competitive balance to public schools brought about debate from private and public school leaders.

"There was good debate and a lot of, 'that's a good point,'" Farris said. "I needed to think about these points from somebody else's point of view, and so I left there very encouraged."

Other topics discussed revolved around finding ways for schools to drop back down to original classifications and splitting coed sports like basketball when looking at competitive balance. Both private and public schools were able to share perspectives on these topics.

"Now it was just one public school saying, 'Yeah I mean honestly it's hard to say no to that, it's hard to say that we shouldn't be fair,' but that's more than none, so that was very encouraging," Castanza added about the June meeting.

The second meeting in September put a freeze on momentum gained in June as the majority of the meeting was used to talk about the lawsuit involving the CHOOSE Act, according to Castanza and Farris.

Both Farris and Castanza expressed the view that the AHSAA is stronger if it can keep member schools together under one athletics oversight structure. The possibility of a public-private split threatens that.

"We want to be united. I think there's a lot of strength," Farris said. "We want to be a part of the association, we want to help it grow. The fear is that we might not get that opportunity."