

IHSA DANCE SERIES
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On June 2, 2011, IHSA convened its first Dance Advisory Committee to develop a scope for an IHSA Dance State Final. I was a member of this committee, and I want to make our IDTA coaches aware of the direction of IHSA. Please note--a State Final that includes Flags is not under consideration.

First, let me give you a brief background. Over the past few years, IHSA has heard from principals and athletic directors that they would like IHSA to offer Dance as one of its organized sports. They would like to see Dance have season limitations (that by-law has already been put into effect), in addition to similar rules that now govern cheerleading, and would like to see IHSA offer a Dance State Final. The concern that the administrators have is not that IDTA or any other state dance organization isn't doing a great job, but that we offer multiple state champions, where the IHSA philosophy is that there is only one state champion per division.

In June of 2010, a group of people (representing IDTA, UDA, TDI and administrators) were asked to meet to discuss ideas regarding an IHSA Dance State. The purpose of this Dance Ad Hoc committee was to provide input to IHSA. At that time, there had not been any formal proposal submitted by the principals to pursue a Dance State. Then in November of 2010, a principal did submit a proposal, and in a vote by the principals in Illinois, that proposal passed. Which brings us now to June of 2011 and the formation of the Dance Advisory Committee to structure the rules and regulations of Dance in Illinois.

In order to be considered for this committee, a person had to be a coach (and preferably a teacher) or an administrator. In addition, the seven IHSA district divisions of the state had to be represented. We were fortunate that of the four coaches asked, three were advocates of IDTA: Natalie Rodriguez (coach, Lane Tech); Debby Bradshaw (coach, Quincy HS); and myself, as a coach from Highland HS. In addition there were three administrators and the coach from Normal West HS. Because Debby Bradshaw retired from teaching, Wendy Koehler, from Riverton HS, has replaced her on this committee.

To first alleviate any fears, the administrators on this committee are strong advocates of dance and want to structure an IHSA Dance Final so that it will conflict as little as possible with the purpose and goals of our organization. Under no circumstance do they want to undermine what we do or take away from what we have to offer the students in Illinois.

Then the IHSA Dance Advisory Committee met again on September 13 to finalize the vision and procedural information for IHSA Competitive Dance, which will include a State series.

To first address any misconception that is out there---this is no longer a proposal to be voted on by the Illinois administrators! The IHSA Board of Directors has approved the proposal of sponsoring a Competitive Dance Tournament Series, and no matter how coaches feel about this proposal, an IHSA State will occur! In addition to the State series, Competitive Dance will now fall under the governance of the IHSA, and coaches, whether or not their teams compete in IHSA, will have to follow the rules and regulations set forth by the IHSA beginning with the 2012-13 school year.

To highlight what coaches can expect regarding rules and regulations:

*The Competitive Dance season will begin October 29 and go through March. If your team performs at football games, that will be considered a “non-competitive” team, and will have a fall season. You may hold a second try-out for your competitive team in October, or have the same students on both teams.

*Coaches will be limited to 25 contacts with your competitive team prior to the beginning of the season in October. This does not include summer camps.

*Teams will be limited to participating in a maximum of seven (7) competitions exclusive of the IHSA Sectionals and State competitions.

*Coaches that teach at a studio may not teach at a studio AND coach the team at the same time.

These are the rules that will really have an impact on us and our teams, and as details become available, we will make sure to share them with you.

Information regarding the IHSA State Series:

The series will begin with a Sectional competition to be held January 19, 2013. There will be several sectional locations throughout the state, but unlike IDTA where you get to pick your competition, your team will be assigned a sectional location.

The IHSA State will be held on Friday and Saturday, January 25 and 26, 2013. The reason the State series is so early is due to the fact that other IHSA state contests (ie cheer, speech, bowling, girls basketball) are held in February, and Dance cannot fit into the schedule.

The four categories IHSA will offer are Pom/Dance, Kick, Jazz and Hip Hop. Divisions will include A (schools with an enrollment of 659 or less), AA (enrollment of 660-1765) and AAA (1766 and up). A roster must be a minimum of 8 up to a maximum of 28. A team may then choose to floor a minimum of 8 up to a maximum of 24.

In order to qualify for the State series, each team must bring 2 routines to the sectional contest. The scores of the two routines will be added together, and the top 5 scoring teams will advance to the State contest. However, the first place teams in each division (Pom/Dance, Kick, Jazz and Hip Hop), if their team did not qualify to advance with both routines, will earn the right to advance to State on Friday to compete for a medal in that category.

We realize this is somewhat confusing, but as details are made available, we will forward them to you!

So how will this impact IDTA? We will have to move our regional competitions that fall on the two January dates. The routines you compete with in IDTA will cross over easily to IHSA. IDTA will continue to offer the categories that IHSA is not offering, which will provide the outlet for categories such as lyrical, production, flags, etc.

We knew that an IHSA State was due to come, and we will work with IHSA, not against them, in order to make this transition of Dance as a competitive sport as easy as possible!

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Michelle Deets at mdeets@highlandcusd5.org. You may also check out the Dance page at ihsa.org for additional information.