

Re-starting Junior High and High School Athletics - Edmonton Public Schools and Edmonton Catholic Schools 2020/21

This document was created by a common group of Principals, Division Administrators and Athletic leads from across both Edmonton Public Schools and Edmonton Catholic Schools

Junior High Athletics

Introduction

As we collectively consider the re-start of junior high athletics across our two school divisions, we base all messaging on the premise of keeping students safe and healthy during this time of a global pandemic.

Administrators, coaches and lead Athletic directors are asked to read the Government of Alberta's [Guidance for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation - Stage 2](#) to establish a common understanding of what the chief medical officer of health, as well as the Government of Alberta, expects in the re-start of school athletics.

The **ASAA (Alberta School Athletic Association)** has also published a [document](#) that will inform the re-start of School Athletics. We are expecting further updates and details from ASAA, as in-person classes resume in September. Specific sport organizations have also produced documents that refer to best practices for their particular sport (i.e. [Hockey Canada](#), [Volleyball Alberta](#), etc...)

It is important to understand that athletics will look significantly different as we start the 2020-2021 school year.

Timelines for junior high athletics

There will be a slow, phased-in approach to re-starting junior high athletics. Schools in Edmonton will not begin any athletic effort or organization in the first two weeks of September. The target date for schools to begin the initial stages of athletic organization is **September 21**. This will ensure all staff and students can concentrate on a safe and careful start to in-class learning.

On September 21, if a school chooses, junior high athletics may begin with school based "cohorting." This means that schools may bring students together to begin training and to practice; however, all physical distancing and health protocols must continue to be followed. At this point, there will not be any competitions or athletic play with any other schools. As stated in Stage 2 of the Government of Alberta Guidance for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation document, leagues and division-wide competitions will **not** occur in the initial re-start.

During the initial stages of the re-start, there are **not** to be any cohorts of more than 50 people within the local school context. All athletic organization or activity **must** be led by a staff member

from the same school. There are **not** to be any outside coaches or volunteers coming in to run initial athletic training sessions or practices.

Mini leagues, where there are less than 50 people involved in a cohort, may be considered after a time of initial training and practice at the local school level. This may be considered in mid-October or later. There will be further communication on the start up of mini leagues in October.

While in Stage 2 of the athletics re-start, there will **not** be any formal leagues or tournaments in place until the Government of Alberta moves athletics to Stage 3.

Direction

As a general rule it is the safest situation to have students in the fewest number of cohorts possible while at school. Students may be part of **only one** extra-curricular cohort when training and play re-starts on September 21. Being part of one extra curricular cohort includes students being part of community-based teams. Students can only be on **one team either at school or in the community** (refer to [Guidance for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation](#) - Government of Alberta)

Students in curricular based cohorts, such as those in Sport Academies, may also be part of one extra curricular team. According to the chief medical officer: *“If the student’s classroom cohort is the same as their sports cohort, this would be considered as one cohort. **Students may also join an extra-curricular sport**; however, all Albertans should limit the number of cohorts they belong to for the duration of Stage 2 and should practice physical distancing whenever possible, even within their cohort settings.”*

Students who are part of Sport Academies may train and play only within their school-based cohort and are not to be involved in any cross academy competitions or play.

Students taking their courses online may **only** be part of an athletic cohort at their local school where they are registered. This is true for Edmonton Public Schools currently; however, this is still under review for Edmonton Catholic Schools.

School-based athletics may have to revert back to the initial stages of the athletics re-start if health circumstances at that school prove problematic. These decisions would be made with health authorities

There are adjustments being made to specific junior high fall sports while under Stage 2 conditions of the athletics re-start. All of these adjustments are only tentative:

- Wrestling, competitions will be reviewed for potential start in November (i.e. mini leagues)
- Cheer, competitions will be reviewed for potential start in November (i.e. mini leagues)
- Curling - competitions will be reviewed for potential start in November (i.e. mini leagues)
- Volleyball - competitions will be reviewed for potential start in late October/November (i.e. mini leagues)
- Soccer - the season of play will be re-evaluated for potential play in the spring
- Cross Country Running - the season of play will be re-evaluated for potential play in the Spring, in conjunction with the track and field season of play

The definition of “mini leagues” is in the [Guidance for Sport , Physical Activity and Recreation](#) document.

Outside coaches and volunteers to help coach or lead teams cannot be considered at this time. Any coach or organizer **must** be a staff member from within the school. Outside coaches may be considered once the Government moves Athletics to Stage 3 of re-opening, of which there is no current timeline.

All of these directives and timelines are intended to keep staff and students as safe as possible, focused on a gradual return to play while ensuring all health protocols are being followed.

High school athletics

The gradual re-start of high school athletics will be directed by the same Government document [Guidance for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation](#).

Additionally, the ASAA and the Metro Athletics group of Edmonton will also provide direction to the gradual re-start of high school athletics. An update from the ASAA on [Fall Seasons of Play](#) was released on August 11. It is expected that more updates will come as we approach September.

The latest updates from ASAA, as of Monday August 17, are:

[Message from John Paton - ASAA](#)
[Safe Return to Athletics Document](#)

In both Edmonton Public Schools and Edmonton Catholic Schools, fall-based sports may begin with training, programming and practice as of **September 21**, ensuring all physical distancing and health related protocols as stated in the Guide to Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation. Both divisions feel it is important that school starts with a full focus on re-starting classes and getting students re-established back into learning routines.

If a student plays with a community team and then wants to transition to a school team, because they can play with **only one** extra curricular cohort, there must be a 14-day quarantine period during this transition time. This is also true if a student goes from a school team to a community team. This is the expectation of the chief medical officer.

Coaches can only be part of **one** athletic team cohort as well, whether that is a school based team or a community based team.

While in the current Stage 2 of athletics re-start, there will not be any formal leagues or championships. After the initial re-start in late September, Metro Athletics will begin communicating the possibility of mini leagues, based on any announcements from the Government of Alberta or ASAA.

Coaches and volunteers from outside the school will **not** be able to coach, organize or lead school based teams in the initial re-start of high school athletics.