



## South Coast Conference

Apponequet – Bourne – Case – Dighton-Rehoboth – Fairhaven  
Gr. New Bedford Reg. Voc. Tech. – Old Rochester – Seekonk  
Somerset Berkley – Wareham

The Southcoast Conference Superintendents are all very strong proponents of Interscholastic Athletics. Sports are an integral component to the educational program and are an important outlet for the physical, social, and emotional health and well-being of our students.

On August 18, 2020, the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) presented Joint Guidance on Modified Sports Seasons for the 2020 – 2021 school year. The interdependent nature of interscholastic athletics created the need for a joint discussion with the goal to create cohesion within the Southcoast Athletic Conference and ultimately the Southcoast region. A meeting of Southcoast Conference Superintendents was held on Monday August 31, 2020. All districts were involved in this conversation: Bourne, Dighton Rehoboth, Fairhaven, Freetown-Lakeville, Greater New Bedford Vocational Technical High School, Old Rochester, Somerset Berkley, Swansea, Seekonk, and Wareham. The following were discussed during this meeting:

- Throughout the course of the summer, school superintendents have received hundreds of pages of guidance that has directed the school reopening process. We were strongly encouraged that courses such as physical education be held fully or partially online if possible. Social distancing recommendations and the removal of all non-essential equipment and materials from classrooms caused many schools to utilize cafeteria and gymnasium space for either classrooms and/or storage.
- Interscholastic competitions will not look the same and will need to be played under fairly stringent restrictions with modified rules. Currently, to be able to engage in competitive play, modifications should include eliminating deliberate contact, modifying or eliminating intermittent contact, and increasing distancing.
- Consistent with the re-opening of our schools, the health, safety and wellness of our student-athletes, coaches, game officials, and others associated with our athletic programs remain a top priority. The establishment of clear guidelines for coaches about how often they can practice, the importance of keeping accurate records for contact tracing, protocols for bathroom/locker room use, and sanitization protocols for all equipment are logistical issues that still remain unanswered.
- For safety and operational reasons, districts may not be able to provide transportation to games. The fact that parents/caregivers may be responsible for all transportation to competitions would create an immediate equity and access issues.
- Challenges related to crowd control and safety concerns would limit the number of fans who could attend a competition. The athletic directors in our league were contemplating beginning the fall season without spectators.
- The health and safety of our school communities must remain the top priority, and we recognize that any plans for athletic opportunities must adapt to evolving public health metrics. The fact that any “unshaded” or “green” communities may be scheduled to compete against “yellow” or “red” communities based upon public health metrics will remain an extremely fluid issue.
- Currently, almost half of the districts in the Southcoast Conference will begin school in a remote learning setting. Offering athletics, while not offering in-person learning or hybrid learning, sends a mixed message regarding the term student-athlete. A School Committee vote is required for those districts who will start the year remotely based upon DESE Guidelines. This information serves to provide a clear and united recommendation for those communities that are required to take said action.

Recent guidance released by DESE in collaboration with the MIAA, has provided us with the option of moving our fall athletic season to a floating season in between the winter and spring. For these reasons, the Superintendent’s of the Southcoast Conference strongly support a joint recommendation. SCC superintendents conducted a majority vote with 8 in favor and 2 in opposition, that all SCC schools collectively recommend beginning interscholastic athletics with the winter season, **deferring the fall season and moving those sports to a later season or during the “floating” season** (February 22nd-April 25th as defined by MIAA), and conducting a spring season. We will reconvene and meet to make a decision as a collaborative group on winter sports in early November.

We reiterate the need for all of our students to be provided with a “whole” educational experience. Interscholastic athletics and student activities are integral to a student’s complete educational program. We believe deferring to the later seasons provided by DESE and the MIAA gives us the opportunity for a better and more complete co-curricular experience than the current uncertain fall season has to offer them.