

September 2009

Dr. Roger Dearing, Executive Director  
Florida High School Athletic Association  
1801 NW 80<sup>th</sup> Boulevard  
Gainesville, Florida 32606

## **PUBLIC LIAISON ADVISORY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT**

To: The Florida High School Athletic Association Board of Directors  
The Florida House of Representatives Education K-12 Committee  
The Florida Senate Education Committee

The Florida High School Athletic Association's Public Liaison Advisory Committee would like to thank the Florida Legislature and the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) for the opportunity to work within our given responsibilities (1) to act as a conduit for the general public to have input into the decision-making process of the FHSAA, (2) to conduct public hearings in which interested parties may address issues, rules and administrative issues of the FHSAA, and (3) to conduct an annual evaluation of the organization as a whole.

The Report of the FHSAA Public Liaison Advisory Committee is as follows:

**FHSAA Administrative Staff:** We have had a smooth transition with Dr. James "Roger " Dearing as the Executive Director. The FHSAA Staff continues to work diligently with the member schools to make the athletic experience for our student athletes the best in the nation.

The Handbook Revision Task Force has completed the revision of the FHSAA Bylaw and Policy handbook. The group is comprised of: Willie Bueno-American Heritage (Delray Beach), Mike Colby-FHSAA, Richard Finlayson-Aucilla Christian Academy, Tom Greer-Osceola School Board, Trish Highland-Orange County Schools, Michael Stutzke-Sebastian River High School, Jerry Welch-All Saint's Academy, Bob West-Bishop Kenny, Sonny Hester-FHSAA, Denarvise Thornton-FHSAA, Jack Watford-FHSAA and Leonard Ireland-Legal Counsel.

Compliance reviews are going well and are accepted as part of the responsibility between the FHSAA and Member Schools. These reviews include all paperwork checked to make sure all schools are on the same page and to assist them with making sure correct policy and procedures are followed by all member schools.

**Board of Directors:** The Board of Directors positions, as established by the Legislature, provide a good cross-section of groups with an interest in high school athletics, all bringing different perspectives and insights to the Board. The Board has a representative balance of the member public and private schools. These elected positions can be principals or athletic directors. Appointed positions to the Board provide the perspective of school boards and superintendents, and the public. This Board weighs all the issues brought before it and tries to make decisions in the best interest of all student-athletes and schools across the entire State of Florida.

**The Representative Assembly** continues to give member schools, as well as coaches, athletic directors, school boards, superintendents, parents, the media and members of the public through the various committees and the Board of Directors a venue to propose changes to the bylaws. Representatives discuss and debate bylaw changes the day before the vote is taken on the proposed bylaw change. There is representation from all parts of the state and the effect of the bylaw change on each region can be considered. The Commissioner has done an outstanding job in informing and ensuring the participation of member schools, both public and private, in all parts of the state in this process. The Representative Assembly again ran smoothly and information was in the hands of member schools in advance of the meeting so delegates could obtain opinions from their legislative division and make wise and thoughtful decisions on all the changes. This past year they were charged with the task of approving revision of the FHSAA Handbook.

**The Representative Assembly**, as created by the Florida Legislature in 1997, has been a great forum for member schools to participate in the governance, policies and operation of their association. As a result there is less dissention and dissatisfaction among the member schools, the media and the public. The image of the FHSAA is more positive, responsive and accessible than it was prior to the 1997 legislative reorganization.

**Sectional Appeals Committees** has been expanded to a seven-member committee. These members consist of: 2-Public School, 1-Private School, 1-Private appointed, 1-appointed by FASA, 1-at-large, and 1-Legal Profession, such as an Attorney, Judge, etc. who will serve as the Chair. The creation of the Sectional Appeals Committee in the 1997 legislation seems to have resolved most of the complaints from the public, parents and member schools about the hardship hearings. Placing the majority of the decision-making process required for hardships at the local level in the hands of the Sectional Appeals Committee and creating an appeal process, has resulted in fewer cases being heard by the FHSAA Board.

**The Public Liaison Advisory Committee** is now listed with the other committees on the FHSAA website, but it is difficult to find. The Public Liaison Advisory Committee is the only conduit for the public to voice concerns to the FHSAA. PLAC suggest a link from the front page to the committees listed on the membership and governance page with a statement that if you have a question or concern, you may contact one of the following committees. It is great that the annual report is posted to the site so that any Legislator that wishes to see the report can. The PLAC is a committee for the public.

**The FHSAA Public Liaison Advisory Committee in the four administrative regions of the state held Public Hearings** during January 2009. The hearings were advertised on the FHSAA website, and through member schools. A staff member of the FHSAA attended each meeting and a PLAC member chaired each meeting. There were no issues brought forth in any of Sections 1-4.

**Student-Athlete Advisory Committee** is made of junior and senior student-athletes from the regions of the state (four per region). The committee is diverse both in gender and ethnic backgrounds. Members of the FHSAA staff reviewed applications and chose the 16 representatives.

The committee had two meetings, Oct. 6 and March 30, at the Robert W. Hughes FHSAA Building in Gainesville.

The October meeting gave the student-athletes an idea of the work that goes into state tournaments, re-districting, etc. The committee members received an FHSAA Handbook, along with the sports manual for the sports they participate in. At this meeting, the student-athletes discussed topics which concerned them. The topics included: GPA requirements, "Pay for Play", overlap of sports seasons, players quitting in the middle of a season, training for contest officials, coaches certification, the sectional appeals process, sportsmanship, balancing sports and academics, playing on Sundays, and the introduction of new sports to the Association. The SAAC members endorsed a concept of a change in Florida Statute regarding the minimum grade point average for a student-athlete, by raising it from a 2.0 to 2.5 over a three-year period.

At the March meeting, the student-athletes chose a committee chair and vice-chair. The committee discussed the recent changes to the maximum number of games allowed for the next two seasons. Some of the concerns of the student-athletes involved the emphasis on playing sports in college. They agreed that it is very hard to get a scholarship to a Division I school, but that if a student plays at a lower division or at junior college, the recognition wouldn't be the same. The committee brainstormed ideas to help their fellow student-athletes keep their grades up, including speaking with their principals and athletic directors about mandatory study hall for student-athletes.

**Awards Programs:** The FHSAA launched a new awards program during the 2006-07 school year. The Academic Team Champion awards program recognizes the school in each sport whose team's cumulative grade point average is the highest in its classification and the Association overall. The FHSAA continues to conduct the FHSAA Academic All-State, Fred E. Rozelle Sportsmanship Award, All-Sports Award programs, and operates the Florida High School Athletic Hall of Fame. These various awards programs are a positive and prestigious way to recognize student-athletes, teams and other individuals who have excelled or made a significant contribution to high school sports in Florida. These awards set the standards in high schools athletics.

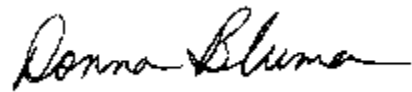
The Academic All-State Awards Banquet is always a highlight of the year for coaches, students, parents, and administrators. Each school can nominate two students for the award based on their academic and athletic achievement, community service, honors, and club participation. The student then submits an essay on a topic chosen each year by the FHSAA. Twenty-four students, 12 girls and 12 boys, are chosen and invited to the banquet to receive their award and cash. Out of those, a boy and a girl are chosen to receive the Scholar Athlete of the Year award and a larger sum of cash. It is an honor just to be nominated and recognized for this award. It is so encouraging to see such outstanding young people who have demonstrated character, determination, discipline and commitment throughout their high school years.

**Lawsuits** by member schools have continued to decrease over the last eight years partly due to the ownership that member schools have in the FHSAA. Placing the majority of the decision-making process required for hardships at the local level in the hands of the Sectional Appeals Committee puts more pressure on schools to abide by the decisions of their peers than to sue the FHSAA.

**Conclusion:** The FHSAA Public Liaison Advisory Committee believes that the operation, management, committees, Board of Directors and staff of the FHSAA are working hard to maintain the integrity of high school sports. The decisions of the FHSAA are carefully considered and are made in

the best interest of the student-athlete and member schools. The PLAC commends the FHSAA on the positive direction and changes the organization has made and would like to see the FHSAA continue to work with the member schools to keep athletics affordable in the state.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donna Blumer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Donna Blumer, CAA  
PLAC Chairman

Cc: FHSAA Board of Directors  
PLAC members