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Academic Eligibility Policies in Interscholastic Athletics: A Survey of New York State School Districts

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Abstract

This research study focuses on the issue of academic eligibility policies in high school athletics. A questionnaire survey was administered to a random sample of athletic administrators (N=189) to determine the current status of eligibility standards in New York State. The results revealed that a large number of school districts (76%) have initiated athletic policies more stringent than those of the New York State Public High School Athletic Association. However, a number of schools only satisfy the Association's minimal standards. Actual policies vary greatly among the school districts surveyed. The advantages and disadvantages of eligibility policies are discussed. Finally, several recommendations for further researching academic eligibility requirements in high school athletics are offered.
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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The National Federation of State High School Associations (hereafter referred to as the NFSHSA) has developed a set of minimum standards for interscholastic athletic eligibility. In response, all 50 states have established academic eligibility standards for their own student-athletes. However, actual policies and "degree of strictness" vary greatly among states (Morton, Richardson, & Vizoso, 1993).

Much of the research regarding academic eligibility in athletics has been conducted at the intercollegiate level (Foley, 1995; Schoemann & Earle, 1994; Swift, 1994; Wiley, 1993). At the high school level, researchers have focused on the relationship between athletic eligibility policies and academic achievement (Ligon, 1988; Morton, et al., 1993; Soltz, 1986; Tauber, 1988). The "degree of strictness" of high school eligibility standards not only varies among states, but also among school districts within a state. Therefore, one district may have a much more stringent academic policy than another. In New York State, no studies have been conducted to date to determine compliance with NFSHSA academic standards or the strictness of district standards.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which high schools in New York State comply with New York State academic standards for participation in athletics.

Significance of the Study

The NFSHSA's standards for academic eligibility are recommended standards.
NFSHSA policy states that a student-athlete must be passing four subjects in order to participate on an athletic team. Each member state has the option of enforcing a less restrictive, more restrictive, or the same policy as called for by the parent organization. New York State's academic eligibility policy is less restrictive since it states that a student athlete must only be enrolled in three subjects plus physical education. The policy mentions nothing about passing these subjects. Other areas related to eligibility taken up by the Federation include student-athlete's age, maximum number of seasons a student-athlete can participate, assurances of the student-athlete's amateur status, transfer and residency matters, medical examinations, non-school participation, recruitment of student-athletes, parental permission to play, and playing under an assumed name. In all of these areas, New York State's eligibility policies are either the same or more restrictive than Federation standards (National Federation of State High School Associations [NFSHSA], 1993; New York State Public High School Athletic Association [NYSPHSAA], 1994).

Member schools in the New York State Public High School Athletic Association (hereafter referred to as the NYSPHSAA) are free to determine the strictness of their eligibility policies. Many have reinforced the importance of academics by making their policies more restrictive. However, the flexibility of New York State academic standards has resulted in considerable variation among individual districts and schools. The NYSPHSAA claims that its purpose is to "adopt, strengthen, interpret, and enforce uniform eligibility rules" (NYSPHSAA, 1994, p. 30). However, can it really enforce uniform eligibility rules when its policy is so minimal, and allows for varying degrees of strictness?

This study will assess the degree to which New York State high schools have exceeded the strictness of the academic eligibility policy recommended by the NYSPHSAA. The study will also survey the range of academic standards presently in place among New York State school districts.
In summary, a study is called for because: (1) For obvious reasons, there is a need for uniformity in the area of academic eligibility; and (2) There is an absence of research on the subject of academic eligibility in New York State.

Assumptions

Since the study will employ questionnaire survey methodology, it is assumed that all questions will be answered truthfully by the respondents.

Delimitations

The study is delimited to a random sample of athletic administrators drawn from the population of all New York State school districts. The study is also delimited to academic eligibility policies; it does not consider eligibility guidelines referring to age, maximum participation, amateur status, transfer and residency, medical examinations, non-school participation, recruiting, parental permission, and playing under an assumed name.

Limitations

The random sampling procedure chosen resulted in the selection of approximately one-fourth (24.3%) of the high schools in New York State. Time and money did not allow the researcher to survey a larger sample. Ideally, one would prefer to survey each and every school in New York State. The survey methodology chosen called for a mailed questionnaire rather than telephone contact. Although the mailing procedure resulted in an excellent return rate of 91%, telephone interviews might have done even better. In addition, there is always the chance that a questionnaire will not be answered truthfully. The questionnaire survey is also susceptible to the giving of socially desirable, dishonest, and/or deceptive answers. Finally, the pilot study included only two athletic directors. The
final questionnaire might have been better constructed if more athletic directors had been included in the pilot study.

Definitions

**Interscholastic athletics.** "Interschool activities . . . in which students are selected to participate in regularly scheduled practices, are trained, conditioned, coached and play a series of scheduled games with teams of similar skills from other schools" (NYSPHSAA, 1994, p. 50).

**Academic.** "A formal course of study at an institution of learning" (VanderZwaag & Sheehan, 1978, p. 6).

**Survey.** "A method of collecting information from people about their ideas, feelings, plans, and social, educational, and financial background" (Fink & Kosecoff, 1985, p. 13).

**Sample.** "A set of respondents selected for study in such a manner as to ensure that whatever is learned about those comprising the sample would also be true of the population form which they were selected" (Babbie, 1990, p. 378).

**Class "A" size classification.** Enrollment of 801 students or more in grades 10-12 (NYSPHSAA, 1994).

**Class "B" size classification.** Enrollment of between 401 and 800 students in grades 10-12 (NYSPHSAA, 1994).

**Class "C" size classification.** Enrollment of between 215 and 400 students in grades 10-12 (NYSPHSAA, 1994).

**Class "D" size classification.** Enrollment of 214 students or less in grades 10-12 (NYSPHSAA, 1994).
CHAPTER II
Review of Literature

This chapter is divided into eight sections. The first section reviews the significant benefits that derive from participation in an interscholastic athletic program. The second section discusses the NFSHSA's recommended policy on academic eligibility in athletics. The third section describes New York State's policy on academic eligibility in athletics. The fourth section reviews NCAA standards for academic eligibility. The fifth section discusses the relationship between academic eligibility and scholastic achievement. The sixth section reviews the advantages and disadvantages of academic eligibility policies. Section seven looks at student-athletes who fail to meet academic standards. The eighth section discusses questionnaire survey methodology as a research and data-gathering procedure.

Benefits of Athletics

Athletics is an important part of the high school educational experience. Extracurricular activities, including interscholastic athletics, are designed to provide student athletes with experiences not normally available in the regular academic program. There is substantial evidence to indicate that significant benefits derive from participating in an athletic program.

In 1985, Indiana University in conjunction with the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFSHSA) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NAASP), co-sponsored a national survey to assess the values of extracurricular activity programs. The survey included a nationwide sample of 7,000 high school students.
and their principals. The results showed that most students believed that extracurricular activities, including athletics, made school more enjoyable. Furthermore, over 90% of the principals believed that participation in extracurricular activities "... is a valuable educational tool, promotes citizenship, and develops a positive school spirit" (Morton et al., 1993, p. 12).

A number of professional organizations as well as many individual schools have studied the consequences of extracurricular participation. The majority have found a positive relationship between participation, including interscholastic athletics, and academic achievement (Durbin, 1986; Fejgin, 1994; Morton et al., 1993; Smith, 1994; Soltz, 1986). Soltz (1986) found that student-athletes achieved significantly higher grades than non-participating students. The average GPA (grade point average) of the athletes was 2.67, while the average GPA of the non-athletes was 2.12. A similar study was conducted by the New Mexico Activities Association. The results were similar. The average GPA of the students involved in interscholastic athletics was 2.80, while the average GPA of the non-participating students was 2.00 (Morton et al., 1993). Fejgin (1994) conducted a longitudinal study of student-athletes in the eighth grade and again when they were tenth graders. She concluded that students involved in athletics achieved higher grades.

Other significant benefits related to participation in athletics include: (1) increased levels of self-esteem (Durbin, 1986; Fejgin, 1994; Lapchick, 1989; Marsh, 1993; Smith, 1994); (2) the development of social skills (Morton et al., 1993); (3) higher graduation rates (Morton et al., 1993; Smith, 1994); (4) higher educational goals and expectations (Marsh, 1993; Morton et al., 1993); (5) lower levels of delinquency (Durbin, 1986; Marsh, 1993; Smith, 1994); (6) higher rates of class attendance (Durbin, 1986); and (7) a significant reduction in the drop-out rate (McNeal, 1995). Marsh (1993) concluded that "participation in sport apparently adds to - not detracts from - time, energy, and
commitment to academic pursuits" and "leads to increased commitment to, involvement with, or identification with school and school values" (p. 35).

By way of summary, Lapchick (1989) states:

There seems to be little doubt that participation in sport can be a great educational vehicle to help develop the full potential of young people. Ideally, there can be much to learn from sport. It can teach discipline; it can teach about limits and capabilities, and dealing with failure and adversity; about teamwork and cooperation, hard work, group problem solving, competitive spirit, self-esteem, self-confidence, and pride in accomplishment (p. 33).

**NFSHSA Policy**

Despite the many documented benefits of interscholastic activities, participation in extracurricular activities, including athletics, is viewed by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFSHSA) as well as many state associations and local districts, as a privilege to be extended to only those students who meet certain academic standards. The Federation believes that: (1) "athletics shall be an integral part of the total secondary school educational program; (2) the purpose of athletics is to provide educational experiences not otherwise provided in the curriculum; (3) athletics shall be primarily for the benefit of the high school students who participate directly and vicariously in them . . . and not for the benefit of the sponsoring institutions; and (4) participation in interscholastic activities is a privilege to be granted to those students who meet the minimum standards of eligibility adopted cooperatively by the schools through their state associations " (NFSHSA, 1993, pp. 16-17).

In 1979, the Federation adopted a recommended set of minimum standards for academic eligibility. It's goal was to allow all 50 states to adopt their own policies but
none less restrictive than its own. The academic standard is stated thusly:

A student-athlete is required to do passing work in the equivalent of at least 20 periods (four subjects with full credit toward graduation) per week. Failure to earn passing marks in four full credit subjects during a credit grading period or the equivalent shall render a student-athlete ineligible for the following grading period. The record at the end of the credit grading period shall be final and scholastic deficiencies may not be removed for the purpose of meeting minimum eligibility requirements, but they may be made up during an intervening credit grading period if approved by that school's state association (NFSHSA, 1993, pp. 20-21).

State Policies

The Federation's academic policy is only a recommendation. Each state association has the option of making its policy less, the same, or more restrictive than the Federation's policy. Consequently, academic policies vary greatly among the states. According to Morton, Richardson, and Vizoso (1993), a survey of member state policies was conducted in 1990 by the National Federation. The results showed that nine states, including New York, had policies which were less restrictive than the Federation's policy. Fifteen states had the same policy as the Federation's, and 27 states had more restrictive policies.

Texas has one of the most rigid policies in the country (i.e., "no pass - no play"), where one "F" in any class results in ineligibility to participate in extracurricular activities. New York has one of the least rigid policies. Students are only required to be enrolled in three classes plus physical education. There is no grade or performance requirement (Morton et al., 1993; NYSPHSAA, 1994).

Local school districts have the option of raising the academic requirements set by their state association if they so choose. It is not uncommon for a variety of policies to exist within a single state.
The following list gives the state-by-state academic requirements for high school athletic eligibility. Maine, Maryland, and Vermont, which have less restrictive academic policies than the Federation's policy, are excluded from the analysis because of incomplete data (Lapchick, 1989). (It is recognized there may have been changes made in these regulations since 1989, but these were the most recent regulations the researcher could locate.)

Alaska: Must pass four subjects in previous semester and be enrolled in four in current semester.

Arizona: Must pass four full-credit courses in previous semester.

California: Must have 2.0 minimum average.

Colorado: Must not fail more than one class in previous semester.

Connecticut: Must pass four subjects in previous semester.

District of Columbia: Must pass four credits in previous semester.

Florida: Requires 1.5 GPA on 4.0 scale in previous semester.

Georgia: Must pass five credit courses in previous semester and current semester.

Hawaii: Must have 2.0 minimum average in previous semester.

Idaho: Must pass five classes in previous semester.

Illinois: Must pass 20 credit hours in previous semester. Weekly certification of passing work in 20 credit hours in current semester.

Iowa: Must pass four courses in previous semester.

Kansas: Must pass five subjects in previous semester.

Kentucky: Must pass four classes in previous semester, and weekly certification in current semester.
Louisiana: Must pass five subjects, have 1.5 GPA on 4.0 scale in previous semester.

Massachusetts: Must pass 20 credits each term.

Michigan: Must pass 20 credits in previous and current semesters.

Minnesota: Must be progressing satisfactorily toward graduation.

Mississippi: Must pass three major subjects (English, math, science, social studies) to be eligible the following year.

Missouri: Must pass four full-credit courses in previous semester.

Montana: Must pass four credit courses in previous semester.

Nebraska: Must pass 15 credit hours in previous semester.

Nevada: Must be enrolled in four courses and may not be failing any course while playing sports.

New Hampshire: Must pass three Carnegie credits in previous marking period.

New Jersey: Must pass 23 credit hours in previous year. Need 11.5 credits from the previous semester for second semester.

New Mexico: Must have 2.0 minimum average.

New York: Must be enrolled in three courses plus a physical education course.

North Carolina: Must pass five courses and have 85 percent attendance in previous semester.

North Dakota: Must pass 15 credit hours in previous semester.

Ohio: Must pass four full-credit courses in previous semester.

Oklahoma: Must pass three full-credit courses in previous semester.

Oregon: Must pass at least four subjects in previous semester.

Pennsylvania: Must pass four full-credit courses in previous marking period.

Rhode Island: Must pass three academic subjects, excluding physical education, in previous marking period.
South Carolina: Must pass all required courses in previous semester.

South Dakota: Must pass 20 hours in previous semester.

Tennessee: Must pass four subjects in previous semester.

Texas: Must maintain 2.0 GPA, and not receive grade of "F" in current semester.

Utah: Must not fail more than one class in grading period and must make up failing grade the following semester.

Virginia: Must pass four subjects in previous semester.

Washington: Must pass four full-credit subjects in previous semester.

West Virginia: Must maintain 2.0 GPA.

Wisconsin: Must pass four full-credit courses in previous grading period.

Wyoming: Must pass four full-credit subjects in previous semester and be passing in current semester.

NCAA Standards

One of the reasons for the increased interest in academic eligibility at the high school level is because of new academic eligibility policies instituted by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). Students need to be academically prepared at the high school level in order to meet the increased academic demands encountered at the intercollegiate level.

The NCAA adopted Proposition 48 in 1986. It stated that to be eligible to play and receive a scholarship in his or her freshman year, an incoming student-athlete had to score a combined 700 (out of a possible 1,600) on the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), or a comparable score of 17 on the American College Test (ACT), and have a 2.00 GPA (out of 4.00 GPA) average for 11 core high school courses (Swift, 1994). In addition, the NCAA set guidelines for core courses to include three years of English, two years in math, two years in social studies, and two years in physical or natural science, with at least one
laboratory class (Schoemann & Earle, 1994). In August of 1995, the NCAA increased the core requirement from 11 to 13, adding an additional year of English and an additional year of either English, math, or science. Stricter rules took effect in August of 1996.

Under the new policy, freshman athletes are required to attain a 2.50 GPA in the 13 core courses and at least 700 on the SAT. A sliding scale permits athletes with grade-point averages as low as 2.00 to compete if they have an SAT score of 900 or higher (Foley, 1995). To determine the validity of the information on which the initial eligibility of a student-athlete is based, each institution must utilize an initial eligibility clearinghouse approved by the Executive Committee (National Collegiate Athletic Association [NCAA], 1997).

According to the NCAA, student athletes must: (1) maintain a GPA that puts them in good academic standing as defined by the member school for all students who are at an equivalent stage of progress toward a degree; (2) be enrolled in at least 12 semester or quarter hours during each academic term (except in the final semester or quarter of the student-athlete's baccalaureate program as long as the student-athlete is enrolled in the courses necessary to complete the degree requirements); (3) successfully complete at least 25 percent of their specific baccalaureate degree program course requirements by the beginning of the third year of collegiate enrollment; (4) successfully complete at least 50 percent of their specific degree program course requirements by the beginning of the fourth year of collegiate enrollment; and (5) successfully complete at least 75 percent of their specific degree program course requirements by the beginning of the fifth year of collegiate enrollment (NCAA, 1997).

Proposition 48 was initiated because revenue from ticket sales, television exposure, post-season play, booster club contributions, and other sources had turned college athletics into a big-time business. It became clear to the NCAA that the money incentive encouraged many colleges and universities to use unethical measures to insure their athletes
remained eligible to compete. Specifically, admissions requirements and academic standards at several schools were relaxed to admit academically marginal students. Many were given special treatment not afforded the general school population. Not surprisingly, many of these special students failed to graduate with their classmates. Thus, the purpose of Proposition 48 was to increase admissions requirements so that only student-athletes who had a realistic chance of succeeding academically were admitted.

High school academic eligibility policies have the same general purpose. They emphasize excellence in academics, and endeavor to maximize the student-athlete's chance of success in higher education and beyond.

**Academic Eligibility and Scholastic Achievement**

Many researchers have looked at the relationship between academic eligibility and scholastic achievement. A majority of these studies have found a positive relationship, however, some have reported negative findings.

Ligon (1988) investigated the effects of the "no pass-no play" rule in Texas after it took effect in 1985. He found: (1) the number of students failing courses were fewer, especially those participating in extracurricular activities, including athletics; (2) enrollment in honors classes grew; and (3) over half of the students surveyed agreed that the eligibility rule encouraged them to make better grades. However, a Texas A & M Principals Poll (1987) found that almost 64% of the high school principals surveyed felt that the eligibility policy directed some students away from tougher courses (Morton et al., 1993).

Soltz (1986) found that student-athletes achieved significantly higher grades than non-participating students. In addition, significantly fewer athletes received a failing grade during competition than out-of-season. Tauber (1988) observed that there is a positive relationship between eligibility standards and academics because of the Premack Principle.
The Premack Principle states "one should use more-favored activities to reinforce less-favored activities" (p. 43). By application, many schools use participation in athletics, the more-favored activity, to motivate athletes to earn better grades (the less-favored activity).

Advantages and Disadvantages of Academic Eligibility Policies

As with most institutional policies, academic standards have their advantages as well as disadvantages. Understandably, there is both support for, and opposition to, academic eligibility policies. The most frequently expressed advantage of academic eligibility policies is that a threat of removal of athletic participation motivates students to work harder in the classroom in order to attain passing grades (Brown, 1988; Cardenas, 1990; Durbin, 1986; Lapchick, 1989).

Other advantages of academic eligibility include: (1) academic eligibility rules demonstrate to all students that the school's top priority is academic excellence (Brown, 1988; NFSHSA, 1993); (2) such policies guard against athletic participation taking too much of the student-athlete's time such that grades suffer (Morton et al., 1993); (3) students are more likely to realize their academic potential by working to a specific level of achievement (Brown, 1988); (4) they show to students that teachers have high, but realistic academic expectations for them (Tauber, 1988); and (5) they help student-athletes better prepare for the increased academic demands of college work (Lapchick, 1989).

The most frequently expressed disadvantage of academic eligibility policies is that they unfairly penalize less academically able students by depriving them of something they enjoy and do well in - athletics (Brown, 1988; Lahnert, 1992; Roberts, 1992). Other disadvantages include: (1) participation in athletics is the only thing that keeps some students in school (Cardenas, 1990; Tauber, 1988); (2) coaches are hesitant to keep players at risk of becoming ineligible (Cardenas, 1990); (3) students are less likely to try out for a
school team if they know they are at risk of becoming ineligible (Cardenas, 1990); (4) some teachers may artificially boost grades in an effort to keep certain students eligible for athletics (Brown, 1988); (5) some students will be discouraged from taking courses that are challenging for fear of losing their eligibility (Brown, 1988); and (6) there is no provision for those student-athletes who have "poor" teachers (Roberts, 1992).

Alternatives to Academic Eligibility Policies

Some school districts, as well as some state associations, have adopted alternatives to removing a student from athletics because of poor grades. One alternative is the adoption of a probationary period for students who are academically ineligible. Students are allowed to participate for a given time period to see whether they can improve their grades (Morton et al., 1993).

Probationary periods often include a mandatory study hall, also known as the athletic study hall. Students must attend a mandatory study hall after school, a given number of days each week, as an alternative to practice sessions or contests. Athletic study halls provide a specific place and a time where student-athletes can study and complete homework assignments with the assistance of academic tutors (Jones, 1986).

Another alternative used in California schools is the Promoting Achievement in School through Sports (PASS) program. This program, developed by The American Sports Institute (ASI), a nonprofit educational organization, consists of a daily, academic, year-long class for student-athletes. Based on the belief that "the fundamentals that lead to success in sports can be transferred to academic and social success" (Promoting Achievement, 1993, p.5), the PASS program uses positive aspects of sport culture to enhance academic achievement by focusing on such fundamental keys to athletic success as concentration, relaxation, power, flexibility, and attitude. Studies done by the ASI have
confirmed that PASS improves a student athlete's academic performance as measured by the GPA (Promoting Achievement, 1991; 1993; 1995).

These academic eligibility alternatives may be more effective than traditional policies because while they stress that academic achievement is very important, they allow the student-athlete to continue participating in an activity that offers several personal benefits (Promoting Achievement, 1993).

**Questionnaire Survey Methodology**

The questionnaire is the most popular method used in survey research because it can generate a great deal of information from a wide geographical area. Questionnaires can be administered either face-to-face or through the mail. In the face-to-face method, the questions are handed to the subject directly; in the mailed survey, the questions are self-administered (Fink & Kosecoff, 1985).

According to Thomas & Nelson (1990), there are nine steps associated with the survey research process. The steps are: (1) determining the objectives; (2) delimiting the sample of respondents; (3) constructing the questionnaire; (4) conducting a pilot study; (5) writing the cover letter; (6) sending the questionnaire; (7) sending out the follow-ups; (8) analyzing the results; and (9) preparing the research report (p. 264).

**Determining the objectives.** The researcher must have a clear understanding as to the survey's specific purpose. Research objectives must be clearly stated. The researcher must also know what information is needed and how each question will be analyzed.

**Delimiting the sample of respondents.** After determining the survey's objectives, the researcher needs to select a sample representative of the target population. This saves the researcher time and money. Two basic methods of sampling are probability and non-
probability sampling. In a probability sample, each person in the population has an equal chance of being selected. Probability sampling includes random, systematic, and stratified sampling procedures. In random sampling, subjects are selected at random. Systematic sampling allows the researcher to choose every fifth, tenth, or nth number from a list of names. Stratified sampling separates the population into subgroups prior to introducing systematic sampling procedures. The resulting sample is theoretically representative of the population. A non-probability sample may or may not be representative of the population. Non-probability sampling includes accidental sampling, where people are chosen because they are available, and purposive sampling, which is limited to known people who can help in the study (Fink & Kosecoff, 1985).

Constructing the questionnaire. Appearance and design are important considerations when constructing the questionnaire. Thomas & Nelson (1990) believe that it is important to write good questions which are clear and concise, and meet the researcher's objectives.

The researcher has two types of questions to consider - open and closed. Open-ended questions are unstructured. Subjects are usually asked to give their opinions or feelings about something. Closed questions are structured. Generally speaking, subjects are given several choices and asked to choose one. Closed questions include rankings (e.g., 1-5), scaled items (e.g., never, often, always), or categorical responses (e.g., yes or no) (Fink & Kosecoff, 1985).

Conducting a pilot study. The pilot study is an initial study or pretest to determine if the questionnaire meets the researcher's objectives. Dillman (1978) recommends three pilot studies. The first one is administered to colleagues who understand the purpose of the study. This group evaluates the questions in terms of whether they accomplish the researcher's objectives. The second pilot study is administered to potential users of the
data. They may include policy makers or administrators. The third pilot study is administered to subjects drawn from the population to be surveyed in order to get feedback about the wording and meaning of the questions. On the other hand, Thomas & Nelson (1990) recommend two pilot studies. The first should be administered to colleagues, the second to a sample drawn from the target population.

Writing the cover letter. The cover letter is enclosed with the mailed questionnaire. It should be brief and convince the respondent of the worth of the study. Also included in the cover letter is an assurance of confidentiality, an explanation of the importance of the respondent's cooperation, the identification of the researcher, an offer of a summary of the results, and a request that the questionnaire be returned by a specified date (Thomas & Nelson, 1990). Fink & Kosecoff (1985) claim that one week is generally sufficient time, although Creswell (1994) and Dillman (1978) argue that upwards of seven weeks be allowed.

Sending the questionnaire. In addition to a cover letter, the questionnaire packet should also include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. This is an added incentive for the subject to respond. Considerations such as holidays and busy times of the year must be thought about before sending the questionnaire. Dillman (1989) recommends a mailing date early in the week so that all questionnaires arrive the same week they were mailed, even those that must be forwarded to a new address. He also recommends avoiding a mailing close to a holiday as well as the month of December.

Follow-up Procedures. A follow-up procedure is used to obtain a higher response rate. Dillman (1978) recommends three follow-up procedures: (1) One week after the initial mail-out, a postcard is sent to all subjects. It serves as both a thank you for those who have responded as well as a reminder for those who have not; (2) Three weeks after the initial mail-out, a letter and replacement questionnaire are sent out to those who have
not responded; and (3) Seven weeks after the initial mail-out, another letter and replacement questionnaire are sent by certified mail to all non-respondents. Creswell (1994) recommends two follow-ups: (1) Two weeks after the initial mailing, a replacement questionnaire is sent to all non-respondents; and (2) After six weeks, a postcard is sent as a reminder. Lastly, Thomas & Nelson (1990) recommend the researcher wait until several days after the expected return date to send a postcard to non-respondents, reminding them that their completed survey was not received. Then, after a few weeks, another letter and replacement questionnaire should be sent.

Most researchers aim for a high return rate. Babbie (1990) considers a 50% response rate adequate, a 60% response rate good, and a 70% response rate very good, while Fink & Kosecoff (1985) do not identify a specific response rate.

Analyzing the results. Analyzing survey data usually means responses are tallied and averaged or percentages calculated, and relationships determined. Statistical methods commonly used to analyze survey data include descriptive measures, correlations, cross-tabulations, and trend analysis (Fink & Kosecoff, 1985).

Descriptive statistics include the mean, median, mode, measures of variance, and totals. Measures of variance help describe the spread of the scores and include the range, standard error, and standard deviation (Fink & Kosecoff, 1985).

Correlations show relationships among two or more sets of data and can be positive or negative. A positive correlation associates a small amount of one variable with a small amount of another variable, or a large amount of one variable with a large amount of another variable. A negative correlation associates a small amount of one variable with a large amount of another variable (Thomas & Nelson, 1990). Comparisons show relationships among groups. Trend analysis is used to measure change over time (Fink & Kosecoff, 1985).
Preparing the research report. Survey results can be presented by tables, pie graphs, bar graphs, line graphs, and pictures. Tables present data in a convenient form. Pie graphs visually show what proportions of the whole each response category occupies. They must be drawn to scale if proportional ratios are used. Bar graphs allow a visual display of many different kinds of information at once. Line graphs allow visual comparisons of groups, patterns, and trends. Pictures are most effective in showing comparisons of geographical areas, however, they are usually difficult to create (Fink & Kosecoff, 1985).

Summary

In this chapter the author has reviewed the current literature on academic eligibility policies in athletics, and the importance of athletic participation within the total educational system. Much of the related research has emphasized the importance of academics in a student's life. The conventional wisdom is that the major purpose of school is to maintain and nurture academic excellence. Yet, the New York State Athletic Association policy regarding the academic eligibility of student-athletes is minimal at best. The Association leaves individual member schools free to decide exactly what their academic policy will be. The chapter concludes with a discussion of questionnaire survey methodology.
CHAPTER III
Methods

This chapter reviews the methods which were used to conduct the study. It is divided into four sections. The first section includes data sources, and a description of the survey sample. The second section includes a description of the instrument used to collect the data. The third section reviews the procedures by which the data were obtained. The fourth, and final section, restates the researcher's intentions.

Sources of Data

The study was based on a sample of New York State high schools, all members of the New York State Public High School Athletic Association. The sample was obtained through a stratified, random sampling procedure. A list of all the high schools in New York State, as well as their size classification (A, B, C, or D), was compiled from the New York State Coaches Directory and The New York State Public High School Athletic Association Directory (NYSPHSAA, 1994; New York State Coaches Directory, 1995). The names of all 779 schools were then written on individual index cards, and categorized by size classification (A, B, C, and D). Twenty-five percent of the schools included in each of the four size classification categories were randomly selected for participation in the survey. For Class A, 32 of 127 schools were selected; for Class B, 51 of 203 schools were selected; for Class C, 53 of 214 schools were selected; and for Class D, 53 of 211 schools were selected. Thus, 189 of the 779 (24.3%) high schools in New York State were selected for participation in the survey. The survey questionnaire was sent to the athletic directors of the selected schools.

A human subjects clearance was obtained from the State University of New York,
College at Brockport Institutional Review Board prior to the initiation of the study. This is a required procedure because all research involving human subjects must be reviewed and approved by State University of New York, College at Brockport before data collection is initiated (see Appendix A).

A total of 171 of the 189 schools selected for participation in the study completed and returned usable questionnaires for a return rate of 90.5%. For Class A, 29 of 32 schools responded (90.6%); for Class B, 47 of 51 schools responded (92.2%); for Class C, 51 of 53 schools responded (96.2%); and for Class D, 44 of 53 schools responded (83.0%).

Instruments

Relevant information was obtained by questionnaire survey methodology. The instrument was developed by the author and reviewed by Professor Merrill J. Melnick, Department of Physical Education and Sport, State University of New York, College at Brockport. A pilot study provided the author with valuable feedback concerning the instrument's format and content. Specifically, questionnaires were completed by two athletic administrators who did not participate in the study. Necessary changes were made as indicated before the final version of the questionnaire (see Appendix B) was mailed to the random sample of athletic directors (N= 189).

Procedures

A mailing list was obtained from The New York State Coaches Directory and The New York State Public High School Athletic Association Directory. The NYSPHSAA directory contains a list of all high schools in New York State that are members of the Association. The coaches' directory contains a complete listing of all schools in New York
A cover letter accompanied each survey (see Appendix C). The letter introduced the researcher and described the nature and purpose of the study. Also included in the survey packet was a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

The surveys were mailed on April 5, 1996. The cover letter requested the respondent to return the survey by April 19, 1996. In order to maximize the return rate, the researcher mailed a follow-up post card (see Appendix D) on April 26, 1996 to all participants who had not responded by April 19th. A second follow-up effort was initiated on May 16, 1996 in the form of a follow-up letter (see Appendix E). Included was another copy of the survey and another self-addressed, stamped envelope.

When the completed questionnaires were received, they were coded and the data transferred to a master sheet. The last survey was received on May 29, 1996. The researcher analyzed the data shortly thereafter. Each of the 11 questions was statistically analyzed using a frequency tally procedure.

Analysis of Data

The purpose of the study was to investigate the status of eligibility requirements among a sample of randomly selected high schools, all members of the New York State Public High School Athletic Association. The researcher was interested in: (1) how many schools had more stringent, less stringent, or the same academic eligibility policies as the NYSPHSAA; (2) the actual policies of said schools; and (3) the advantages and disadvantages of academic eligibility policies as perceived by the sample of athletic directors.
CHAPTER IV

Results and Discussion

The chapter is divided into nine sections, each highlighted by a figure. Recall that the New York State academic eligibility policy requires a student-athlete be enrolled in three subjects plus physical education. A school was determined to have the same policy as the State Association's policy if its athletic director indicated that his/her school's policy was enrollment in at least three subjects plus physical education. A school was determined to have a more stringent policy if the athletic director stated that his/her school standard included passing or achieving a specified grade. No schools were determined to have a less stringent policy because State policy is a required policy. Individual member schools only have the option of enforcing the same policy or adopting a more stringent policy.

Figure one presents the strictness of academic eligibility policies of the sample high schools. A total of 130 or 76% of the schools surveyed had an academic policy that was more strict than State Association policy; 41 or 24% of the schools had the same policy. No school had a policy that was less strict than State Association policy. (See Figure 1).
Figure 1. Strictness of the schools' academic eligibility policy (N=171).
Figure two presents the strictness of the school's academic eligibility policy according to its school size classification. The responses of the athletic directors were categorized into four size classifications (Class A, Class B, Class C, and Class D). The data revealed that 22 or 75.9% of the Class A schools, 34 or 72.3% of the Class B schools, 39 or 76.5% of the Class C schools, and 35 or 79.5% of the Class D schools had athletic eligibility policies which were more stringent than State Association policy. There appeared to be few differences among the four school size categories. The percentage of schools with the same policy as the State Association ranged from 20.5% (Class D) to 27.7% (Class B). No school had a policy less strict than State Association policy (See Figure 2).

Figure 2. Strictness of the school's academic eligibility policy according to size classification.
Figure three identifies the academic eligibility policies of those schools with a more stringent policy than the State Association. The data revealed that failing two or more courses was the modal response. That is, student-athletes who were failing two or more courses during a given marking period were declared academically ineligible for participation. Seventy-two or 55% of the schools had such a policy. Failing one course was the policy for 21 or 16% of the schools surveyed. Failing three or more courses was the policy for 10 or 8% of the schools. Two or more unsatisfactory effort grades was the standard for five or 4% of the schools. A student-athlete with less than a 2.00 GPA was declared ineligible at two or 2% of the schools. The remaining 20 or 15% of the schools had policies that were some variation thereof (See Figure 3).

Figure 3. Academic eligibility policies among schools with a more stringent policy than the State Association (N=130).
Figure four identifies the alternatives to academic eligibility policies among those schools with a more stringent policy than the State Association. The alternatives include a probationary period, a warning period, and a mandatory study hall. These data are based on a careful reading of a school's academic eligibility policy (some athletic directors included this information with their completed questionnaire), as well as information they volunteered. No specific question in the instrument requested this information.

Statistical analysis of individual eligibility policies revealed that 56 or 43% of the schools with a more stringent policy than the State Association had a probationary period. This period is a specified amount of time during which athletes could practice with their team but could not participate in contests until the academic standard was met. The data also revealed that 39 or 30% of the schools had a warning period whereby athletes could participate in practices and contests, but had a specified amount of time to meet academic standards before they were put on probation or declared ineligible. A total of 39 or 30% of the schools had a required, in-school study hall for all students who were academically ineligible, on academic probation, or who had received an academic warning. (See Figure 4).
Eleven schools had both a probationary period and a mandatory study hall. Nine schools had both a warning period and a mandatory study hall. Eleven schools had both a warning period and a probationary period. And, seven of the schools had a warning period, a probationary period, and a mandatory study hall.
Figure five presents the number of years a school's academic eligibility policy was in effect among those with a more stringent policy. Number of years was categorized into five-year intervals. The data revealed that 44 or 34% of the schools had a policy in effect for 10 years or more, 33 or 25% initiated a policy between five and nine years ago, and 41 or 32% initiated their policy within the past four years. A total of 12 or 9% of the athletic directors did not know when their school policy was initiated (See Figure 5).

Figure 5. The age of academic eligibility policies among schools with a more stringent policy than the State Association (N=130).
Figure six categorizes the athletic directors' agreement/disagreement with the academic eligibility policies at schools with a more stringent policy than the State Association. The data revealed that 108 or 83% of the athletic directors "strongly agree" or "agree" with their school's more stringent policy; 20 athletic directors (15%) "disagree" or "strongly disagree" with their school's more stringent policy; and two athletic directors stated that they could not say. (see Figure 6)

Figure 6. Athletic directors' agreement/disagreement with the academic eligibility policies at schools with a more stringent policy than the State Association (N=130).

The twenty athletic directors who disagreed with their school's policy had many reasons for their position. The five most common were:

1. "The policy is only for athletics - it should be for all extra-curricular activities. Student-athletes are discriminated against", and "students in other school organizations do not have to follow the same eligibility policy as the athletes".

2. "The policy is too strict".
3. "Some teachers abuse the policy". Some athletic directors were of the opinion that "some teachers punish student-athletes by purposely failing them". Others said that "some teachers purposely pass students in order to allow them to participate on teams, even if they are actually failing".

4. "The policy is too lenient". Some athletic directors stated that their school's policy is not strict enough, even though it is more stringent than State Association policy.

5. "The policy should include a mandatory study hall". Recall that 39 schools have a required, in-school study hall for all students who are academically ineligible; 91 schools do not have such a mandatory study hall. Several athletic directors at schools without mandatory study halls believe that their ineligible student-athletes should be required to attend study halls.
The athletic directors were asked their perceptions of "degree of strictness" of their school's academic eligibility policy. The data revealed that 137 or 80% of the athletic directors believed that their schools academic eligibility policy should be more stringent than State Association policy; 31 or 18% indicated their school should not have a more stringent policy. Three athletic directors said, "it depends".

Further analysis revealed that 123 or 95% of the athletic directors whose schools have a more stringent academic eligibility policy than the State Association believe they have taken the correct path, while six or 5% believe their school's policy is excessive. One athletic director whose school has a more stringent policy than the State Association stated, "it depends".

Finally, the data revealed that 14 or 34% of the athletic directors whose schools have the same academic eligibility policy as the State Association believe they do not need a more stringent policy. Two athletic directors whose schools have the same policy as the State Association stated, "it depends".
Figure seven presents the athletic directors' opinions of the New York State Athletic Association policy regarding academic eligibility. The data revealed that 76 or 66% of the athletic directors believe the current New York State policy is a good one, while 25 or 22% believe it is not strong enough. Interestingly, 14 or 12% of the athletic directors do not believe it is an "academic policy". Instead, they view it as a school eligibility policy which assures the athlete is a bona fide student. Fifty-six athletic directors (33%) did not respond to the question. This may have been due to some confusion regarding the interpretation of the question. Unfortunately, this confusion was undetected in the pilot study (See Figure 7).

Figure 7. Athletic directors' opinions of the New York State Athletic Association policy regarding academic eligibility (N=171).
Figure eight categorizes the athletic directors' perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of academic eligibility policies for student-athletes. The data revealed that 134 or 79% of the athletic directors believe that academic eligibility policies are advantageous for student-athletes; 26 or 15% believe they are not. Ten (6%) answered "yes" and "no". One athletic director did not respond to the question (See Figure 8).

Figure 8. Athletic directors' perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of academic eligibility policies for student-athletes (N=171).

Advantages

Some of the advantages of an academic eligibility policy for student-athletes as stated by the affirming athletic directors were as follows.

1. Focuses importance on academics.

One athletic administrator stated, "It lets the student-athlete know that sports are not
the main reason they are in school and that academics come first, athletics second."

Another athletic director observed, "The policy provides an incentive for the student-athlete to do well academically. If they know that poor grades will make them ineligible to participate on a team, they will work harder in class to achieve passing grades."

2. Leadership

"It teaches the student-athlete responsibility and commitment," stated one athletic administrator. He went on to point out, "as a member of a team, the student-athlete has an obligation to remain eligible. A student-athlete who works hard to remain eligible will be viewed by teachers and classmates alike as a role model. These student-athletes will become leaders by encouraging teammates to work hard to remain eligible."

3. Better attendance

One athletic director claimed, "Academic eligibility policies force the student-athlete to attend school. Some schools with a more stringent academic policy than the State Association include attendance as part of their standard. If a student-athlete knows that poor attendance will result in ineligibility, they will attend more classes."

4. Discipline

One athletic director observed, "It creates a well-rounded student-athlete. The student-athlete learns discipline when academic eligibility policies are strictly enforced. They are also disciplined to budget their time in order to do well academically. This discipline follows them to the playing areas and helps them become well-rounded athletes."

5. Preparation for collegiate level

One athletic director stated, "Academic eligibility in athletics emphasizes the same message as the NCAA. Student-athletes need to be academically prepared at the high school level in order to meet the increased academic demands waiting for them at the collegiate level."
Disadvantages

Some of the disadvantages of academic eligibility policies for the student-athlete offered by the dissenting athletic directors were as follows.

1. Denial of opportunity

One athletic director wrote, "Some student-athletes just do not have the mental capacity to do well academically, even if they work very hard. By enforcing an academic policy, this student is denied the opportunity to participate on an athletic team. Some schools have exceptions for students with learning disabilities, however many schools do not."

2. Forces athletes to take easier courses

One athletic director observed, "Some student-athletes take easier courses to stay eligible, while others who take harder courses become ineligible. As a result, some student-athletes do not work to their academic potential. They assign a higher priority to athletics than academics. Those who do work to their academic potential and take harder courses risk becoming ineligible, even though academics is their priority."

3. Discrimination against student-athletes

More than one athletic director stated, "Academic eligibility policies usually do not include other after-school activities. Therefore, athletes are affected while other students are not."

4. Loss of motivation

One athletic administrator noted, "If athletes are dismissed from teams, their motivation drops and their grades suffer even more. Many student-athletes utilize athletics to motivate them to do well and remain in school. Without athletics, these students are no longer motivated."

5. Misuse of the policy

One athletic director wrote, "Teachers misuse the system. They use the academic
eligibility policy as a disciplinary measure against students, even if a student-athlete is not actually failing a class. Some teachers also give passing grades to student-athletes who are failing their courses." Another athletic director claimed, "Academic policies are often enforced at the will of school administrators. Therefore, if a talented student-athlete is struggling academically, administrators make exceptions to keep him or her eligible. This may seem like an advantage for the student-athlete, but it is actually a disadvantage. Eventually, this 'cheating' will catch up to the student-athlete and hurt him or her."
Summary

This chapter identifies and discusses several conclusions based on an analysis of the data. These conclusions form the foundation for a set of recommendations which conclude the chapter.

The data showed that a majority of schools (76%) in the New York State Public High School Athletic Association have academic eligibility policies for student-athletes that are more stringent than Association policy. Twenty-four percent of the schools surveyed follow the same policy as the State Association.

When the schools were divided into four classification sizes (A, B, C, and D), it was revealed that the smaller classes (class C and D schools) were somewhat more likely to have academic policies more stringent than the State Association. Specifically, 78% of the smaller schools (C and D) had policies that were more stringent than the State Association, versus 74% for the larger schools (A and B).

More than one-half (55%) of the schools with a more stringent academic eligibility policy than State Association policy use, "failing two or more courses" as their academic eligibility standard. Approximately 16% of the schools have opted for an academic policy based on failing a single course. Failing three or more courses, a much more lenient policy, was the policy at 8% of the schools.

Of interest was the fact that approximately 70% of the schools with a more stringent academic policy have alternative programs for student athletes who do not meet school academic standards. These alternatives include mandatory study halls, probationary periods, and warning periods. The probationary period was the most common alternative.
Of the participating schools which have a more stringent academic eligibility policy, approximately one-third initiated their standard ten or more years ago. Approximately one-quarter of the sample began their policy between five and nine years ago. Approximately one-third adopted their policies within the past four years. This shows that there has been a move in recent years to emphasize the academic performance of student-athletes.

A majority of the athletic directors at schools with a more stringent policy agree with their school's policies. In fact, 83% believe that their policy is a good one. This is not surprising because athletic directors usually participate in policy formulation; they are merely agreeing with the policy they themselves initiated. The 15% who disagree or strongly disagree with their school's policies may be new athletic directors, but are not prepared to make major changes so early in their tenure.

Interestingly, 35% of the athletic directors who disagree or strongly disagree with their school's eligibility standards hold that opinion because the policy is not applied to all extracurricular activities. They believe the policy should be applied uniformly across the entire extracurriculum.

Approximately 95% of the athletic directors at schools with a more stringent academic policy believe in a tougher standard. Only six athletic directors said there was no need for a more stringent academic policy at their school. Likewise, 61% of the athletic directors at schools with the same academic policy as the State Association believed that they did not need a more stringent one. Interestingly, 34% thought that their school should have a more stringent policy.

Approximately 66% of the athletic directors agreed that the current policy of the New York State High School Athletic Association was a good one. They believe that this minimal policy allows each individual school to decide its own standards. A more stringent policy, they believe, would limit the flexibility of individual school districts.
The majority of the athletic directors believed that academic policies have more advantages than disadvantages for student-athletes. In fact, over three-quarters (79%) of the athletic directors surveyed believed these policies offer several advantages for student athletes; only 15% believed that such policies are disadvantageous for athletes. The majority argued that the value of these policies lie in their educational value. Academic standards give academics a high priority which motivates student-athletes to do well in school. Many believed that academic policies keep student-athletes on track toward graduation because it forces them to get good grades and attend school.

One of the most common responses offered by those opposed to eligibility policies had to do with denying students the opportunity to do something they really like and are very good at. They observed that denial of opportunity can result in lower grades and even dropping out of school.

Conclusions

Based on the data analysis, the following conclusions were reached:

(1) Not only do high schools in New York State fully comply with the New York State Association policy regarding academic eligibility for student-athletes, but many go well beyond what is recommended.

(2) There is considerable variation among high schools with respect to academic eligibility requirements for student-athletes.

(3) High school athletic directors in New York State view academic eligibility policies for student-athletes as very desirable.

(4) Among the schools that have adopted more stringent requirements, the most popular policy alternative is a probationary period for students-athletes who are doing poorly in school.
Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations are offered for the reader's consideration:

(1) A study focusing specifically on alternative programs for student-athletes who become ineligible should be conducted. Approximately 52% of the high schools surveyed in this study adopted alternative programs before declaring an athlete academically ineligible. Further study of alternative programs would be desirable.

(2) A study involving the academic eligibility policies of other State Associations would be useful. In New York State, individual member schools have the flexibility of determining their own academic standards. This flexibility is not available in most other states.

(3) A study of the relationship between academic eligibility policies and team success could determine whether eligibility policies have any effect on the success of athletic teams.

(4) Further studies targeted at identifying the advantages and disadvantages of academic eligibility policies for student-athletes would be very useful. Many athletic directors want to see proof that eligibility policies are advantageous before adopting them.
APPENDIX A

Permission from SUNY Brockport Institutional Review Board to do the study

BROCKPORT
State University of New York
College at Brockport
350 New Campus Drive
Brockport, New York 14420-2919

Grants Development Director
(716) 395-2523/5118
FAX: (716) 395-5602

Date: April 26, 1996

To: Kimberly Gerstung /
   Dr. Merrill Nelnick

From: Colleen Donaldson for
       Institutional Review Board

Re: Project IRB #96-34

Your proposal entitled ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETES IN NEW YORK STATE has been approved. Accordingly, you may proceed with the work as proposed and approved.

If this project continues beyond one year, federal guidelines require that the information below (items 1-6) will need to be provided to the IRB before the project can be approved for a second year. Please note also that if the project initially required a full meeting of the IRB (Category III proposal) for the first review, then continuation of the project after one year will again require full IRB review.

Information required by the IRB for continuation of the project past the first year includes the following:

1. number of subjects involved in year one
2. a description of any adverse events or unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or other, withdrawal of subjects from the research or complaints about the research during the previous year
3. a summary of any recent literature, findings, or new information about any risks associated with the research
4. a copy of the current informed consent document
5. a general summary of research findings from year one
6. reason why project needs to be continued into a second year

Please contact Colleen Donaldson, Office of Academic Affairs, immediately if:
- the project changes substantially,
- a subject is injured,
- the level of risk changes.

A final report is due September 1, 1996.
APPENDIX B
Athletic Director's Questionnaire

NAME OF SCHOOL ________________________________

1. Does your school currently have an academic eligibility policy for an athlete's participation in interscholastic athletics? Circle one.

YES  NO

Note: If your answer is NO, go directly to question #6

2. Please describe what the policy is. If possible, please include a copy of the policy when you return the questionnaire.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

3. How many years has the current policy been in effect? Check one.

   1 year   4 years   7 years   10 or more years
   2 years   5 years   8 years     years
   3 years   6 years   9 years     unknown

4. Do you agree with the policy? Check one.

   Strongly Agree    Agree    Cannot Say
   Disagree          Strongly Disagree

5. If your response to #4 is Disagree or Strongly Disagree, please explain why.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

6. Do you think your school should have an academic eligibility policy for an athlete's participation in interscholastic athletics? Circle one.

   YES  NO
7. The New York State policy concerning academic eligibility for participation in interscholastic athletics is as follows: A student athlete "must be taking at least four subjects including Physical Education" (New York State Public High School Athletic Association 1994-96 Handbook, p. 57). Please describe your evaluation of this policy.

_______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

8. Do you think academic eligibility policies help athletes? Circle one.

YES

NO

9. If your response to #8 is YES, in which specific ways do these policies help student athletes?

_______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

10. If your response to #8 is NO, please explain.

_______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

11. Would you like a copy of the results of this study? Circle one.

YES

NO
APPENDIX C
Letter of Introduction to Athletic Directors

April 5, 1996

(Athletic Director)
(School)
(Address)

Dear (Athletic Director):

Allow me to introduce myself. I am a graduate student at the State University of New York, College at Brockport working on my Master's of Science in Education (Physical Education) degree. My area of concentration is athletic administration. For my thesis, I am conducting a state wide survey of academic eligibility in interscholastic athletics. Specifically, I wish to learn the status of eligibility requirements among high schools in the New York State Public High School Athletic Association.

Your school was scientifically chosen for participation in this survey. I would be most appreciative if you would take the 10 - 15 minutes required to provide the information requested. Be assured that your answers will be kept in the strictest of confidence. My interest is in statistical findings only and under no circumstances will I report responses on an identifiable basis. As soon as your completed questionnaire is received, it will be converted and coded for analysis, and all identifying information removed.

I have provided you with a self-addressed, stamped envelope in which to return the completed questionnaire. Since the validity of the results depends on obtaining a high rate of response, your participation is crucial to the success of this study. I would like the questionnaire returned by April 19, 1996. Thank you for your time and participation.

Sincerely,

Kimberly L. Gerstung
APPENDIX D

First Follow-up Letter to Athletic Directors

April 26, 1996

Dear (Athletic Director):

You were mailed a questionnaire survey a few weeks ago regarding academic eligibility policies in athletics. Your response to this survey would be greatly appreciated and beneficial to this research project. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Gerstung
May 16, 1996

(Athletic Director)
(School)
(Address)

Dear (Athletic Director):

My records show that I mailed you a questionnaire survey a month ago regarding academic eligibility policies in high school athletics. As of yet, I have not received a response. It is important to the success of this research project that I obtain a response from each school in my survey sample because only a limited number of schools in New York State were contacted.

I have taken the liberty to include another copy of the questionnaire along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. I would be most appreciative if you could take the 10 - 15 minutes needed to complete the questionnaire, and return it within a few days. Thanking you in advance for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Kimberly L. Gerstung
### APPENDIX F

**List of Participating School Districts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class A:</th>
<th>Class B:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albany High School</td>
<td>Alden Central High School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arlington High School North</td>
<td>Amityville Memorial High School</td>
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<td>Auburn High School</td>
<td>Amsterdam High School</td>
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<td>Bellport High School</td>
<td>Beacon High School</td>
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<td>Brentwood High School</td>
<td>Ben Franklin High School</td>
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<td>Clarkstown South High School</td>
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<td>Commack High School</td>
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<td>East High School</td>
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<td>East Syracuse-Minoa High School</td>
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<td>Frontier Central High School</td>
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<td>Herricks High School</td>
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<td>John F. Kennedy High School</td>
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<td>Lindenhurst High School</td>
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<td>Southside High School</td>
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<td>Spring Valley High School</td>
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<td>Rush Henrietta Sr. High School</td>
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<td>Valley Stream Central High School</td>
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<td>Watertown High School</td>
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<td>Washingtonville High School</td>
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<td>Williamsville North High School</td>
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<td>Whitesboro High School</td>
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</table>
Class B (continued):

Chenango Forks Central High School  
Corning-Painted Post East High School  
Cornwall Central High School  
Elmira Free Academy  
Elwood / John H. Glenn High School  
Fonda Fultonville High School  
George W. Fowler High School  
Half Hollow Hills West High School  
Harborfields High School  
Hendrick Hudson High School  
H. Frank Carey High School  
Islip High School  
J.C. Birdlebough High School  
John F. Kennedy High School  
Kenmore East High School  
Lackawanna High School  
Lakeland High School  
Lansingburgh High School  
LaSalle Center School  
Massena Central High School  
Niagara Falls High School  
Norwich High School  
Plainedge High School  
Port Jervis High School  
Poughkeepsie High School  
Queensbury High School  
Rondout Valley High School  
Sayville High School  
Southwestern Central High School  
Tappan Zee High School  
Tonawanda High School  
Warwick High School  
Waverly Jr. Sr. High School  
Westhampton Beach High School  
Williamsville South High School  

Class C:

Addison Central High School  
Akron Central High School  
Allegany-Limestone Central School  
A.P.W. Central High School  
Ardsley Union Free School District  
Au Sable Valley Central High School  
Bainbridge Guilford High School  
Barker Central High School  
Beaver River Central School  
Berne Knox Westerlo High School
Class C (continued):

Buffalo Traditional School
Burke Catholic High School
Caledonia-Mumford High School
Campbell-Savona High School
Canajoharie Central High School
Carle Place High School
Chatham High School
Corinth High School
Coxsackie-Athens High School
Delaware Academy
Earl L. VanderMeulen High School
East Bloomfield Sr. High School
East Rochester High School
Greene Central High School
Greenwich Central High School
Harpursville Central High School
Holland Patent Central School
Hudson High School
John F. Kennedy High School
LeRoy High School
Liberty Central High School
Maple Hill High School
Marcus Whitman High School
Mercy High School
Mount Markham High School
Our Lady of Lourdes High
Oxford Academy & Central School
Pleasantville High School
Sauquoit Valley Central High School
Sidney Central High School
Spacenkill High School
Spencer Van Etten Central High
St. Lawrence Central High School
Ticonderoga Central High School
Tri-Valley Central High School
Walton Central High School
Wayland-Cohocton Central High
Westlake High School
Williamson Central High School
Windsor Central High School
Woodlands-Hartsdale High School

Class D:

Alfred Almond Central School
Andrew S. Draper School
Alton Central High School
Blind Brook High School
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<th>Class D (continued):</th>
<th>Notre Dame High School (Elmira)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bolivar Central High School</td>
<td>Oppenheim-Ephratah High School</td>
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<td>Owen D. Young High School</td>
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<td>Colton Pierrepont High School</td>
<td>Red Creek Central Jr. Sr. High</td>
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<tr>
<td>Copenhagen Central High School</td>
<td>Red Jacket Central High School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delaware Valley Central</td>
<td>Rome Catholic High School</td>
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<td>Saratoga Central Catholic High</td>
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<td>York Central School</td>
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<td>North Salem High School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Notre Dame High School (Batavia)</td>
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REFERENCES


