

IHSSA Eighth-Grade Participation
Frequently Asked Questions
Preliminary Guidance July 1, 2026

Eighth-Grade Student Participation in IHSSA:

Effective for the 2026-2027 season, the IHSSA 9th grade membership will now become the 8th/9th grade membership. The IHSSA will follow the applicable sections of HF2591 for interscholastic IGHS AU/IHSAA athletics. Participation in IHSSA for eighth-graders is based upon local school district decisions.

Q1: May eighth-grade students participate in interscholastic Iowa High School Speech Association contests/festivals?

A1: *Yes, if the board of directors of a school district, the authorities in charge of a non-public school, or the governing board of a charter school adopt a local policy to allow it.*

Q2: In what events may eighth graders participate in IHSSA contests/festivals?

A2: *Large-group events, individual events and debate events are available for eighth-grade participation based upon local decision.*

Q3: At what level (8th/9th grade team, high school team) may eighth-grade students participate in IHSSA events?

A3: *This is a local decision.*

Q4: May eighth-grade students participate in both the 8th/9th grade team and the high school team?

A4: *No. All eighth-grade students may only participate on their school's 8th/9th grade team or their high school team.*

Q5: May some eighth-grade students participate on the 8th/9th grade team while other eighth-grade students participate on the high school team?

A5: *No. All eighth-grade students must either participate on the 8th/9th grade team OR the high school team.*

Q6: Must eighth-grade students meet academic requirements in order to participate in IHSSA contests?

A6: *No. This is similar to current eighth-grade student participation in summer baseball and softball. There are no academic requirements for eighth-grade students.*

Q7: May a school district, non-public school, or charter school implement academic requirements as a condition for eighth-grade students to participate in IHSSA?

A7: Yes. *This is a local decision.*

Q8: May a school district, non-public school, or charter school limit the number of eighth-grade students permitted to participate in IHSSA?

A8: Yes. *This is a local decision.*

Q9: At what school may an eighth-grade student participate in IHSSA?

A9: *An eighth-grade student may participate only at a school where the student is otherwise eligible to participate under applicable enrollment, attendance, and eligibility rules and where the local board or governing authority has adopted a policy allowing eighth-grade participation. Examples:*

Public School District

An eighth-grade student who resides in a district in which the Board of Directors adopts a policy to allow eighth graders to participate in IHSSA may participate in the high school in that district. If the district has multiple high schools, the district will determine which high school the student may participate.

Cooperative Sharing Agreement

An eighth-grade student who attends a school in which the district Board Directors, the authorities in charge of non-public school, or the governing board of a charter school adopts a policy to allow eighth graders to participate in IHSSA, and whose district is in a cooperative sharing agreement with a district, non-public school, or charter school that also adopts a policy to allow eighth graders to participate in IHSSA, may participate as part of the cooperative sharing agreement.

Non-Public School or Charter School Continuation

If an eighth-grade student attends a non-public school or charter school and a high school with the same governing body has adopted a policy to allow eighth graders to participate in IHSSA, the eighth-grade student may participate in IHSSA at that school.

District of Residence

If the high school with the same governing body as the non-public or charter school does not offer IHSSA and is not in a cooperative sharing agreement with another school, the eighth-grade student may participate in their district of residence.

If an eighth-grade student attends a non-public school or charter school and has no high school with the same governing body, the eighth-grade student may participate in IHSSA in their district of residence.

Q10: May an eighth-grade student who attends a school in a state other than Iowa participate in IHSSA?

A10: No.

Q11: May seventh-grade students now participate in IHSSA?

A11: No.

Q12: May a school district allow eighth-grade participation in specific IHSSA events but not others?

A12: Yes. *This is a local decision. For example, a district may decide eighth-grade students may participate in the one-act play, but choose not to allow eighth-grade students to participate in readers theatre.*

Q13: What performance materials are appropriate for eighth-grade participation?

A13: *This is a local decision.*

Q14: Are copyright permissions for performance materials required for eighth-graders?

A14: Yes.

Q15: Are eighth-grade students eligible for All-State recognition?

A15: Yes.

Q16: May a school enter three separate team memberships? An 8th grade team, a 9th grade team, and a high school team?

A16: No. *Schools may only enter two team memberships. An 8th/9th grade membership and a high school member.*

Q17: May a school have just one membership? 8th grade - 12 grade?

A17: Yes.