

M C P S



HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you, we hear you!

● Time and energy

Significant time, effort, energy, resources and (love) have gone into this discussion.

● Passion

From a community standpoint, there are a group of people who have been at the forefront (and behind the scenes) advocating to bring high school baseball to Missoula. They are eager to partner with us and help.

● Widespread support

There are a dedicated people who support baseball across age levels and leagues: from Pee-Wee, to Little League, to American Legion - including coaches, volunteers, parents, grandparents, and students.

● Homework has been done

There is a group of people at MCPS and within the community who have spent considerable time evaluating and assessing the ability of MCPS to add three high school baseball teams to existing budgets and staffing resources.

PROPONENTS TELL US...

1

That statistics show participation in extracurriculars improves academic performance. Students who play sports tend to have higher GPAs, better attendance, and higher graduation rates. Baseball may help motivate and engage students academically.

2

Baseball teaches important life skills like discipline, teamwork, and perseverance. The sport requires dedication, practice, and working together as a team. Overcoming challenges and adversity in baseball helps build character.

3

Many students grow up playing Little League before high school. Offering baseball in high school allows students to continue participating in a sport that they might otherwise be cut from in Legion or other club programs.

4

Baseball is inclusive to students of different athletic abilities. More students may be interested in and capable of playing baseball and may positively benefit.

PROPONENTS TELL US...

5

Having a baseball team can boost school spirit and community. Baseball games get students, families, staff, and community members engaged and excited to support the high school. This can help build a strong sense of community that is already valued in Missoula.

6

Participation in baseball during high school opens doors for potential scholarship opportunities to continue playing in college. This can provide a way for some students to attend and cover the costs of college.

7

High school baseball can be more affordable for students to participate in than some club teams.

I (we) would not argue against any of these points!

MORE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- We see and appreciate the clear passion and support for baseball in our community!
 - We acknowledge the many merits of adding baseball.
 - We are eager to add more positive opportunities for our students at MCPS.
 - We would like to partner with our community to see this come to fruition and would support it for all the reasons we have discussed.
 - However, there are also some challenges to consider...
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SOME CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER WHEN ADDING HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL...

● COST

Adding baseball requires significant costs for equipment, uniforms, field maintenance, coaches salaries, and travel. This strains already tight budgets.

● POTENTIAL IMPACT TO OTHER MCPS SPORTS

With limited sports budgets, adding baseball may mean cutting funding to other sports or activities. This could negatively impact others.

CHALLENGES...

● A CUT SPORT

If the demand is truly there, baseball teams will be a cut sport (just like Legion). Cutting players who don't make the team can be difficult and controversial.

● SPACE

Baseball requires space for fields. Access to fields and facilities may present challenges. Schools may lack available facilities on or near campus.

CHALLENGES

● EQUITY

Baseball is a male sport. Adding it without considering female sports could raise Title IX compliance issues.

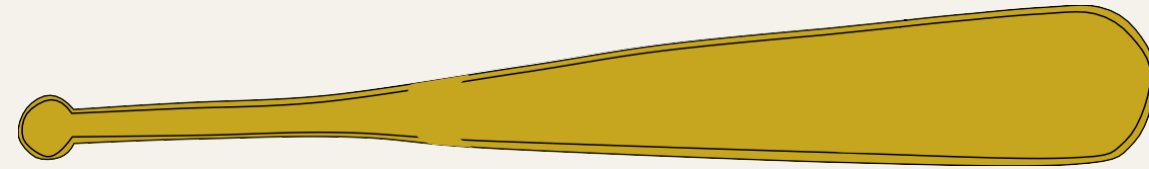
● SUSTAINABILITY?

If the first year is financed through fundraising, what is the outlook for sustaining the financial needs of the program? Is there enough interest in participation?

FACTS

- Montana High School Association approved the addition of baseball and the inaugural season was 2023 with 25 schools representing 21 teams participating. It is currently an “all-class” sport.
 - Two AA high schools out of 16 approved the addition of high school baseball – Butte and Belgrade (both districts only have one high school). Most AA districts cite budget and facilities as the greatest obstacle to approving baseball in their communities.
 - Presently, no other AA high school is planning to add baseball to their list of activities for the 2023-2024 school year.
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COSTS



Looking at MCPS softball expenditures for 2023, the MCPS working group's start up cost analysis, and Butte's actual start up costs it is estimated that it will cost approximately \$50,000 per school to have a varsity and jv baseball team or roughly \$150,000 for MCPS. These figures do not include field rentals or field maintenance (which will cost at least \$4000-\$5000) based on city rentals. It is unclear if the city will provide the equipment and or human resources necessary to keep the fields in playing condition in the early spring months.

MHSA CONSIDERATIONS



TITLE IX



PROPORTIONALITY



EQUITY



CONCURRENT SEASON



INPUT FROM OTHER GROUPS?

Discussed the addition of baseball at MCPS with other stakeholders...


LEGION BASEBALL

MISSOULA EDUCATION
FOUNDATION

HIGH SCHOOL ADMIN

A THOUGHTFUL AND SENSITIVE DECISION

IS VERY IMPORTANT

 Adding baseball is a sensitive proposition amidst current budget challenges.

MCPS is facing an ESSER funding cliff with more than 90 staff members who will be impacted by those grant dollars sunseting. We are aiming to be transparent about these challenges and I have shared my concerns with advocates for the addition of baseball as well as with our Unions and Board. MCPS is also facing a potential budget shortfall and is in a negotiation year with the MEA and the MMCEO.

 Optics should be considered.

Regardless of where the funding for baseball comes from, the optics could be that staff positions were eliminated and baseball was added. MCPS staff and community could potentially feel that we value sports over education. This doesn't mean we can't add baseball, but a sensitive and thoughtful approach is critical. We should carefully consider the impact of any decisions and ensure that our entire staff feels valued and supported. Our steps forward should reflect our core values as a district.

OPTIONS TO CONSIDER

- 1 Decide not to offer high school baseball as an activity at MCPS.
- 2 Delay the start of high school baseball until 2025.
- 3 Approve high school baseball for 2024 and use current, one time only, funds and direct the administration to make it budget neutral beginning in 2025. Budget neutral means we would have to add it by taking away funding from other male high school programs.
- 4 Approve high school baseball for 2024 and require that the entire first year be fundraised (with fundraising milestones) and look to add baseball to the general fund in 2025.



QUESTIONS ?

THANK YOU