

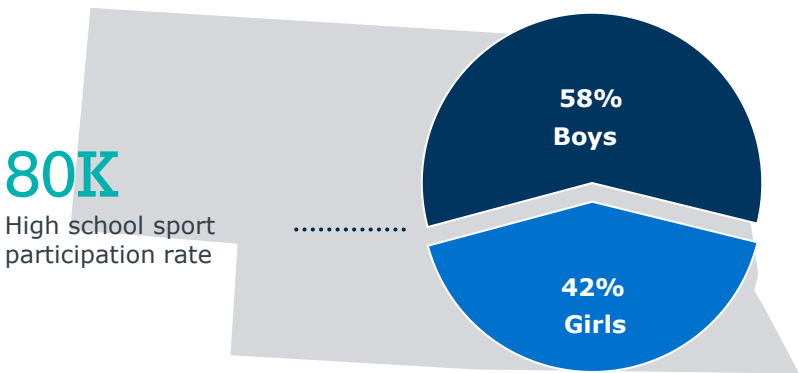
High School Sports Participation State Profile

State Profile: Nebraska

Boys Account for Most High School Sport Participation

As of 2023-2024, the high school sports participation rate was 80,827 in Nebraska. Mirroring the national trend, boys accounted for more than half of participation.

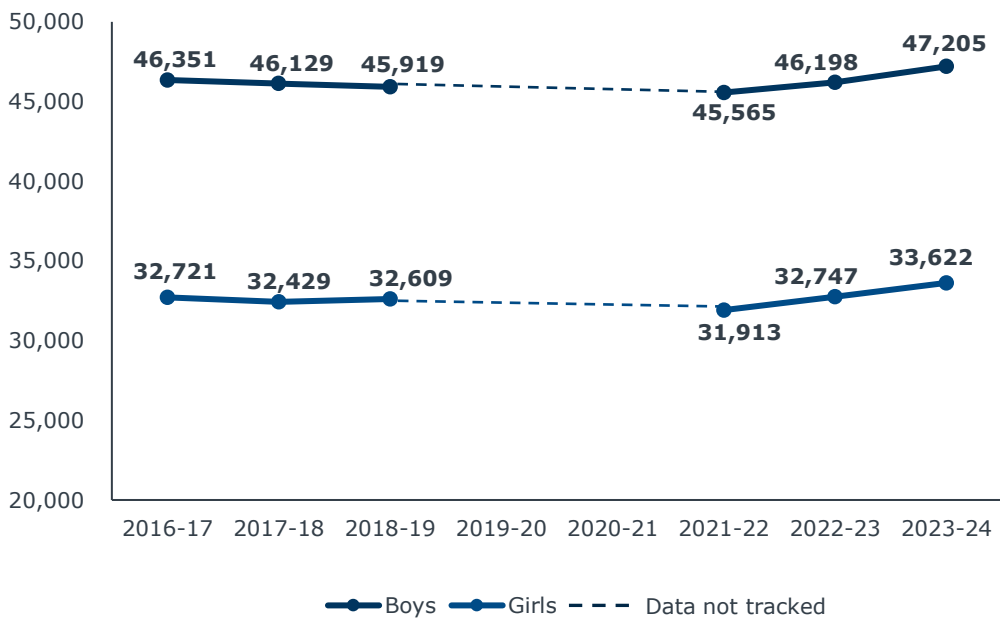
High School Sport Participation, Share of Girls v. Boys, 2023-24
n= 80,827 (total participation)



Gap Between Boys, Girls Shrinking Slightly

Participation in high school sports is growing among boys and girls over the last eight years. The growth rate has been faster among girls, closing the gap slightly with boys.

Change in Participation Rates, 2016-17 to 2023-24



Source: EAB analysis of National Federation of State High School Association data.

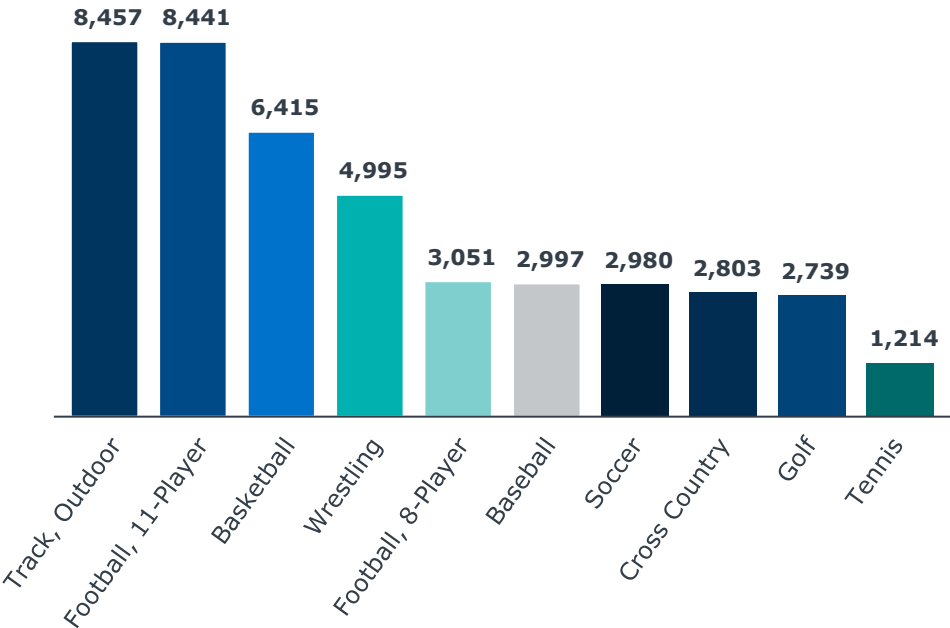
Top Boys' and Girls' Sports

Football Takes Two Spots in Top 10, But Not No. 1

Unlike many other states, outdoor track and field was the biggest boys' sport as of 2023-2024. Football, the largest sport nationally, still accounted for two spots in the top 10.

Top 10 Boys' Sports by Participation Rate, 2022-2023

n = 47,205 (boys' participation rate)

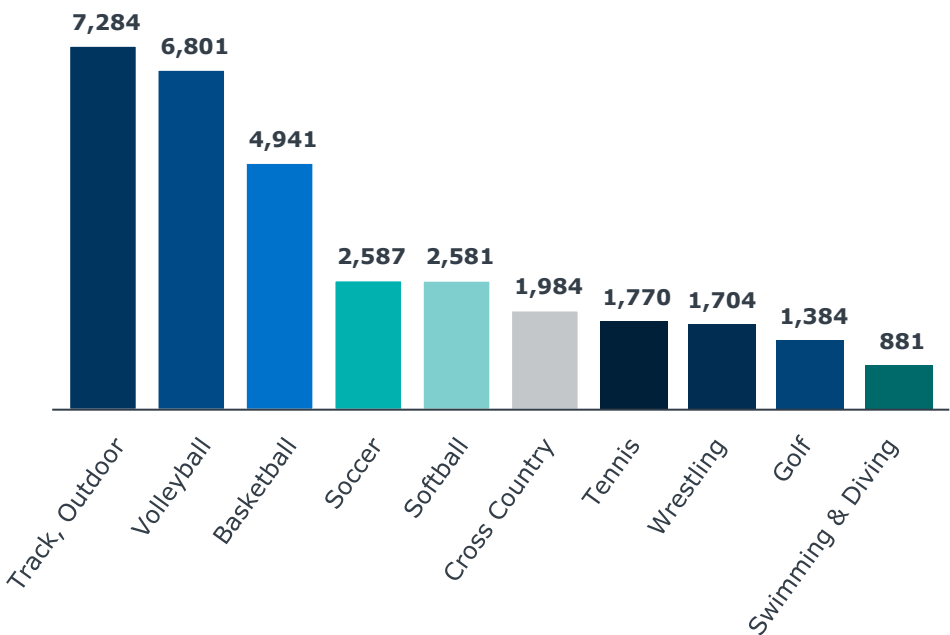


Track Also the Top Sport Among Girls

The top girls' sports in Nebraska largely reflect national trends. The biggest deviations are wrestling and golf, the eighth and ninth largest sports in the state, respectively.

Top 10 Girls' Sports by Participation Rate, 2023-2024

n = 33,622 (girls' participation rate)



Source: EAB analysis of National Federation of State High School Association data.

Short- and Long-Term Changes in Participation

Boys

Areas of Consistent Growth

Five sports grew both in the last year and across the last eight years. This trend may signal emerging and/or sustainable recruitment areas. They included:

- Baseball
- Football, 8-Player
- Golf
- Tennis
- Wrestling

Areas of Steady Decline

In comparison, participation fell in the last year and across the last eight years among three sports. Because the participation rate double counts multi-sport athletes, it is possible some of these declines may be attributed to growing specialization.

- Basketball
- Football, 11-Player
- Swimming & Diving

Sport	2023-2024 Participation	Change, 2022-23 to 2023-24	Change, 2016-17 to 2023-24
Track & Field, Outdoor	8457	1%	-2%
Football, 11-Player	8441	-0.3%	-12%
Basketball	6415	-1%	-10%
Wrestling	4995	10%	14%
Football, 8-player	3051	18%	3%
Baseball	2997	7%	20%
Soccer	2980	2%	0%
Cross Country	2803	2%	-16%
Golf	2739	2%	6%
Tennis	1214	4%	18%
Unified Bowling	850	-0.2%	N/A
Bowling	823	17%	N/A
Swimming & Diving	678	-0.4%	-21%
Football, 6-Player	387	-55%	N/A
Unified Track	375	-5%	N/A

Source: EAB analysis of National Federation of State High School Association data.

Biggest, Fastest Growth, Largest Decline

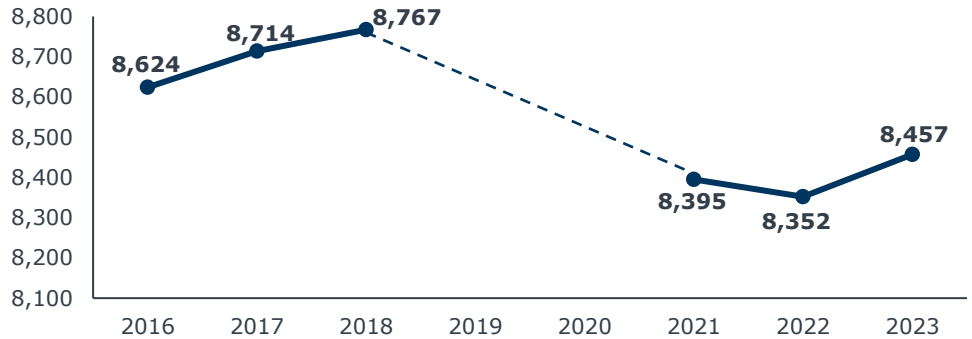
Boys

Biggest Sport

Track Growing Again After Pandemic-Era Decline

Participation in track and field decreased 2% between 2016 and 2023. However, it is showing recent signs of growth, with a small bump (1%) in participation between 2022 and 2023.

Change in Boys' Outdoor Track and Field Participation, 2016-17 to 2023-24

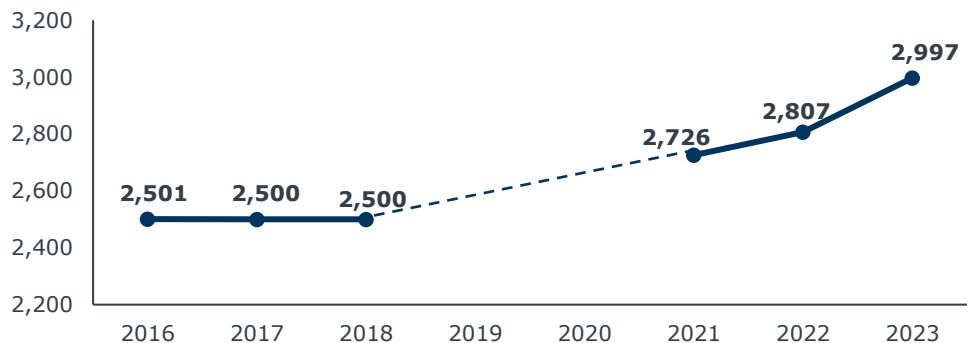


Fastest Growth

Baseball Participation Starting to Grow Quickly

In contrast, participation in baseball increased 20% from 2016 to 2023, with most growth happening after the pandemic.

Change in Boys' Baseball Participation, 2016-17 to 2023-24

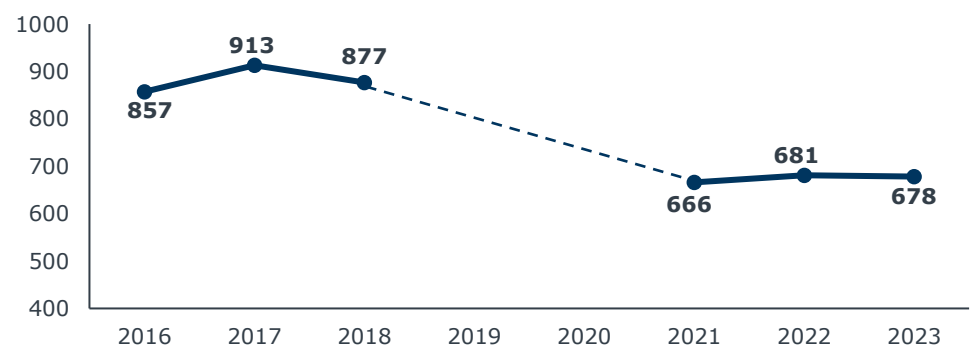


Largest Decline

Swimming & Diving Small and Shrinking

Participation in swimming and diving decreased 21% between 2016 and 2023.

Change in Boys' Swimming & Diving Participation, 2016-17 to 2023-24



Source: EAB analysis of National Federation of State High School Association data.

Short- and Long-Term Changes in Participation

Girls

Areas of Consistent Growth

Four sports grew both in the last year and across the last eight years. This trend may signal emerging and/or sustainable recruitment areas. They included:

- Football, 8-Player
- Football, 11-Player
- Tennis
- Wrestling

Areas of Steady Decline

In comparison, participation fell in the last year and across the last eight years among three sports. Because the participation rate double counts multi-sport athletes, it is possible some of these declines may be attributed to growing specialization.

- Basketball
- Softball
- Swimming & Diving

Sport	2023-2024 Participation	Change, 2022-23 to 2023-24	Change, 2016-17 to 2023-24
Track & Field, Outdoor	7,284	4%	0%
Volleyball	6,801	1%	-2%
Basketball	4,941	-1%	-18%
Soccer	2,587	4%	-4%
Softball	2,581	-0.2%	-6%
Cross Country	1,984	0.4%	-21%
Tennis	1,770	7%	12%
Wrestling	1,704	33%	1,201%
Golf	1,384	-4%	3%
Swimming & Diving	881	-3%	-17%
Unified Bowling	750	-3%	0%
Bowling	546	-3%	N/A
Unified Track	365	6%	N/A
Football, 11-Player	24	4%	33%
Football, 8-player	17	55%	113%
Football, 6-Player	3	-25%	N/A

Source: EAB analysis of National Federation of State High School Association data.

Biggest, Fastest Growth, Largest Decline

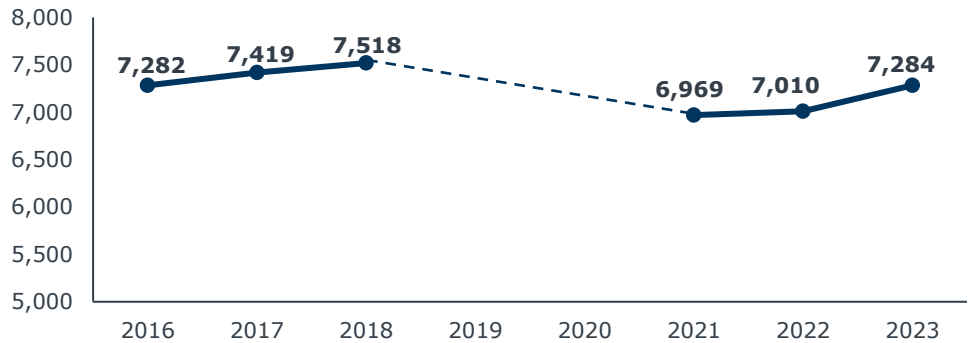
Girls

Biggest Sport

Track Returning to Pre-Pandemic Levels

Participation in track is about the same as it was in 2016, after falling from 2018 to 2021.

Change in Girls' Volleyball Participation, 2016-17 to 2023-24

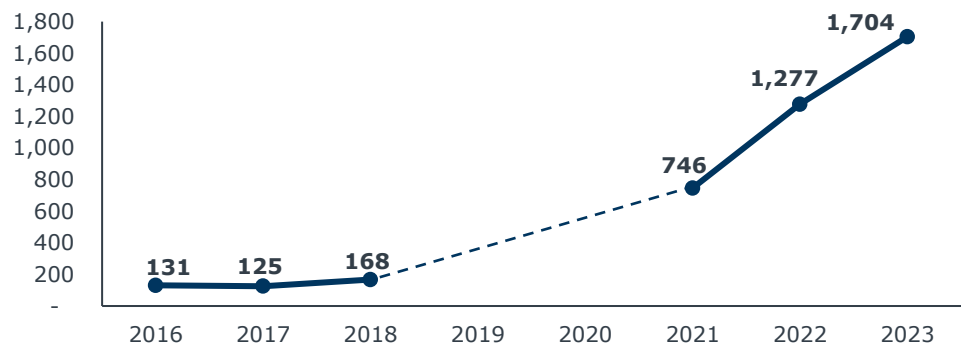


Fastest Growth

Wrestling Small but Growing Fast Among Girls

While wrestling previously wasn't in the top 10 sports, participation increased 1,201% between 2016 and 2023 and is now eighth biggest.

Change in Girls' Wrestling Participation, 2016-17 to 2023-24

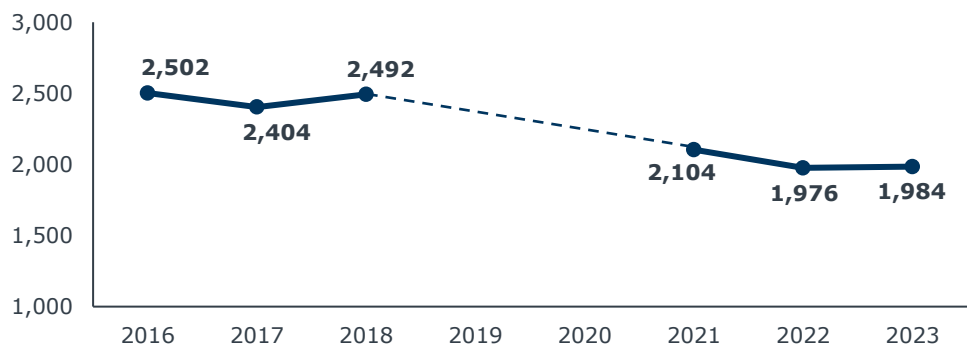


Largest Decline

Steady Decline for Girls' Cross Country

Participation in cross country fell 21% from 2016 to 2023. While the decline has slowed, it could fall out of the top 10 sports if the trend continues.

Change in Girls' Cross Country Participation, 2016-17 to 2023-24



Source: EAB analysis of National Federation of State High School Association data.

Biggest, Fastest Growth, Largest Decline

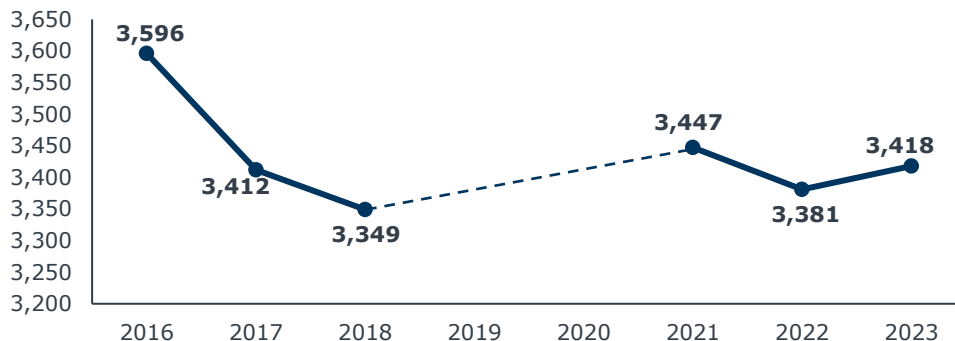
Girls

Biggest Sport

Volleyball Shrinking Slightly

Participation in volleyball is down 5% since 2016, but it has shown some signs of growth since the pandemic.

Change in Girls' Volleyball Participation, 2016-17 to 2023-24

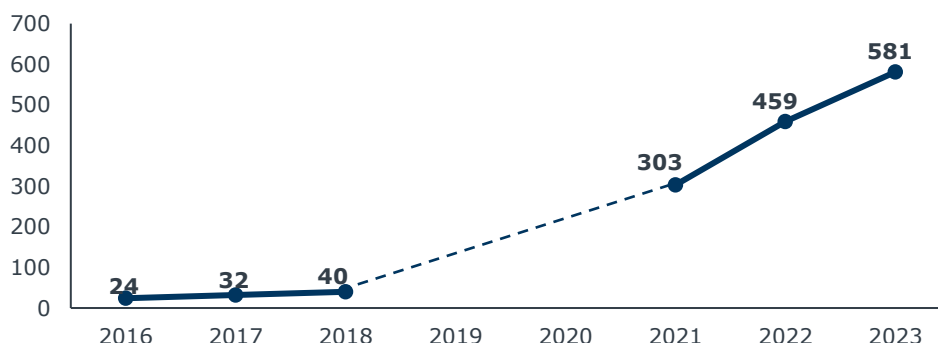


Fastest Growth

Wrestling Small but Growing Fast Among Girls

Participation in wrestling has increased every year since 2016 for 2,321% total growth. Growth was particularly fast starting in 2021.

Change in Girls' Wrestling Participation, 2016-17 to 2023-24

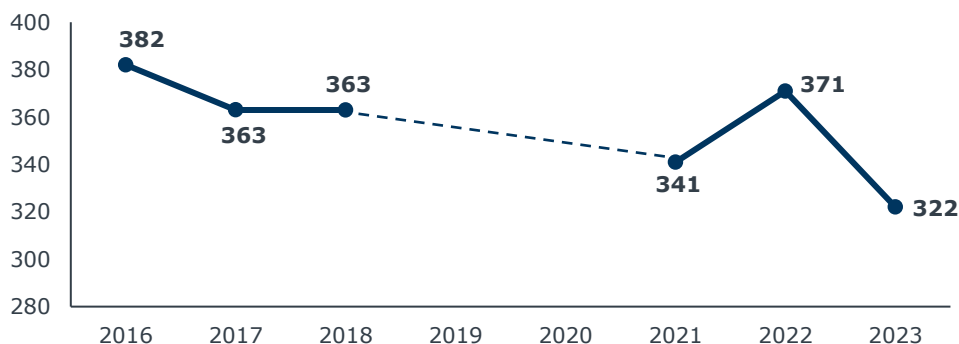


Largest Decline

Already Small, Swimming Participation Drops

Participation in swimming is down 16% since 2016 and could fall out of the top 10 sports if trends continue.

Change in Girls' Swimming & Diving Participation, 2016-17 to 2023-24



Source: EAB analysis of National Federation of State High School Association data.

Appendix: About the Data

Data in this report come from the National Federation of State High School Association's "[High School Athletics Participation Survey](#)."

Limitations of the Data

- The numbers cited in this report reflect the "participation rate." An individual who participated in two sports is counted twice, three sports – three times and so on.
- Participation rates are not adjusted for population changes.
- Most states exclude data from independent schools, unless they are part of the state league, which varies by state and sport.
- Data do not include club sport participation.
- Some states did not report data for all years included in the report. Meanwhile, others appear to have reported duplicate data in a few cases. These cases are called out in the report when applicable.

Definitions

"Adapted" refers to sports that are modified (e.g., rules, equipment) for special-needs students.

"Unified" refers to sports that are open to special-needs students but aren't adapted to meet their needs.

Appendix: National High School Sports Participation

2023-2024 Top 10 Sports in USA by Participation

Top Boys' Sports

1. Football – 11-Player	1,031,508
2. Track and Field – Outdoor	625,333
3. Basketball	536,668
4. Baseball	471,701
5. Soccer	467,483
6. Wrestling	291,874
7. Cross Country	239,874
8. Tennis	157,835
9. Golf	155,174
10. Swimming and Diving	116,799
Total Boys' Participation	4,638,785

Top Girls' Sports

1. Track and Field – Outdoor	506,015
2. Volleyball	479,125
3. Soccer	383,895
4. Basketball	367,284
5. Softball – Fast Pitch	345,451
6. Tennis	195,766
7. Cross Country	192,969
8. Competitive Spirit	181,023
9. Swimming and Diving	138,174
10. Lacrosse	101,204
Total Girls' Participation	3,423,517

Source: EAB analysis of National Federation of State High School Association data.