

The Case For Athletic Administrator Certification in NYS

The State Education Department's Commissioner's Regulations 135, includes a mandate that states,

“...each school district operating a high school shall employ a director of physical education who shall have certification in physical education and administrative and supervisory service. Such director shall provide leadership and supervision for class instruction, intramural activities and **interschool athletic competition** in the total physical education program...”

Dating back to the years prior to 1975, these regulations mandating a Director of Physical Education in each school contained a provision for those that were designated as an athletic director. Those Directors of Physical Education were required to attain an “**Athletic Director Certification**”, a six hour course, which upon completion, provided the recipient with the appropriate certification.

The interscholastic athletic environment has changed dramatically since the mid-seventies. Ideally and ideologically. Those were the days when physical education teachers would take courses and track themselves in administration, many moving into roles as principals or superintendents using their experiences in coaching and team building to provide leadership in public education.

Those days are gone, and many school districts, especially small to mid-size districts, find it extremely difficult to find candidates with the appropriate credentials, or can not financially justify a full time administrator. Therefore many have, over the years, split those positions and created a separate athletic director or athletic administrator positions. A recent survey conducted revealed that over 15% of schools use a director of athletics that is either not certified or lacks a physical education background.

Currently, there is no requirement or prerequisite in New York State for a “Director of Athletics”, “Athletic Director” or “Athletic Administrator.” Additionally, there is no guideline presented to a school district that seeks to employ those that will ultimately oversee these education-based interschool athletic programs. Ironically, the standards of practice currently in place permit a director of athletics holding no professional certifications, the responsibility to supervise coaches and staff that are required to hold specific certifications and licenses under Commissioner's Regulations 135.

The need for certified individuals to administer athletic programs in NYS is evident on many levels.

It has become increasingly difficult to recruit certified, competent people to fill the position of Athletic Administrator for a school district. The potential pitfalls come with those applicants having little or no knowledge regarding the operation of an Athletic Department, and even less knowledge of the processes and regulations that govern their department. While the NYSPHSAA does provide guidance in specific areas of rules and regulations, it does not prepare the individual for the actual execution of the position on a daily basis.

Additionally, the NY State Administrators' certification program does little to prepare the individual

specifically for their role in administering an athletic program. It has been stated that experienced athletic administrators have an advantage when engaged in litigious situations requiring expert testimony. Such cases usually center on determining liability and safety. A degree of negligence can be a result for those not trained properly in the administration of these programs.

While that experience is considered acceptable in some cases, an administrator that has been certified as a result of receiving valuable professional development and training specific to athletic administration and the law can only enhance that program and protect the school district and administrator. Therefore, that moderate advantage becomes a definitive advantage when legal issues arise.

Relevant coursework, specifically designed for athletics has been developed by the NIAAA (National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association) and has been in place for almost 10 years. There are over 35 courses developed (4 hours each) that are specific to a variety of areas in athletic administration. They are nationally recognized and accredited, and are used by some major universities, such as Ohio University and University of Maine in their athletic administration programs. This program contains three levels of achievement (described briefly below):

1. **RAA**—a Registered Athletic Administrator is one that has a Bachelor Degree and completed two basic courses of instruction (LTC's 501 & 502), plus completion of a personal data form and obtaining the signature of a sponsor
2. **CAA**—a Certified Athletic Administrator is one that has completed a Bachelor's Degree, plus four mandatory courses (LTC's 501, 502, 504, 506) in the basics of athletic administration, as well as the legal aspects. The candidate must also have an approved personal data form, a signature of a sponsor, and successfully pass a basic competency test (CAA Exam) for Athletic Administration.
3. **CMAA**—a Certified Master Athletic Administrator has completed the coursework and testing for the CAA and completed an addition six courses in two different disciplines. Additionally, they must complete a special project that is approved by a national committee versed in the subject of the project.

At the last NYSAAA Representative Board meeting in October, a resolution was proposed, discussed and passed which **supports a minimum certification** for athletic administrators in New York State, and strongly urges the NYSPHSAA to promote a minimum requirement be established throughout all sections for this important position in our schools.

We recommend that current athletic administrators with experience, certified teachers and administrators be exempted from this requirement, and that there should be a generous timeline established for implementation for those not in this category.

The cost to complete certification (CAA) over a three-year period is less than \$500.00 and negotiations are underway with NYS BOCES to have this program be a part of consortiums throughout the State, reducing the cost further.

Currently, of the 785 secondary schools in NYS, 30 individuals hold RAA status, 185 are CAAs and 50 are CMAAs. Our survey also revealed that while they may not have achieved one of these designations, an additional 62 administrators have taken at least one course. These numbers are promising as it serves to demonstrate to Superintendents and Boards of Education that this program does have value and can be used as evidence that Athletic Administrators are lifetime learners and use this professional development to add to their toolkit for success.

The number of courses offered has multiplied over the last seven years, and the opportunity to take courses has become easier each year, with the offering of webinars, local course offerings, state conferences and summer institutes. Many are able to complete each of the required courses in the convenience of their home over two evenings. This will continue to grow exponentially as the need increases for individuals needing certification and appropriate professional development.

It is no secret that the role of an athletic administrator in every school district across the country has become more complex. **The need for a minimum certification requirement for athletic administrators has never been greater** and by supporting this resolution, it is guaranteed that school districts will employ the best person available with the best education specific to the task.

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