



THE NEXT GENERATION OF OFFICIALS

BUILDING & SUSTAINING ENGAGEMENT

BUTCH COPE
SENIOR ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER
KENTUCKY HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

THE NEXT GENERATION OF OFFICIALS BUILDING & SUSTAINING ENGAGEMENT

- PERSPECTIVE
- INTEREST
- LEARNING
- ENVIRONMENT
- INVOLVEMENT
- STUDENT ADVISORY GROUP INVOLVEMENT
- JUNIOR OFFICIALS PROGRAM/NEW OFFICIALS



THE NEXT GENERATION OF OFFICIALS BUILDING & SUSTAINING ENGAGEMENT

- PERSPECTIVE
 - VARIES AMONG STATES / LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS-STATE ASSOCIATIONS
 - INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS
 - AGING OUT
 - POSITIVE – NOT REPLACING
 - GET THEM IN AND KEEPING THEM
 - DUTY TO HELP TRAIN



THE NEXT GENERATION OF OFFICIALS BUILDING & SUSTAINING ENGAGEMENT

- INTEREST
 - PARENT/FRIEND GET THEM STARTED
 - GIVING BACK TO THE GAME
 - BE ABLE TO RESPOND QUICKLY/REGISTRATION DEADLINES
 - HELP WITH COST OF EQUIPMENT
 - NEXT STEPS



THE NEXT GENERATION OF OFFICIALS BUILDING & SUSTAINING ENGAGEMENT

- **LEARNING**
 - **MAKE SURE PROVIDING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES THE WAY THEY LEARN**
 - **RULE BOOKS WRITTEN/TESTS COMPILED FOR LEARNING EASE**
 - **VIDEOS - REFREPS**
 - **ON COURT**
 - **CAMPS & IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK**
 - **CASE SITUATIONS / NFHS WEEKLY INTERPS**



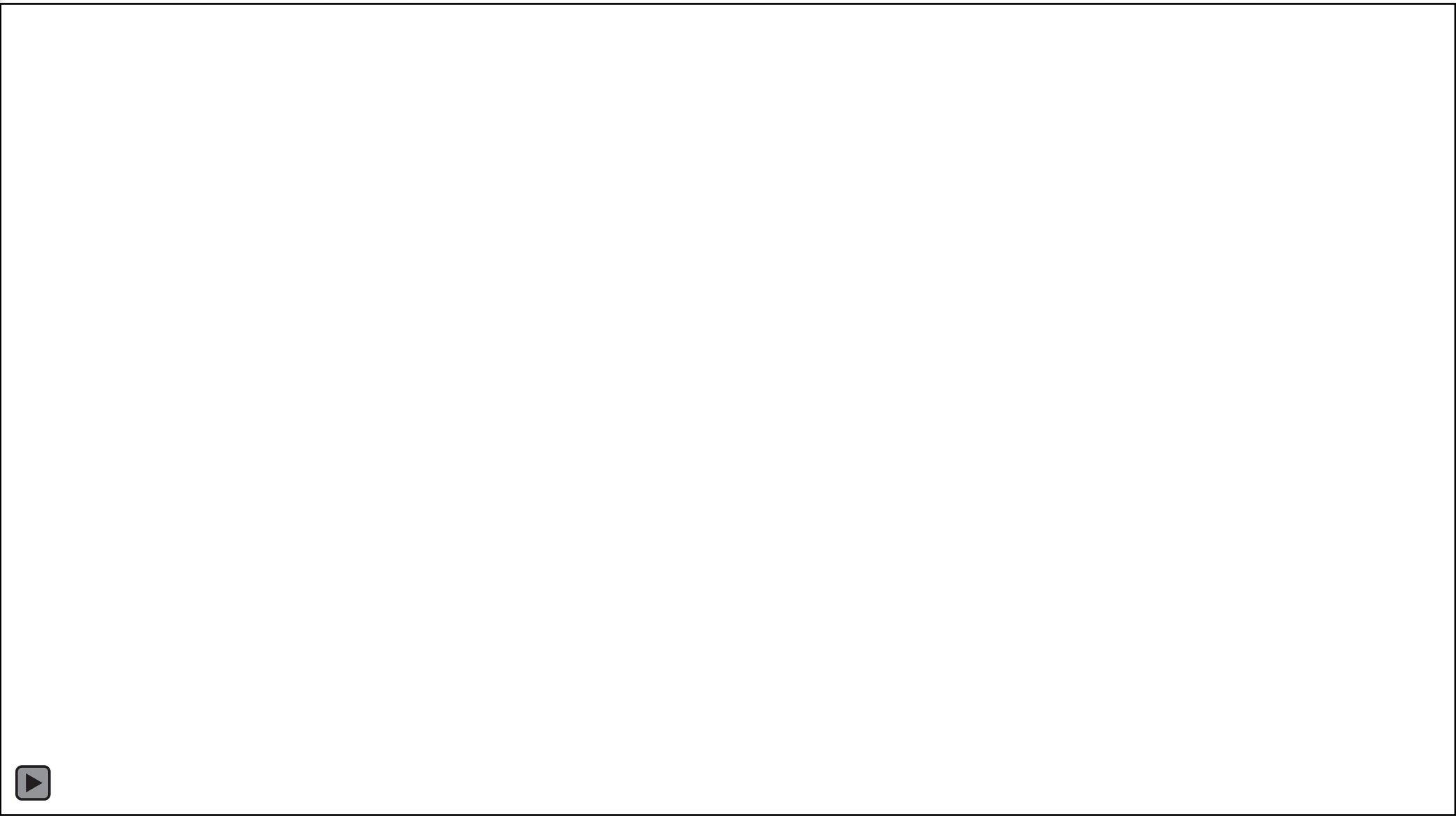
THE NEXT GENERATION OF OFFICIALS BUILDING & SUSTAINING ENGAGEMENT

- ENVIRONMENT
 - MENTORING JUNIOR & NEW OFFICIALS
 - SCHEDULING
 - COMMUNICATING WITH COACHES/PLAYERS



THE NEXT GENERATION OF OFFICIALS BUILDING & SUSTAINING ENGAGEMENT





THE NEXT GENERATION OF OFFICIALS BUILDING & SUSTAINING ENGAGEMENT

- INVOLVEMENT
 - MENTORS
 - ADVANCEMENT



THE NEXT GENERATION OF OFFICIALS BUILDING & SUSTAINING ENGAGEMENT

- JUNIOR OFFICIALS PROGRAM/NEW OFFICIALS
- JULY 2022 – STAFF SHARED WITH BOARD DESIRE TO INSTITUTE JUNIOR OFFICIALS' PROGRAM. FALL REGIONAL MEETINGS WITH SCHOOLS ANNOUNCED THE CONCEPT TO HELP WITH OFFICIATING SHORTAGES.
- LICENSE 14–17-YEAR-OLDS THAT ARE PERMITTED TO OFFICIATE CONTESTS BELOW THE VARSITY LEVEL WITH MENTOR OFFICIALS. ALL REQUIREMENTS LESS BACKGROUND CHECK; REDUCED ADMINISTRATIVE FEE (\$10).
- PART 1 TEST REQUIRED EACH YEAR.



THE NEXT GENERATION OF OFFICIALS BUILDING & SUSTAINING ENGAGEMENT

- YEAR ONE JUNIOR OFFICIALS ONLY PERMITTED TO DO MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL CONTESTS WITH MENTOR OFFICIAL.
- 156 JUNIOR OFFICIALS THE FIRST YEAR. BASKETBALL, WRESTLING, BASEBALL WERE TOPS.
- AFTER YEAR ONE AT REQUEST OF LOCAL ASSIGNERS TO RAISE TO (F/JV) THAT WE HAD JUNIOR OFFICIALS THAT WERE “READY”
- ASSIGNER AND MENTORS ARE KEY WITH ENSURING WELCOMING AND TRAINING, EVALUATING, ETC.



THE NEXT GENERATION OF OFFICIALS BUILDING & SUSTAINING ENGAGEMENT

- JUNIOR OFFICIALS DO NOT WORK THEIR OWN SCHOOL CONTEST AT HS LEVEL.
- REGULAR LOCAL MEETING ATTENDANCE AND TRAININGS REQUIRED SAME AS OTHER OFFICIALS.
- JUNIOR OFFICIALS ARE PAID THE SAME RATE AS STANDARD OFFICIALS.
- DISCUSSION OF “IDENTIFIER” SO THAT COACHES, FANS, PARENTS WOULD KNOW AND PERHAPS “TAKE IT EASIER”. DID NOT GO THAT ROUTE AS WE DIDN’T WANT TO SIGNAL THEM OUT.



THE NEXT GENERATION OF OFFICIALS BUILDING & SUSTAINING ENGAGEMENT

- SOCIAL MEDIA AND STATE CHAMPIONSHIP RECOGNITION FOR JUNIOR OFFICIALS.
- ASSISTANCE WITH GEAR DONE WITH SUPPORT OF LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS.
- REGIONAL MEETINGS AND COACHES' MEETINGS ENCOURAGE COACHES TO IDENTIFY STUDENTS INTERESTED IN BECOMING AN OFFICIAL.



THE NEXT GENERATION OF OFFICIALS BUILDING & SUSTAINING ENGAGEMENT

- USE REFREPS COURSES FOR THE JUNIOR OFFICIALS – THIS YEAR.
- ONCE OFFICIAL TURNS 18, LICENSE AS STANDARD OFFICIAL WITH YEARS OF SERVICE CREDIT.
- CHALLENGES CONTINUE TO BE LACK OF ENTHUSIASM BY ADMINISTRATORS/COACHES TO ASSIST WITH THE SHORTAGE PROBLEM; CONTEST AVAILABILITY – ASSIGNER ISSUE; COSTS FOR SOME SPORTS.



TAKE AWAYS

- PERSPECTIVE
- INTEREST
- LEARNING
- ENVIRONMENT
- SUCCESS





The Next Generation of Officials:

Building and Sustaining Engagement



PIAA JUNIOR OFFICIALS PROGRAM

Goal: to assist in the recruitment of officials

How it started-How it's going

- PIAA made formal announcement of program on social media and through press release on website
- PIAA member schools provided information directly through yearly meetings with schools
- All prospective junior official applications forwarded to one, single person at PIAA
- Direct contact made with applicant via email and telephone to offer assistance
- Periodic emails sent to all junior officials offering assistance
- Notice provided to chapter secretary regarding junior official joining their chapter



PIAA JUNIOR OFFICIALS PROGRAM

Goal: to assist in the recruitment of officials

How it started-How it's going

- Affected chapter secretary must notify mentorship coordinator of new junior official to assign mentor
- Mentor shall reach out directly to junior official
- Assignors must reach out directly to junior official to provide information on the assigning process
- End of season interview by mentorship coordinator could glean information valuable to the program
- Chapter Presidents are encouraged to correspond with PIAA officials department regarding the junior official program



PIAA JUNIOR OFFICIALS PROGRAM

Goal: to assist in the recruitment of officials

Key Points for Chapters:

- 16 & 17 year olds can work 9th grade and below
- Mentorship must be strong and active
- Assignors must be aware of who junior officials are
- Social media must be used to publicize junior officials
- Welcome and engage with junior officials at chapter meetings
- Must be given opportunities to work immediately
- Standard pay is required for junior officials
- Separate meetings for juniors should be considered by chapters
- Create an Officials Closet for junior officials



PIAA JUNIOR OFFICIALS PROGRAM

Goal: to assist in the recruitment of officials

Key Points for Current Officials:

- Actively seek out prospective officials
- Engage junior officials in conversations on officiating
- Become a mentor and work contests with junior officials.
- Provide face to face feedback before, during and after working with them
- Check in periodically with junior official during the season and during post season
- Provide video resources to junior officials for them to view at their pace



PIAA JUNIOR OFFICIALS PROGRAM

Goal: to assist in the recruitment of officials

Key Points for Schools:

- Game management must be alert and active when junior official is working
- Must actively reach out to prospective officials (students within the school)
- Create/sponsor a club or activity within the school regarding officiating. Use teacher/official/coach as advisor
- Provide notoriety to students engaged in the program, congratulate the students in your school
- Pay standard game fees to junior officials



PIAA JUNIOR OFFICIALS PROGRAM

Goal: to assist in the recruitment of officials

Coaches' Responsibilities:

- Encourage students/players to become officials
- Treat all officials with respect
 - Your actions could affect players on both teams
- Leave the adversarial position at the door
- Provide encouraging feedback to junior official working your contest and also provide it to the chapter leadership



PIAA JUNIOR OFFICIALS PROGRAM

Goal: to assist in the recruitment of officials

Why Become an Official:

- Hang out with friends
- Stay fit
- Opportunities for all sports
- Make extra money
- Learn life skills
- Stay connected to sports by learning rules, assists those that may want to coach



PIAA JUNIOR OFFICIALS PROGRAM

Goal: to assist in the recruitment of officials

Roadblocks to the Program:

- Lack of interest by students and administrators
- Continued poor treatment of all officials
- Conflicts with those playing a sport
- Lack of contests to work
- Alienation by chapter members
- Startup costs for junior officials



PIAA JUNIOR OFFICIALS PROGRAM

Goal: to assist in the recruitment of officials

Additional information :

- Registration fees are waived by PIAA for all students (high school and college)
- Can officiate at current school district thereby eliminating transportation concerns
- Conflict of interest should not be an issue at lower level
- Junior officials can graduate to active, registered PIAA official at age 18 or when they graduate
- Chapters should consider conducting an exit interview for those leaving officiating
- PIAA licensed provider of equipment offers uniforms at reduced costs
- PIAA supports the high schools who have officiating classes by donating previous years rules books, which generates interest now and in the future



PIAA Efforts to Recognize Officials

Touch Base with Veteran Officials

5 Year Anniversary Email

On behalf of the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association, congratulations on reaching your five-year anniversary as a registered PIAA official.

This milestone represents your continued commitment to education-based athletics and your dedication to upholding the integrity of interscholastic competition. Over the past five years, you have contributed your time, effort, and expertise to ensure that student-athletes across Pennsylvania are provided with a fair, safe, and sportsmanlike environment in which to compete.

Officiating is both a challenging and essential role, and your willingness to serve speaks volumes about your character and professionalism. The PIAA deeply appreciates your contributions and your role in promoting the values of respect, responsibility, and sportsmanship.

Thank you for your service to our schools and student-athletes. We look forward to your continued involvement and wish you ongoing success in the years ahead.

Sincerely,

Patrick Gebhart

PIAA



PIAA Efforts to Recognize Officials

Show that Officials are Appreciated

Officials Appreciation Week

- Provide personal Thank You email to all registered officials for that sport season
- Provide athletic directors with ideas to assist them in recognizing officials during appreciation weeks
- Request schools tag PIAA with X posts during Appreciation Weeks – PIAA re-posts for greater coverage
- At end of Appreciation Week PIAA creates a compilation of all pictures for that week -

<https://x.com/PIAASports/status/2044118431461507151/photo/1>



PIAA Efforts to Recognize Officials

Show that Officials are Appreciated

- Officials with 30 or more years
 - Presented with a certificate
 - Presented with a gold watch
 - Lifetime warranty
 - Culminating banquet honoring those officials
 - Name etched on plaque at PIAA HQ
- Officials with 50 or more years
 - Presented with a gold pin
 - Certificate
 - Name etched on plaque at PIAA HQ



PIAA OFFICIALS PROGRAM

How is Success Measured?

Current Statistics

- Junior Official Applicants: 2,186
- Current Junior Officials: 212
- Current numbers for all PIAA officials (May 2026): 15,253
- Numbers when first charted (September 2022): 13,455



Questions

