

**NEW YORK STATE PUBLIC  
HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION**



*Education Through Interscholastic Athletics*

**OP-ED COLUMN**

For Immediate Release  
March 21, 2018

**Contact Information:**

Chris Watson, Dir. of Communications  
Phone: 518-690-0771 Ext. 19  
[cwatson@nysphsaa.org](mailto:cwatson@nysphsaa.org)

Dear media members covering NYSPHSAA events:

We're enclosing an op-ed piece that our state association hopes you will consider publishing. It addresses a common misunderstanding that potentially affects dozens, if not hundreds, of families in your community.

Parents are spending thousands of dollars a year for their children to play club sports. Club fees, equipment purchases, summer camps, private coaching and the cost of travel to out-of-state tournaments has turned youth sports into a \$15 billion-per-year industry. For many families, this investment is based on the false hope that their children will eventually be awarded a sports scholarship.

The facts, however, suggest otherwise. Only 1 child in 54 actually gets a sports scholarship and very few of those cover the full cost of tuition, let alone room and board. An overwhelming majority of teenagers would be better served by playing high school sports and learning the life lessons they teach. It's interesting to note that nearly four times more money is awarded every year for academic achievement than for sports scholarships.

Please read the attached op-ed submission carefully and feel free to contact me with any questions or suggestions. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Robert Zayas  
Executive Director, New York State Public High School Athletic Association

**THE TRUTH ABOUT SPORTS SCHOLARSHIPS**

By Bob Gardner, Executive Director of the National Federation of State High School Associations and Robert Zayas, Executive Director of the New York State Public High School Athletic Association.

Many parents are trying to live the dream through their sons and daughters – the dream of landing a college athletic scholarship by specializing in a sport year-round. Unfortunately, most of these dreams are never realized.

The odds of a sports scholarship paying for even a portion of a student’s college education are miniscule.

The College Board, a not-for-profit organization comprised of 6,000 of the world’s leading educational institutions, reports that a moderate cost for college students who attend a public university in their state of residence is \$25,290 per year. The annual cost at a private college averages \$50,900.

Meanwhile, the most recent data from the NCAA reveals that the average Division I athletic scholarship is worth only \$10,400. More significantly, the same study shows that fewer than two percent of all high school athletes (1 in 54) ever wear the uniform of an NCAA Division I school.

Even if the dream is realized, parents likely will spend more money for club sports than they ever regain through college athletic scholarships. Thanks to the costs of club fees, equipment, summer camps, playing in out-of-state tournaments and private coaching, youth sports has become a \$15 billion-per-year industry.

There is an option, and it’s a financially viable one: Encourage your sons and daughters to play sports at their high school.

In education-based high school sports, student-athletes are taught, as the term implies, that grades come first. The real-life lessons that students experientially learn offer insights into leadership, overcoming adversity and mutual respect that cannot be learned anywhere else. Unlike club sports, coaches in an education-based school setting are held accountable by the guiding principles and goals of their school district. And the cost of participating in high school sports is minimal in most cases.

While there is a belief that the only way to get noticed by college coaches is to play on non-school travel teams year-round, many Division I football and basketball coaches recently have stated that they are committed to recruiting students who have played multiple sports within the high school setting.

In addition, by focusing on academics while playing sports within the school setting, students can earn scholarships for academics and other talents—skill sets oftentimes nurtured while participating in high school activities. These scholarships are more accessible and worth more money than athletic scholarships. While \$3 billion per year is available for athletic scholarships, more than \$11 billion is awarded for academic scholarships and other financial assistance.

Without a doubt, your sons and daughters will have more fun, make more friends and be better prepared for life beyond sport by participating in multiple sports and activities offered by the high school in your community.

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About NYSPHSAA (Twitter: @NYSPHSAA | Facebook: NYSPHSAA | YouTube: NYSPHSAASports):

The New York State Public High School Athletic Association Inc. is a non-profit, voluntary, educational service organization composed of public, parochial, and private schools dedicated to providing equitable and safe competition for the students of its member schools. The organization conducts 32 championship events and governs the rules and regulations of high school athletics in New York State. Membership is open to secondary schools providing interschool athletic activities for boys and girls in grades 7-12.