

# COMPETITIVE BALANCE: PUBLIC & PRIVATE SCHOOL FOOTBALL IN TENNESSEE

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Competition is a defining characteristic of all sports. Competitors, whether individuals or groups, engage in contests of skill or ability to determine who has the better score, the better time, or the better performance.

For the competition to be considered fair, the competitors must share a similar set of advantages and disadvantages, sometimes referred to as a “level playing field” or as “competitive balance.”

In Tennessee, the responsibility of maintaining competitive balance, especially between public and private schools, falls on the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association (TSSAA). The TSSAA is a nonprofit organization that governs sports and athletic competitions among participating high schools.

This publication examines the two main competitive balance factors in high school football—school enrollment and financial aid.



# HOW DOES IT WORK?

Competitive balance in high school football largely rests on two factors:

- 1) the size of a school's enrollment; and
- 2) whether need-based financial aid is provided to athletes or if a Financial Assistance Program is offered by the high school.

Student enrollment affects competitive balance because larger schools have a more extensive pool of athletes to choose from when making team selections.

Student financial aid affects competitive balance because it can be used as a recruiting tool to attract students with athletic abilities who may be unable to afford private school tuition otherwise.



## **Financial Assistance Program:**

Any program through which a school provides financial assistance to tuition-paying student-athletes and/or to any member of the student-athlete's immediate family. Employment by a member school of a tuition-paying student-athlete or the student-athlete's parent(s), guardian(s), or immediate family member(s) (other than as a full-time certified teacher or classified employee) shall be regarded as a Financial Assistance Program.

*-TSSAA Definition*

TSSAA will reevaluate every member school's enrollment after two years—the next reevaluation period will be Fall 2018.

Schools with a 20 percent increase or decrease in enrollment from Fall 2016 will be moved to the appropriate class for the 2019-21 school years (provided the 20 percent change moves the enrollment numbers into another class).

TSSAA participating schools fall into one of two divisions for high school football: Division I and Division II.

Both divisions are broken up into different classes, which are based on student enrollment. The tables below show the different divisions and classes for the upcoming classification cycle which extends from Fall 2017 through Spring 2021:

**Division I: Contains public schools and private schools that do not offer need-based financial aid**

CLASS	# OF SCHOOLS	STUDENT ENROLLMENT
1A	53	0-375
2A	47	376-556
3A	48	557-821
4A	47	822-1102
5A	54	1103-1508
6A	49	1509+
<b>298 Total Schools</b>		

**Division II: Private schools that have a Financial Assistance Program or provide need-based financial aid**

CLASS	# OF SCHOOLS	STUDENT ENROLLMENT
A	17	0-265
AA	19	266-530
AAA	11	531+
<b>47 Total Schools</b>		

A private school that offers financial aid may compete in Division I but will be subject to a multiplier formula. The multiplier formula inflates the private school's enrollment so that its football team is more likely to be placed in a higher class in Division I.

The effect of the multiplier is that such private schools will compete against Division I schools with larger student enrollment. The multiplier is designed to promote competitive balance. **TSSAA uses a multiplier of 1.8.**

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