

Certification Requirements in New York State

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For decades, New York State has been a leader in coaching certification requirements across this country. In fact, we still remain the toughest state when it comes to meeting those requirements. That was fine in the mid-seventies, when most coaches came from the ranks of physical education and teaching staffs, or when we didn't have as many sports programs or levels operating, as we do today, almost forty years later. Today, at least a third of our coaches or more come from the general public, with no teaching degree, much less a physical education degree. Yet, we still have regulations that require our coaches to have more class hours than any other state in the country. Other states have adopted a quality certification program developed by the National Federation of State High School Associations, called the NFHS Coaching Certification Program. It has maintained the quality and integrity of what we desire of our coaches, within a reasonable time frame, as well as providing a much more accessible delivery system for all.

New York's certification requirements for coaches was fine for the time period in which it was developed (mid-seventies), but it needs to be streamlined and updated to fit the situation in today's New York schools where it has become increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to find qualified and certified personnel to fill all the coaching positions of our schools. We need to have a coaching certification program that trains our coaches with the desired outcomes for an education-based interscholastic athletic program, and at the same time, makes it easier for schools to find, train and certify them in a reasonable time frame. In my opinion, the NFHS Coaching Certification Program does just that. Many of their courses are offered through on-line webinars, where potential coaches can take courses in the convenience of their home and schedule. The bottom line is that we no longer need 90-120 course clock hours in addition to all of the other necessary requirements that coaches must have in order to coach in New York State.

In complete contrast to what I have stated above, New York State has NO REQUIREMENT whatsoever for anyone to be an athletic administrator or athletic director (whichever term is appropriate) in our schools. It seems incredible in a state that has such high standards for its coaches, that anyone (literally) can come into our schools 'off the streets', and be appointed the athletic director to oversee the operation of those same programs for which our coaches are required to have an excessive amount of course clock hours. It is true that New York has a requirement for a Physical Education Director, which requires a Physical Education degree plus administrative certification, but many schools get around the regulation in different ways, and then hire an "athletic director" with no certification in some cases, to run the athletic program.

In my opinion, New York State should adopt the nationally recognized and accredited certification program developed by the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators' Association as a minimum requirement to be an athletic administrator or athletic director in this state. This program currently has three levels of certification and each has a set of requirements and standards that is accessible and achievable in a reasonable amount of time through its Leadership Training Institute, which offers over 35 four-clock hour classes in every phase of athletic administration. All these courses are offered at national and state conferences, workshops and through on-line webinars. To get appointed, every athletic administrator should be required to

attain at least an RAA (Registered Athletic Administrator) certification, which currently requires the completion of two fundamental Leadership Training Institute courses (8 hours) in addition to a Bachelor's Degree, a sponsor, and the complete reading of the NIAAA Code of Ethics for Athletic Administrators. Within a time period of two to three years of appointment, that same athletic administrator should achieve the level of "Certified Athletic Administrator", which currently requires that person to take an additional two required LTI courses (8 hours), and successfully complete the CAA Examination (a national competency-based exam, administered by the NIAAA and the NYSAAA).

If we want quality education-based interscholastic athletic programs in New York State, we need to have qualified and certified leadership to administer those important programs for our youth. I urge officials in the state education department to seriously consider adopting these standards for the administration of interscholastic athletic programs in New York State. The standards and courses have already been developed and the delivery system is already in place and easily accessible for all. To maintain the quality and integrity of these highly visible programs, we need leaders that have the right philosophy and the necessary skills to administer the programs that affect the development of so many of our youth today.

*Please note this is written as the opinion of the author, and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the membership of the association.