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## January 11, 2021 ASAA Public Comment

During the Public Comments section of the January 11, 2021 ASAA Board of Director's meeting the following individuals addressed the Board (listed in order of their speaking):

Nancy Hanson\*  
Mike Cronk\*  
Kyle McFall  
Kevin McHenry  
Jon Coon\*  
Frank Ostanik  
James Fields  
Brett Slaathaug\*  
Paul Salima\*  
Jason Boerger\*  
Julie Boerger,  
Ja Dorris  
Todd Wegner

Those speaking are required to submit their address in written form in order to have them included in the minutes.

\*a written submission from this speaker is included in the following pages.

Good morning ASAA Board of Directors,

My name is Nancy Hanson. I began teaching at Monroe in 1979. I was Director of Schools for the Catholic Schools of Fairbanks from 1989-2003 and from 2007-2019.

I am present to reflect upon the new ASAA ruling regarding team classification.

I played basketball at Lathrop in the late 1960's and early 1970's—and I played on the early UAF womens' team, too. I coached 2 years in Delta in the 1970's and began coaching at Monroe in 1979. As a player and as a coach I have participated in games where my team lost by 20, 30, 40, 50 points. Lathrop in the late 60's had close to 2000 students, and our team lost to Glennallen, Valdez, Cordova by 30-50 points.....which led us to practicing more, learning the game, becoming better. I came to Monroe when the girls' team had been 0-22...we worked hard to become better and 3 years later were 25-3.

As a teacher, coach and administrator I saw Monroe teams go through good seasons and rough seasons. As the number of high schools in the state grew and enrollments ranged from 40 students to 2,000, I supported Monroe becoming a member of the 3A classification, knowing the teams could continue to play the 4A schools. The classification was simple, based on enrollment.

I have read the recently adopted ASAA classification. It astounds and saddens me as its intent is clear and has little to do with challenging schools, coaches and teams to become better, to succeed. A team from a school of 100 students is "punished" for being good if it wins too many games against certain schools. A goal for every school should be for its teams to be the best they can be. I understand the challenges for teams in smaller villages and towns. However, I have seen many of these teams, with good coaching and determination/grit become good.

It seems that these rules were written presuming that Monroe, ACS and Grace Christian cheat and don't follow the current recruiting and transfer rules. In my time at Monroe, I don't know of a time when we cheated or broke a rule. And if we did do such, then ASAA should have called, visited, and if necessary sanctioned us. The same for ACS and Grace Christian and any school. (I do know of times when bigger schools recruited Monroe team members.)

A goal of every high school should be to build student body camaraderie; girls teams supporting boys' teams. Parents supporting the full program. And yet now, ASAA wants the successful team to be in a different league than the team that perhaps had a down or rough season. Parents with children on each team have to figure out what games to attend.

I realize this is now the way it is. I would like to see members who wrote and approved this take the time to visit each school it affects; to meet with the parents, students and coaches and explain fully the ruling; and to explain fully the reasoning for the ruling. To meet and to answer the questions of those who try to understand why this was written and the consequences of it.

Thank you.

Nancy Hanson

January 11, 2021

**Subject:** recap of public comments

**Date:** Monday, January 11, 2021 at 9:37:58 AM Alaska Standard Time

**From:** Mike Cronk

**To:** ASAA Board

Hello, My name is Mike Cronk, M-i-k-e C-r-o-n-k

I am calling in to voice my concern with ASAA decision regarding their basketball classification according to section B.

For those of you who many not know me, Sports was a big part of my life. I attended a small rural school in Northway, Alaska. We were a 1A school playing at the 2A classification mainly due to the fact that there were no 1A schools near us. As we watched the big schools of East Anchorage and Juneau Douglas, we wanted to be just as good. We wanted to not only compete at their level, but beat them. I personally strived to be the best and wanted to be recognized as the best even though that was a near impossible feat being a kid from a small rural bush village. Knowing that pushed me to prove everyone wrong. In 1987, I was named the Alaska basketball player of the year for all schools, am currently am the unofficial highest scoring basketball player in Alaska history, and a member of the first class into the ASAA hall of fame. Do you know why I was able to reach these milestones? Excellency. To be the best, you have to beat the best.

As I began to read through your newly adopted revision in Section B. I was taken back and became very concerned at what I was reading.

In your Step 1 analysis there are two things that really concern me and should you as well.

First: in sections 1 and 2 of the criteria you have, you are using a 5 year time span. And then in section 3 and 4 you expand that to 8?

This is very concerning as it almost seems as by changing this criteria you are selectively picking a school or schools without naming them. This is subjective and arbitrary.

Second, which is really the most concerning of all is that in sections 1, 2, 3, and 4, you identify excellency and you penalize it. You are penalizing the kids, coaches, and teams that are striving to be the best. And again, subjective and arbitrary.

Step 1 and 2 of section B are targeting specific schools. Instead of addressing the school that has brought this to light you are penalizing the rest. How come basketball is the only sport addressed?

Your decision to reclassify in section B along with the criteria are very flawed and honestly very discriminatory not only against individual sports, sexes, students, and schools. To make up this criteria and implement against the past 5 to 8 years is simply unfair to everyone involved.

As a governing body, ASAA is to put kids first, not personal feelings. The section B of reclassification is obviously not only personal but capricious. I eagerly look forward to seeing this seemingly discriminatory reclassification reversed, and if ASAA chooses new criteria for future decisions, that it be fair and non discriminatory toward any student/athlete or school.

Sincerely,

Mike Cronk

October 11th, 2021

ASAA Board Meeting Minutes Addition

Statement from Jon Coon during Public Comment:

My name is Jon Coon. I am an assistant coach from Colony High boys basketball program. I appreciate what ASAA does and the opportunity they provide to formally work with our youth in competitive organized sports. As a 4A coach, over the years I've come to value and look forward to playing 3A schools during the basketball season. I believe the board has done a solid job encouraging 3A and 4A teams to play each other during the season without penalty. After reviewing the 2 Step criteria addressing forced reclassification, it would be disappointing if 3A teams started adjusting their future schedules to avoid playing 4A teams they may beat in competition.

Additionally, based on the reclassification enrollment policy, teams may request to play at a higher classification. That seems to fit with the American spirit of competitiveness and I think this is a great policy that allows for teams that desire to compete at the highest level the opportunity to do so and prove they are the top team in the state. Teams that make that choice, do so understanding that it affects both the boys and girls programs when that choice is made. Similarly, it seems that the 2 step analysis of potential forced reclassification should follow the same guideline that both the boys and girls programs from a school would need to qualify in the 2 step criteria before being forced to reclassify as a basketball program. This would ensure that one side of the schools basketball program is not penalized for the success of the other side.

I am excited that today is the start of 2021 basketball season. Keep up the good work and let's have a great year!

**The Board Voted to Approve the basketball reclassification on Nov. 9<sup>th</sup>. However, I am here today to ask the board to reconsider this policy change and to not proceed in implementing it for the 21-22 calendar year but maintain the status quo of the current classification. Prior to the adoption of this policy. I would like note that Grace Christian School and many of our representatives attended a board meeting on February 24<sup>th</sup> and expressed our opposition to Basketball Committee's recommendations. The concerns we raised at that meeting should be in the board minutes from that meeting.**

**On November 17<sup>th</sup>, I received the data summary of schools that were affected by the criteria selected by ASAA. Not surprisingly it was Grace Christian Boys, Monroe Boys and ACS Boys and Girls basketball teams. Coincidence? NO because the premise going into this arbitrary selection criteria was in my opinion pre-determined and targeted the Private Schools: The idea that Private Schools are too dominate in 3A, so lets figure out what we need to do to make it fair. I sent an email to ASAA on January 22,2020 requesting Basketball data. In the email I received from ASAA Director stated. Quote "My direction to the staff member working on this is**

**to make it “objective” system. To do so we are also looking at the systems several other states use. We will present to the Board in February and then what they want to do. Attached is the results of the last 10 years of 3A basketball. It’s pretty clear four schools have dominated the boys division and two have dominated the girls. The question is: Why?” end Quote.**

**The four boys school from this data were Monroe, ACS, Barrow, and Grace and for the Girls, they were Barrow and ACS, but I would note that Sitka and Mt. Egdecumbe were 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> on this report. However, the final results of the criteria adopted didn’t include Barrow because they were not within 25 mile radius of selected Municipalities. An arbitrary criteria!**

**After receiving the data on November 17<sup>th</sup>, I requested via an email to ASAA the documentation of their data so we can verify the results. I still haven’t received that information. However, we were already under the assumption of moving to 4A after the summary results were provided to us on Nov.17<sup>th</sup>. But on Nov. 24<sup>th</sup> my coach notice that on the checkmark system under Appearance at State Criteria section was error. We checked the**

**information on ASAA's website November. 28<sup>th</sup> and it listed us as finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> in 2015 at State. However, our records indicated we finished 5<sup>th</sup> and ACS finished 3<sup>rd</sup>. This "mistake" on ASAA's website put Grace Christian at 41 points instead of 39 points.**

**On Dec. 4<sup>th</sup> I drafted my email to ASAA to point out this mistake. However, when I went to ASAA's website to print out this document for my reference as backup, ASAA's website already corrected their error, but we never heard from ASAA in regards to this error and how it would keep Grace Christian Boys Basketball at 3A. I submitted this email to ASAA Director with our documentation and was informed of their verification of this error.**

**Four things I want to make clear today.**

**1) The Criteria ASAA has used to determine Basketball Classification is arbitrary and capricious. 5 years or 8 years. 40 points or 39 points? It subject to selective application and what are the desired results.**

**2) It's discriminatory singling out private schools based on some of the criteria's used.**

**3) None of the private schools had any representation on the committee. As it's been well known that some on the committee openly discussed**

**private schools success mainly ACS and other factors in trying to implement a classification with a predetermined result.**

**4) Our schools are engaged in competitive sports. Not everyone gets a trophy. I've stated to our Region in our meetings, I will never bring a proposal on behalf of Grace Christian School that requires other schools to change classification because our Grace Girls Basketball team has not been represented at State enough times or have won a State Title! I and our coaches need to do a better job in our girls program to get them at the competitive level.**

**In conclusion, it is our opinion the only fair criteria that applies to ALL SCHOOLS as stated in ASAA's handbook is the enrollment numbers.**





# NORTHWEST ARCTIC BOROUGH SCHOOL

Ambler · Buckland · Deering · Kiana · Kivalina · Kobuk · Kotzebue · Noatak · Noorvik · Selawik · Shungnak  
PO Box 51 · Kotzebue, Alaska 99752 · Phone (907) 442-1800

January 12, 2021

We, the NWABSD, are in full support of the recently adopted competitive checkmark system for basketball reclassification purposes. We understand that there are schools that are not in favor of the adoption and have voiced their concerns and desire to return to the status quo. However, NWABSD and namely 3A Kotzebue are in full support of the new system taking effect in the 21-22 school year as it levels the playing field in all divisions.

Here are the following reasons why we support the adoption:

## 1) *Transfer Potential:*

Due to the high potential for high-level players to transfer to road system schools in order to form all-star teams is that the checkmark helps rectify those situations. This has become more a norm over the past decade with private schools, but has been an historic issue in Alaska over the past 30 years.

Stretching back to coaches like Chuck Martin and Chuck White is that the best area players would transfer to go play for them. As the coach moved from one school to another so did the success. Numerous state titles were won in this fashion and against schools who's only appearance the state championship occurred during these eras. On a shorter-term level, schools like Heritage Christian won back-to-back state titles with the school shutting down immediately after. It clearly showed that the intent of the school was athletically motivated.

## 2) *Recruitment Potential:*

The bottom line is that Private and Boarding schools has the freedom to openly recruit students to come attend and play while Public schools do not and would be penalized severely if such actions were proven to have taken place.

The recruitment of very talented HS players goes on in various forms, but has extended itself now down in the MS level with comp league being organized for coaches and/or reps of schools develop rapport to have those gifted athletes to come attend their school once starting HS. You see students who are zoned in one municipality end up attending namely private schools that are in another municipality. Sadly, the attempts to strengthen the transfer policy over the years has not resulted in a lessening of this, but simply furthered the manipulation of the spirit of the Hardship rules to subvert the sit out period.

MISSION: To provide a learning environment that inspires and challenges students and employees to excel  
VISION: To graduate all students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for a successful future

### 3) *Scheduling:*

In my 7 years in Kotzebue, the difficulty in getting teams to come out and play on a Friday/Saturday is quite great. The schools that are currently being affected by the checkmark system have denied coming to play against us because they see playing back-to-back games as too big of a loss to their game count and/or if our teams aren't good enough in their viewpoint that it is simply not worth their time.

Usually, the extension is made in reverse for us to come attend their tournaments; so we are 99% of the time playing on their homecourt if there ever ends up being a head-to-head matchup. But recently, I was extended an invitation for the Kotzebue girls to attend a tournament but not the boys. The simple reason is because the girls have a state tournament level team this year and the boys are low. This demonstrates an example of these schools self-leveling to their competitive level with their non-conference games. I assure you that if their conferences didn't mandate league games that their schedules would be primarily filled with 4A games.

So, when fans and coaches use the argument that we should use those programs as a/the standard for excellence and should aspire to reach their same level is that it's virtually impossible when they're not willing to ever come to our communities and at the same time only extend ½ an invitation to come play in their tournaments.

#### Final responses to varying comments:

##### *a) Traditional Head-to-Head Matchups Will Be Lost:*

I've heard the complaint that this will eliminate traditional head-to-head matchups. I completely disagree. The conferences that these schools are moving into are actually smaller than the previous ones and would therefore have more non-conference games at their disposal to fill. Top programs want to play against the best competition. And if a school in a lower division can compete, then they schedule them. Most coaches don't care what division their opponent as long as their opponent is good competition for their team to go against. Nobody in the 3A division mind bringing in strong 1A boys teams like Noatak or 1A girls teams like King Cove in recent because they could compete at those levels.

##### *b) Dedication and Work Ethic Determine Success:*

This argument has become very unnerving for me to hear coming from some of these affected school's coaches and is getting echoed by parents & fans of their schools. To insinuate that coaches at-large outside of these schools are not that dedicated or don't have the work ethic to make their programs successful or cultivate an environment where kids strive for greatness is complete garbage. Rural coaches very often have to raise 10s of thousands of dollars each year just to have a full season of games for their kids. And then have to raise even more money to attend summer camps. And just note, that a high majority of this fundraising money typically goes to attend these private schools' tournaments and summer camps. And since our communities love to support

our teams is that bring in huge crowds that bring in great revenue to these programs' fundraiser accounts.

At the end of the day, this another competitive advantage for road system schools because they get to spend most of their offseason developing their player is that we have to spend a good portion of our time fundraising just to attend their events with our fans filling their stands. And keep in mind, this is for our kids to come to schools who rarely reciprocate the travel. And if it is ever done is that we pay for their travel to come out.

Furthermore, I very much doubt that if one of these coaches had a losing season would appreciate anyone or group of people publicly saying that it must have been due to their lack of dedication and work ethic. You would never hear this argument used against a regular classroom teacher who has a low performing class, especially this year due to COVID-19. Which has completely shut down rural coaches from conducting any form of out-of-season practices while these and other road system programs have continuously played in comp leagues in the Matsu valley all Fall and attended out-of-state comp tournaments.

For these reasons and others unmentioned, I fully support the retention of the recently adopted checkmark system for basketball reclassification and hope that these schools think of the golden rule before directly or indirectly insulted our current and past coaches.

If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to contact me at 442-1844 or at [activities@nwarctic.org](mailto:activities@nwarctic.org).

Brett Slaathaug  
NWABSD Student Activities Coordinator  
PO Box 51  
Kotzebue, Ak 99752  
(907) 442-1844

1/11/21

Dear ASAA Board Members,

I am writing to oppose ASAA's recent decision to discriminate against private schools under the auspices of creating fairness and equity. In reality, nothing could be less fair than the reverse engineered and retroactive metric that was designed and approved on November 9th. There is no doubt by looking at the "checkmark system" that it was produced with a predetermined outcome in mind.

In the ASAA Handbook under general policies section 1A, it makes clear that member schools are classified by their 9-12 enrollments. Furthermore in section 1B it states that "geographic and competitive considerations are not determining factors for classification placement". I also maintain that this body does not want to get into the business of determining classification based on competitiveness. This new system promises to "solve" competitive disparities as they exist in Alaska Basketball, however it will only continue to bring before this body wave after wave of protests, appeals and complaints. Some will argue that traditional "brick and mortar" schools and their enrollments are no longer a fair way to measure parity. Statistics can be given to show that private schools have had tremendous success over the last many years and some much larger schools have had no success (Service girls, Eagle River....). This body has already heard about many other public school dynasties that have existed (Barrow... Nikiski...Valdez). Instead of recognizing the value of committed coaches supported by a parent and school culture driven by high expectations, there was a movement to level the playing field.

Urban advantage, scholarships, access to a wide population of athletes are some of the listed perks of being a private school. At Grace, we only offer a select number of financial based scholarships completely unrelated to athletics. We also have "disadvantages". High academic admission standards, high tuition costs, and Christian families that must be actively committed to their church... all form their own restrictive boundaries. If there was a widespread advantage, I am not sure why it doesn't also apply to our girls program? I find it interesting that in order to "opt up" from a lower classification to a higher one, both the girls and the boys programs need to make the move. However, under this new system you are essentially punishing our girls program for the boys past success. Splitting our programs would likely be just as destructive as our eventual move to 4A. In this system you are comfortable involuntarily moving one program up but in your own "opt up policy" you require both. This system forces us to violate the language written in Article 7 Section 1 of your handbook and provide equal or unequal athletic opportunities between boys and girls programs. I'd contend that for the "checkmark system" to be fair, both girls and boys programs would need to qualify.

I am glad I took the time to carefully calculate 5 and 8 years of data and did not rely on ASAA's numbers. I discovered a very serious typo in the 2015 state results that moved our total number

of state points from 41 to 39 (benchmark is 40). Essentially, the framers of this system built it with the wrong data and now we have a stay of reclassification. An error that I have no doubt would have been remedied if known prior to the publication of the various benchmarks. I personally never had the opportunity to verify the data behind some of the other calculations but their integrity is now highly in doubt.

I am seeking a return to the status quo and also would welcome a conversation about other ways to fairly address concerns with the present system.

Thank you for your time.

Jason Boerger  
Grace Christian School  
Boys Varsity Basketball Coach