

Middle School Parents/Guardians,

We have some exciting news to share with you about new extracurricular athletics and activities that will be offered to middle school students beginning with the 2017-2018 school year.

On April 25, the Board of Education allocated nearly \$500,000 to expand extracurricular activities and increase participation and engagement at all middle schools. This will be accomplished by implementing the following three strategies at each middle school:

1. **Participation Through The Engagement Program**

Research indicates that student involvement in extracurricular activities improves social development, eases the transition from elementary to middle school, improves GPA and attendance, lowers disciplinary infractions, fosters passion and boosts self-confidence. To increase student participation and engagement, school staff will create new activity groups/clubs/organizations designed to appeal to the special and diverse interest of 6th through 8th grade students at each school. Interests will be determined based on a student survey to be conducted in early Fall 2017.

2. **MSHSAA Participation**

Middle school athletics will join the Missouri State High School Activities Association which will provide:

- *Increased scheduling options to meet diverse school needs across the district including increasing the number of contests and participating in competition that is leveled based on schools of similar size, ability level and participation rates*
- *Alignment with a set of bylaws that all member schools comply with across Missouri*
- *Alignment of SPS' sports seasons with regional schools (for more details, please see the attached Fact Sheet). This will mean that football, volleyball, and boys & girls cross country seasons will occur in the Fall of 2017.*
- *Development of high school programs by increased participation and allowing our coaches to draw comparisons of skill and talent levels between SPS students/teams and regional schools*

Please note: In compliance with academic eligibility criteria, MSHSAA has clarified that **any seventh-grade student who fails more than one class during the fourth quarter of the 2016-2017 school year will not be eligible to participate in interscholastic activities during the first quarter of the 2017-2018 school year.** Sixth-grade students transitioning to seventh grade and eighth-grade students transitioning to ninth grade are given a clean slate, however, MSHSAA does not exempt athletes from grade standards when a district officially begins with them. [View academic criteria on page 42 of the MSHSAA handbook.](#)

3. **Athletic Option Expansion**

Athletic opportunities will be expanded with the addition of cross-country and archery as a competitive opportunities for girls and boys beginning with the 2017-2018 school year.

If your child is interested in participating in these activities next school year, please see the attached Fact Sheet for important information.

We look forward to the positive lifelong changes this investment will create for our students and hope you will encourage your child to consider how they may want to participate in activities or athletics next school year.