

# Original Guidance

(Iowa Department of Education School Leader Update – July, 2015)

## **School start date: co-curricular vs. extra-curricular activities**

The Legislature has finally set a school start date of Aug. 23. Now that this is finalized we have had a few questions about what this start date means for school activities.

The starting dates for sports are set by the athletic associations. For other school-sponsored activities, the question boils down to whether the activity is co-curricular or extra-curricular. If the activity is co-curricular and required, then the school should not be scheduling the activity prior to Aug. 23. The rationale is simple – you cannot require a student to participate in a co-curricular activity that is part of her grade prior to the first day of school. However, if the activity is an extracurricular activity and not required, scheduling the activity before Aug. 23 is a local decision by the district’s administration, or any relevant governing body.

# Newly-Adopted Guidance

(Iowa Department of Education School Leader Update – December, 2015; Iowa Department of Education in collaboration with the Iowa High School Music Association)

## **School start date as it relates to extra-curricular and co-curricular activities**

The Legislature has set a school start date no earlier than August 23 each year. Now that this is finalized the question is how does this start date affect extracurricular and co-curricular activities/programs that have traditionally occurred before August 23 such as marching band? Can these co-curricular activities occur before the start date? As background for this discussion here are some definitions that will help put this question into context:

**Curriculum** (from IAC Section 281, Chapter 12): a plan that outlines what students shall be taught. Curriculum refers to all the courses offered, or all the courses offered in a particular area of study.

**Day of School** (from IAC Section 281, Chapter 12): A day of school is a day during which the school or school district is in session and students are under the guidance and instruction of the instructional professional staff. School shall be considered in session during parent-teacher conferences as well as during activities such as field trips if students are engaged in programs or activities under the guidance and direction of the instructional professional staff. All grade levels of the school or school district must be operated and available for attendance by all students. An exception is if either the elementary or secondary grades are closed and provided that the time missed is made up at some other point

during the school calendar so as to meet the minimum of 180 days or 1,080 hours of instruction for all grades 1 through 12.

**Curricular activities** are those activities that part of the curriculum.

**Co-curricular activities** are those activities that are outside of but usually complementing the regular curriculum.

**Extracurricular activities** are defined as those school-based activities that are not tied to the curriculum.

We know that some activities may have both Curricular and Co-curricular components to them. Marching Band, Concert Band, Concert Choir, and Orchestra in many schools are both co-curricular offerings and a curricular offering. Show Choir, Jazz Band, Jazz Choir, Solo and Small Ensemble music offerings in many schools are just co-curricular offerings but may, in some instances, be both curricular and co-curricular. Other activities that may be co-curricular include but are not limited to student government, theater, speech, debate, academic decathlon, model United Nations, mock trial, and Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) to include FFA, FCCLA, FBLA, BPA, DECA, HOSA, Skills USA and TSA.

For co-curricular activities, establishing a school start date implies that the first day of school is the date curricular assessment may begin. Rehearsals, practices, and performances may be held prior to the school start date but those rehearsals, practices, and performances may not be assessed (graded) as part of the formal curriculum until the school start date has occurred. Conferences and other CTSO activities held prior to the school start date are voluntary in nature and may not be assessed (graded) as part of the formal curriculum until the school start date has occurred.

If the activity is extracurricular, scheduling the activity prior to August 23 is a local decision by the district's administration, or any relevant governing body. The IHSAA and IGHS AU have established dates for when official fall sports practices may begin.