



## **KSHSAA Position Statement on Student Burnout**

While there are many positive outcomes of sport and activity participation, the Kansas State High School Activities Association (KSHSAA) recognizes that burnout among high school students and athletes is a growing concern. The benefits include, but are not limited to, increased confidence, self-worth, learning team-building skills, learning communication skills, building a positive relationship with exercise, improved sleep, improved immune functioning, improved academic performance, and creating positive relationships with others. Burnout is commonly characterized by three processes: physical and emotional exhaustion, a decrease in the person's sense of accomplishment, and the reduction in how that person values their sport (or activity). Burnout is fueled by the increasing pressure to excel in multiple sports and activities, maintain academic performance, and meet internal and external expectations. High school students often face intense schedules that leave little room for rest, relaxation, or personal time. This constant strain can lead to feelings of exhaustion, anxiety, and disengagement, potentially affecting their academic and extracurricular activity and performance as well as physical and mental health.

Risk factors for burnout include both physical and psychological experiences including an increased training load without proper recovery opportunities; pressure to succeed from the coach, parents, and the student themselves; the student's perception that their relationship with their coach is negative; coaches who demand perfection, are controlling of their athletes, and who are extrinsically motivated by the outcome of performance (wins and losses). Other risk factors include increased stress in the student's life outside of their sport or activity and a strong identification of an identity of "athlete" without the opportunity to explore other interest areas.

Symptoms of burnout can vary from student to student. These typically include increased tiredness/fatigue; a depressed affect including loss of interest in activities that were once pleasurable and low mood; sleep disruptions; increased irritability; symptoms of anxiety including excessive worry and agitation; difficulty concentrating; unexplained physical and musculoskeletal complaints; changes in weight; academic, social, and athletic performance decreases; and loss of enjoyment in everyday activities.

The KSHSAA recommends vigilance in prioritizing the physical and mental health of high school sport and activity participants by providing proper recovery opportunities and setting realistic expectations to help ensure participants can thrive without sacrificing their well-being. Common recommendations for the prevention of burnout in teens and adolescents include setting intrinsic vs extrinsic goals that are unrelated to performance outcomes, focusing on long-term development of the student in a holistic way, instilling hope and optimism, and helping the student develop autonomy. Specifically, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends the following: 5-day limits per week on each sport activity, at least one day of rest per week from all physical activity, and a break of at least 2-3 months from organized sport activity per year. Other recommendations include allowing for a significant rest period after completing a sport/activity



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season, allowing for proper recovery opportunities after difficult physical training sessions, allowing the student to engage in only one sport and team per season and to limit sport specialization (participating in the same sport year-round).

### **References:**

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