

October 28, 2021

PIAA Announces New Emerging Sport Classification

The future of rugby in schools in Pennsylvania has taken a positive step forward, as the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA) Board of Directors has approved the creation of an Emerging Sport classification. During its meeting on July 14th, 2021, the PIAA Board accepted a proposal from their Executive Staff for the development of an Emerging Sports Process Guide. This new emerging sports classification allows sports with smaller levels of school participation, like rugby, to have a pathway to achieving full sponsorship by the PIAA.

Rugby PA leadership met with members of the PIAA Executive Staff in early 2020 to discuss the potential of rugby being introduced into more schools across the state. Rugby PA encouraged the PIAA to consider creating a classification similar to that of the NCAA Emerging Sports for Women, for which rugby qualifies. Currently, PIAA policy provides the establishment of an Inter-District Championship for a sport when the number of member senior high schools sponsoring that sport reaches 100. The new emerging sport classification allows for only 25 schools per gender to sponsor the sport; including varsity, club, and co-op programs. "This emerging sport classification is exactly what we were hoping for after our meeting in 2020. We knew that getting to 100 schools would be a challenge, particularly after previous meetings with Athletic Directors to encourage participation. But with this new classification, we look forward to bringing all the inclusivity of rugby to every community across the state," said Rugby PA Executive Director Dylan Hamilton.

With this announcement, Rugby PA has launched a new campaign to sign up the first 25 programs, for both boys and girls, to participate in a Scholastic Sevens competition. Named the *Emerging 25*, these school-based rugby programs will commit to playing in a 7 week sevens competition in the spring of 2023. With over 20 combined school programs already established, Rugby PA is confident that the requirements will be quickly met in order to apply for the Emerging Sport classification. "We're excited to work with school faculties to start these new programs, and to introduce to their students all the opportunities rugby has to offer," added Hamilton.

For more information on the Emerging 25 and how to start a program, visit www.rugbypa.org/emerging25.