

Student Athletic Interest Survey

The athletic interest survey helps schools determine whether they are providing equal athletic opportunities for male and female students. The results from the survey can help a school determine whether or not to add a new sport or perhaps a new team for a sport it already offers.

Schools that operate or sponsor athletics must administer the OSPI student athletic interest survey at least **once every three years**.

Step 1: Survey students using the OSPI survey questions

Schools must use the [survey questions developed by OSPI](#). With OSPI approval, schools may modify the contents of the survey if necessary to clarify and assist in evaluating student interest. However, schools do not need OSPI approval to make formatting changes, add questions, or adapt the survey for Scantron or online application.

Administer the survey to all students in all schools that operate or sponsor athletic programs. Some schools choose to also survey the next incoming class (e.g., 5th grade students soon to enter middle school) and skip the graduating class (e.g., graduating 12th grade students).

To ensure high response rates, schools can administer the survey as part of a mandatory student activity, such as during course registration or advisory period.

Step 2: Disaggregate survey results by sex and by building

To identify the interests of male and female students in each school, disaggregate the results of each survey question by building and by sex. In other words, separate the results of the survey so that each school can identify how female students responded and how male students responded.

Schools may use this [summary worksheet](#) to compile survey results.

Step 3: Analyze survey results using the Three-Part Test

Use the results of the survey to evaluate each school's athletic programs for compliance under Title IX's Three-Part Test (see below) and when conducting the [annual evaluation](#) of its athletic program.

If the survey results show enough interest to potentially sustain a team or additional squad in a particular sport,¹ consider the feasibility of adding the sport or adding levels of competition if the school already offers the sport. These steps can include following up with students about their interest in a specific sport, assessing if there are enough interested students—with the necessary skills—to sustain a team or additional squad, and researching available competition.

¹ The number of participants necessary to sustain a team depends on the nature of each sport. A team should include enough participants to be on the field or court at one time, plus enough substitutes in case of fatigue or injury to starting players.

Three-Part Test: Assessing Athletic Opportunities

Title IX and Washington state law require public schools to provide male and female students with equal opportunities to participate in athletics. The U.S. Department of Education applies a three-part test to assess whether a school is providing nondiscriminatory participation opportunities for students of both sexes. A school can show it provides equal athletic opportunities if it meets compliance with *any* part of the test.

The [Three-Part Test Worksheet](#) helps schools evaluate compliance under the Three-Part Test.

The athletic interest survey is essential for evaluating compliance with the Three-Part Test, particularly under Part Three.

Part One: Participation Opportunities

A school can meet compliance with Part One if the school provides interscholastic athletic participation opportunities² for male and female students in numbers substantially proportionate to their respective enrollment in the school.³

Example: If 45% of the students enrolled at a school are male and 55% are female, athletic participation opportunities are proportionate if the athletic participation opportunities were also 45% male and 55% female.

Part Two: Program Expansion

Even when a sex is underrepresented in a school's athletic program, the school can meet compliance under Part Two if it can demonstrate the school has a history and continuing practice of program expansion for the underrepresented sex.

To show a history and continuing practice of program expansion, the school must demonstrate:

1. A record of adding new sports or expanding current opportunities in response to the existing and emerging interests of students;
2. A clear and effective method for requesting new sports, such as the athletic interest survey; and
3. Current implementation of a plan to add more sports in response to known interest.

² Schools determine the number of athletic participation opportunities by counting the number of students who participate in the school's athletic program. Each spot a student-athlete occupies counts one time. For example, an athlete who competes on track and cross country occupies two participation spots.

³ Athletic opportunities are considered to be substantially proportionate when the number of opportunities that would be required to achieve exact proportionality would not be sufficient to sustain a viable team. As a frame of reference for assessing this situation, the school should consider the average size of teams offered for the underrepresented sex.

Part Three: Meeting Interests and Abilities

Even when a sex is underrepresented in a school's athletic program, the school can meet compliance under Part Three if it can show that its athletic program fully and effectively accommodates the athletic interests and abilities of the underrepresented sex.

In determining whether a school's current program fully and effectively accommodates the interests and abilities of the underrepresented sex (Part Three of the Three-Part Test), consider the following three questions:

1. Is there unmet interest in a particular sport?
2. Is there sufficient ability to sustain a team in the sport?
3. Is there a reasonable expectation of competition for the team?

Identifying unmet interests. When evaluating whether the underrepresented sex has an unmet interest in a particular sport, evaluate the underrepresented sex's responses to the athletic interest survey and any other requests for sports.

Considerations:

Are requested sports already offered? If so, do the teams have a no-cut policy? Could the school expand the team size or add additional levels of competition?

Are students participating in a sport in the community or in club or amateur leagues? This may indicate an unmet interest.

Schools are not limited to offering sports sanctioned by the WIAA. Consider non-WIAA sports students request.

Sufficient ability to sustain a team. In determining whether there is sufficient ability to sustain a team in a particular sport, evaluate whether there is a sufficient number of students interested and able to sustain a team, and whether those students have the athletic abilities necessary to participate.

Considerations:

Would enough students turn out for a team? Follow up on possible unmet interests by holding information meetings, administering targeted surveys, or organizing informal opportunities for students to try out the sport.

Would students have the athletic abilities necessary to participate? Consider whether students use similar skill sets in other sports.

Reasonable expectation of competition. In determining whether there is a reasonable expectation of competition for the team, consider available competitive opportunities in the geographic region in which the school's athletics primarily compete.

Considerations:

Consider available competitive opportunities in the geographic region, even if the school does not currently compete against those schools.

A school may need to confer with athletic directors from other districts and actively encourage the development of competition for a particular sport.

Frequently Asked Questions

How often must schools administer the athletic interest survey?

State law requires that schools administer the athletic interest survey at least **once every three years**. Some schools survey students more frequently to help fine-tune their athletic program on a regular basis.

Can schools change or add questions to the OSPI survey?

Schools must use the [survey questions developed by OSPI](#). With OSPI approval, however, schools may modify the contents of the survey if necessary to clarify and assist in evaluating student interest.

Schools do not need OSPI approval to make formatting changes, add questions, or adapt the survey for Scantron or online application. For example, if regional competition exists for sports not listed on the OSPI survey, a school may add those sports to the survey without OSPI approval to help determine student interest. Some schools also find it helpful to add additional demographic questions—such as race and ethnicity—to better understand students' athletic interests and any perceived barriers to participation.

What is an acceptable response rate for the survey?

No specific response rate is required. However, OSPI and the U.S. Department of Education will assess each school's survey on a case-by-case basis.

Schools should take steps to allow—and encourage—all students to participate in the athletic interest survey. Schools should take steps to widely publicize the survey, give students adequate time to respond, and send reminder notices as needed. To ensure high response rates, schools can administer the survey as part of a mandatory student activity, such as during course registration or advisory period.

OSPI and the U.S. Department of Education generally afford more weight to a survey with a higher response rate, but will also consider the school's efforts to encourage participation, the target population surveyed, and treatment of nonresponses.

Why does the survey include the sports listed?

The athletic interest survey includes all sports sanctioned by the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association (WIAA). The survey includes additional sports based on the availability of facilities, interscholastic competition among Washington schools, national participation data, as well as a review of athletic offerings at state universities and emerging sports for women and girls.

OSPI will regularly review and update the survey to reflect shifts in athletic interests and participation of Washington students, available interscholastic competition, and emerging sports for women and girls.

How should a school handle requests for sports that are not feasible?

If, through due diligence, a school determines that there is not sufficient ability among its students to sustain a team in the sport or determined that there is not a reasonable expectation of competition for the team, the school does not need to add the sport.

To develop students' ability to sustain a team in the future, the school can consider offering it as an intramural sport or introducing the sport during physical education classes. Schools can also discuss the possibility of adding the sport along with other schools in its geographic region to develop interscholastic competition.

Does OSPI provide an online version of the survey?

OSPI is not able to provide an online version of the athletic interest survey at this time. To assist schools in adapting the survey for online use, OSPI provides notes for adapting the survey for online use:

[Adapting the Survey for Online Use](#).

Schools are welcome—and encouraged—to survey students online. By adapting the survey for use online, each school can add additional questions specific to their needs. There are several free and low-cost survey tools available online.

Resources

[Equity in School Athletic Programs](#): OSPI's web page for athletic equity resources

[Athletic Interest Survey](#): OSPI athletic interest survey and resources

[Athletic Opportunities Worksheet](#): Add your school's data to evaluate compliance with the Three-Part Test

Learn More. Ask Questions. Get Help.

OSPI Equity and Civil Rights Office

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