

A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF OHIO INTERSCHOLASTIC  
EXTRACURRICULAR PAY TO PARTICIPATE POLICIES

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## ABSTRACT

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Due to the increasingly widespread utilization of interscholastic athletic pay to participate policies within the state of Ohio, this study focused on analyzing specific pay to participate policies within Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) member school districts through a qualitative, multiple case study methodology. This study aimed to contribute to the overall gap in research regarding pay to participate policies from a policy analysis perspective.

Utilizing the policy process model outlined by Kraft and Furlong (2015) as a framework, policy document and interview data analysis assisted in the development of key elements such as contributing factors and goals of the specific policies, implementation methods and procedures unique and different among districts, as well as evaluation processes and criterion utilized to define success. This study did not intend to generalize pay to participate policies that implement the most evident fee typology within the state of Ohio, but rather provide depth within the stories of specific districts, intending to add value to district discussions surrounding pay to participate policy utilization.

The study results described key policy elements from district contextual perspectives regarding their development, implementation, and evaluation methods. These key components provided unique perspectives based upon perceptions of athletic administrators, and actions of the policies themselves, as well as resulted in the development of a pay to participate discussion guide (Appendix C) that can be utilized by districts during policy discussions.

This dissertation is dedicated to:

My parents, for providing me the opportunity to grow up watching two people pour their hearts and souls into serving others, and helping me realize what education, and life, is all about. Your consistent support and love is more than I could ever ask for.

My wife Elizabeth, for supporting this adventure, and for being my number one fan, and consistent voice of reason. You sacrificed a tremendous amount to allow our family to push down this road, and you completed this process as much as I did. Without you, there is no way this would have become a reality, and each day I am thankful to share life with you.

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## CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Due to state cuts in educational funding throughout the United States, interscholastic athletic programs have faced reductions in financial support, and potential elimination as districts struggle with dwindling budgets. Although high school sports have historically been viewed as an integral part of the educational process beginning with their organized inception as a component of physical education curriculum, funding cuts coupled with the rising costs associated with the administration of interscholastic athletic programs are continuing to be at the center of attention in school district discussions (Putnam, 2014). As a result of these funding cuts, athletic departments and school boards often consider the development and implementation of new policies and procedures to financially support extracurricular programs (Gardner, 2014).

One specific policy practice often utilized to generate additional financial support for athletic programs is known as a pay to participate fee policy, commonly referred to as a pay to play fee (Neish, 2005). These fees are often described as user fees that students who participate in the athletic programs pay to provide financial support for sport programming, while those that do not choose to participate, are not required to do so. Pay to participate fee policies have witnessed a widespread increase in utilization, especially in the state of Ohio where nearly half of the 822 Ohio High School Athletic Association member schools reported having a policy during the 2014-2015 school year (OHSAA & Grant, 2015). As stated in the National Interscholastic Athletic Administration Guidebook (2013), a resource used for professional development of athletic directors, pay to participate fees constitute one of the fastest and most user friendly ways to raise necessary athletic department funds. Rausch (2005) states that “despite sharp criticism, pay to play programs provide an alternate source of revenue for public schools in dire budgetary straights and often act as a last resort to save athletic programs from

elimination” (para. 1). As budgets continue to be stretched, school administrators may consider ways to increase revenue within the athletic structure for immediate maintenance of programs.

Fee policy structure and development is unique to individual school districts, but are becoming more representative of current educational funding norms. The rationale for fees can be simply, “fifty dollars isn’t much when you consider that, in football, you’re wearing a helmet that costs \$115 to \$120” (Howe, 2001, p.6). Fifteen years later helmet costs have risen to nearly \$300 per individual item. The implementation of pay to participate fee policies to offset rising costs and budget deficiencies is also becoming a staple throughout the United States, as 33 states documented districts utilizing pay to participate fees in a 2009 survey completed by the National Federation of State High School Associations (Howard, 2014).

Although the future of school finance remains uncertain, available research considering individual policies, and their policy development, implementation, and evaluation, as well as districts overall definitions of success for these policies, is extremely sparse. This study aims to investigate and analyze specific district policies describing these key elements through a multiple case study research design to help fill the literature gap and assist other districts and educational leaders in strategic planning and decision making processes.

### **Problem Statement**

School districts across the country are facing increasing costs and declining budgets (Paige, 2008). To offset these financial concerns and shortfalls, schools are continually looking for new ways of generating revenue as well as decrease cost. Extracurricular activities are often an expense many districts will initially consider during budget cuts. The implementation of pay to participate fees for extracurricular activities helps districts alleviate budget pressure by passing some or all of the costs, onto the students participating. With nearly 50% of schools in the state

of Ohio implementing a pay to participate policy to generate revenue for interscholastic athletic programming, the development, implementation, and evaluations procedures of pay to participate fee policies for interscholastic athletic programs are drawing increased attention among legislators in the state of Ohio (OHSAA, 2015). Due to this increased visibility and discussion, as well as a gap in literature surrounding actual policy analysis, a deeper dive is necessary to provide further data for meaningful discussions surrounding proposed legislation and potential impacts on school districts in the state of Ohio, as well as nationally. A majority of the research up to this point has focused on the importance of interscholastic athletics in general, positive impacts on student achievement, and the short and long term benefits of extracurricular programming for school districts and individuals (Chapman 2009; Harper, 2005; Jordan, 1999; Mahoney, 2000; Miller et al., 2005, Otto & Alwin, 1977; Sabo, Miller, Farrell, Melnick, & Barnes, 1999; Schafer & Rehberg, 1970; Whitley, 1999), but additional studies surrounding the specific pay to participate typologies considering policy development, implementation, and evaluation procedures are integral to adding value in current and future discussions.

### **Nature of the Study**

This study will focus on the analysis of school districts located in the state of Ohio that implement the most widely utilized pay to participate policy typology to supplement costs for the administration of their interscholastic athletic programs. School districts were selected based upon cross referencing information provided from a pilot study completed by the Ohio High School Athletic Association and Grant (2015) describing their typology implemented and the approval and willingness to participate.

## **Research Questions**

As pay to participate policies continue to be a commonly used practice in interscholastic athletic departments for funding purposes, the need to complete a policy analysis and examine contributing factors and processes of development, implementations methods, and evaluation procedures is extremely important for school district strategic planning and transparency. The following research questions will guide this study:

1. What are the goals of the specific pay to participate policies and what factors contributed to their development?
2. How are the implementation methods of pay to participate policies similar and different among school districts?
3. What criterion do school districts utilize when evaluating the success of the programs based on the outlined goals?

## **Purpose of the Study**

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate further specific pay to participate policies within Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) member school districts utilizing a multiple case study analysis, focusing on policy development, implementation, and evaluation. The legislature in the state of Ohio has considered potential legislation concerning the usage of pay to participate fees, and the current environment needs more research to build a wider view of understanding. Utilizing data from a OHSAA study on Ohio member school pay to participate fees, school district policies can be divided into three major with unique implementation variations (OHSAA & Grant, 2015). Of the 822 OHSAA member, 58% responded with a fully completed survey. From the data collected regarding the actual policy type, one main typology where student athletes are charged a fee for each sport they choose to

participate in, but the fee is the same for every sport, was utilized by 152 districts statewide accounting for 63% of the respondents that had an implemented pay to participate fee policy. This policy typology will be referred to as a consistent fee, flat rate policy.

Evaluation measurements and procedures are not currently publicly available for many districts, and although this type of policy is visible and prevalent throughout the country, very little research regarding the development, implementation, and assessment of specific policies is available. As a result of this study, pay to participate policies will be analyzed and described through an analysis of the policy documents themselves, as well as through interviews with district athletic administrators. The goal is to describe the development, implementation, and evaluation methods and procedures further, which may be of use to school officials who currently have, or are considering a pay to participate policy in their district. This study will fill the void currently present in this research environment.

### **Theoretical Framework**

There is not a strong literature base surrounding high school pay to participate fees focused on the policies themselves. Research is substantial in regards to the benefits of student involvement in extracurricular activities, the impact of participation rates in interscholastic athletics, as well as the long term individual and societal impacts caused by limited access to extracurricular participation due to additional fees. While widespread and extensive, it does not provide much qualitative data offering insight into the development, implementation, and evaluation of the policies at the district level. Considering the why, how, and what of pay to participate policies, as well as the role and definition of success within a specific school district is important to study.

This research study aims to consider this further, and will utilize the policy process model from Kraft and Furlong (2015) for document analysis and interview data collection and analysis. The policy process model sequentially outlines activities affecting the development of public policies. The fluidity and relationships between policy stakeholders throughout the process is depicted within this model, and it provides a clear guideline for consideration of important policymaking aspects. The six stages that encapsulate the policy process model include (1) problem definition and agenda setting, (2) policy formulation, (3) policy legitimation, (4) policy implementation, (5) policy and program evaluation, and (6) policy change. These six stages illustrate everything from the base level problem definition, how the policy gets on a specific political agenda, the design of goals and strategies for achievement, the justification for the action, the resources for how programs will be implemented, evaluation procedures for defining success or failure, and ultimately the modification process as environments shift. The policy process model can be viewed as “six distinct, if not entirely separate, stages in policy making” (p. 84). Others may view this “policy cycle” as a cyclical process, or a “series of stages linked in a circle, because no policy decision or solution is ever final” (p. 84). Ultimately, Kraft and Furlong (2015) contest that in real world application, the stages often overlap one another, as well as are sometimes skipped throughout the process, and the model enables the effective questions to be formulated about the policy process.

As school districts increasingly develop and utilize pay to participate policies for interscholastic athletics, it is important to consider policy process model when analyzing their processes and the evaluative criterion they incorporate when defining success. School districts have autonomy managing their daily fiscal operations, and are individually unique in regards to their interscholastic athletic financial management. The identification of specific intricacies of



policy development, implementation procedures, and overall evaluation procedures necessitates further study within specific districts throughout Ohio, and provides opportunities for educational support programs to be developed to assist local and state governing organizations, as well as legislative bodies during interscholastic pay to participate policy discussions.

Ultimately, the vital purpose of researching policies further is to “inform the public and policymakers so that they can make better decisions” (p. 205). Understanding the process model within specific districts through the utilization of this framework assists in the collection and analysis of data focused on the research questions in this study.

### **Operational Definitions**

For the purpose of this study, the following terms were used:

***Activity Fee:*** An activity fee is a financial assessment made by a school district for students to participate in an extracurricular activity.

***Athletic Director:*** Athletic administrator who manages the operations of the athletic department within the school district. Also may be discussed as athletic administrator.

***Board of Education:*** The governing body of a local school district (Smith, 2001).

***Co-Curricular:*** Co-curricular activities refer to those activities which complement learning experience of the students in the schools. These activities are connected with academic and are organized or designed to help the students have a better understanding of his course. 'Extra-curricular activities' (or sometimes referred to as Extra Academic Activity) refer to those activities which are totally outside the realm of normal curriculum, but are essential for the all-around development of the students.

***Extracurricular Activity:*** An extracurricular activity is any school-sponsored activity that generally requires practice and competition outside of the school day (Gold-Cunningham, 2000).

***National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS):*** Governing body of interscholastic athletics and activity programs in the United States. The NFHS provides leadership for the administration of education-based interscholastic athletics and activities which support academic achievement, good citizenship and equitable opportunities (National Federation of High School Handbook, 2006-2007).

Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA)

***Participation Fee:*** A participation fee is a financial assessment made by a school district for students to participate in an extracurricular activity (MHSAA, 2003).

***Pay to Participate Policy:*** School board of education approved policy where a school accepts or requires a financial assessment for students to participate in an extracurricular activity (Brady & Giler, 2004).

***Pay to Participate Consistent Fee, Flat Rate Typology:*** A policy model where students are charged a consistent, flat rate fee for participation in a sport. An example would be a \$50-dollar charge per student, per sport. Different variations can be developed within this typology such as a discount for additional participation, as well as maximum costs for a school year.

***Pay to Participate Tiered Discount Variation:*** A policy model variation where the first sport fee is consistent, and a discount is applied for each additional sport that a student athlete may participate in. Example: 1<sup>st</sup> sport = \$250, 2<sup>nd</sup> sport = \$150, 3<sup>rd</sup> sport = \$100. Actual costs vary by school.

***Pay to Play:*** A term used to describe an athletic program policy that charges students a fee to participate.

***State High School Athletic / Activity Associations:*** Active members of the National Federation of High Schools Association. Responsible for sponsoring, directing, and developing

athletics/activities; conducting post-season tournaments; regulation of athletic officials in their state; and service to the member schools in their state (NFHS, 2006).

***Student-Athlete:*** A student athlete is an individual who is enrolled in a secondary high school, and participates on an athletic team sponsored by the high school they attend, or the district in which they reside if home schooled (Hairston-Pinson, 2007).

***Interscholastic Athletics:*** Sports and games organized and sanctioned by secondary schools (high schools). Interscholastic athletics are governed by their state athletic association and

***Northwest District Athletic Board:*** The state of Ohio is divided into six athletic districts that govern the operations and post season tournaments held within their districts.

***Waiver:*** A procedure by which a school excuses or exempts a student from the athletic pay to participate fee. A waiver may include all or part of the fee.

### **Assumptions**

As a former athletic director and high school coach, I dealt firsthand with the impact of budget deficits, and the call to action for a development of a pay to participate policy. I have witnessed the increased utilization of this practice throughout the state, and have worked with athletic directors as they struggled to develop, implement, and evaluate such policies. Over the past two years I have been able to research the current environment within the state, and have collected numerous policies that were publicly available. Based upon information provided by athletic directors in the pilot study completed in conjunction with the OHSAA in 2015, 61% acknowledged that the funds collected were deposited into the district general fund and commented that they were not sure what the funds were exactly used for.

Due to this, and the nature of the position, my interest in the actual policies themselves, how and why they were developed, how and why they are implemented in specific ways, and the

overall evaluation process, or lack thereof, that takes place in defining policy success for districts was the driver for this study. Nearly 87% of athletic administrators responded in the pilot study that their school has not considered discontinuing the fees, and 76% percent believed the fee has not impacted participation rates negatively. I believe many athletic administrators support pay to participate fees because they view them as a necessary evil, and I am curious to describe further specific cases more in depth.

Several assumptions were made regarding the participants and data that will be provided for this study. First, I assumed all data collected from the school districts and the Ohio High School Athletic Association were accurate. Additionally, I assumed that athletic administrators provided accurate information, and had access available to the resources needed. I also assumed that all information gathered from the participating schools including their policy, use, and collection of fees was accurate. Enrollment data, participation data, and other athletic department program data utilized was also assumed accurate. Thirdly, I assumed that the athletic administrator had some previous knowledge of the development process of the pay to participate program currently being used, as well as information regarding the process and assessment of the program. Lastly, I assumed that all participants provided honest responses and answered the questions to the best of his/her ability, providing the most accurate data.

### **Limitations**

This study will examine and describe the development, implementation, and assessment procedures of pay to participate within specific Ohio school districts. Although many studies focus on pay to participate fees and individual student athlete participation rates, the focus of this study is to dive deeper into the policy process model to evaluate the institutional impact of a policy system from all stages of its life cycle. A limitation of this study includes difficulty

obtaining open, honest discussions with athletic administrations regarding pay to participate policies within their specific district. Due to the sensitive nature of this topic, every attempt will be made to interview athletic administrators who will be open and forthright regarding their knowledge and specific components of their school districts policy. Since athletic administrators and districts will be selected through purposeful sampling based upon typology informed by the pilot study, as well as those who commented they would be willing to discuss the policy further will be contacted first, it is important to consider that this may influence the participants' perceptions of how the dialogue mentioned above should be constructed. The study may also be at risk of validity as many of the data necessary will be provided by the athletic administrators, who may not have been in their position during the development and implementation of the policy. Due to the qualitative design interview component, it is important to consider the limitations of the day, time, setting, and overall thoughts surrounding job satisfaction and personal views of the athletic administrator in regards to the questions regarding a potential sensitive topic.

Another limitation is the availability of the actual board approved policy document, as well as all communication through the numerous channels utilized by a specific district to education and discuss their policies with their stakeholders. Since districts operate under local control in regards to pay to participate policy development, it is important to consider the transitioning of stakeholders that may have held roles during development. School district administrators, school board personnel, and community leaders have an impact on policy development. The value placed on extracurricular programming and interscholastic athletics within a school community plays a role and is not something that was considered, other than through the school's mission, vision, and values. Again, due to the evolutionary component of

strategic planning processes and policy needs due to fluctuating funding models and concerns, the stakeholders involved may change, and specific views may have been altered.

One additional limitation of this study regards the focus on a few specific school districts throughout the state. Although the analysis was conducted on schools with the same pay to participate policy model, which was selected due to it being the model implemented by the majority of schools in the state of Ohio during the 2014-2015 school year, the uniqueness of each district and specific resources limits the ability to generalize for policies throughout the state.

### **Significance of the Study**

Although pay to participate policies have been utilized for over 100 years, there is little academic research that analyzes and describes specific district policy development, implementation, and evaluation methods and procedures, as well as the definition of what constitutes a successful policy. As the state of Ohio continues to discuss further potential legislation surrounding pay to participate policies, it is important for school districts to understand the environment regarding the policy process of development, implementation, and evaluation of districts utilizing a fee, and have access to descriptions of specific cases to provide support for moving forward as they implement a new, evaluate an existing, or consider other potential policy developments.

### **Summary**

This case study analysis of specific pay to participate policies will utilize narrative inquiry to construct rich, descriptive narratives providing insight into each specific districts experience and unique attributes. This research will be accomplished using a multitude of documents and interviews that will be analyzed to understand the development, implementation

and evaluation methods and procedures with districts in the state of Ohio. The study will be comprised of the following chapters and focus areas:

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose and significance of the study, the major research questions, limitations and definitions of terms.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature pertaining to interscholastic athletics and the utilization of pay to participate policies.

Chapter 3 outlines an overview of the qualitative research design and methodology used for the study. The chapter outlines in detail the procedures used in the selection of the participants, individual interviews, data collection, data analysis, and pertinent issues.

Chapter 4 presents the results of data collection.

Chapter 5 summarizes and discusses the findings of the study, the conclusions and implications of the study, implications for practitioners, and suggestions for future research.

## **CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This study aims to explore and describe further specific consistent fee, flat rate typology pay to participate policies in Ohio school districts with a focus on the goals and factors contributing to their development, the implementation methods integrated within the policies, as well as the criterion and processes utilized to evaluate the success of these policies. In this chapter a review of the literature is provided that is associated with the major research questions of this study. This review of literature will be organized into seven sections, beginning with brief review of the theoretical framework identified in chapter one. The second and third sections will discuss interscholastic athletics in United States school districts and school financial concerns. Additional literature will discuss information relating to the national environment trends of high school athletics, the cost of administering interscholastic athletic programs, as well as budget concerns plaguing athletic departments from a current perspective as well as a historical context. Section four and five will examine the history and transgression of pay to participate policies and fees in regards constitutional rights, the legality of utilization, as well as potential access concerns. Finally, the last two sections will provide an overview of specific policy models prevalent in Ohio today, and a synthesis summarizing the literature presented throughout the chapter.

### **Theoretical Framework**

When considering the increased, and widespread utilization of pay to participate policies, it is important to consider the why, how, and what surrounding specific policies development, implementation, and evaluation, as well as the role and definition of success within a specific school district.



In order to study this further, components from the policy process model by Kraft and Furlong (2015) will be utilized as an overarching guide for the document and interview analysis. As stated earlier, there is not a strong literature base surrounding interscholastic athletic pay to participate fees with a specific policy focus. Much of the previous research has focused on the impact of extracurricular activities on student success, legal concerns of participation fees, as well as the impact of pay to participate fees on participation rates (Archibold, 2001; Brady & Glier, 2004, Bucy, 2013; Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003; Finch, 2014; Gardner, 2014; Hardy, 1997; Holland, 2014; Jable, 1986; Kendall, 1984; Marsh & Kleitman, 2002; Mitchell & Hoff, 2006; Neish, 2005; Rees, 2008; Whitley, 1999). It is important to note that the development of policy is unique to each district, and not all will be accessible or applicable within each realm. Ultimately Kraft and Furlong provide a great starting foundation, and the key components within the policy process model must be considered individually and in coordination with one another during the development of new policies, as well as during the evaluation of those currently in existence to achieve the critical purpose of “informing the public and policymakers so that they can make better decisions” (p. 205).

### **Interscholastic Athletics in United States Secondary Schools**

Organized athletic competition within United States school districts traces its roots to the first documented introduction of physical education in school curriculum at the Round Hill School in Massachusetts in 1823 (Pruter, 2013). By the late 1850's, the first organized intramural competition occurred between classes, followed by interscholastic contests between notable private schools such as Phillips Andover Academy and Phillips Exeter Academy located in New England during that same decade. School teams were originally seen as a way to channel

boyhood energy in a positive direction and create an overall sense of community pride for the school (Mitchell & Hoff, 2006).

During the turn of the century, school attendance rates escalated and athletic participation was introduced as a potential solution to deter the influx of youth gang involvement, increasing youth crime, as well as many other societal ills (Mirel, 1982). Many stakeholders felt that athletics could be utilized as a platform by which to structure the spare time of youth more intentionally, leading to a decline in many current social issues, (Jable 1986, Hairston-Pinson, 2007). Prior to this time, sports teams were traditionally developed, organized, and operated by the students. Early interscholastic athletic opportunities were often developed by college students who provided necessary components such as coaching and officiating to high school communities, as well as provided a means of recruiting high school athletes for organized college teams (Blackburn et al., 2013).

As they became more institutionalized, faculty oversight began being placed on school teams to control programs and implement further the education of desired character traits, which were often developed and run initially by student fortitude (Mirel, 1982; NIAAA, 2013). This further integration within the curriculum expedited the process of adding full time physical education teachers who were qualified to coach as district staff members (Hairson-Pinson, 2007). The educational philosophy that began to drive interscholastic athletic programs became ingrained in the school doctrine, which still exists today (Jable, 1986).

As more programs developed, governing organizations within states began to form in the early 1900's, leading to the development of the National Federation of High School Associations (NFHS) in 1921 which specifically focuses on the writing of national competition rule guidelines (Hairson-Pinson, 2007; NIAAA, 2013). This governance structure hoped to act as a bridge for

athletic programming and educational philosophy through minimum requirements and potential motivation. Interscholastic athletics has historically played a role bridging gaps addressing societal issues such as the desegregation movement of the 1950's, as well as the equal opportunity for participation movement in the 1970's. As a result of the 1972 Title IX legislation, interscholastic athletics experienced a "40-year increase of female participants from 300,000 to more than 3 million at the high school level." (NIAAA, 2013).

According to the annual study of interscholastic athletic participation completed by the National Federation of State High School Athletic Association (NFHS), nearly 8 million high school students competed in a state sanctioned athletic competition in the 2015-2016 school year. This rate of participation has increased by nearly 4 million since the first survey was completed in 1972 (NFHS, 2016). Although participation data has only been documented over the past 40 years, interscholastic athletics have been an integral part of the educational experience since their beginnings in the nineteenth century. Pruter 2013, indicates that high school sports have permeated the fabric of society since their inception. He stated that nearly one third of students enrolled in the 27,500 secondary schools located in the United States participated in interscholastic athletics, making high school sports the "largest organized sports program in the nation" (p. 2).

As the discussion continues to center around the importance and value of interscholastic athletics in secondary schools, and the funding model used to maintain such programs, a common topic stems around the notion of removing athletics from the interscholastic environment, and solely offering participation through external club sports. While many agree this may be a solution to assist with financial concerns, others seek to evaluate the loss of the educational doctrine integrated within interscholastic athletic programming. To participate in

interscholastic sports, all schools and state organizations have minimum requirements students must meet. Grade point averages, credit and class requirements, as well as behavioral conduct are just a few items that are often integrated into the administration of a high school sports program. If sports are moved externally, these requirements are lost and a foundational educational component for motivating many students to attend and complete high school may be lost too.

The United States is only one of a handful of countries where students have the opportunity to compete in extracurricular activities as part of an educational based program through their school district (Howard, 2014). As that number continues to increase coupled with continued federal and state budget cuts, the ability to keep the door of opportunity for educational based athletics is getting harder and harder.

### **The National Federation of State High School Associations**

The National Federation for High School Activities (NFHS) based out of Indianapolis, Indiana, continuously updates its website article entitled to provide a current overview and outline of the importance of extracurricular activities. Along with the member state associations, the NFHS “champions interscholastic sport and performing arts activities because they promote citizenship and sportsmanship” (2016, p. 1). While many consider interscholastic athletics, as well as many other extracurricular activities, as being too costly for a school to cover within its own operating budget, the NFHS (2016) states that “from a cost standpoint, activity programs are an exceptional bargain when matched against the overall school district’s education budget” (p. 1). They view the one to three percent cost, or less in many cases, of an overall school budget to provide high school activity programs that complement the classroom academic lessons as a tremendous bargain, even though many schools look in that direction initially when cost cutting

policies and plans are formulated (Gardner, 2014). Gardner, the current executive director of the NFHS, stated that even in cases where schools are charging as much as \$500 per sport, that is extremely small compared to what many pay for “out of school club programs, where the educational component is missing” (p. 1). When considering this in relationships to the increasing popularity and participation in non-school sanctioned travel and club teams, Scandale (2016) found in a study completed by The University of Florida that parents pay an average of \$2,266 annually. Holland (2014) documented a personal reflection case provided by a University of Florida sport management professor, describing that he spent just over \$18,000 for his daughter’s travel soccer year. After factoring regional and national tournament entry fees, coaching salaries, and personal travel, the rising cost of sport participation are making harder for low-income youth to participate (Holland, 2014).

The NFHS views high school activities as an extension of a school districts educational programming, and generalizes that students who participate have higher grade point averages, better attendance records, lower dropout rates, and fewer discipline problems than other students (Mahoney, 2000; Marsh & Kleitman, 2002, Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1999; Rees, 2008). Their stance and focus on the educational importance has led to the usage of “co-curricular” and “education-based” rather than extracurricular, highlighting that activities, including athletics, “support the academic mission of schools, are inherently educational, and are a significant part of the school or education system” (National Federation of State High School Associations, 2016, p.3). The NFHS outlines seven key pillars in their case which they feel drive the impact of co-curricular activities including better educational outcomes, enhanced school engagement and sense of belonging, positive youth development/life skills, healthier behaviors, post high school

positive results, developing better citizens, and school and community benefits (National Federation of State High School Associations, 2016).

Studies have been conducted to examine these pillars and outcomes in schools through the United States. Rosewater (2009) analyzed organized sports and educational outcomes in Oakland, California and suggested that the cognitive skills gained through sports may effect information processing in everyday life. In Minnesota, a study of 300 high schools revealed a higher average grade point average of nearly 0.2 points, as well as better attendance rates (Born, 2007). Additionally, a study completed by the North Carolina High School Athletic Association (NCHSAA) showed an even larger increase of grade point average with a student athlete mean of 2.86 and only a 1.96 for non-athletes. It is also revealed a decrease in school discipline reports of 10%, a 9% discrepancy in dropout rates, as well as a 99.5% graduation rate for athletes vs. only a 94.6% for non-athletes (Whitley, 1995).

The NFHS concedes that co-curricular activities promote positive youth development and provide opportunities for learning numerous skills and values that may not be explicitly taught in the academic classroom. A survey study of life skill development in student athletes outlined that “parents, coaches, and student athletes all perceive high school sport as positive and is a context where life skills are developed, that student-athletes score higher on most development assets than students who are not in high school sports, and that student athletes appear to be more engaged and enjoy school more as a result of participation in high school sport” (Williamson et al., 2013). Studies completed by Gardner (2008) and Rouse (2012) further contend that school sponsored activities provide opportunities that are more relevant for later occupational success, and are a main mode of attaining leadership positions to assist in learning skills related to their future. The NFHS (2016) indicated that “participation in organized activities during high school

is positively associated with post-secondary educational attainment, voting, volunteering, and occupational factors 2 & 8 years after high school” (p. 9).

Schools offer a unique setting to extend skill development through intentional and consistent actions within the administration of co-curricular programs. The NFHS ultimately believes that “schools are the center of learning, where teaching and learning are intentionally designed and implemented, and if communities want to be intentional about what students learn, it is imperative to incorporate education-based co-curricular activities” (“The case for high school activities”, p. 13). A quote by Danny Erickson, the athletic director of Canton High School in Massachusetts, eloquently summarizes the concern by interscholastic sport advocates in that “whenever we look at cutting sports, we’re taking away kids identities – and with that, our math, science and English programs are going to suffer, and we don’t want that either” (Popke, 2007).

### **School Financial Concerns and Interscholastic Athletics**

School budget constraints is not a new phenomenon, and charging fees for transportation, textbooks, laboratory usage, school supplies, as well as copies has been an integral part of school financial budgeting for years (Rausch, 2006; Kendall, 1984; Chapman, 2009). Published articles by Keeler (1903) outlining the financial responsibilities of high school athletic managers, as well as Wagenhorst (1926) set the beginning evaluative stage for the importance of researching interscholastic athletic funding.

In 1992, the Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles (AAFLA) hosted a conference to increase awareness of the current funding issues, and collaboratively work to find solutions moving forward. Anita L. DeFrantz, the President of the AAFLA at the time, stated that “two points came through loud and clear: high school athletics make a positive contribution to high

school education, and that the funding crisis is here now, and it requires solutions now, not later” (AAFLA, 1992, p. 1). During the 1992 conference, the executive director of the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Durbin acknowledged that “tax-based general funding for high school sports across the country is decreasing at a precipitous rate” (AAFLA, p. 3, para. 2). Mr. Durbin explained that high school sports have gone through a five stage life cycle beginning with total resistance, following by tolerance, recognition of values, refinement, and maintenance. During his keynote address, he cited the 1977 defeat of a school bond issue in Rockford, Illinois, as an example of “what happens when the public abandons support for sports. All programs in Rockford except academics were halted” (AAFLA, 1992, p. 3). Slavkin (1992), a member of the Los Angeles Board of Education, and a panelist at the 1992 conference, stated that although he feels sports an integral part of education, when faced with a 400-million-dollar deficit like the Los Angeles school district had encountered, he believed they “ought to be kept alive within the context of a lessor priority than basic instructional functions. Sports comes second” (p. 4, para. 2). Since athletics are considered non-academic and exist outside of the classroom, administrators are often faced with a dilemma during times of financial distress on where they fit in the overall educational experience.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, average spending per student for school districts has increased 44% over the past two decades (Simon, 2011). Since 2009, state funding of education has witnessed a \$17-billion-dollar decrease, with nearly a \$1.8-billion-dollar deficit in the state of Ohio due to a combination of diminishing tax revenue and governmental funding changes coupled with higher expenses caused by increased costs in healthcare, personnel, utilities, and technology. Since almost 50% of school funding typically comes from state budgets, and another 10% from the federal government, the current decline is having a



significant impact on how schools allocate financial resources to provide a “free and appropriate public education” (Howard, 2014). Increases in standardized testing and the boosting of resources for special education which are both mandated by law, have added pressure to district pocket books. Howard (2014) states that since the cost of educating students is increasing each year and state legislatures are limiting the amount of revenue schools can generate through local property taxes, school districts are looking more often to increase enrollments, as well as cut funds supporting interscholastic athletic and activities programs to help their bottom line due to the nature of these programs being considered extra.

Many believe that the student fee discussion constitutes a small aspect of the larger school finance debate (Brady & Glier, 2004). Stealth versions of fee policies have been in existence for many years, often with specific focal areas of transportation fees, equipment fees, or required fundraising. As education budgets continue to shrink, more and more schools are considering pay to participate fees to cover some, or all, of the costs for the district. During times of levy failures, school districts must make sacrifices, and often fees for interscholastic athletics and other extra-curricular activities are topics of discussion.

Simon (2011) stated that due to a levy failure in 2009, Medina Local Schools located outside of Cleveland, Ohio, implemented a pay to participate fee for interscholastic athletic programs totaling over \$600 per student. This fee policy led to a 21% decrease in participation over the next two years. Medina City Schools also extended charges into exclusive academic programs, such as a requirement of \$260 for participation in National Honor Society (Simon, 2011). In the southwest region of the state, Fairfield City Schools, a suburban Cincinnati district, announced in the spring of 2004 it was eliminating extracurricular activities for the coming school year, including sports, as well as other programs like National Honor Society (Brady &

Glier, 2004). The situation at Fairfield was unique considering the fact that a group of parents known as P.A.C.E., which stands for Promoting Activities for a Complete Education, put together the user fee system (Brady & Glier, 2004). According to the structure of the program, P.A.C.E. would be required to write a check to the treasurer of Fairfield City Schools if the levy failed, at the beginning of each season. Another group in the Fairfield district known as C.A.R.E., or Citizens for Accountability and Results in Education, focuses on building a majority to vote down levies, which they had successfully done the previous three years (Brady & Glier, 2004). Their founder, Arnold Engel, stated he “opposes a rise in taxes because he believes the school district does not spend its money responsibly” (Brady & Glier, 2004, para. 33). Engel also states he does not oppose the pay to participate plan, as he believes “the only reason to cut sports and extracurricular activities is to blackmail the public to pass the levy” (para. 34). Another C.A.R.E. member stated they plan to pay for their son’s estimated \$630 fee to participate in track, because they would “much rather pay it than raise taxes and force senior citizens to move out” (para. 35).

While many may view funding issues in interscholastic athletics as a recent phenomenon, it has been prevalent and concerning for over a hundred years. “The struggle to fund public schools and the use of unpopular pay to play programs to cover funding gaps is not a phenomenon of the twenty first century” (Rausch, 2006, p. 584). Pay to participate fees generate needed funds for school districts by shifting financial responsibility for sport participation to parents. Due to the longevity of pay to participate policy usage, it has become a legitimate practice within the institutional environment of American public education (Heinze & Zdroik, 2016). While schools in many states have been dealing with financial concerns for years, state

funding of public education is expected to continue its downward spiral for several more years, and will increasingly affect extracurricular activity programs (Gardner, 2014).

Bucy (2013) outlines that state legislature's delegate revenue generation to local governments and school districts, which often comes nearly exclusively from property taxes within the specific district. The vast majority of financial assistance for educating American high school students does not come from the federal government, as it only makes up 8% of the entire country's education expenditure, which equates to about \$880 per student annually (p. 283). Dr. Tenopir, the Chief Operating Officer of the NFHS, and a former high school superintendent and executive director of the Nebraska School Activities Association, offered his views in the 2014 NFHS publication, *High School Today*, stating:

there is not much of the country that has not been impacted by the shortage of funds for educational programming. In many cases, state legislatures have limited the amount of money that schools can generate through local property taxes, and states are struggling to maintain past levels of funding from state aid to education as the cost of educating students continues to increase on an annual basis. (p. 11)

Brady & Glier (2004) stated that more schools continue to implement pay to participate programs to offset shrinking education budgets, and is becoming a national phenomenon. With continued levy failures, schools are working to sustain current program offerings. Ronnie Carter, the former executive director of the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association (TSSAA), stated in 2004 that "when I go to national meetings and listen to people it is clear that we are facing a financial crisis with funding high school athletics" (Brady & Glier, 2004, para. 8). Numerous states saw drastic increases in pay to play programs during the late 1990's and early 2000's. Gillis (1995) stated that about 60% of schools in Colorado implemented a pay to

participate policy during the 1995 school year. The state of Kansas saw a 50% increase in usage in its 302 school districts between 2001 to 2004. Pennsylvania saw a 12% increase in growth between 2010-2012 (Saltullo, 2013), and Michigan experienced an unprecedented rise from 10% to over 50% of schools implementing a fee between 1994-2011 (MHSAA, 2013). In 2012, the state of Indiana reported no pay to play activity, but during the most recent athletic director meeting, funding and program cuts were among the biggest issues, with a few schools having cut or eliminated middle school sports, and others implementing pay to play fees for the first time (Howard, 2014). In a study conducted by The University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, 61 percent of respondents reported paying fees for participation in middle and high school sports (Holland, 2014). It is not surprising as available financial resources become stagnate or diminish, school officials continue to consider pay to participate fee policies for extracurricular activities, often referred to as pay to play (Dayton & McCarthy, 1992).

As financial concerns in districts continue to develop further, proponents for pay to participate fees often argue that these pay to participate fees, sometimes described as user fees or user taxes, are a fairer way to generate the revenue needed to support programs that only a portion of the student may participate in (Pennsylvania School Board Association, 2010). User fees have existed for many years not only in interscholastic athletics, but also in school-provided programs or services that require a nominal fee such as driver's education, textbook supplies, and pupil transportation. Popke (2007) stated that a major fear for many athletic directors regarding the increased utilization of user fees within a district is the potential that community members will believe that booster clubs should provide large amounts of revenue, and ultimately that the district "can run sports without tax dollars" (para. 4). Hardy (1986) discussed that "boards of education have begun to cut back or eliminate those programs though to be too expensive or of

little educational value” (p. 48). This overall consideration of where athletics fits within the structure of educational programming is a key element in the pay to participate discussion.

### **Participation Fees and Free Public Education**

The historical construct of sports being offered and funded by the school district hinges on the notion that interscholastic athletics are an integral part of a free public education and a constitutional right. This constitutional right is a task of the states, and is not explicitly mentioned within the constitution of the United States (Bucy, 2013). Pennsylvania was the first to ratify a constitution guaranteeing economically disadvantaged children a free public education, followed by Massachusetts in 1827, which extended that right by creating a free public school system that served all of Massachusetts’s children (Bucy, 2013). Bauries (2011) states that to some degree every state constitution provides for a free public education, but the funds and methods utilized are left up to the state legislature for oversight. Hubsch (1992) contends that although every state constitution contains a provision relating to providing citizens of each state a free and appropriate public education most state courts and legislators have held the notion that this does not include extracurricular activities. In general, student participation in sports is considered a privilege, and not a right, by governmental standards (Ryan, 2003). Conversely, Mitchell and Hoff (2006) outline that when a state constitution guarantees a free public education, it means schools may not charge fees for participation in programs. While this is not the case in society today, the underlying debate regarding schools fully funding interscholastic athletic programs centers around the legal interpretation of what constitutes a free and appropriate education and the murkiness with which the vulnerability of any “extra” program is able to become fee based (Archibold, 2001).

When analyzing the state constitutional provisions, specific phrases surrounding public and common schools most widely utilized within the written state constitutional provisions must further be defined and applied to the current situations within each state. Some of the most frequent phrases used to describe public or common schools include “thorough and efficient,” “general,” “uniform,” and routinely “free.” Eight states make provisions to “secure the people the advantages and opportunities of education,” while 18 states provide “enthusiastic clauses that introduce education as a democratic imperative” (Hunter, n.d.). For legal purposes, most states do not recognize athletics, band, and other student clubs and activities as part of the guaranteed basic public education, thus providing an open door for charging fees to cover their costs (Pennsylvania School Board Association, 2010). Archibold (2001) detailed that “although all states embrace the responsibility of providing a free public education, the question on what constitutes an adequate education is still being debated in courts” (para. 1, 2001).

Since 1851, the Ohio state constitution has guaranteed the requirement of the legislature to provide a “thorough and efficient” public school system to its citizens (Neff, 2007). This phrase was adopted to entitle students to high quality educational opportunities and assigned the state the responsibility to ensure this occurred. Article VI, Section 2, which sets forth the legal foundation for public schooling in the state reads:

The General Assembly shall make such provisions, by taxation, or otherwise, as, with the income arising from the school trust fund, will secure a thorough and efficient system of common schools through the state, but no religious or other sect, or sects, shall ever have any exclusive right to, or control of, any part of the school funds of this state. (OH Const. Art. VI, 2; O’Brien & Woodrum, 2004)

The common school envisioned by the state of Ohio was set in motion to provide “citizen equality, and social and economic mobility; and safeguard liberty by developing a polity capable of self-government” (O’Brien & Woodrum, 2004). A 12-year court battle in the *DeRolph vs. State of Ohio* case generated numerous decisions, and in the process the court stated “the trial lead to one inescapable conclusion – Ohio’s elementary and secondary public schools are neither thorough or efficient, as required by the Ohio constitution (Pittner & Carleton, p. 114, 2010). Although the Ohio Supreme court found that the state’s funding system led to an inadequate education in poor districts and ordered the legislature to “create an entirely new school financing system, including a definition of adequacy,” the court ultimately allowed the legislature the power to define adequacy, and limited its own abilities to do much more than to tell them to try again (Pittner & Carleton, p. 114, 2010).

Even though state courts nationwide require that school finance policies ensure equitable or adequate public education, continued concerns have arisen in regards to the constitutionality of funding models, and the equity of the actual education being delivered (Heise, 1995). When the definition of what a thorough and efficient education is analyzed, it must be considered whether a fee imposed activity constitutes an integral part of a student’s education and if it contradicts the free and adequate school guarantee embedded in state’s constitution (Chmelynski, 2002). Ultimately, Chmelynski (2002) states that the National Association of State Boards of Education believe that athletic fees raise the issue of whether a particular fee runs contrary to the state’s constitutional responsibility to provide for free public education.

### **Legal Concerns of Pay to Participate Policies**

Due to the increasing costs of educating students coupled with increased funding cuts, programs considered outside the necessary, and historic thorough and efficient educational

curricular programming are often considered extras and placed on the proverbial chopping block first (Ripley, 2013). When the court ruled in *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez* that Americans enjoy no fundamental right to an education under the Constitution of the United States, it relegated all legal challenges to any public education issue to state court jurisdiction (Rausch, 2006; San Antonio Ind. Sch. Dist. v. Rodriguez, 1973). As mentioned previously, each state constitution is charged with providing its citizens the right a free public education, but the interpretation of what is included in that right is a differentiating legal component (Bastress, 2003; Chapman, 2009). Very few state judicial and/or legislative bodies have defined where extracurricular activities, and more specifically interscholastic athletics fall in the constitutional education clause. In the early 1970's, several courts upheld the ability to impose fees for extracurricular participation. One specific example occurred in 1970 when the Supreme Court of Idaho upheld a school district's policy, noting that extracurricular activities are not necessary elements of a high school career (Dayton & McCarthy, 1992; Paulson v. Minidoka County School District, 1970). Later in 1985, a Michigan court of appeals ruled fees were "acceptable because the funds were required only for extracurricular activities, and no school credit was awarded for participation" (MHSAA, 2003, p.3).

As many state courts have upheld pay for play programs, they have also developed validity of student fees tests in the process (*Bond v. Michigan*, 1970). The first test came as a result of *Bond v. Public Schools of Ann Arbor School District*, and a review of the state constitutional mandate by the Supreme Court of Michigan. The Michigan state constitution states that "the legislature shall maintain and support a system of free public elementary and secondary schools as defined by law" (Ryan, 2003, p. 3). Based upon an earlier precedent set in the *Paulson v. Minidoka County School District No. 331* case in Idaho, the court held that fees



could not be charged for “necessary elements of any school’s activity” or as stated in testimony by a Michigan Department of Education member, “any integral part of the elementary and secondary education” (Ryan, 2003, p. 3). The fees in question in this case were assessed for textbooks and school supplies, and were found unconstitutional. This analysis test is often referred to as “The Paulson Analysis,” and provides a framework many courts have followed for determining the constitutionality of student fees in all areas of education (Harris, 1987).

The second test utilized by state courts is known as the “Hamer test”, drawing its name from the result of the *Hamer v. Board of Education of School District No. 109* in Illinois. The Illinois state constitution states that “the general assembly shall provide a thorough and efficient system of free schools” (Ryan, 2003, p. 3). The court found that the term “free schools”, developed by the constitutional convention, did not include free textbooks. States that choose to use this analysis often uphold fees for items that students often utilize for their own use (Harris, 1987). Ryan (2003) states that there are disparities amongst states that utilize the Hamer Test as their method of analysis in regards to considering the constitutionality of fees for extracurricular activities or elective courses.

The final test framework developed as a result of a decision of the Supreme Court of Montana. In *Granger v. Cascade County School District No. 1*, the court held that “the obligation to provide a free public education does not completely prohibit school districts from charging students fees” (Ryan, 2003, p. 3). They moved forward with the notion of testing whether the fee was “reasonably related to a recognized academic and educational goal of the particular school system”, and if so, it was deemed a constitutional part of a schools’ educational goals (*Granger v. Cascade County School District No. 1*, 1972; Ryan, 2003, p. 3).

A few states have declared pay to participate fees unconstitutional, initiated by the 1984 case of *Hartzell v. Connell*, in which the California Supreme Court ruled that public schools may not charge a fee for student participation in extracurricular activities such as drama, music, and athletic competition. Based upon their interpretation of the California State Constitution, the free school clause calls for legislature to “provide for a system of common schools by which a free school shall be kept up and supported in each district...This provision entitles the ‘youth of the State’ ...to be educated at the public expense” (Yurek, 1996, p.18). They ultimately stated that if a school is going to offer a program, then they must come up with a way to fund it without the utilization of additional fees. As the court stated in its findings, “a student’s participation in that program cannot be made to depend upon his or her family’s decision whether to pay a fee or buy a toaster” (Ryan, 2003, p. 6). Interestingly, in 2012, California lawmakers passed further legislation through AB 1575 that prevents school districts from requiring students to pay a fee for a number of educational activities such as attendance at summer school, the use of books and lab equipment or supplies, and participation in sports, but does allow schools permissions to ask for donations (Tomaka, 2015). The increased discussion at the legislative levels throughout the country warrant further researcher into specific cases, and better understanding of the intricacies of policy development.

Due to the disparity and absence of any consistent voice regarding the legality of pay to participate fees, as well as lack of prior litigation in most states, it is extremely difficult for schools to predict the legality of most systems (Neish, 2005). Putnam (2015) states that “as districts continue to tighten their budgets, school boards everywhere have decided that extracurriculars now more often than not fall in the category of frills” (p. 179). Most states have allowed schools to continue to create and impose fees, even if it means using creativity to define

a specific fee for a specific expenditure such as transportation, insurance, athletic training, etc. (NIAAA, 2013). As the policies continue to be implemented and become further institutionalized throughout the nation, their practice gains further relevance in the current additional funding discussion for many districts.

### **Pay to Participate Fees and Access Concerns**

A major point of consideration for school districts that implement, or are considering the development and implementation of a pay to participate fee, is the concern regarding access and equity. Some argue that because fees present the “potential for a stratification of schools and districts along socioeconomic lines, their use is inconsistent with the concept of free public schooling in the United States” (Pennsylvania School Board Association, 2010, p. 2). Mitchell and Hoff (2006) contend that “pay to participate represents one more obstacle to engaging students, and it is one that is likely to have a negative effect on attendance, achievement, discipline, and graduation. So why would any school or administrator support a policy that puts up additional barriers to participation?” (p. 233). School districts must also be cognizant of the potential of a pay to participate plan violating an individual student 504 or Individualized Education Plan (IEP), which are binding governmental contracts, as well as consider implications for Title IX compliance issues regarding access as schools further analyze and implement such plans (Pennsylvania School Board Association, 2010).

A study completed by The University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital indicated that 42% of parents stated that at least one of their high school or middle school students participated in school sponsored athletics. Of the 58% whose children did not participate, 14% cited cost as the reason for non-participation (2016). The study also found that 61% of students nationally pay a user fee, with the average price averaging \$139 per sport, up

from an average of \$93 in 2012 (2016). This price does not include the additional items students have historically paid for themselves such as equipment, travel, private lessons, and special events, which averages nearly \$302 per participant, per sport. Mitchell & Hoff (2006) outlined research stating that when user fees exceed \$300, the participation rate in school activities drops by 30% or more.

The discrepancy of participant accessibility is most visible when evaluating participation rates of underprivileged segments. The 2016 study update by The University of Michigan's C.S. Mott Children's Hospital also outlined that nearly 27% of parents in households earning less than \$60,000 per year said the cost of school activities caused a drop in participation for their child. Conversely, households earning more than \$60,000 experienced only a 12% drop, although this increased nearly 7% since the 2012 study. The report also stated that the decrease in participation data in lower income families reflected the 24% of middle and high school students within this demographic "who did not participate in a single sport, arts, or club during the 2015-2016 school year" (The University of Michigan, 2016, para. 4). Ultimately, only one in four lower income parents forced children to cut back on extracurricular participation (The University of Michigan, 2016).

Putnam (2014) states that there is a growing extracurricular class gap of over 20% that has doubled between affluent youth and poor youth over the past 30 years. Although districts are required to offer a free public education, this increasing class gap limits the opportunity for the intended diffusion of soft skills and character education within the school environment, as an integral part of the curricular structure. User fees penalize the poorest students who are at the most risk. Extracurricular activity participation has been linked to decreased juvenile crime, increased sense of connectedness, as well as increased self-esteem and academic achievement

(Bucy, 2013). Snyder and Spreitzer (1977) stated that athletic participation can be the confidence booster needed to be academically successful. They suggested that lower achieving students may utilize athletic participation as motivation to improve academic performance, graduate from high school, and move into higher education institutions. Whitley (1999) agrees that athletic participation “serves as a positive motivational factor for students and there is a direct relationship between participation in athletics and academic success” (p.228). He also found a nearly 23% higher mean grade point averages of students who participated in athletics to compared to those who did not.

The National Federation of State High School Associations (2016) includes positive statements regarding the impact of participation on reducing drop-out rates and discipline problems, as well as having long-lasting effects. It also outlines the importance of activities being an extension of the classroom and acting as a linchpin to further support the mission of school districts. McNeal (1998) noted that “it is likely that differential access and participation results in a less-than equitable distribution of various social skills” (p. 183). Studies have also revealed the importance of extracurricular participation related to college admission (Watson, 2009). Thompson (2008) found that extracurricular participation in high school activities is an important factor in consideration of college acceptance. Such participation “speaks to a student’s character and to his or her ability to communicate” (Watson, 2009, p. 4). It is important to consider how the implementation of pay to participate policies within a district may impact access for opportunities that provide much more than sport competition.

The implications for social equity is significant, given that participation in sport is linked to not only educational pursuits and achievement, but also occupation and physical benefits throughout the course of their life (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003; Heinze & Zdroik,

2016). A study of nearly 140,000 Kansas high school students through data examined provided by the Kansas High School Athletic Association (KHSAA) and the Kansas State Department of Education, revealed that “athletes earned higher grades, graduated at a higher rate, dropped out of school level frequently, and scored higher on state assessments than did non-athletes” (NFHS, n.d., p. 5). The study also concluded that non-white student participants contributed to the overall results having much higher graduation rates and lower dropout rates than non-white students who did not participate in activities. Based upon this, Lumpkin and Favor (2012) said that although pay to play policies “may seem like a reasonable alternative to eliminating sport programs altogether, it discriminates against students who do not have the financial means to pay for membership on a high school sports team” (p. 58).

In 2010, the Pennsylvania School Board Associations Education Research and Policy Center completed an in depth survey and analysis overview of pay to play programs in Pennsylvania and throughout the United States. Their main concern focused on educating schools on the importance of providing modifications to ensure availability and access to underprivileged families. They also insisted that any Pennsylvania school considering, or currently implementing a pay to play policy, have clear guidelines and criteria for financial eligibility and waiver assistance to “promote consistency and enhance opportunities for economically disadvantaged students” (Pennsylvania School Board Association, 2010, p. 3). Interestingly enough, in cases such as *Granger v. Cascade County School District No. 1* in Montana discussed in a previous section, the court struck down the use of a fee waiver program because they felt that it was inherently degrading. The California Supreme Court in *Hartzell v. Connell* also held that fee waiver programs were degrading to the students they were designed to benefit (Ryan, 2003). Many school districts do allow fee waiver programs, as well as parents of

other students and booster club organizations to step in to provide assistance with fees that students are unable to pay (Sherman, 2002). Data from the OHSAA survey of Athletic Administrators completed in 2015 outlined that 54% of districts implemented a maximum yearly charge per athlete, 47% constructed a maximum yearly charge per family, 58% offered some sort of waiver program. UP2US sports, a coalition of more than 1,000 nonprofit organizations who believe sports are an avenue to end academic failure and help provide a level playing field, state that “fees and complicated waiver systems for eligible students are significant barriers to entry that disproportionately impact disadvantaged youth and subsequently help perpetuate the achievement gap” (UP2US, 2014).

Economic inequity can play a significant role in participation in districts where pay to participate policies have replaced free athletic opportunities (Rosewater, 2009). Schomberg (1998) also believes that inner city school systems athletic programs are hit harder with budget cuts due to a problem he refers to as “municipal overburden” (p. 145). This overburden is experienced by educational systems in poverty stricken areas in larger cities because they continuously compete for tax dollars with “other high-demand public services such as public health, mass transit, and crime prevention” (Ryan, 2003, p. 5). Ultimately when faced with the choice of cutting the sport, or finding other sources of money, many school systems choose to implement pay to play programs.

With potential inabilities to participate due to costs, studies of school districts throughout the United States have analyzed the immediate impact on student access and participation in extracurricular activities. The New Albany school district, an affluent northeastern suburb of Columbus, Ohio, raised its fees from \$50 to \$625 and saw a 16 percent drop in athlete participation even with financial help for 100 students (Siegel, 2015). This fee increase came on

the tail end of a failed operating levy, forcing the district to cut 53 teachers and make numerous other reductions to their budget and offerings. While nearly half of the schools in the state of Ohio that charge provide some sort of waiver or financial assistance program, students that may not qualify for free and reduced lunch programs could be impacted even more as costs continue to increase. In the case of Medina City Schools referenced earlier, their implementation of a \$660 dollar per sport fee following a levy failure, and the lack of any waiver or financial assistance program provision saw their track team participation decline from 192 to only 92., , Although 16% of Medina students are considered disadvantaged, rising costs for all components of school including academic books and national honor society, placed a choice in front of students and their families, and created access concerns. Their superintendent at the time, Mr. Stepp said he disliked the fees, but that it may not be all that bad, commenting that “students have to realize, as our country is realizing, that you can’t have everything, and we all have to make tough choices.” (Simon, 2011, para. 6).

Heinze and Zdroik state this growing practice of utilizing pay to participate policies is “part of a global trend towards privatization of provision of high school physical education” (2016, p. 2). Although there may be benefits associated with this notion of privatization, and while parents are becoming increasingly accustomed to paying fees for activities, the institutional trend has social justice implications (Heinze & Zdroik, 2016, p. 3). When faced with choices regarding the best learning opportunities for their children, parents are consumers who do not have equal resources, causing “a disparity that may lead to lack of participation opportunities, as well as fewer opportunities to acquire physical and social capital” (Heinze & Zdroik, 2016, p. 3).



Melnick and Sabo (1992) studied further specific subgroups of high school student populations concluding that depending on location, athletic participation did significantly impact a decrease dropout rates for some minority youth. Eide and Ronan (2001) found that African-American male athletes had higher college attendance rates, and Caucasian females achieved benefits of higher college attendance rates and college graduation. Ultimately, as Davidson (2010) outlines, interscholastic athletic participation impacts many personal and professional development opportunities in the form of college attendance rates, professional career attainment, as well as the social, emotional, and physical development of individual participants.

Participation opportunities may also impact the long term educational opportunities available for high school students. Bucy (2013) discussed further that “because top colleges seek to enroll the most diverse and well-rounded class possible, minority and low income students who do not participate in these activities are at an unjustifiable disadvantage when it comes to applying for college” (p. 279). College admissions directors factor test scores, class rigor, and grades when admitting new students. After that, they are “interested in a student’s extracurricular activities” (Shaevits, 2013). Utilizing the High School and Beyond Survey (1980), they found that students who participated in high school athletics attended college at a greater percentage rate when compared to their peers who did not (Davidson, 2012; Snyder & Spreitzer, 1990). The overall value and impact of these pay to participate fee policies and the potential hindrance of opportunities are important to consider from all access perspectives.

Although pay to participate fees may negatively impact participation rates, these policies can generate the necessary revenue needed to help save sports from elimination. It is also important to note that the number of sport offerings continues to expand, as seen by a 37% increase between 1994 and 2010 (Sabo & Veliz, 2012). School district offerings vary due to

many factors, but many are working to incorporate methods of assistance in unique manners to ensure equal opportunities. In 2012, the Dixon Unit School District 170 in Illinois began a Student Worker Assistance program (SWAP) that allows “any student, regardless of financial need, to work for the district in the summer in order to pay for the student’s athletic fee for the upcoming seasons” (IASB.com, 2012). Many other districts are working to creatively design new approaches to assist families with meeting the fee requirements, and providing access to all who desire to participate.

As access and student success considerations continue to be a focal point of literature discussion, it is important to consider the potential impact pay to participate policies can have in the immediate, as well as long term futures of students. Because each school district determines how they will develop, implement, and evaluate their pay to participate policies, wide disparities can arise, and questions begin to further center on whether fee policies limit athletic teams to only students with the financial resources, or athletic ability to receive a lot of playing time. A study of CEO’s of fortune 500 companies revealed that ninety-five percent played high school sports, and that students who may not have access to participate are missing out on a valuable component of the educational experience that can influence the rest of their lives (Ryan, 2003).

### **Ohio Pay to Participate Policy Models Overview**

The Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) surveys state athletic administrators routinely to gather data regarding the percentage of schools with an implemented pay to participate policy and the specific prices associated with the plan. From the most recent 2015 survey which was completed by 471 respondents of the nearly 850 member schools in the association, 49% of athletic directors indicated their school has implemented some type of additional participation or transportation fee for student athletes to curtail operating costs

(OHSAA & Grant, 2015). This was a 3% increase from the OHSAA survey completed in 2013 ([www.ohsaa.org](http://www.ohsaa.org)). These fees had an average range between \$66 and \$153 across the six athletic districts in Ohio.

Based upon the OHSAA survey data from 2015, the responding Ohio school districts with a pay to participate policy currently fall in one of three major models, accounting for nearly 88% of the overall district responses. These models include, (1) student athlete participants paying once per year, regardless of the number of sports they participate in, (2) student athlete participants paying per sport, and the amount is the same regardless of the sport, and (3) student athlete participants paying per sport, and the amount depends on the type of sport, i.e. basketball may cost \$250, and the tennis \$100. Ultimately, the only limiting factor for model development is the imagination of the people involved. When you consider the models further and their overall percentage of use, 62% of school districts, or 152 of the 242 respondents, instituted a policy based upon participants paying the same amount per sport, with the amount being the same regardless of the sport (OHSAA & Grant, 2015).

Although this policy seems very straightforward in development and implementation, there are variations within all the models, including a tiered system most commonly utilized in models two and three, where students have a consistent, flat rate fee, but as they continue to participate in sports in additional seasons, their fee for each sport is discounted based upon the number, not the type, of sport they participate in. An example of this tiered model variation would be when a school charges a consistent, flat rate fee of \$200 for participation in one sport, followed by a discounted fee of \$150 for their second, and potentially an additional discount of \$75 for their third. This tiered system also is incorporated into model three where the fees are different for each sport, and are not consistent for every student. This would mean that a student

who plays football may pay \$300, and then only \$100 for their second sport, while other sports may only pay \$200 for their first sport, but \$150 for their second. The development of this type of model often takes into account the overall operating costs for each specific sport, rather than for the athletic department as a whole.

Additionally, some schools implement models where every sport has a different fee based upon the total operating cost of that sport divided by the number of students participating as well as where the cost may depend on the level of sport team a student participates on such as varsity, junior varsity, and freshman. Riverside High School located outside of Cleveland documented fees of \$715 dollars for golf participation, and \$933 dollars for participation on their tennis team (Cook, 2012). There were also school districts that implemented a flat fee model per family per season with a cap built in, as well as fees that may only be assessed for a few sports in the department that have high costs such as ice hockey due to facility rental fees. Many school districts that do not have a specific school owned facility offset rental charges through a pay to participate fee assessed to the student athletes of those respective.

Pay to participate policies also often implement caps, or maximum cost amounts for families and students, meaning they decide on a specific dollar amount as the highest maximum cost either a student, a family, or both can pay. Some districts choose not to implement a cap, or maximum within their policy structure as well. It is important to note that although schools may have similar policies, the way in which they implement them, including collection and refund processes, may be completely different. The one guiding primer for all pay to participate policies seems to be consistent with a response by the Michigan High School Athletic Association published in 2004 when they stated, “all of the conditions of being a team member apply as if the fee did not exist, and that includes playing time” (Brady & Glier, 2004). The

understanding that paying a participation fee does not equal playing time is paramount to limiting parent issues regarding playing time and the cost of the sport.

Although additional fees for interscholastic athletic participation have been present for many years as stated in the beginning of this chapter, a rise in specific purpose fees are becoming more prevalent as costs continue to increase in areas such as busing, athletic training, personnel salaries, department insurance, and facility upgrades. Societal changes regarding increased liabilities within athletic programs, the impact of school choice and enrollment, as well as the increased importance parents are placing on the pursuit of athletic scholarships to offset rising higher education costs coupled with dwindling budgets are impacting the delivery and organizational structure of interscholastic athletics.

As concerns throughout the state of Ohio continue regarding the utilization of pay to participate fee policies, it is important to note that the definition of school fees is not necessarily considered a problem universally within a school district, or at the state level. Due to the local control jurisdiction of school districts, this divisive definition plays an integral role in interscholastic athletic funding policy development. In the summer of 2015, Secretary of State John Husted and Senator Cliff Hite started discussions surrounding the concept of developing legislation impacting the development and implementation of pay to participate fees in the state of Ohio. Senator Hite held four open forums throughout the state of Ohio to gather feedback from school administrators, state residents, and anyone else willing to provide information. A considerable amount of responses focused on avoiding a “one size fits all” philosophy passed down through legislative action, but rather comments centered around a desire of continuing to allow local control of school boards and administrators to decide what is in the best interest of their district. Mr. McCuen, treasurer of Worthington schools, stated in an interview with the

Dayton Daily News that “I caution that a one-plan-fits-all to ban these fees may result in unintended consequences of having no basketball or football team” (Siegel, 2015, para. 5).

This one size fits all approach is not new, as the Nebraska legislature pursued a similar action in 2002 that would have considerably amended the law to either expand or limit the authority of school districts to charge fees (Stenberg & Grasz, 2002; Neish, 2005). John Bonaiuto, Executive Director for the Nebraska Association of School Boards commented that “the legislature’s responsibility is to set a definition and give schools guidance as to what fees can or cannot be charged” (Neish, 2005, p. 32). Ohio lacks a clear definition, and the continued push of potential legislation by lawmakers leaves many questions surrounding the future of extracurricular athletics in public school districts unanswered. Critics fear that the practice of charging for participation in extracurricular activities will lead to the end of smaller programs and progressively cause an increase in charging for more and more activities, not just those considered extracurricular or part of a guaranteed public education (Pennsylvania School Board Association, 2010).

Ultimately, the literature shows a trending national issue, one that needs further explored within the context of individual school districts, in order to analyze and describe components surrounding the development, implementation, and evaluation procedures which are necessary to engage in further meaningful conversations.

### **Conclusion**

As noted earlier, the past few years of my life have been consumed with understanding pay to participate policies, and the increasing utilization of, and discussions surrounding its usage. During my professional career as an Athletic Director, my research time was limited, but I became frustrated with studies that only seemed to focus on the overall value of extracurricular

athletics, and found very little assisting with my questions centered on the process of development, implementation, and evaluation of pay to participate fee policies, specifically those already being utilized. The literature speaks to the impact extracurricular athletics contributes to the overall success of students throughout their lives, and the character and soft skill curriculum it was based upon. Many conferences and discussions have centered around the issue of school finance, and although many seem to be opposed to pay to participate fees, due to the large majority of districts implementing them currently and at an increasing rate, I feel that the literature gap must be filled to include resources for in depth examinations of specific district cases surrounding the methods and processes that other districts may be able to learn from.

### **CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this research study was to analyze specific consistent fee, flat rate typology pay to participate policies within the state of Ohio through a qualitative, multiple case study research design in order to describe further the development, implementation, and evaluation procedures, as well as how specific school districts define policy success. A study by the Ohio High School Athletic Association and Grant (2015) which surveyed OHSAA member schools found that 63% of the 152 school districts that implemented a pay to participate policy during the 2014-2015 school year utilized a consistent, flat rate typology where student athletes are charged a predetermined fee for each sport they choose to participate in, but the fee is the same for every sport.

This consistent fee, flat rate policy type will be the basis for this research study utilizing a multiple case study method approach guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the goals of the specific pay to participate policies and what factors contributed to their development?
2. How are the implementation methods of pay to participate policies similar and different among school districts?
3. What criterion do school districts utilize when evaluating the success of the programs based on the outlined goals?

In this chapter I will describe methods and procedures that were utilized to explore the research questions of this study, addressing the qualitative, multiple case study research design, describing the attainment of the participants and sampling procedures involved, defining the instruments that will be utilized, as well as listing the variables and explaining the data collection, analysis procedures, protection of subjects, and trustworthiness and credibility of the



research, before providing personal assumptions. I will describe the specific participants at the beginning of chapter four, to set an immediate foundation of understanding the policy overview within the context of the case site.

### **Research Design**

A qualitative research design, utilizing a multiple case study research design set the foundation for this research project. Yin (2014) states that research design is a logical plan from getting from here to there, and “qualitative research most all involves studying the meaning of people’s lives, as experienced under real-world conditions” (p. 9). Qualitative research aims to provide a holistic understanding of rich, contextual, and generally unstructured non-numeric data by engaging in conversation with participants in a natural setting (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research serves as an umbrella for a broad range of different approaches and methods which vary in forms of focus and assumptions about the nature of knowledge and the role of the researcher. According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993), qualitative research is defined as “primarily an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships among categories” (p. 479). Each qualitative research approach is distinct, but each has a separate history, complex body of literature and preferred ways of putting strategy in motion (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Major characteristics of qualitative research such as personal contact and insight, as well as understanding the dynamic systems associated with school districts and pay to participate policies are anchoring components to this study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009).

## Case Study

The value of the case study approach is that it deals with individual cases in their respective context, and allows the researcher to get as close to the subject of interest as possible (Yin, 2014). Ultimately, the central tendency of a case study is to “try to illuminate a decision or set of decisions, why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result” (Schramm, 1971). The case study approach focuses on answering how and why questions (Myers, 2009), and puts the case at center stage, not the variables (Yin, 2014). The case study approach is rooted in the interpretivist paradigm, which focuses on a goal of understanding, and relies heavily on naturalist methods including interviews, observations, and analysis of existing text. Cohen and Crabtree (2006) state that generally interpretivist meanings emerge throughout the research process and meaningful reality is constructed as an investigation proceeds. Burrell & Morgan (1979) described that the goal of a case study is understanding the world as it is from a subjective point of view and seek to explain that view within the frame of reference of the participant.

The case study methodology provided the opportunity to investigate this policy phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, and focus on the how and why form of research questions without controlling any behaviors or events (Yin, 2009). By implementing a qualitative research design and case study approach, “the natural setting is the direct source of data with the researcher as the key instrument” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009, p. 422). According to Janesick (2003), due to the realities of doing research among and with the human beings, it is understood that the qualitative research design is elastic, adapted, changed, and redesigned as the study proceeds. The goal of this study was to illustrate in a descriptive manner consistent fee, flat rate pay to participate policies, focused on their development, implementation, and

evaluation methods and procedures. Additionally, it is a goal to add a valuable missing piece of the literature focused on pay to participate policies themselves, and assist school districts, legislators, and other stakeholders who have an interest in, as well as governance power of, current or future implementation of pay to participate policies and legislation (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009; Wolcott, 1990).

### **Multiple Case Study**

Multiple case studies within one research study allows the opportunity to pursue the most appropriate path to analyze data and construct themes to further understand the complexity of each case, which are often not generalizable (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2005). Since the main focus of this research study was on the experience of the development, implementation, and evaluation of pay to participate policies within specific school districts, a multiple case study approach allows for the opportunity to draw on multiple sources, identify specific intricacies within each case, and then look for common themes that transcend the cases (Yin, 2009). The multiple case study design allows for the analysis of several school district policies in a wider evaluative context, and provides an opportunity to understand further specific cases operating in a real life situation (Stake, 2005). By including multiple cases, this research design provides a more robust data set and compelling analysis (Herriott & Firestone, 1983; Davidson, 2010). Each case offers potential “contrasting situations” (Yin, 2009, p. 61) yet similar, and unique social contexts and policy characteristics based upon their individual development, implementation, and evaluation. The case study methodology provides for “. . . an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context . . .” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). A case study analysis often resembles a narrative, and seeks to provide rich, thick data and experience stories which I believe are needed in the research environment surrounding pay to

participate fees, and is most beneficial for the current environment of pay to participate utilization, and the continued implementation and discussions regarding this practice at the local, state, and national level.

Ultimately a qualitative, multiple case study approach provides an opportunity to study the meaning of people's lives, as experienced under real world conditions, and is devoted to representing the views and perspectives of the study participants. The social, institutional, cultural, and environmental contexts are embraced in qualitative research, and the hope to provide explanations of social behavior and thinking, as well as outline emerging concepts is steadfast in its development and utilization (Yin, 2014). My dissertation focus needed the story, and a deep dive into the experiences and opinions of the participants, in hopes of helping to achieve a further understanding of the development, implementation, and evaluation of pay to participate policies within the most present policy type in Ohio.

### **Pilot Study**

In the summer of 2015 I worked with the Ohio High School Athletic Association Commissioner Dr. Dan Ross, in conjunction with Ohio Secretary of State John Husted and Senator Cliff Hite, to complete a research study on the current environment of pay to participate policies in the state of Ohio. Informed by the book, *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*, written by former Ohioan and current Harvard professor Robert Putnam, John Husted became interested in exploring further the utilization of pay to participate fees in Ohio schools. Dr. Ross and I traveled to Lakeside retreat in Marblehead, Ohio to listen to Dr. Putnam who was traveling on his book tour discussing his data and thoughts from the book. Following this, I developed a research survey that Dr. Ross sent to the athletic director membership of the Ohio High School Athletic Association, which at the time constituted 822 member schools. This survey contained

both quantitative and qualitative questions, and from the 470 full surveys completed, we were able to consider further the current structure of what pay to participate policy implementation looked like in the state of Ohio. After cleaning the data, and considering further the qualitative responses from the athletic directors, I realized that while pay to participate policies had been utilized regularly for the last 30 years within Ohio, many of the athletic directors responded stating they did not know specifically why the policy was put into place. The majority of athletic directors at 61% said the fees were deposited directly into their school's general fund, but many were not fully aware of how it was specifically spent following collection. Many of the athletic directors who stated the money was deposited into the general fund were not clear in regards to whether that money was specifically ear marked for athletics, or if it just went back to help offset some of the costs without additional follow up. As a former athletic director that was faced with the development of a policy in response to an upcoming levy, the data from this survey was intriguing to analyze and created further questions surrounding how policies are developed, implemented, and evaluated within specific school districts, thus becoming the guiding basis for my research interests and the focus of this study.

### **Selection of Participants**

The selection of specific school districts for this research study was informed by the pilot study completed by the Ohio High School Athletic Association and Grant (2015) outlined above and integrated a purposeful sampling approach. After identifying the different pay to participate models, I chose to focus on selecting participants that implemented the consistent fee, flat rate typology which was the most widely utilized throughout the state. As part of the pilot study, athletic directors were provided the opportunity to respond through a qualitative question on whether or not they would be interested in discussing their policy further for future research. I

cross referenced this list with the school districts that responded stating they implemented the consistent fee, flat rate typology, and utilized a purposeful sampling focus regarding the typology, willingness to participate, and overall accessibility. The utilization of purposeful sampling may occur when researchers possess sufficient experience and relevant inside experience to select an appropriate sample that can provide the best information about the issue to be studied (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorenson, 2006). Maxwell (2013) and Creswell (2013) believe purposeful sampling to be a beneficial approach and appropriate method for sample selection within a qualitative study.

The selection of the districts was guided by three main conventions (Creswell, 2007). First, the districts selected were members of the Ohio High School Athletic Association, which is open to all districts within the state through an application process and does not require a fee. Second, the district currently employs a consistent fee, flat rate pay to participate policy within their district. Lastly, the athletic director was willing to discuss the policy further in detail through an interview. Access and entry are sensitive components within qualitative research, as trust and rapport are necessary to ensure insight from participants is shared openly and meaningful (Janesick, 2003). Being a former athletic administrator, my ability to connect with the research subjects assisted in the ability to gain participation.

Following the identification of districts that fit within these parameters, I contacted district superintendents to request approval to invite their athletic administrators to participation. Over fifty school district superintendents were initially contacted through email, from which nine approval responses were received. After contacting the nine athletic administrators from these districts, only five were willing to be interviewed further regarding their policy. One responded saying that the topic was just too much of a hot button, political issue that they did not want to

talk about it (District 1 AD, Personal communication, December 30, 2017). After written approval and consent was received from the athletic administrator, an interview was scheduled at the school location, or location of the athletic administrator's choice, and the athletic administrators were asked to provide a copy of any additional policy documentation not available on their district website through email for analysis and further interview question development. All districts provided additional materials in conjunction with the documents that were accessible online. This initially was intriguing to me, as it seems that all documentation in regards to the policy that would be necessary for someone to understand it would be available on their district website, specifically their athletic website for communication and transparency with district stakeholders. One of the most important components of policy development is working with the different stakeholders involved (Kraft & Furlong, 2015).

The combination of analyzing district level written documents and interviews of the athletic administrators aimed to provide a further value of understanding consistent fee, flat rate pay to participate policy development, implementation, and evaluation from a subjective point of view and "within a frame of reference of the participant" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Data collected from the document analysis assisted in the development of thick, rich descriptions of each policy (Glesne, 2009), as well as provided additional lines of inquiry within the semi-structured interviews with the athletic administrators to allow contextual, fluid discussions (Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

The interview questions were organized around Kraft and Furlongs (2015) policy process model outlining agenda setting, policy formulation, policy legitimation, policy implementation, policy and program evaluation, and policy change. The policy process model provides a framework "depicting the policymaking process and the relationships among policy actors within

each stage of it” (Kraft & Furlong, p. 84, 2015). The policy process is a series of stages that are continuously changing based upon new information, conditions within a district, as well as shifting opinions. The policy process model does not necessarily follow a sequential order of operations from a top down approach, but rather is a continuous cycle of evolving components that “capture important aspects of policymaking that correspond to political reality” (Kraft & Furlong, p. 85, 2015). Kraft and Furlong are quick to point out that politics sometimes trumps even the best policy analyses, which is impacted by the structure and often revolving door of school board personnel (2015).

Data analysis utilized an open coding method, examining language and phrases related, but not limited to, the predetermined major code categories (Bogdan & Biklan, 2003; Davidson, 2010) of development, implementation, and evaluation, which align directly with the research questions. The policy process model provided important structural components when developing the interview questions, which revealed unique data on how intimately connected each athletic administrator was to the policy development, implementation, and evaluation. Components of the policy process model were used as further components assisting with assertion development within their specific area of alignment with the study research questions. The goal of utilizing the policy process model as the framework for question and analysis development centered around it working as the foundational basis for policy development, implementation, and evaluation. These key components are then divulged further into additional areas of inquiry, but my goal was to consider the district’s policy from this overarching position.



### **Data Collection Procedures**

Ragin, Nagel and White (2004) state that in qualitative research, the researcher themselves serves as the primary data collection instrument. Janesick (2003) states that qualitative researchers utilize inductive analysis, meaning that categories, themes, and patterns emerge from the data through careful examination and constant comparison. For this research study, data collection took place through an analysis of school district pay to participate policies and interviews with athletic administrators. Data collection of the pay to participate policies and contact of the athletic administrators employing this policy occurred concurrently, as the documents provided integral components for interview question development aligning with Kraft and Furlongs policy process model.

### **Policy Documents**

Merriam (1998) believes, “documents of all types can help the researcher uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem,” (p. 133). Yin (2016) believes that for case study research, “the most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources” (p. 107), and play an explicit role in data collection. The school district policy document data collection was conducted in two steps. First, websites of the districts whose athletic administrators agreed to participate were targeted, and any publicly available policies, payment forms, or additional pay to participate policy communication and documentation was collected. Secondly, during my initial follow up email response after receiving written approval from the athletic administrators, I requested any additional pertinent documentation regarding the pay to participate policy that is not available on their district websites. The athletic administrators provided resources such as copies of their student handbook, fee waiver documents, application forms, as well as one district provided a

bylaw outline from their board of education. These documents assisted in developing thick, rich descriptions of each policy, as well as informing the questioning during the in person interviews with the athletic administrators (Glesne, 2009).

## **Interviews**

Creswell (2009) stated that interviewing as a data collection method provides the opportunity to explore each case in depth by controlling the line of question. Fink (2006) also outlined that interview data collection allows for the clarification of participant answers when necessary. Initial contact for interviews were made at the end of December immediately following approval from the Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB). This approval document can be found as Appendix B.

The interviews were conducted from January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017 until February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2017, with additional follow up for clarification of meaning and member checking. Initial interviews were conducted at the location of the participant's choice, and of the five athletic administrators interviewed, three chose to interview at the school location, one chose to interview over the phone, and one chose an off-site location. All participants were informed that the discussions would be recorded with their approval, to which they agreed. They were also informed prior to the interviews that their responses to interview questions would remain anonymous; however, they could be quoted directly in the study findings through the use of pseudonyms. The study participants were reminded their participation is voluntary and, if they chose, could withdraw from the study at any time. In addition to the recording, notes were taken during the interview on the interview protocol that was part of a packet created for each school that encompassed their district documentation for quick reference. Each interview lasted approximately 30-45 minutes. Additional follow up conversations for clarification of meaning were quick and primarily

accomplished through email and phone. Due to the nature of the athletic administrator's position, and consistently fluctuating demands on time, it was important to be sensitive to their communication availability and desire to communicate through email at their convenience.

To prevent potential personal and professional risks, all school district and employee names involved with this study were kept confidential and were assigned pseudonyms. The qualitative data collected from participants was not intended to identify them as individuals, but rather to provide pay to participate policy contextual experiences, so each pay to participate policy could be examined further individualistically, as well as in comparison with others through cross case analyses.

### **Instrumentation**

An interview protocol was developed in order to obtain data to respond to the research questions. The interview protocol consisted of (1) an introduction to the research, (2) a brief description of the study, (3) a description of participant protections, and (4) the interview questions. The questions were organized in categories based upon the research questions, and were also be developed to extend questions developed from the document analysis. Kraft and Furlong (2012) provided key elements within their policy process model that served as a guide for question development in consideration of the research questions for the interview questions and document analysis, as well as provided further sub categories for analysis and description.

Interviews were conducted with a semi-structured interview format, to afford participants an opportunity to share their specific district stories, as well as to dialogue further in regards to additional contextual components related to the development, implementation, and evaluation of their respective policy, and the overall discussion regarding what constitutes policy success for their specific district pay to participate policy. This also allow for open ended questions in order

to provide opportunities for the participants to consider their own views regarding the pay to participate policies from different perspectives and backgrounds (Creswell, 2013).

According to Fontana and Frey (1994), semi structured interviewing enables the researcher most in engaging participants in meaningful conversation and dialogue (Singer, 2002). Semi-structured interviews also allow for a certain level of flexibility and the potential for collection of “unanticipated information” (Sabo, 1990, p. 68). Although there was a consistent line of inquiry, the case interviews were fluid, rather than rigid (Rubin & Rubin, 2011) describe as a fluid rather than rigid manner. Procedures were developed to ensure that confidentiality was maintained, and the questionnaire located within the interview protocol consisted of three main categorical sections, containing questions that captured both general and specific information regarding the research questions focused on the development, implementation, and evaluation of the district pay to participate policy and was developed to systematically guide the interview process (Yin, 2009). Due to the utilization of a semi-structured interview approach, I was provided the flexibility to seek clarification and pursue deeper meaning (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Merriam, 1998; Hairston-Pinson 2007).

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis occurred concurrently with data collection, and the document analysis notes and interviews were analyzed utilizing an open-coding method. As Yin (2016) stated, disassembling of data can occur in many ways, but ultimately boils down to whether a researcher chooses to code portions of data, assigning new labels or codes to selected words, phrases, or other segments of text in the database (p. 194). Charmaz (2014) also stated that the codes will “inevitably represent the meanings inferred from the original data” (p. 111), and by moving into a slighter higher conceptual level, the opportunity to gain insight into potential important

processes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011, p. 175), as well as sort data for similarities and dissimilarities is presented (Yin, 2016, p. 196).

### **Policy Document Analysis**

District policy documents were analyzed to uncover unique contextual components of the policies, as well as help provide further insights and clarity in the formation of interview questions for each respective district. The purpose of a document analysis is to provide qualitative case studies the opportunity to produce rich descriptions of a single phenomenon, event, organization, or program (Yin, 1994).

As I began analyzing the district documentation, I worked to organize the data into the three major categories of development, implementation, and evaluation. In searching for the best method, it seemed most appropriate to analyze each line, focusing on extracting the data around the main categories, which I processed as similar to highlighting the document utilizing three different colors. I took the data that coincided with each category, and placed it into an individual document where I further analyzed it for additional sub categories, as new topics warranted further exploration and analysis (Bogdan & Biklan, 2003, p. 173; Davidson, 2010). Following this structure provided easy access for me to understand the informational provisions and potential mechanisms incorporated within the document. I tried to view each document for what it was, analyzing its overall purpose and function such as providing information or initiating action, but continuously focusing on the realization that the documents were written for “some specific purpose and some specific audience other than those of the case study being done” (Yin, 2016, p. 108). This categorical breakdown of each policy allowed me to create further areas of inquiry specific to each district based on the uniqueness of how it was written and portrayed.

The documents analyzed across the five districts included the board of education bylaws regarding extracurricular pay to participate fees, a board approved pay to participate policy document or statement which was often found as part of the student handbook, fee payment paperwork which a few districts developed as a stand-alone document utilized as a form the student athlete submitted with payment, and a policy overview document which a few districts provided as an additional document outlining the district's policy and fees created for direct communication internally and externally with stakeholders (Creswell, 2009, p. 180). Having a background in athletic administration and a sincere passion for studying the policy component of pay to participate fees, I had to continuously pull back my views of the document, and focus on the documents meaning and contribution, rather than its precision, accuracy, or what I might view as being incomplete (Bowen, 2009).

### **Interview Analysis**

As I began my initial coding process, each transcription was examined for language and phrases related to, but not limited to, the predetermined major code categories (Bogdan & Biklan, 2003; Davidson, 2010) of development, implementation, evaluation. These major code categories align with the research questions and any language or phrases that fell under these predetermined major codes were considered "units of data" and incorporated into an additional document for further analysis (Bogdan & Biklan, 2003, p. 173). The codes helped "enable the researcher to gain insight into potentially important processes" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011, p. 175), as well as "to sort the data for their similarities and dissimilarities" (Yin, 2016, p. 196). It is important to note that the process of analyzing data was continuously ongoing throughout the study, as Glesne (2011) and Creswell (2013) articulate the importance regarding the further formation of the study throughout the data collection process. After the analysis of the data from

transcriptions into documents focused on each main category which aligned with specific research questions, I analyzed each separate categorical document identifying repeating ideas, and working to create more sub categories to explore. While I worked through this comparative approach, I then created theme headers within the document where I would highlight and copy specific data that helped tell specific stories individually by case, and then from an across case analysis and place within the specific theme area.

The combination of the analyses of district level written documents and interviews of the athletic administrators aimed to provide a value of understanding of the pay to participate policy development, implementation, and evaluation from a subjective point of view and “within a frame of reference of the participant” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). By coupling these two research activities together, it provided a realist perspective and extended the ability to answer the how and why form of the research questions within this study (Yin, 2014), ultimately capturing reality within the specific case settings (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2001). My overall goal was to capture the real life story of each districts pay to participate policy development, implementation, and evaluation individually and through a cross case analysis.

### **Validity**

Lincoln & Guba (1985) state that the trustworthiness of the qualitative research paradigm is determined by four key elements including creditability, transferability, dependability, and conformability. In order to construct meaning, the study must demonstrate a high degree of validity of trustworthiness (Finch, 2014). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested “it is not possible to understand a phenomenon without reference to the context in which it is embedded” (p. 302). The 2015 study I completed in conjunction with Ohio High School Athletic Association provided a base level overview of the current environment and structure of pay to participate

policies within the state of Ohio. This research provided the guidance and foundation for the research questions developed that informed the need to pursue further the contextual story of individual districts within the most widely utilized typology.

The first key element of trustworthiness centers around the credibility of the study, and “the degree of confidence in the ‘truth’ that the findings of a particular inquiry have for the subject with which—and context within which—the inquiry is carried out” (Finch, 2014, p. 67). Due to my role as a former athletic director, and tournament assistant to the assistant commissioner of the Ohio High School Athletic Association, prolonged engagement occurred throughout the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) outlined that one of the most significant components to understanding any phenomena hinges on the “reference to context in which it is embedded” (p. 302). It was important to utilize multiple data collection methods to reduce bias of one specific method, as well as gain information about different aspects of pay to participate policies, which in this case was the phenomena being studied (Maxwell, 2013).

Throughout this study, different sources of data and collection procedures were utilized. First, this research study was informed by and continually referenced to the 2015 pilot study completed by OHSAA member school athletic administrators regarding pay to participate policies. The pilot study was a computer based survey with both quantitative and qualitative responses that provided key elements for discovery, consideration, and further inquiry regarding the development, implementation, and evaluation of pay to participate policies. An analysis of the qualitative responses of additional viewpoints of districts with pay to participate policies. Secondly, district level written policies were analyzed regarding main categorical elements within the research questions focused on the development, implementation, and evaluation of pay to participate policies, providing a description, not necessarily a perception (Maxwell, 2013).



Third, interviews with athletic administrators collected data that was analyzed regarding the development, implementation, and evaluation procedures, extending, as well as potentially contradicting evidence derived from the document. Weiss (1994) stated that “interviewing gives us access to the observations of others” and provides an opportunity to learn about “settings in which we have not lived” (p. 1). The descriptions created from the interview transcriptions then generated an interpretation of the athletic administrator’s perspective (Maxwell, 2012).

Additionally, member checking was utilized throughout the interview process to clarify and ensure accuracy of participant data surrounding the description and overall perspective (Finch, 2014; Maxwell, 2013). Stake (2003) states that “qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world, and their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict” (p. 447).

Lastly, throughout the data analysis process I integrated two main peer debriefers to externally check my analysis process, and ask those hard questions that helped lead to the overall development of my analysis and conclusions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2013), as well as read certain areas for understanding. The first reviewer was a former athletic administrator of over twenty years with an extensive policy and governance background, providing a closeness to the situation and pay to participate policy environment. The second peer reviewer, selected primarily due to their different background than the first, is a former varsity head coach, and current school administrator. His experience is not rooted within pay to participate policies from an athletic administrative perspective, but I wanted him to generate questions and push back from his experience as a coach and school administrator. These components assisted with the overall organization of the data, and helped me identify key elements that I may have otherwise missed.

When moving forward in the examination of trustworthiness, the next element of transferability must be considered. “Transferability is defined as the extent to which its findings can be applied in other contexts or with other respondents” (Finch, 2014, p. 67). Finch (2014) and Janesick (1998) further outline that “although the reader has ownership regarding whether or not the research findings are applicable in their specific context, providing thick descriptions that “explains the essence of experience and meaning is vital” (p. 68). By asking numerous questions related to the overall focus areas, the study increased the probability that other districts may benefit from the data collected and analyzed from each case, as well as across the cases.

The next key element of trustworthiness centered around dependability, which is the “extent to which, if the inquiry were replicated with the same or similar respondents (subjects) in the same (or similar) context, its findings would be repeated” (Finch, 2014, p. 68). When utilizing the case study research method approach, it is imperative that the approach be systematically developed in order for procedures to be replicated, showing that findings are consistent and could be repeated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Yin (2003) provides guidelines for the development of a case study protocol, serving as a blueprint that clearly lays out the instrument of analysis, adopted rules and procedures, and prepares in advance how the case study is to be reported. Paying attention to criteria to ensure trustworthiness is vital in order to develop high quality research (Oates, 2006). A thick description is necessary to explain the context and the overall situational behavior, with an intent to provide and inform other districts of investigated information that may be applicable in their specific context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

The last key component of trustworthiness needing consideration is the confirmability, or the “degree to which its findings are the product of the focus of its inquiry and not of the biases

of the researcher” (Finch, 2014, p. 69). The utilization of triangulation methods including member checking and peer debriefing helped keep the analysis transparent and grounded in data (Finch, 2014). It is also important to consider the personal and professional opinions of each participant, as these views may not align. Their reactivity in regards to the impact of pay to participate policies on their specific position coupled with the political nature of the topic, as well as the day, time, and emotions during the specific interview must be taken into account. Each participant may have a unique closeness to the policy, depending on their level of impact in regards to the development, implementation, and evaluation of the policy. Their definition of success may also be unique due to their position as an athletic administrator, and the context and regularity with which they work with the policy.

Lastly, it is vital to consider various ethical considerations of this research study. First, and most significant, is the protection of confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. This topic is politically charged and controversial, so these two attributes of the study for the participants are extremely important. Active dialogue with participants, consistent providing of feedback through open dialogue and member checking, as well as listening well for any signs of concerns were at the forefront of the researcher participant relationships in order to protect the study participants and the validity of the research (Stake, 2003).

### **Subjectivity**

It is imperative that I also take into account my own personal bias, past experiences, as well as professional opinion in order to be cognizant of how that may impact the data collection and analysis. Janesick (2003) states that “there is no value-free or bias-free design... the qualitative researcher early on identifies his or her own biases and articulates the ideology or conceptual frame for their study” (p. 56). Merriam (1998) believes that it is important from the

very beginning for researchers to articulate and clarify their position and any biases or assumptions that may impact the inquiry. “By identifying one’s biases, one can easily see where the questions that guide the study are crafted” (Janesick, 2003; Hairston-Pinson, 2007, p. 69). Additionally, due to my role as a former high school director of athletics, as well as assistant director of athletics and varsity coach for nearly a decade, prolonged engagement for this study occurred. Throughout the course of this study, I also worked closely with an Ohio High School Athletic Association staff member, engaging in debriefing to examine any bias and the overall body of work. Due to the unique nature of case study research, researchers must take ample time familiarizing themselves with the unique settings and circumstances of the case they are studying in order to develop an ethical perspective of it (Gall, Borg, & Gall., 1996). According to Merriam (1998), ethical issues in qualitative and case study research are most likely to emerge during data collection and the dissemination of findings. This provides a tremendous guiding principal for the ethical considerations of this study.

My personal interest in educational based interscholastic athletics stems from an upbringing with parents who were both public school teachers, and a father who was a three sport varsity coach. My childhood was spent in a school building or interscholastic athletic facility, cultivating a desire at an early age to teach, coach, and eventually become an interscholastic athletic administrator. There was absolutely nothing else I wanted to do, and I was going to work as hard as I could to get there as fast as I could. Immediately following college graduation, I was employed in college athletics as a graduate assistant while I completed my master’s degree in business administration with an emphasis in sport administration. After I completed my assistantship and degree I secured a position as a high school teacher, varsity head golf coach, junior varsity basketball coach, and assistant athletic director. After five years within

these positions, I became a Director of Athletics, during which time I was charged with developing a structure, on paper, of a potential pay to participate policy as a precursor for a potential levy failure. As I began to consider my task developing this policy, I had no idea where to begin, what criteria to utilize as the basis, and ultimately had no idea what a successful policy might look like. None of the districts I had been a part of as either a student or employee prior to my time as an Athletic Director implemented a pay to participate policy, so I had very little personal reference from any standpoint.

It was due to this experience, and the lack of guidance and resources available anywhere, including the Ohio High School Athletic Association, that I became intrigued with pay to participate policies, which ultimately provided the motivation and basis for my passion to pursue a doctoral degree with a research focus on pay to participate policies. I have worked with the Ohio High School Athletic Association as well as state legislators investigating the environment of pay to participate fees within the state of Ohio over the past two years, and have been afforded many different opportunities to learn further about this topic. These experiences, coupled with my desire to make a difference and research focus throughout my doctoral work and this dissertation, provide a tremendous frame of reference, but also bias as a former coach and athletic administrator that must be clearly understood and defined. I am sincerely hopeful this research study has the opportunity to impact districts on the national stage, and provide a resource for districts interested in learning more about pay to participate policies. It is just beginning of what I hope to be a long career researching and making an impact supporting athletic administrators and interscholastic athletic programs everywhere.

### **Protection of Subjects**

In this study, the main ethical challenge is to protect the identities of the participants. In order to address this, focused on few strategies. First, all participants were first targeted due to their feedback from the pilot study regarding their interest in being involved in additional research, and were selected based upon their willingness to participate. It was made clear that they can choose to end participation at any time. Secondly, each district and participant was assigned a pseudonym that is utilized throughout all aspects of the study, including transcripts and data documents, the case study database, as well as this written report. Third, I informed the participants in the introductions to the study and through the informed consent process that every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality. This included conversations regarding the use of pseudonyms, as well as the overall sharing of findings in such a way to minimize the possibility that they could be linked to any specific individual. Lastly, I discussed the limitations on confidentiality associated with this study such as a small sample size of a specific group of school districts.

### **Informed Consent**

Each study participant completed the Consent to Participate in Research form (see Appendix B) that outlines the name, purpose, and procedures of the study, as well as potential risks and benefits to subjects and society, confidentiality, and participation and withdrawal procedures. All participants signed the consent form, ensuring their understanding of the research study in its entirety.

### **Summary**

The primary purpose of this research study was to analyze consistent fee, flat rate pay to participate policies within specific school districts within OHSAA member schools through a qualitative research design in order to understand further the development, implementation, and evaluation methods and procedures, as well as the districts definition of success. Chapter 3 included discussions of the procedures for utilizing a multiple case study design, identifying the cases, and the method by which the data was collected for the study. It also outlined the data analysis of the district level written policies and in depth interviews conducted from five athletic administrators. This chapter also outlined processes implemented to increase validity, as well as an overview of my personal subjectivity as a research. The overall utilization of a multiple case study research design aimed to describe further the development, implementation, evaluation methods and procedures of select school districts within the state of Ohio and illuminate actions and intricacies within each individual case, and through a wider cross case analysis.

## CHAPTER IV. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine consistent fee, flat rate typology pay to participate policies with Ohio High School Athletic Association member school districts through a qualitative, multiple case study research design in order to describe the development, implementation, and evaluation procedures of specific school districts. The intent of this chapter is to analyze the data obtained from five specific district pay to participate policy documents, as well as from interviews with their athletic administrators. These districts were initially informed by the pilot study conducted by the OHSAA & Grant (2015), which found that the consistent fee, flat rate model was the most widely utilized pay to participate typology during the 2014-2015 school year. They were then purposefully selected utilizing the criteria outlined in chapter three. After the completion of the initial document analyses, interviews, and transcriptions of all five districts, there were two specific districts, District 100 and District 395, that were analyzed deeper due to unique circumstances and rich data gained from their interview.

The idea surrounding the development of this research study began during the analysis of the aforementioned pilot study, from which one of the qualitative response questions provided an opportunity for districts to select whether they would be interested in discussing their individual policies further (OHSAA & Grant, 2015). Since over half of the districts responding to that survey implemented a consistent fee, flat rate typology, I felt it was important to consider this as the initial focal point of study participants. From there, additional data made me believe there were compelling stories about the development, implementation, and evaluation procedures of districts overall, and I was intrigued to research them further. At the inception of this study, districts who selected that they implemented a consistent fee, flat rate typology were cross referenced from the pilot study responses of districts interested in discussing their policies



further. Superintendents from these districts were targeted to seek approval to contact their district athletic administrators.

### **District Overviews**

Prior to the presentation of data and findings, each district within the study will be briefly outlined from an overview perspective. The districts have been identified utilizing pseudonyms that incorporate the initial flat rate fee amount implemented within their respective pay to participate policy. The goal of this is to help the reader differentiate each district, but also have a reference point for the overall initial fee investment a student would make for participating in one sport within the respective school district. For example, District 35 currently implements a policy where each high school student athlete is charged a \$35 fee to participate in a sport, and District 50 implements a fee of \$50 per sport participated in. As each district site is described, additional variations within the consistent, flat rate typology are outlined, such as within District 395, where they provide a \$100 discount for each additional sport participated in after the first sport which costs \$395. As an example, if a high school student attending District 395 chooses to participate in football in the fall, and basketball in the winter, they would be charged \$395 for football participation, and then would receive the \$100 discount decreasing their second sport fee for basketball to \$295. District 65, District 100, and District 395 all incorporate some type of discount system as students participate in additional sports, whereas District 35 and District 50 do not. Different variations within the development structure will be outlined further as part of the data analysis of research question #2.

The information described within the site overview section provides an identification of key facts and figures of each school district such as their overall district enrollment, number of students approved for free and reduced lunch benefits, estimated number of student athlete

participants per year, as well as a brief structural overview of their pay to participate policy fees. The school enrollment as well as free and reduced lunch benefit data was gathered from the Ohio Department of Education website (2016). The estimated number of student athlete participants per year was provided through the interview with the athletic directors, and the pay to participate policy information was collected from district policy documents and interviews.

### **District 35**

District 35 – D35 (a pseudonym) – serves over 5,500 students district wide and is located within close proximity of a major metropolitan area. Just over 32% of its student population receive free and reduced lunches, with nearly 1,000 of those students attending the middle and high schools. D35 currently sponsors 24 varsity high school sports (12 male and 12 female) as well as 9 middle school sports (5 male and 4 female). The athletic director has more than 30 years' experience in education, and was part of a pay to participate policy development at his previous school district. District 35 also has a designated middle school athletic director who manages all pay to participate activities at that level.

D35 implements a consistent rate, flat rate policy with a \$35 fee per sport at the high school level as well as a \$25 fee per sport at the middle school level. Policy documentation provided on the school website also stated they charge for extracurricular and co-curricular club participation at both levels, but did not provide any additional specific information. D35 also does not have a maximum cap per student or per family as part of their policy. As the reader will notice, many districts choose to integrate a maximum amount that a student or family will pay for a school year for sport participation. The D35 athletic administrator estimated that a total of 800 participant roster spots are filled by student athletes per year. This number does not translate

to 800 different students participating, as some students may play more than one sport, thus accounting for two or three of the 800 roster spots.

### **District 50**

District 50 – D50 – serves roughly 2,000 students district wide, and is located in a rural area. Nearly 44% of the district's enrollment receives free and reduced lunches. D50 sponsors 22 varsity high school sports (11 male and 11 female) as well as 9 middle school sports (5 male and 4 female), and the athletic director also serves as an assistant principal. The D50 athletic administrator has nearly a decade of athletic administration experience overall, but has employed less than three years within the district.

D50 implements a consistent fee, flat rate policy where high school students are charged a \$50 participation fee per sport, and middle school students are charged a \$35 participation fee per sport. Their district board bylaws document stated that students also pay a \$15 participation fee for school sponsored clubs other than those by which the students have been rewarded or elected. D50 charges the \$50 fee for each season a student participates in without a discount variation, but does implement a \$150 family cap for all members of a family in grades 7-12. The athletic administrator from District 50 stated they have roughly 500 students participate in athletics at the high school level on a yearly basis.

### **District 65**

District 65 – D65 – serves nearly 1,900 students district wide, with nearly 25% of its students receiving free and reduced lunch meal plans. D65 is a consolidation of small rural towns, and currently administers 15 varsity high school sports (8 male and 7 female) as well as 9 middle school sports (5 male and 4 female). The athletic director also serves as the head

principal for the middle school and at the time of the interview, had less than one-year of experience within the district.

D65 implements a consistent fee, flat rate policy with a discount tiered variation whereas the first sport participation fee for high school students is \$65, with a discount to \$35 for the second sport, and no charge for participation in a third sport. They also implement this same model for clubs starting with a \$25 fee for the first club, \$20 fee for the second, and no charge for the third. Clubs included in the pay to participate fee policy are student council, musical productions, pep band, as well as quiz bowl. It is interesting when comparing District 65 to District 50, which stated in their bylaws that no fees will be applied to organizations where students have been awarded or elected. Based upon the specific groups identified in the D65 policy, these most likely would be classified as groups at District 50 that a student would need to be selected, elected, or rewarded to become part of. This is a starting point for realizing the unique components that each district has integrated within their policies.

D65 also incorporates a maximum student fee amount of \$110 for high school students and \$70 for middle school students, as well as a \$165 family maximum fee within their policy structure. D65 stated they had nearly 270 actual participants during the 2015-2016 school year between the middle school and high school athletic programs.

### **District 100**

District 100 – D100 – serves just under 1,500 students in a consolidated district located in a rural area with just under 25% of their student population receiving free and reduced lunches. D100 currently administers 18 varsity high school sports (9 male and 9 female), as well as 9 middle school sports (5 male and 4 female). The high school athletic administrator also serves as a high school assistant principal, and does not have oversight duties of the middle school athletic

programs. D100 employs a separate middle school athletic administrator and secretary that handle all organizational items pertaining to middle school athletic operations. The athletic director of the high school has over 30 years' experience in school administration as a former head principal, as well as athletic administrator within other districts within the state of Ohio.

D100 incorporates a consistent fee, flat rate policy with a discounted tiered system requiring high school students to pay a \$100 fee for the first sport, a \$75 fee for the second, and a \$50 fee for the third. Middle school student athletes also receive a discount as they participate in more than one sport, paying \$50 for the first sport, \$25 for the second sport, and \$0 if they choose to participate in a third. D100 implements a household cap of \$500 for families with students in grades 7-12, and estimated around 450 roster spots are filled each year.

### **District 395**

District 395 – D395 – serves just over 2,500 students in an expansive, rural, consolidated district located outside a large metropolitan area. Approximately 23% of high school students within the district are enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program. D395 currently administers 18 varsity high school sports (9 male and 9 female) as well as 9 middle school sports (5 male and 4 female). The athletic administrator from District 395 has nearly 10 years of experience, with a previous career background in accounting and finance, and no experience as a classroom educator or school administrator prior to becoming the district athletic administrator. Of all of the athletic administrators, he is the only one without a career path that began as a teacher and then moved into an athletic administrative position. The job duties of the athletic administrator role at D395 also includes oversight of all middle school programs without additional assistance, and the athletic department shares an administrative assistant with the high school administrative office.

D395 has the highest fee structure of all the districts interviewed with a first sport price starting at \$395 for high school student athletes and \$295 for those at the middle school level. D395 incorporates a \$100 discount for each additional sport participated in as well as a \$1,600 family maximum. Based upon numbers provided by the athletic administrator during the interview, D395 had a total of nearly 450 high school student athletes participate during the 2015-2016 school year, and just over 200 middle school student athletes. Specific percentages were also provided in regards to participation of one, two and three sport athletes, outlining that 71% of student athletes only participated in one sport, 25% participated in two sports, and only 3% participated in three sports. Based upon the data provided, he estimated a little over \$150,000 dollars was generated from high school pay to participate fees during the past year thus far (Personal communication, January 26, 2017). I was continually intrigued by District 395's story as he seemed to have the least amount of assistance internally, the largest fee to manage, as well as the most limited background within the educational setting, but, had the most intimate relationship with the understanding and application of the policy. I could sense there were unique components waiting within this story.

TABLE 1. Pay to Participate Fee Overview by District

	District 35		District 50		District 65		District 100		District 395	
	HS	MS	HS	MS	HS	MS	HS	MS	HS	MS
1 <sup>st</sup> Sport	\$35	\$25	\$50	\$35	\$65	\$45	\$100	\$50	\$395	\$295
2 <sup>nd</sup> Sport	\$35	\$25	\$50	\$35	\$35	\$25	\$75	\$25	\$295	\$195
3 <sup>rd</sup> Sport	\$35	\$25	\$50	\$35	\$0	\$0	\$50	\$0	\$195	\$95
Student Max	--	--	--	--	\$110	\$70	--	--	--	--
Family Max	--	--	\$150	\$150	\$165	\$165	\$500	\$500	\$1,600	\$1,600

\*Family or household cap includes both middle school and high school participant costs for an individual family.

## **Results Findings**

After completing the document analysis, interviews, and transcriptions, I realized that my original plan of completing an in depth, multiple case study of the five sites was not the best option in regards to providing the richest and most valuable data. As is often the case with qualitative research in the midst of the data collection and analysis stages, unintended findings emerge. In this study, the depth and breadth of knowledge provided during the interviews of District 100 and District 395 allowed me to not only address my research questions but to gain insights into the implementation and stewardship of pay to participate programming. Although I will integrate data uncovered from all the districts, a vast majority of my efforts will center around reporting in depth what I learned from these two districts. Additionally, although the districts all employ the consistent fee, flat rate pay to participate policy typology, their various approaches to, and methods of development, implementation, and evaluation processes are distinctive and unique, which provided excellent points of analysis and discussion throughout.

### **Research Question #1**

What are the goals of the specific pay to participate policies and what factors contributed to their development?

When considering the policy process model outlined by Kraft and Furlong (2015), the first two stages of the policy process are agenda setting and policy formulation, which consider how problems are perceived, defined, and arrive on the political agenda, as well as how goals and strategies to help achieve them are designed and scripted. As I began the data analysis centered around this question, I had a preconceived notion that although the majority of athletic administrators most likely were not present when the policy was developed, they would be



somewhat versed within the context of these developmental realms of discovery. As I analyzed the policy documents and interview data there were two major themes that clearly developed.

**Offsetting athletic costs.** First, the majority of districts stated that the goals of their district pay to participate policy are to offset coaching supplemental salaries and transportation costs. For three of the fee policies, these goals were directly stated within the text of their policy document. Often this text would provide a few options where the money would potentially be dispensed, such as in District 50's policy stating "the participation fee of \$50.00 would be utilized to offset coaches' salaries, transportation, and maintenance of facilities" (District 50 Policy Document). The athletic administrator from D50 stated that the treasurer handles the pay to participate policy analysis and where the money specifically goes due to all fees being deposited into the general fund. As we discussed the three areas listed within the document, he offered insight surrounding the salaries and transportation components by stating, "these two areas increase yearly due to the supplements being tied to the teaching contract, and the increase cost in fuel, so that is why those two are listed I would assume...I'm not sure about the maintenance of facilities, or what that actually means" (Personal communication, February 2, 2017). As districts work to get more specific from an allocation standpoint, the clarity of the actual meaning in regards to athletics may lose visibility both internally and externally.

As I considered these district goals further, the issue arose regarding whether or not these constitute actual measurable goals, or just serve as place holders for potential allocation of pay to participate fees. Since they provide no specificity such as amounts or projects, from a policy formulation standpoint it would be extremely hard to develop any metric to incorporate into a strategy to assess and evaluate whether or not the goal was achieved. Some might say that by keeping it general, then any additional revenue brought in by fees would achieve these goals.

This is understandable, but when considering the policy process model concerning formulation and legitimation, it would be hard to provide much substance to stakeholders in garnering support. When considering a goal of offsetting facility maintenance costs, I became curious as to whether or not the expenditures from the specific teams are tracked in regards to their overall facilities costs. Some fields and facilities cost more to maintain each year, and some are utilized every day within the curricular structure of the district such as a gymnasium or tennis courts for physical education courses. Do the fees from the basketball and tennis teams go toward coaching salaries and transportation instead, if the district already manages those facilities as part of their educational offerings? In districts where small amounts of money are raised through pay to participate policy fees and facility costs are noted as a goal, being transparent about what those costs are, and the overall impact fees from individual teams have per facility would be important. Although not documented except through anecdotal evidence during my time as an athletic director, I have heard of athletic departments in Ohio who are charged electricity costs for usage of lights on the football field, as well as other facilities. Some are charged overtime rates for custodial services when games are played on weekends, but not charged when games occur during the week when custodians are already on duty. All of these variations play a role in the policy development process, and should be considered during the formulation stage.

District 35 and District 100 incorporated policy documents containing similar language focused on offsetting costs with statements such as “in an attempt to offset transportation fees and adviser costs” (District 35 Policy Document), and “the fee will be used to offset the rising cost of the athletic program” (District 100 Policy Document). These statements seem too generic to develop any measurable components identifying what success would mean. Although the document from District 100 outlined areas for potential spending such as facilities and

transportation that were already mentioned in the discussion of the other districts, they did include a unique area of designation for expenditures of fees being directly used to cover athletic trainer fees. The athletic administrator from D100 indicated athletic training fees would climb to nearly \$14,000 for the upcoming year (Personal communication, January 6, 2017). As safety and liability concerns continue to make a forward push within athletic department program operations, labeling a pay to participate fee as directly contributing toward a fee assessed to keep students safe who choose to participate in athletics seems to be a viable option. Gaining support for something that is keeping a child safe would seem to be an easier fee to legitimize than one that pays for facility maintenance, although that could also be a safety issue. Although this seems like a more strategic and specific use of the fee, stakeholders may question whether all teams are receiving the same care and coverage if they are paying the same fee. School districts often utilize an athletic trainer in areas of necessity and liability, purchasing levels of care that may be different for different sports. From former experience, the a la carte menu of athletic training services can quickly escalate as more coverage is desired for practices, contests, and weekly check in services. Often middle school sport contests do not have athletic trainers present, and many high school contests such as volleyball, golf, as well as cross country may not be viewed as sports where the cost of having an athletic trainer present is justified, especially during a budget crunch. Specifically developing a goal of offsetting athletic training fees would need to be well researched, developed, and communicated due to these potential questions and concerns that may arise from stakeholders.

Although the policy documents from Districts 35, 50 and 100 do identify potential areas of incurred costs where the pay to participate fees may be used, without any specifically designed document goals such as an intended generated amount, a targeted maintenance project

and cost, or detailed percentage of supplemental salaries to cover, there is no definitive way to measure what offsetting athletic costs actually means and whether the policy is being successful. The interviews additionally confirmed a lack of any detailed, written goals throughout the majority of the cases. “Although it is not written down, our pay to participate policies are deposited into the general fund and assist with major costs such as coaching salaries and transportation costs” (District 50 AD, personal communication, February 2, 2017). District AD 100 stated that the district “felt it was important to help offset some of the costs” (Personal communication, January 6, 2017). Similarly, District 35’s athletic administrator stated that “here in our district, our fees directly go into the general fund and help offset the costs of coaching salaries” (Personal communication, January 17, 2017). All three of these district athletic administrators stated they do not deal with the fees regularly from a procedural standpoint, as they are deposited directly into a separate account, and the secretaries or office personnel code them. They do not specifically know the total of how much is brought in, and as one of them articulated, “it’s a political, symbolic move for the district, and I really do not know how much money we bring in” (Personal communication, District 50, February 2, 2017). As the director of the athletic department, and the person who ultimately operates the programs to which these fees are applied, it is interesting to realize that the majority of the athletic directors did not know specific goals associated with the fees other than vague overview of areas of potential allocation that were outlined in their documents.

**Levy failures.** The second theme that developed through the analysis of data tied to the first research question was that athletic administrators view levy failures and financial distress as the major contributing factor to the development of their pay to participate policies. Although this makes sense, the interesting component is that often this passes, but their fees remain, so the

purposes then potentially change. As with many districts throughout the United States, pay to participate policies are often implemented during times of financial distress (Gardner, 2014). Funding of interscholastic athletic programs continue to be strong discussion points within districts throughout the United States (Putnam, 2015), and since most of the districts relayed similar interview responses of “I was not here when the policy was developed...” (District 65 AD, personal communication, January 5, 2017), or “since I was not involved in the development...” (District 35 AD, personal communication, January 17, 2017), I felt it was important to consider the timeframe during which most policies in Ohio were implemented before expecting athletic administrators to know solid evidence around the contributing factors. Based upon information collected from the pilot study (OHSAA & Grant, 2015), 19% of districts stated their fee policies were implemented between 1975 and 1999. Nearly half, or 48% of respondents had a development range between 2000-2009, and an additional 25% were developed between 2010-2015. Fifteen districts stated they did not know when the fee was instituted, and an additional thirty-three districts who stated they had a fee, did not respond to the question. The pilot study data is important to consider as a large majority of district athletic administrators most likely were not present when their district policies were developed. That is to be expected based upon the nature of the job and the large influx of retirements over the past few years due to changing regulations with the state teacher retirement system. Although they may not have been present during the development or fully know the contributing factors, I believe it is important for athletic administrators to understand what the financial element of the district was during the time of inception so that as the conditions change, they are able to better understand and integrate the policy process model, and be keenly aware of how it fits into the district at the current juncture. Part of identifying success of a policy surrounds understanding

the issues, problems, and concerns for development, and being able to recognize the evolution of the financial situation within the district to best consider changes as well as current and future needs.

Considering the financial implications leading to the policy development and implementation, other than District 100 and District 395 whose athletic administrators had been employed within their districts the longest out of the five cases, the only information surrounding these financial contributing factors came from anecdotal evidence. It is interesting that although the athletic administrators were quick to point out that their lack of involvement, they each quickly assumed, or stated they were told, that the fee was developed as a result of a levy failure, or potential levy failure caused by financial distress and community hardship. In the case of District 50, he stated that:

Fifteen to twenty years ago, a major employer in town had a massive lay off, our inventory tax dropped, we failed a levy and funding of the district was struggling...what I am told is that they felt it was important to show the community that we were being fiscally responsible and ultimately try to push a levy through. (District 50 AD, personal communication, February 2, 2017)

This idea of districts viewing fee implementation as part of fiscal responsibility is something that became evident within other interviews as well.

As I focused further on data retrieved from District 100 and District 395, the way in which they communicated their knowledge regarding the policy provided a strong sense of overall understanding of the contributing factors. During the analysis of District 100's athletic administrator interview transcription, I questioned why their athletic administrator's knowledge base was so much stronger than some of the other athletic administrators since he too was not

present when the pay to participate policy was developed. Even though he had been in his current district five to eight years longer than all other athletic administrators except for District 395, I was curious whether or not his previous administrative roles within the district prior to becoming the athletic director may have provided him with more opportunities for understanding and connection to the policy. This may seem trivial, but since the majority of district athletic administrators stated they do not interact much with the fee and it is deposited into the general fund, this element would be key for understanding more about the policy, since it becomes a part of a different line item and discussion outside of the athletic realm. When I asked the athletic administrator from D100 about contributing factors of their policy development, he quickly answered with confidence that "...our district was having money issues at the time...pretty serious money issues due to the point where they instituted this policy to keep athletics going" (District 100 AD, personal communication, January 6, 2017). It was clear he had been involved in some type of analysis, historical discussion, or evaluation of the fee in the past. He was able to clearly define the process the district took voting in an emergency levy, then passing an income tax which took place his second year in the district. Interestingly, he confirmed that, "although we have been in the black financially the past 11 years, we still maintain the fee to show we are being fiscally responsible" (District 100 AD, personal communication, January 6, 2017). This statement seems to be an outlined goal for their district, but is not present within any of their documentation. Although potentially unimportant on the surface, it would seem that when describing a policy that is being viewed by the internal administration as something the majority of district stakeholders would classify as a strength of the administrations management of fiscal operations, I am curious as to how they articulate this, and how they evaluate whether this perception is shared within the community. Based upon their fee structure where the first

sport fee is deposited into the athletic fund, and their second and third sport fees are deposited into their general fund, as well as the general fund covering the costs of all athletic transportation and coaching supplemental costs, I believe the goal of being fiscally responsible in regards to athletic funding due to a pay to participate fee implementation would be hard to describe and quantify for district stakeholders without some tie to a historical contributing factor, or the identification of a specific goal that is achieved.

Lastly, and most uniquely due to the intimacy with which the athletic administrator from District 395 was involved with the development of the policy, the amount of detail and depth of knowledge was unsurpassed in comparison to the other interviews. The history of the policy came alive because the athletic administrator from District 395 was present during every moment of its consideration, and development.

It's always a levy, that didn't get passed. It didn't get passed, well...at that time, it had been 15 years since they had passed one, and the board decided they were going to put that as a threat to see if they could get it to pass. What they didn't realize was that even though only 25% of the high school population participated in sports, by threatening to eliminate sports, kids will just leave to go to other schools...So now you lost revenue, and district residents who transferred away. (District 395 AD, personal communication, January 26, 2017)

As students started to leave for other schools, the financial value provided by the state per pupil also left, and ultimately would cause any district to consider the overall cost analysis of the price of sports versus the potential number of lost students. I am not saying school districts should keep sports to keep kids, but a district is made up of students, and as students leave, so do financial operating dollars. There has to be a balance, and an overall cost investment for districts



to deliver educational programming, which includes athletics and extracurricular activities, that help maintain, and sometimes increase enrollment. As I considered this case further, and the statement District 395's athletic administrator made regarding students transferring and leaving their district causing the board to reconsider, I was reminded of the comparative situation experienced within the South-Western City School District in 2009 when they returned to school that fall without sports, band, or clubs after failing an operating levy after numerous attempts. Boss (2009) stated in an article in *The Columbus Dispatch* that "officials anticipate that some students will not enroll in other districts to play sports and participate in extracurricular activities" (para. 12). Within the article, a sophomore student from Grove City High School detailed he planned to start practicing with another local school that very same day, stating "Why should we stay if the community gives up on us?" (Boss, 2009, para. 13). While others documented that they would stay within the district, an article published by Sports Illustrated indicated that many staff members who were coaches within the district left to take other positions, as well as some students emancipated themselves, and families transferred guardianship to family members within other districts that offered extracurricular athletics (Staples, 2009).

The story of District 395 told by their athletic administrator seemed to be this in the making. He believed someone needed to step up, and it was apparent he was willing to do whatever he could as part of the booster club to ensure it continued. It became clear that without the booster club stepping in during this time of financial distress, and pushing the boundaries of what a booster club should be expected, or even asked to consider doing, District 395 most likely would not have had an athletic program until a levy passed, and their district trajectory may have very well looked similar to that of South-Western City Schools. And even then, athletics may

not have ever been integrated back within their educational structure, as it took three years to pass a levy, even after every single financial cost related to athletics was self-funded.

The AD at the time saw what was going on before it was going to be brought to the public that the board was going to eliminate sports if the levy did not pass.

He brought this information to the boosters, and stated that the board wanted to utilize the desperate financial times we were in with desperate measures of cutting athletics to pass the levy. The AD knew that it would take a group to make self-funding work, and the board did not want anyone or any group to propose self-funding, but we took it upon ourselves as a booster club to save it. (District 395 AD, personal communication, January 26, 2017)

District 395's current athletic administrator knew when the booster club was approached with the information about cutting sports, they were the final, and only resort. They took it upon themselves to ensure it was saved. A quote captured in 2009 from Greg Wait, head basketball coach at Grove City High School, one of the four high schools housed within the South-Western City School District that cut sports, provides an analogy to the case of District 395 and their plight to save school sports. "I never gave up hope. I'm an optimist, and I believe in people" ("SWCS high school sports," 2009). The athletic administrator at District 395 was full of hope, and there was no doubt based upon his interview that he was an optimist, being charged with "generating nearly \$500,000 for three years to pay for everything" (Personal communication, January 26, 2017). Eventually District 395 passed a levy, as did the majority of the other districts analyzed, but all maintained the fee as part of their yearly athletic operations.

**Typology development.** One final element that became evident during the interview analysis surrounded the notion that the majority of athletic directors do not know why their policy was developed as a flat rate, consistent fee typology. As discussed in the earlier chapters, the ways in which districts develop their policies, and the models they utilize are unique. There are many different pay to participate typologies that districts could develop, but based upon the pilot study conducted in 2015 (OHSAA & Grant), over 60% of the nearly 500 Ohio districts that responded integrated a consistent fee, flat rate model where the first sport participation fee is the same for all sports. This model is described as having a base methodology where the fee is essentially the same for every sport. An example of this would occur when a district charges a student athlete that participates in basketball \$50, and a student athlete that participates in softball the same, consistent rate fee of \$50 as well.

As typology development is considered further, it is important to note that often a tiered discount variation is implemented within the consistent fee, flat rate model where a district maintains a consistent fee for the first sport a student participates in, but for each additional sport they participate in they would receive a discounted fee. Whether the discount helps alleviate the overall financial hardship of a fee for families with students who are interested in participating in more than one sport is an area where additional research is needed within each district.

Of the five districts analyzed, Districts 65, 100, and 395 utilize a tiered discount variation approach within their model, while District 35 and 50 do not provide any discounts for participation in additional sports. Policy documentation from the five districts did not provide any indication or overview regarding why the specific model was developed, and since only the athletic administrator from District 395 was part of the original development of their districts policy, all others stated that they did not know concrete information regarding why that specific

model was developed for use within their district. I had assumed that the majority of districts utilizing the tiered variation would state it was integrated within their policy to encourage, and not limit, multiple sport participation. District 65 was the only district that charged for the first two sports, and then eliminated the cost for participation in a third. Being a smaller district, this typology variation may be more applicable, as the necessity for multiple sport participation to fill the team roster spots may be higher than at a district such as District 35. Ultimately, even with unique implementation variations, and extremely different district sizes and sport offerings, a three sport athlete experiences only a \$5-dollar difference between District 35 and District 65.

District 35's athletic administrator had been part of the development of a policy at his previous school district, and his response came from a more financial analysis perspective, especially since they offer no internal model variations of implementation at D35.

Since I was not involved in the development, I can only guess that a discussion occurred analyzing how many participants they had and came up with a number that they would like to bring in each year from a financial perspective. (District 35 AD, personal communication, January 17, 2017)

Taking into account previous participation data and a potential revenue number they would hope to generate would seem to be an appropriate method in developing a policy fee total.

Interestingly though, this would mean there would be some type of specific goal tied to the development, which was something that was unknown for all of the districts other than District 395.

District 50 also seemed to be a unique case, because although the athletic administrator had been there for a little over three years, it was evident throughout the interview that the pay to participate policy was not something that he dealt with on a regular basis operationally. Of

course it was tied with athletics, but because it went to the general fund, and it had been created more than fifteen years prior, it seemed more of a fundamental process from the treasurer's office than one that provided strategic movement forward of the athletic department. The athletic administrator from District 50 stated, "I have no idea why they chose that cost or fee structure. The treasurer probably emailed and said our costs increased this much, how can we come up with that money" (Personal communication, February 2, 2017).

The athletic administrator at District 395 was the president of the booster club at the time when the levy failed, and stated that they took it upon themselves to develop the policy after being approached by the athletic administrator at the time. He stated that having a background in accounting and finance assisted in the process of development. "The first thing I did was gather all of the financial documents from the treasurer and athletic director, and developed a budget based on every expenditure from what we were paying coaches, tournament fees, everything" (District 395 AD, personal communication, January 26, 2017). They proceeded to break down each sport, and come up with a dollar amount they would need to support it for the first year.

We eliminated transportation, the athletic director was retiring so we brought him back in at about \$20,000 per year, and we got a few other costs down a bit, but that's how we came up with the figure of the initial \$365. (District 395 AD, personal communication, January 26, 2017)

Two major points of consideration came to light during this part of the interview. First, the typology utilized currently with their \$395 fee originally started as a \$365 fee with no discount variation. This provides an understanding of why the consistent fee, flat rate policy typology may be implemented more often than others, as it is easy to change the price each year and educate all stakeholders if it is consistent among sports, and often can positively impact the

district participation with a discount for additional sports during positive financial times, or when improved public relations are necessary. The second major component falls more under the implementation realm, but with a key focus on the developmental structure. Throughout the interview, when discussing the historical context and typology development, the athletic administrator from District 395 consistently used the term “we” within his responses. Knowing that the booster club developed the policy, I followed up with District 395’s athletic administrator regarding the initial development process. He stated that the school district did not want anyone to self-fund, and first denied the athletic boosters proposal in the spring, but eventually was pressured by the community to let them push forward.

The boosters drove everything. The board didn’t care what happened. After they approved that we could move forward with the pay to participate fee, but only if we put \$25,000 dollars in escrow before the school year started... so we started collecting the money and fundraising, we were able to pull it off by August 1<sup>st</sup>. (Personal communication, February 15, 2017)

I quickly asked for clarification on the statement regarding “we started collecting the money”, and then found out that the athletic boosters externally ran the pay to participate program, and then donated the money to the school for three years until the levy passed. They handled all record keeping, and did not receive any resources to assist with implementation. “It was all blood and guts” (District 395 AD, personal communication, February 15, 2017). After the district passed the levy, the typology remained the same, but they increased the fee to bring back transportation for the student athletes and teams. This process of development and implementation of a major policy outside the administrative oversight of the district, but directly integrated within their internal operations is astonishing. He stated that “desperate times call for

desperate measures” (Personal communication, February 15, 2017), but it seems that the majority of districts would not allow something like this to occur. I am curious as to whether the support may have been more easily generated due to a closer tie to the community, and a we against them mentality for saving the sports programs for the kids. Nevertheless, the feat of a booster club developing a pay to participate program, implementing it, and paying for a districts athletic programs for three years is truly remarkable.

**Across districts.** Since four of the five district administrators were not part of the creation of the policy, their knowledge of the perceived problems and drafting of the policy goals, as well as the agenda setting process during inception of the policy was limited. Athletic administrators from District 35, District 50, and District 100 stated they knew anecdotally that the districts were experiencing financial distress and the goals were most likely to help offset costs or being used as a political ploy to encourage levy passage. It is interesting as the levies were passed, the reason many of the athletic directors stated the fees continued was to show fiscal responsibility. This was evident as District 100 stated they wanted to “let people know we are trying to be fiscally responsible, and that academics do come before athletics” (personal communication, January 6, 2017). The athletic administrator from District 65 did not know the reason, history, or any concrete goals associated with their fee other than to recoup some of the overall costs and assist with operating costs. His response of “In all honestly, I do not know specifically why we have a fee” (District 65 AD, personal communication, January 5, 2017), is not surprising as he had only been employed with the district less than a year. The fee structure developed by districts who stated their goals were to offset or “recoup” some of the costs of athletic operations ranged from \$35 to \$100, and each athletic administrator stated that the

amount generated is miniscule in that regard, utilizing the same terminology articulating the fees do not come close to covering costs.

Since the athletic administrator from District 395 was involved from the beginning of the policy, and was part of a process where the school board threatened to completely eliminate athletics in the event of a levy failure which ultimately occurred, the closeness with the policy was unique in comparison to the other district athletic administrators. The goal of the pay to participate policy utilized within District 395 may not have been formally written down, but was explicit in regards to covering all expenses associated with the operations of the athletic department, including salaries and transportation. As their athletic administrator phrased it, “if the cost had to do with athletics in any way, then we had to figure out a way to fund it” (District 395 AD, personal communication, January 26, 2017).

Lastly, the majority of athletic administrators did not know why the consistent fee, flat rate model was implemented, as well as the factors that led to the development and utilization of their specific typology and current cost structure. Ultimately, the pay to participate policies may have taken different paths to arrive at the consistent fee, flat rate typology, and I believe the understanding of the historical context and contributing factors, as well as specifically defined goals would have assisted with a more sound understanding of the overall policy structure in place.

## **Research Question #2**

How are the implementation methods of pay to participate policies similar and different among school districts?

Based upon the analysis of data in research question one, it is extremely evident that every school district controls all aspects of their pay to participate policy regarding development



and implementation. There are no set methods from a state or national level, and very little resources in regards to assisting with the elements of the policy process model. When considering the implementation processes districts choose to integrate within their policy, it is important to remember that the policy process model is defined and followed individually by specific districts, in accordance to their views and ideas. Some integrate their community stakeholders, others choose to move from inside out, creating and implementing policy without extended discussions. The local control element of school district operations is key when considering how pay to participate policies are uniquely designed and implemented.

**Financial assistance programs.** A consistent theme that emerged throughout the analysis of the documents and interviews was that the school districts offer financial assistance programs for student athletes who are unable to pay, but vary on the organizational structure and how these are communicated to stakeholders. Additionally, the majority of schools provided a discount or fee waiver program for students who qualify for the state free and reduced lunch program, but did not provide this information on the policy documents available on their websites, or have an organized, board approved system or application process. Only District 100 provided information in a clearly underlined section that “those who qualify for the free lunch program will not pay any fee, and those who qualify for a reduced lunch plan will pay half the fee for that season / sport” (D100 Policy document). Their documents did not provide any additional next steps in applying for the waiver. It is interesting to note that the policy document was only available online as part of the overall school student handbook, which was a document of over 100 pages. Many other policies and procedures were provided as individual documents attached to the districts athletic website.

District 65 was the only district that had an actual developed, stand alone “Fee Waiver Document,” which required parents to list student names and grades, along with a parental signature indicating that they are applying for the fee waiver, and they confirm that their family is eligible for free or reduced lunch assistance. This waiver was not outlined in their pay to participate informational document, or as part of the pay to participate payment form document provided on their athletic website. When asked about additional assistance from outside groups such as a booster club, he stated that “from my knowledge base at this point, I have not seen where external groups or athletic boosters have offset the cost” (District 65 AD, personal communication, January 5, 2017). District 50 also did not provide any specific information regarding a free and reduced lunch waiver program in any of their policy documentation or district bylaws, but their athletic administrator stated that “although there is nothing in writing or board approved regarding a waiver program, the athletic booster club covers any qualifying free and reduced lunch student athletes if coaches tell them in the preseason booster meeting” (District 50 AD, personal communication, February 2, 2017). This structure places the ownership on the coach, who may have external variables that may impact their ability to in following this unstructured assistance program.

The athletic administrator at District 35 stated that they do not have a formalized waiver program in place for any student athletes, including those that qualify for free and reduced lunches, but that they always “find a way to make it work.” He mentioned that there are often anonymous donations that come in such as “an anonymous donor at thanksgiving stopped by my office and handed me \$300 cash and said, pay for kid’s participation fees who need help” (District 35 AD, personal communication, January 17, 2017), that are used to cover hardship cases brought to the attention of the department by coaches.

When discussing financial assistance and waiver programs present at District 395, the athletic administrator stated that “when the booster club ran the pay to participate policy the first year, and collected all of the funds and donated the money back to the school to cover the cost of athletics, we did have an assistance program” (District 395 AD, personal communication, January 26, 2017). As stated before, as a former athletic administrator, I find it almost unfathomable to consider that all operational components of the pay to participate fee policies implementation was handled outside of the purview of a school district employee, and the money came as a donation to the department. District 395’s athletic administrator stated that the boosters implemented a support structure for free and reduced lunch eligible students during the initial implementation, “...if you were on free and reduced lunch, we paid for all of your fee or reduced it by the percentage you qualified for” (District 395 AD, personal communication, January 26, 2017). When asked how this took place, he stated that the athletic director provided the information of students due to governmental restrictions of information (District 395 AD, personal communication, January 26, 2017). Although this practice is visible within many school districts implementation procedures, the pilot study data from 2015 (OHSAA & Grant) indicated that nearly 42% of the districts responding who implemented a pay to participate fee did not make allowances, provide waivers, or offer scholarships for students unable to afford the fee. The athletic administrator at District 395 stated that “when the school passed the levy and took back over funding some of athletics, they eliminated any waivers” (District 395 AD, personal communication, January 26, 2017). He stated that the loss of the official, documented waiver system was a catalyst to look for additional, external sponsorship for students. As a rural district, it seems that the community rallied behind helping support the programs, and the athletic administrator did, and continues to spend a lot of time working to provide opportunities to fund

student fees individually. “We have a men’s basketball group who will help any needy basketball player, boy or girl. I send letters to churches, anyone who is willing to sponsor kids, donate money” (District 395 AD, personal communication, January 26, 2017). It is clear that his background externally in the business environment has assisted with his continued approach to push for new methods of revenue and finding assistance from individuals and organizations. “If anyone asks if I need anything I immediately take their number and I call them” (District 395 AD, personal communication, January 26, 2017). It is apparent that although District 395 may not have a formal waiver system or offer any school sponsored financial assistance program to their students, their athletic administrator has created a network of donors and outside sponsorship to offset student’s costs if need is present. You can hear the passion in his voice for making it work when everything was, and somewhat continues to be, stacked against him. It should not have worked. It probably would not have worked under most, but he continues to develop a department and offer extracurricular opportunities for their students.

**Payment procedures.** A second implementation theme that developed throughout the analysis of data with a focus on research question #2 was that although pay to participate policies indicate due dates and requirements to pay in full to be eligible for participation, athletic administrators work with individual students on a case by case basis. It was clear during data analysis that each district policy document provided appropriate contact information to call regarding pay to participate policy questions. Each document also outlined due dates for payment to be eligible to participate. After analyzing the interview data, each athletic director stated that while the policy explicitly stipulates a due date when students or parents must pay the fee in order to be able to participate, the athletic administrator works with each student and family to ensure the opportunity to participate is present.

The document from District 65 states that fees are due prior to the first contest, and “if payment is not received in full by the above mentioned deadline the student athlete cannot participate in practices or contests” (D65 Document). District 100’s document outlines a specific time of 3:00 pm on the day of their first contest in order to be able to “participate in that contest or any further contests” (D100 Document). A time stipulation presents potential logistical issues for families, especially for parents or guardians who may not be able to leave work before 3:00 pm. If there are no external methods of payments incorporated such as online services, potential delivery options and additional methods would need to be outlined and communicated. District 50 also focuses on payment being required in full before the team’s first contest on their document, but defines it further as the “first regular season game” (D50 Document). In this scenario, depending upon the sport, a student could potentially practice for a month prior to a game, as well as take part in team pictures, and build a community within the group prior to having to pay. District 35’s policy document describes even further that “athletic fees must be paid directly to the high school athletic office before an athlete can participate in a scrimmage, practice, or game” (D35 Document). The wording of this statement is interesting as mechanically a practice most likely would come before a scrimmage, and ultimately they are saying the fee must be paid before they show up for the first day in a way that may be misunderstood.

The policy document from District 395 does not focus on the first contest or regular season game specifically, but rather states that “athletes may not participate in contests until they have paid their participation fee or arrange a payment plan” (D395 Document). Although each athletic administrator stated they work with students and families on a case by case basis, District 395 is the only district who explicitly outlines a payment plan in the policy text, as well as states

that “anyone who cannot meet this obligation should call the Athletic Director at the following number...” (D395 Document). This is extremely interesting because District 395 does not have a free and reduced waiver program as the school cancelled it when the board of education reinstated partial funding of the athletics program following a successful levy campaign, and currently do not offer any other documented waiver or assistance programs. When asked further about this, the athletic administrator showed additional individual concern for the students, families, and overall athletic program in the district.

I put people on payment plans, and they have to come in and sign a document that says this is what you’re paying... I let them tell me when they can make their payments, and I hold them accountable for what they tell me. People often come in and ask what the payment plan is, and I say, well sit down here and we’ll make one up for you...because every person has an individual situation. (District 395 AD, personal communication, January 26, 2017)

This could potentially be a serious liability, but one which no doubt shows care and concern for ensuring opportunities are present for District 395 student athletes.

**Depositing of fees.** The final theme that emerged throughout the data analysis addressed the implementation procedure of which school account, or accounts, pay to participate fees are deposited in and this again is specific to each individual school district. One major area of concern raised by athletic directors in the pilot study in 2015 was their lack of knowledge regarding what the money collected from pay to participate fees was actually paying for, as 61% of the districts indicated fees were deposited into the district general operating fund. An additional 6% stated they had no idea where the money was deposited, and only 4% stated the money went into a fund with an identified, allocated focus such as transportation. The fees from

the remaining 29% of district respondents were deposited into the athletic operating fund (OHSAA & Grant, 2015).

When considering the five districts analyzed within this study and their goal or pursuit of offsetting or recouping costs of athletic operations, the general operating fund or athletic department account would be the most appropriate based upon the goal information provided. This decision is unique to each district, and one which is not present on any policy documents of the schools analyzed within this study. Based upon the interview analysis, the five districts within this study deposited their funds in one of two different accounts, including either directly into the general fund, or directly into the athletic department account. District 65 provided further detail as they stated their athletics/building coordinator managed the pay to participate fees which are “deposited into a pay to participate fee account within the general fund that also encompasses clubs and sports” (District 65 AD, personal communication, January 5, 2017). This is important to note and consider as the fees for both sports and clubs were placed into the same pay to participate account. Although the athletic administrator was unsure with my follow up question, I asked how these fees are then distributed and if they are specifically separated for costs. Since the goal was to offset costs, I would assume that there was no additional consideration, and the fees just became part of the larger pot of revenue to offset expenses overall.

The athletic administrators from both District 50 and District 35 have implementation programs where the funds are directly deposited into the school’s general fund, although District 35 seemed very clear in regards to that being a direct result of the athletic department being required to pay for transportation costs. “We generate somewhere around \$33,000 per year which is deposited directly into the general fund to help pay for our transportation cost of nearly

\$2.00 per mile” (District 35 AD, personal communication, January 17, 2017). District 35 is a large district with the largest number of sport programs. Their fee is minimal, and the athletic director quickly pointed out that in no way does the fee even cover half of their transportation costs.

District 50’s athletic administrator did not know where the money was allocated after being deposited, or how much was brought in through the pay to participate fee collection. “I never see any of the pay to participate fee money. It goes directly into the general fund. I can’t tell you exactly how much we take in. The treasurer handles all of that” (District 50 AD, personal communication, February 2, 2017). It is interesting that both of these districts provide the consistent fee, flat rate typology without the discount variation. From a development standpoint, a theory could be made that since the athletic pay to participate fees seem the furthest from the daily operations and knowledge base of the athletic administrators within these two districts, the development of the fee implementation procedures may have involved the treasurer and school building administrators, leading to a decision to not implement a discount variation model. The discount variation model would be an assumed interest for athletic administrators who are continually trying to engage students in participating in more athletic programs, and may be something that does not necessarily interest administrators who do not see athletic participation as a key value in their district.

On the other side of the spectrum, you have District 100 and District 395, which both deposit at least a partial amount of their fees directly into their athletic accounts. When considering the 29% of the pilot study who also have this practice, one interesting component concerns the typologies used, and if that has an impact on where the fees are deposited. In this study, all cases utilize the same overarching typology, and both District 100 and District 395 also



integrated a discount model variation. The athletic administrator from District 395 handles all aspects of their policy, including the need to purchase his own accounting software and development of financial reporting documents to manage all aspects of the implementation, including invoicing for payments. District 395 did not provide any additional resources for implementation, but all fees do go directly into the athletic account.

During the interview with the athletic administrator from District 100, he outlined a deposit model that I had not seen utilized within other districts. I was intrigued about the set-up, specifically based upon their continued focus on recouping costs and showing fiscal responsibility. “Our setup is a little unique,” (District 100 AD, personal communication, January 6, 2017), he stated as he described their tiered variation where the first sport fee is \$100 dollars, the second is \$75 dollars, and the third \$50 dollars at the high school level. When fees are paid, the first sport participation fee of \$100 gets deposited directly into our athletic fund to help offset our costs for running athletics. The second and third sport fees of \$75 and \$50 are deposited directly into the school’s general fund to offset costs of coaching salaries and transportation which we do not pay out of our athletic budget. (District 100 AD, personal communication, January 6, 2017).

After additional discussion, he was not sure why it was initially developed this way but stated “I think again, it was to not make it a burden. To let people know we are trying to be fiscally responsible, and that academics do come before athletics (Personal communication, January 6, 2017). He estimated generating somewhere near \$14,000 per year that is directly deposited into the athletic department account from first sport participation. This type of implementation could be a potential method districts consider for strategically defining a goal of recouping costs and

offsetting rising costs of athletic operations because by depositing funds in both accounts, it may be remarkably easier to develop an evaluation method to measure specific success tied to this.

**Across districts.** As districts continue to develop pay to participate policies, it is important to consider the implementation procedures, as they will be unique and specific to the type of policy, but also to the districts structure and goals. It is evident through the above analysis of data centered around research question #2, that although the districts all employ the same pay to participate typology, implementation methods of due dates, as well as board approved waiver or financial assistance programs vary among districts. The documents try to be clear in regards to expectations of payment, as well as work to outline assistance programs, but the interviews described a large amount of control maintained by the athletic administrators regarding how they implement additional financial assistance programs, handle hardship cases, as well as treat each family on a case by case basis. Even though the district administrators organize and manage these processes differently through board approval or as an extension of their own personal conscience and value system, they were clear to state in some manner that at the end of the day, cost will not be a limiting factor of participation for a student within their districts.

### **Research Question #3**

What criterion do school districts utilize when evaluating the success of the programs based on the outlined goals?

As the number of schools implementing pay to participate policies in Ohio increases, it is important to consider step five and six of the policy process to continuously evaluate and change the programs as necessary. Kraft and Furlong (2015) state that the policy process never really ends (p. 101), and school districts should not see pay to participate programs as a means to an

end without further discussion and evaluation. The final research question aimed to analyze data considering what criterion districts utilize when measuring and assessing the success, or failure, of the policies.

**Evaluation process.** During the analysis of the data surrounding this research question, it was apparent that due to the majority of the athletic administrators and districts not having clearly defined goals, or strategies for achieving those goals, the majority of the districts had no clear definition of what success meant within their district. This lack of definition contributed to the majority of school districts not having any formal evaluative process regarding end of year evaluations, or how success would be measured on any of the policy documents provided by the athletic administrators. After collecting and going through all the additional documents, fee waivers, and district bylaws, District 50 was the only district to provide any documentation that discussed an evaluation would take place. It was explicitly written in District 50's bylaws and policy regarding participation guidelines for co-curricular and extra-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics, which was last revised in 2015, that "all participation fee amounts are reviewed annually for high school sports, middle school sports, as well as school sponsored clubs" (BD 50 Bylaws Document). Although this is in writing, District 50's athletic administrator stated there is no formal evaluation process in place, and "if there is ever a discussion at a school board meeting it is only because the athletic director or treasurer has brought it up, which hasn't happened since I've been here" (Personal communication, February 2, 2017).

The athletic administrator had been in the position for a few years, and clearly was not part of any annual review if it occurred. His previous comment discussed during the development section regarding the policy being a "political, symbolic move" aligns directly with

the response from District 35's athletic administrator regarding their lack of evaluation procedures within their district. "Even though we see the impact athletics can play in providing a well-rounded education...we ultimately collect a pool of money and sell that action as perspective for public relations. I guess the success is that our fees are low" (District 35 AD, personal communication, January 17, 2017). Along similar lines, although the athletic administrator from District 65 was unaware of any year end evaluation processes since he had not completed a full year cycle in the position, he did mention that a brief discussion occurred at the beginning of the year when he took over about the pay to participate forms. "The form we discussed at the beginning of the year...how we need to go back and revisit this form, and make sure it is what we are actually doing on a daily basis (District 65 AD, personal communication, January 5, 2017).

Although the previous three districts described were not clear on specific evaluation procedures, District 100 and District 395 did state they evaluated their policies, but in different methods.

Pay to participate is a big conversation at the end of the year for the school board. I go through and look at our finances, and put together our documents so we know exactly what we took in, and where we fall short. This helps the board know how much support I need. We have people run for the board who say they are going to eliminate pay to participate...they don't realize that if they eliminate it, that's coming out of their general fund...and when they realize how much it is, it doesn't go anywhere. (District 395 AD, personal communication, January, 26, 2017)

The development and evolution of the pay to participate policy at District 395 is intriguing, and illuminates the impact of school board members and the individual agendas they may bring with

them as new members. He stated that often new members will join the board with the intent of eliminating the fees, but are quick to lose sight of this plight when they have to start to become educated in regards to the financial components of running a district.

Although District 100 does require the athletic administrator to complete a formal presentation like District 395, their athletic administrator said he would put one together, but that he really does not need to based upon the structure they have in place with their athletic council.

We have an athletic council which helps make a lot of our decisions, well, at least our recommendations to the board. It's made up of our high school and middle school principals, the athletic directors of both high school and middle school, as well as the superintendent and two board members. I put together a board report, and answer questions, but any recommendations, including raising fees which will most likely occur this year due to rising operating costs, comes from me on behalf of the athletic council.

There are zero surprises. (District 100 AD, personal communication, January 6, 2017)

District 100's internal structure of evaluation seems to include the most people, and is not something that only occurs at the end of the year. Because the individuals integrated within this group are all part of the current school governance structure and take an additional step to come together with a focus on the athletic department, the athletic administrator seemed confident they are meeting their needs and hopefully implementing a policy that best aligns with their goal of offsetting costs, and maintaining a perception of being fiscally responsible.

**Across districts.** The hardest part regarding an analysis of data concerning the evaluation criterion of the districts pay to participate policies was that the district athletic administrators stated they did not have any formally outlined goals other than to help offset, or recoup some of the costs of athletic operations. Three districts mentioned potential areas in their

documentation where the fees collected may be utilized to offset costs incurred from athletic trainers, transportation, and facility maintenance, but they did not discuss or incorporate any evaluation procedures to assess the impact of these costs, or the total amount offset by utilizing pay to participate fees. District 100 was the only district with an organized support structure integrating school officials to help discuss and develop recommendations to the board. From the other athletic administrator responses outlined throughout, they were all left individually to assess, or not assess, their policies, even though the fees in some districts were not deposited into the athletic account and they had no touchpoint with them.

### **Summary**

The results of this study indicated that although districts may utilize the same pay to participate fee typology, specific factors related to the district, their administration and organization, as well as the athletic administrator's knowledge and understanding of the policy impact the development, implementation, and evaluation processes, or lack thereof. The data described throughout this chapter assisted in answering the research questions, centered on each distinctive element of the development, implementation, and evaluation processes individually. Ultimately, the data revealed that the majority of district pay to participate policies do not have clearly defined goals, and athletic administrators may not have a full understanding of development processes, and districts may not have a formal process for policy evaluation and potential change.

## CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Over the last forty years, pay to participate policies have witnessed increased utilization in order to offset rising costs and boost declining budgets at public school districts throughout the United States (Smith, 2001). A 2009 study completed by the National Federation of High School Associations documented at least one district in 33 states nationwide implemented a pay to participate policy. Gaining traction during the financial crisis during the 1970s and 1980's, athletic pay to participate policies saw a significant increase in development in the Midwest region (Parkhouse & Dennison, 1984; Hiestand, 1992, Hardy, 1997; Smith, 2001).

As school districts continue to employ this practice of revenue generation, it is important for school administrators to consider how their current, or potential future policy is developed, implemented, and evaluated. During this consideration, it is also important for districts to utilize available resources to better organize and assist with the discussion and overall analysis of their policies. Kraft and Furlong (2015) outline a policy process model based upon strong historical foundations that provides an easy way for districts to overlay their policy and analyze specific attributes of their individual policy. Each stage of the policy process model which includes agenda setting, policy formulation, policy legitimation, policy implementation, policy evaluation, and policy change, should be analyzed through the districts lens with the intent of identifying goals and metrics that can be utilized in defining the overall success of a policy being considered or already implemented. Without a focus or clear identification of what success actually entails in regards to a pay to participate policy, the ability to consider whether or not it is beneficial, and doing what it is intended or hoped to do for the district and students is extremely hard to articulate or understand. Each district is unique, and the variables impacting the policy process model within their context will be as well.

The review of literature revealed a gap in research surrounding the policy development, implementation, and evaluation of pay to participate fees, and this dissertation was one of the first formal analyses of specific pay to participate policies of athletic programs within Ohio High School Athletic Association member schools. It was also one of the first to analyze actual policy documents, and interview athletic administrators about their respective policies. With a pay to participate fee being the base element to the opportunity to participate in a district athletic program, it is important for the district athletic administrator to be well versed in the actions of the policy itself. The results of this study will provide information to school administrators and others considering the implementation or continuation of interscholastic athletic pay to participate policies in their respective districts.

### **Overview of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate and describe further the development, implementation, and evaluation of flat rate, consistent fee pay to participate policies within select Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSA) member school districts. A qualitative, multiple case study design was applied to examine three research questions related to this purpose. Creswell (2012) stated that qualitative research aims to provide a holistic understanding and rich, contextual data by engaging in conversation with participants in a natural setting. According to Schramm (1971), case studies try to illuminate a decision or set of decisions, why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result. This study intended to gather the stories surrounding specific districts through the following research questions considering the why, how, and what behind specific pay to participate policies:

1. What are the goals of the specific pay to participate policies and what factors contributed to their development?



2. How are the implementation methods of pay to participate policies similar and different among school districts?
3. What criterion do school districts utilize when evaluating the success of the programs based on the outlined goals?

### **Interpretation of Findings**

The last step within this study is the interpretation of results, and more than one perspective or interpretation is possible. Caplan and Caplan (1999) state, “the researcher must take into account every detail of the study and come up with an interpretation of what actually happened” (p. 28). This chapter will aim to authenticate such an interpretation from my findings identified in Chapter 4.

As a former athletic director who was charged with developing a pay to participate policy for implementation in response to a potential levy failure, it is important that I consider and be forthright in my closeness and deep connection to pay to participate policies. My interest in studying pay to participate policy development, implementation, and evaluation derives from an initial lack of understanding of where to start myself during this process, and the little knowledge, or specific considerations I possessed at the time in regards to these three areas of the policy process.

The findings of this study should benefit school districts who are currently implementing a pay to participate policy, or considering the development, or discontinuation of one. As school districts continue to examine budgets, analyze shortfalls, as well as consider potential opportunities for growth and maintenance of current programming leading to the consideration of pay to participate policies, district administrators as well as school board personnel may want to use this study for discussion points and consideration elements in the policy proposal and

analysis process. Considering problem perception and definition, coupled with the formulation of goals and strategies for achieving them would be a beneficial component to any district discussion (Kraft & Furlong, 2015). This discussion could potentially provide a robust, district centered dialogue surrounding the literature presented, as well as the unique cases and potential concerns and success areas of other districts.

In addition, utilizing the data and findings from this study, I developed a pay to participate policy discussion guide to assist districts further when analyzing and discussing a current, or future interscholastic athletic pay to participate policy. This document is located as Appendix C.

### **Development and Contributing Factors**

The initial research question focused on identifying and describing factors contributing to the development of the district policies as well as any associated, documented goals. During the data analysis, three major sub themes emerged surrounding the goals of pay to participate fees, levy failures as the major contributing factor, as well as lack of knowledge surrounding typology development. Each sub theme will be outlined, and then the recommendations for leadership will be provided.

**Goals.** During the document analysis, it was evident that the majority of goals associated with district pay to participate fees were vague and focused on offsetting costs of athletic operations, primarily concerning transportation fees and coaching salaries. Although this clearly is an outcome for any fee that is placed within any school organization, there was no additional specific information provided within the documents. Two of the five policies contained verbiage relating the fees to financial cuts or savings for the district, but the rest only outlined the immediate action steps for implementation, and served as overview procedural documents and

payment forms. These findings are important for districts to utilize when analyzing their policies, considering their purpose and the information they provide communicating this to internal and external stakeholders. Districts are implementing a policy that requires students to pay for something, and it is important for stakeholders to understand why, and how that result has occurred. It is also important for districts to show the impact of the fee, and be transparent regarding how much is collected, what it actually pays for, and the overall impact it has on the district. Without the development of measurable goals, these outcomes are hard to achieve.

Interview data from the athletic administrators contributed further to the overarching, sometimes “unwritten” goal of assisting with major costs of athletic department operations, such as salaries and transportation. During the interviews, the athletic administrators stated these goals were not written down anywhere other than on a few of the district’s policy documents. Although the idea of offsetting athletic costs seems like an appropriate goal, it does not provide much design or development from a strategic evaluation standpoint. Schools continuously implement S.M.A.R.T. goals or metric based goals, as well as assessment procedures to ensure specific strategies and action plans are in place for achievement and most other programming. Due to this, I believe it is important for districts to consider how the design of pay to participate policies can be more clearly outlined for evaluation and measurement.

***Recommendations for leadership.*** Although the policy process model outlined by Kraft and Furlong (2015) references the process as a cycle with a clear understanding of its cyclical or continuous nature, rather than stages being a onetime set of actions (p. 84), due to the lack of initial knowledge regarding agenda setting, policy formulation, and policy legitimation surrounding the development of the pay to participate policy by athletic administrators tasked with the management of these policies, it seems that it would be difficult to engage in strategic

analysis and developmental change of justifications and rationales for policy goals. Without the goals, the policies float as cogs in the wheel of district operations, doing a job, but not necessarily making a strategic impact. This lack of overall understanding and clarity limits a districts ability to view this as a strategic policy that can be evaluated for success each year, and fully understand how the policy is actually impacting their district, and whether it is relevant and appropriate for the district at the current time. Although I am sure many school districts try to do this without a clear definition of goals, they must consistently consider rates of participation, as well as longitudinal trends to insure that the potential benefits obtained through extracurricular activity participation is available to the maximum number of students (Chapman, 2009). Additionally, by focusing on developing strategic goals, districts can then consider how well internal and external stakeholders understand the policy from a purpose standpoint, and work to design policy documents that assist in outlining the why behind the fees, being extremely clear on the goals of the policy and fees, the strategies in place to help achieve those goals, and ultimately the evaluation process that will take place to measure and evaluate their overall success.

**Levy failures.** Secondly, athletic administrators consistently viewed levy failures as the major contributing factor for pay to participate policy development, and as part of being fiscally responsible. This data was primarily provided through anecdotal evidence as only one athletic administrator was present during the development of the policy with their current district. Additionally, although all district stated their policies were developed due to levy concerns, failures, or other financial distress, the districts had since passed levies but their fees remained intact. When this was discussed further, the majority of the athletic administrators believed this to be a public relations or political symbolic move, ultimately showing the community they were

being fiscally responsible. This raises the question as to whether this fee structure is actually the most beneficial for the goals of the district, and again leads back to the importance of the development of measurable goals and understanding the why behind the fee development. It also extends the discussion regarding what the district definition of fiscal responsibility in regards to athletic operations truly is.

Furthermore, since four out of the five athletic administrators in this study were not present during the development of their policies, and nearly half of athletic administrators responding to the 2015 pilot study had less than five years' experience and most likely were not present during the development of the pay to participate policy, full understanding of the policy development other than through anecdotal evidence is not necessarily surprising.

***Recommendations for leadership.*** Districts must continuously work to analyze their reasoning, and why, behind continued implementation if they have since passed a levy that was the major contributing factor for their policy development. If the reasoning behind the fee was resolved, or somewhat resolved, but yet the fee is maintained, then districts must be clear regarding why continued implementation occurred to ensure open lines of communication and maintenance support and understanding. If a fee remains, and districts undergo another levy campaign or experience additional financial distress, the case of 395 and external operations of athletics funding would seem like a potentially inevitable path.

I also believe that athletic administrators must have a strong knowledge base surrounding the development, historical political context, or initial agenda setting process, as well as a solid understanding of policy formulation programming that initially developed the proverbial door the students they serve must unlock, to effectively and efficiently lead the total strategic operations of an athletic department within a school district. Since most provided information

regarding this element from an anecdotal perspective, unless their superintendent has been a constant staple within the district, and their school board members were part of the initial process and have a strong length of tenure, reasoning for why pay to participate policies are implemented within districts will continue to emulate the statements of, “well it’s always been there,” or “it generates some revenue.” Additionally, with the increase of club sports, and the high costs associated with travel teams and Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) programs, parents and districts will become accustomed, and almost expect, to pay a fee for sport participation.

Lastly, if districts are going to state that the fee is part of being fiscally responsible, I question what this actually means, and whether the community has the same perception. One athletic administrator referenced fiscal responsibility as showing that academics is our main priority and above athletics. While this thought process may be evident within the minds of many athletic administrators, or school administrators in general, this alludes to the importance of open evaluation and discussion regarding where athletics fits within the educational realm of the district, and what purpose it truly provides from an educational based perspective. What does this mean to the administrators and school board? What does this mean to the community? What does this mean to the students? Are those consistent, and does that perception impact the policy actions and success in any way? If districts define this as showing that academics comes before athletics, then they need to discuss where athletics fits within the educational structure of their district, and ultimately define the overall value for their students. Districts have the responsibility of educating and preparing students for their next steps, and this discussion is one the district leadership must have collaboratively with district stakeholders. Without understanding the value and purpose of athletics within a specific district, I believe it would be

hard to appropriately develop a policy that is the most beneficial in achieving a districts goals, whatever they may be.

**Typology.** Since the data analyzed showed that none of the policies and only one district athletic administrator provided evidence regarding why the consistent fee, flat rate typology was, or currently is, utilized within their district, it is important for districts to consider the model and structure of the pay to participate fee, focusing on what best serves the students and district if a fee is implemented. Based upon the 2015 pilot study, there were three major typologies utilized, with numerous variations that could be included within the overall structure such as discounts for additional participation seen within three of the districts within this study. By considering the alternative typologies during the development stages, districts can better strategically assess whether or not they will assist in the overall achievement of the identified goals. This again shows the importance of developing strategic goals, as there is no clear way to identify if a typology is the right fit for a district if they do not clearly outline what the policy should accomplish through implementation.

***Recommendations for leadership.*** The typology of a pay to participate policy utilized within a district is the base organizational structure that will impact the overall external and internal operations, discussion points, and outcomes. How the fee structure is set will also drive potential waiver assistance programs, resources needed for implementation, and ultimately create unintentional barriers due to the processes both internal and external constituents must need to follow to carry out this policy from a payment and collections standpoint. This lack of understanding regarding why a specific typology was utilized impacts the development of documents, as well as impacts the way in which they are written to communicate and support the rationale and utilization of pay to participate fees. It also impacts the ability of the athletic

administrator appropriate discuss and educate the policy, answering questions surrounding why the specific type was chosen. If different methods are not considered, there is no way to know which might be the best fit for the district during a specific time. Additionally, it would be almost impossible for districts to forecast financially without an understanding of the outcomes desired, especially since no junior high schools offer the same number of sports that are offered at high schools. The typology must be considered in the overall district frame of reference, including additional fees that students may be required to pay for academic, clubs, or technology and how that might impact overall attendance and participation cost for students. This discussion needs to include numerous stakeholders in order understand perceptions and potential impacts on families and student athletes, as well as the internal processes of operation for the district athletic administrator and support staff.

### **Implementation of Policies**

The second research question within this study focused on describing how the implementation methods of pay to participate policies are similar and different among school districts. As policies are continuously developed in districts nationwide, their implementation procedures and intricacies must be carefully considered from many different vantage points. Key implementation mechanisms such as communication of payment dates and procedure requirements, utilization and communication of waivers or financial assistance programs to offset hardship cases as well as to assist students who qualify for free and reduced lunches, where the pay to participate fees are deposited, along with unique intricacies that may be impacted by sport participation such as refunds for injuries, as well as cancellation of games, must be thoroughly discussed and taken into consideration. When considering the data regarding the similarities and differences among the districts researched, three major sub themes regarding



the implementation of financial assistance programs, payment procedures process, as well as the depositing of fees provided unique considerations for districts to consider moving forward.

**Financial assistance programs.** From the case study data, each district had unique implementation procedures, and although most districts stated they did offer some type of financial assistance program often focused on students who qualify for free and reduced lunch programs, they varied on the structure and how these are communicated to stakeholders. District 100 stated specifically in their policy document a provision for free and reduced lunch students. District 65 provided a separate document as a stand-alone waiver application only for families who qualified for the free and reduced lunch program and wanted their participation fees waived. The wording was interesting, as the fee waiver application stated “this form only needs to be filled out if you receive free/reduced lunches and would like your pay to participate fees waived” (D65 fee waiver document). It also required signatures from parents or guardians confirming that their family was eligible for the free and reduced lunch program. This made me consider further if there was a process where each waiver was analyzed for actual eligibility, or if they just took the families word based upon the signature. If they do not utilize an online payment process that may automatically populate a balance of zero for students on free and reduced lunch programs, each form would need to be analyzed individually through physical resources. Due to Mitchell and Hoff (2006) outlining potential stigmas attached to fees, as well as concern for potential embarrassment of asking for help, districts should work to take any elements of action for waivers and financial assistance out of an in person, interactive process for the student or family. They also must be extremely cautious regarding the wording of their policies, to ensure that financial assistance processes and programs are easily understood and manageable by the students and families.

The athletic administrator from District 50 stated that although there was nothing in writing regarding a board approved waiver program, the athletic booster club covered any students who qualified for the free and reduced lunch program if coaches provided the information in the preseason meeting. This process seemed like an additional barrier for students, as they would have to discuss with their coach their eligibility, and their coach would need to remember to submit a document or provide verbally the names of students needing assistance. I would be curious if any students have been provided assistance by a coach who may not have qualified for free and reduced lunches, but the coach knew they could not afford the cost. Additionally, with the high rate of turnover for many coaching positions, this action would be predicated on the notion that either students are open to talking about their financial situations with most people, including a new coach, or they have developed a strong relationship with a coach and feel comfortable disclosing that information.

When considering the implementation component of financial assistance and waiver programs further, it is interesting to note that from the OHSA pilot study, 58%, or 141 schools that implemented a pay to participate policy during the 2014-2015 school year provided scholarship allowances, waivers, or additional financial assistance programs. Over one hundred schools responded stating they did not provide any assistance programs during that school year, including student or family maximum fee amounts. Based upon the data collected and analyzed during this study of the five specific districts, District 35, District 50, and District 395 did not provide any board approved financial support programs, including any type of discount for free and reduced lunch students. Although their school districts did not offer official, documented waiver programs or financial assistance programs, they stated in their interviews they would

never allow the inability to pay a fee impact the opportunity for a student to participate in a sport and would provide some type of support.

***Recommendations for leadership.*** As school's develop and implement new policies, as well as analyze current ones, they must continuously consider structural components that may positively and negatively impact their students. Although all districts either offered a board approved financial assistance program, or had other internal mechanisms or support groups that would assist with the costs, the process that students or families must take to activate these assistance programs is an extremely important discussion. What type of paperwork is required for students or families to fill out? Who must they tell that they need assistance in order to receive it? What is the process that occurs when this happens, and how can a student get assistance when they are nervous or embarrassed to ask for it? There also will most likely be additional costs associated with integrating a financial assistance program, which may include time and physical resources needed to handle administrative processes involved, as well to develop additional revenue generation through fundraisers, external sponsorship, or booster club involvement. Although these assistance programs are developed to help, without considering how they assist in activating actions to assist in achieving the strategic goals, and analyzing the utilization of students each year, it would be hard for a district to know if they are actually helping. Districts need to consider how many students are completing the process for assistance in relation to how many are eligible, and fully discuss whether or not the financial assistance programs are strategically serving their intentions. If that number is low, then the communication and processes to gain assistance may not be the most appropriate or properly designed for assisting students within the district. The more steps that are placed within this

process, the more potential it may be acting as an unintentional barrier for students and families needing assistance.

**Payment procedures and individual cases.** As I analyzed the interview data further, and referenced the policy documents, it became clear that even though all pay to participate policies indicated due dates and requirements to pay in full to be eligible for participation, and may not have had assistance programs, all the athletic directors interviewed stated they work with individual students and families on a case by case basis to ensure fees are not a deciding factor. Interestingly, the interview and policy document data are often contradictory as the documents reference implementation guidelines detailing that if a student athlete's participation fees are not paid in full by a specific deadline, which is defined differently as either the first practice, scrimmage, or sometimes game, they would not be allowed to participate, and in one case, would be removed from the team. District 395 outlines that a student will not be allowed to participate until fees are paid, but provides a bulleted point stating that if you cannot meet the fee obligation to contact the Athletic Director to set up a payment plan (D395 Document). The athletic administrator states that he now works individually with each family to develop necessary payment plans, as he believes "they are all individual cases, so they must be treated individually" (Personal communication, January 26, 2017). It is curious to consider the impact of deadlines and payment plans, and again the amount of resources needed to manage this type of process.

From my personal experience, the people who I have worked with in athletic administrator roles are extremely hard working, and want to create the best opportunities for their students and district while following policy and procedural implementation guidelines. But at the end of the day, they care so deeply about kids and athletics they will do what is necessary

to serve the best interest of the student, and in my eyes, this always trumps policy. I do not believe this to be any different than what a teacher would do for a student in the classroom, and something I would expect school board members would encourage outside of the board room. Thus, it did not surprise me to hear that many of the athletic directors do not follow their board approved policy document in regards to exact implementation procedures all the time, which may partly occur due to a lack of full understanding of the intricacies associated with their policy implementation, or having little actual hands on activity with the implementation on a daily basis. Ultimately, the interview data revealed although the policies have similarities and differences in the form of their implementation, athletic administrators will do whatever they can to ensure a student has the opportunity to participate if they are putting in the effort to make themselves, their teams, and the department better.

***Recommendations for leadership.*** When considering the interview and policy document data, and that all five athletic administrators stated they would do what is in the best interest of any student on a case by case basis whether stated in the policy or not, I questioned the flexibility of pay to participate policies and the impact on the athletic programs and athletic director's position. As stated earlier, school staff are hired with the intention to help support and develop students. Athletic administrators have to walk a fine line between making sure their departments are operating well enough financially to support their programs, while also making sure the students interests are at the fore front of their service. Athletic departments cannot operate without generating revenue, and they also cannot operate without student participation. These two elements seem to potentially be at odds with one another during a pay to participate fee when you consider the data from this study in this area. Do the policies require athletic administrators to choose one or the other? If a student wants to participate, but may not meet the

criteria outlined within the policy document from a fee perspective, what does the district expect of the athletic administrator? If the athletic administrator is flexible, are they jeopardizing the policy in regards to all of the students following the procedures? Is a payment plan sufficient enough if the policy doesn't outline the opportunity for one? Is the athletic administrator's role within the policy flexible enough to do this? These are key questions the internal leadership must have moving forward to ensure the best interests of the students, families, and athletic administrator, as well as all others who are intricately involved in the operations of this policy, are taken into account.

**Depositing of fees.** Lastly, a final key element from an implementation standpoint that became visible from the interview data was that the depositing of fees into specific accounts was unique to each district and information surrounding this process was not included in any district policy documentation. Consideration of this procedural element was heightened by the 2015 pilot study where 65% of athletic administrators with pay to participate policies stated that fees collected within their district were deposited into the district's general operating fund, and an additional 6% were not sure where the funds were deposited. Only 29% acknowledged fees being deposited into their athletic fund. Although this may not seem important, this was a major point of contention within the political discussions last year regarding the need for potential legislation surrounding pay to participate fees. When analyzing the interview data, three of the districts deposited the funds into their general fund, with one district implementing a tiered model where the first sport fee went into the athletic department fund, and the second and third sport fee was deposited into the general fund. It was interesting to note that the two districts who had at least a portion of their fees deposited into their athletic accounts seemed to understand the policy and the overall impact it played within their district more fluently. Because of this, it is

important for districts to consider where they deposit their fees, how their athletic administrator is integrated into that process, and how that is communicated within their policy documentation and through other modes of communication with their stakeholders. The ways in which policy implementation procedures are created are as unique as the policy makers want to ultimately design them. Unfortunately, based upon the data from the documents and the interviews, the reasoning behind it is not often evident or explicitly communicated to the athletic directors who come on board post policy development.

***Recommendations for leadership.*** Although where pay to participate fees are deposited within the financial structure of a district may seem trivial, based upon the interview data, it was clear that the athletic administrators who were integrated in the process and saw at least a portion of the financial outcomes within their daily budget structures were much more hands on and educated about the policy. I strongly believe this is impactful from an external stakeholder perspective, as the athletic administrators are the managers of the total athletic program, and ultimately have to educate stakeholders surrounding a pay to participate policy and its impact on their department. If they are unable to speak strategically about its purpose, and do not feel a strong connection of understanding, I believe it would be tough for them to assist in generating these desired outcomes within the community as well. Clarity within this realm of implementation is needed throughout the documents, as well as all other communication avenues to provide a strong transparent, and collaborative structure. By being up front with where the fees are deposited, the overall costs of operating a total athletic department, as well as providing information regarding financial data depicting its usage and impact, districts allow themselves a better foundation to begin and continue discussions about the utilization of the fee with all stakeholders, which serves as a beneficial, strategic move for their future. Ultimately, I believe

implementation programming is something that often is overlooked, and usually is created quickly with little formal discussion and strategic planning. Policy documents and desired outcomes must serve a purpose, and districts need to continue to take into account stakeholder input as internal and external conditions change and evolve.

### **Evaluation of Policies**

The last research question within this study focused on identifying what criterion school districts utilize when evaluating the success of pay to participate programs based on the outlined goals. This research question aligned directly with the fifth stage of Kraft and Furlong's (2015) policy process model regarding policy and program evaluation, and the overall "measurement and assessment of policy and program effects, including success or failure" (Table 3-1, p. 86). When I initially started this study, the evaluation component was the piece I was most excited about uncovering and describing further, and I had hoped to truly deliver some impactful data to help develop a supporting document outline that could be provided to other districts. This part unfortunately was where I was the most disappointed, as three of the five districts did not have a documented evaluation process, or specific criterion they utilized to analyze the success of the program. Of the five districts that I studied, one athletic administrator had not been there during a year end process yet, so he was unaware of the districts evaluation procedures, and did not have a definition of success from a district policy standpoint, other than to help offset costs. Two districts did not have an evaluation process, and stated that any evaluation would be completed by the treasurer in regards to overall success. When I tried to connect this statement with their overarching goal of recouping some of the costs of athletic operations, there was no process that could be strategically outlined to decide whether or not the policy was a success, which ultimately lead me to believe that the policy would just continue the way it was until the



treasurer gave a negative financial forecast, and the superintendent would tell the athletic administrator they needed to cut their budget further, resulting in a potentially higher fee. Even in positive financial times, without an evaluation process, a pay to participate fee most likely will remain a constant in the district. As witnessed within the study, all districts stated they had passed their levy which was the underlying theme for why the fee was developed, but they continued to maintain the fee even after stating they were financially sound as a district over a certain number of years. If the goal was to assist during times of financial distress or to help pass a levy, and that occurred, then reasoning for continued utilization needs to be understood by all involved through consistent, transparent evaluations and discussion.

Additionally, District 100 did not have a structured, outlined year end evaluation process, and was not required to present any formal evaluation overview to the board of education, but did work directly with an established athletic council that would discuss the policy and make recommendations for any changes. The athletic council was made up of the district administrators, as well as school board members, so the process at least felt as if they were having a sound, reflective discussion surrounding the overall policy, and strategic next steps. It is interesting to note that the only two districts that identified an evaluation process, no matter how unstructured, deposited at least a partial amount of their funds directly into the athletic accounts.

District 395 continued to be unique as he provided financial analysis documents immediately that he created for evaluation and manages himself. Due to his financial and accounting background, he developed a tracking and analysis process during the inception of the policy. He had a pie chart of all expenditures, all revenues, as well as sport participation broken down with percentages attached to each level, including overall income generated. The sheer

volume of data he had available within seconds was astonishing, and the transparency he was able to provide made me believe that he could make an impact assisting other district athletic administrators charged with the development, or current implementation and evaluation of their pay to participate policy. The booster club, under his direction, funded an athletics program at a cost of nearly \$500,000 dollars per year, for three years. That in itself is an astounding feat, one which I am not sure many athletic administrators would even want to consider taking on.

District 395 was also the only district where the athletic administrator handled all aspects of the organizational and implementation procedures including collections, invoicing, and payment plan development. His closeness to the process, and full understanding to every caveat of the policy development, seemed to allow a different level of understanding and flexibility regarding the policy procedures. He knew every aspect of the policy, and knew exactly the evaluative components that the district would request to see, or that he wanted them to see. He also was dealing with the largest amount of revenue generated from the policy implementation, at nearly \$220,000 during the 2015-2016 school year. Unfortunately, although he presents the information to the school board and has definitive numbers and financial analysis documents evaluating the overall policy implementation, he stated that new board members often push an agenda to eliminate the fee until the moment "...they realize how much it really is, and then it doesn't go anywhere" (Personal communication, District 395, January 26, 2017). This idea of changing policy and quickly disbanding is one which I believe may happen quite often, and could be contributed to a lack of understanding regarding the cyclical policy process model, or the intricate components of the development, implementation, and evaluation of pay to participate fees in general, and within a specific district.

**Recommendations for leadership.** Policy and program evaluation is intended to measure and assess the policy and program effects, but since most districts did not have any outlined goals other than recouping costs of athletic operations, the criterion they measured was not clear. Is success generating an additional \$10,000, or \$20,000 in revenue, or that participation rates stayed consistent in comparison to recent years, or that the pay to participate fees covered travel costs? Without clear goals and the integration of the athletic administrator in all aspects of the policy development, implementation, and evaluation, districts will have a hard time fully understanding the impact of a policy. Specifically, from a participation perspective, it would be important for districts to consider previous literature from Mitchell & Hoff (2006) who stated that when user fees exceed \$300, the participation rate in school activities drops by 30% or more, and that the average additional cost for participation such as equipment, fundraising, or clothing averages nationally a little over \$302 per sport. The impact of this large investment on participation numbers could be a strong evaluation metric for District 100 and District 395 from an individual and family perspective, as they implemented either a single fee or family maximum above this cost.

These questions need to be asked and considered further in a wider study of the school districts. A few districts mentioned in the documentation specific areas where the pay to participate fees may be utilized to offset costs incurred from athletic trainers, transportation, and facility maintenance, but they did not mention any incorporated evaluation methods to assess the impact of these fees on those costs, and the total amount offset. Ultimately it seems that the evaluation of the policy came to rest on the athletic administrator individually. This is a key component of consideration moving forward in regards to the changing requirements of the athletic administrator position, and a potential importance in a background in accounting,

development, and financial analysis. An additional consideration might be to hire an external entity to conduct a year-end financial analysis, doing an in depth study and overview for district stakeholders to increase transparency and understanding for all involved.

While discussions continue at the state legislative levels, schools with implemented pay to participate policies and those without must continue to realize the strategic, and somewhat experimental mindset needed for any policy initiative. Political agendas will change, district leaders will change, and the commitment to current and new programming will continually be evaluated. Open discussions, data discovery, and evaluation are at the heart of true policy implementation, and school districts will be pushed to do what is best for the numerous stakeholders involved in their business of developing people.

### **Implications for Leadership**

The findings of this study, described further within the pay to participate policy discussion guide identified as Appendix C, should benefit school districts who are currently implementing a pay to participate policy, or considering the development, or discontinuation of one. As school districts continue to examine budgets, analyze shortfalls, as well as consider potential opportunities for growth and maintenance of current programming leading to the consideration of pay to participate policies, district administrators as well as school board personnel may want to use this study and document for discussion points and consideration elements in the policy proposal and analysis process. Considering problem perception and definition, coupled with the formulation of goals and strategies for achieving them would be a beneficial component to any district discussion (Kraft & Furlong, 2015). This discussion could potentially provide a robust, district centered dialogue surrounding the literature presented, as well as the unique cases and potential concerns and success areas of other districts.

Due to extensive research available outlining the multitude of benefits students involved in extracurricular athletics experience, (Allen, 2006; Chapman, 2009, Cousins, 2004; Everson & Millsap, 2004; Harper, 2005; Mahoney, 2000; Millsap, 2004, Sabo et al., 1999; Wimberly, 2002), it is important for athletic administrators, school administrators, as well as board of education members to consistently examine and evaluate district pay to participate policies, including how they were developed, how they are currently implemented at all levels, and ultimately how they are evaluated throughout, and at the end of the year. Districts must identify and outline specific goals for policies in order to be further transparent and provide a basis for strategy development for achievement. Without strategically considering the goals of the policy, how these are communicated to the district within the text of the policy as well as verbally, and how it fits within the districts mission, vision, and value set, full understanding and support would be hard to achieve internally and externally. School districts should also make available all financial reporting in regards to the specifics of athletic department revenue and expenditures, and overall impact of the pay to participate fees. Kraft and Furlong state, “where you stand depends on where you sit” (p. 87), and I believe that often times the stance for many, and the discussion surrounding pay to participate policies and fee implementation takes place without a full understanding and consideration of what it actually costs to operate an athletic department, what that cost is in comparison to the districts overall budget, as well as each specific revenue stream athletic departments generate including, but not limited to, ticket sales, sponsorships, pay to participate fees, fundraisers both departmentally and by individual team.

Additionally, over 400 athletic administrators completing the pilot study ranked financial budget issues and concerns as the second highest stressful component of their position, just behind parent issues and concerns (OHSAA & Grant, 2015). Due to the changing landscape of

school funding, and the consistent need for additional revenue, as well as increased costs of athletic operations, the experience necessary for these increased financial analysis and reporting job duties is an important consideration in preparation for any potential athletic administrator.

Key revenue growth opportunities such as corporate sponsorship development, marketing activations, contract negotiations, and nontraditional revenue program development are becoming increasingly necessary to explore and assist in not only helping maintain current district programming, but also to provide increased expansion and a level of quality expected by districts, especially those that are being asked to pay in the form of participation fees.

The pathway for most athletic administrators previously had been through teaching and coaching, and while valid and important, may not have provided ample experience in the financial, marketing, and policy development realms to tackle this increasingly integral part of the position. Pilot study data revealed that 51% of athletic administrators in Ohio during the 2014-2015 school year had less than five years' total experience, and 34% less than three years' experience (OHSAA & Grant, 2015). As more athletic administrators retire, or move into different roles vacating positions, it is important for districts to consider the financial educational background of potential candidates, and the experience they have with policy development, business development, and the overall understanding of school finance. Unless athletic administrators pursue an administrative license and their program of choice integrates a school finance course, most undergraduate education programs do not prepare students for the financial side of athletic operations.

Lastly, when a school district implements a fee for any activity, whether it be extra-curricular or co-curricular, they are essentially placing a door that must be unlocked by the student and their family in order to participate. From an athletic perspective, as stated in

research by C.S. Mott-Children's Hospital, 14% of parents whose children did not participate in school sponsored athletics cited cost as the reason for non-participation (2016). They also found that the average national cost per sport for the 61% of students who paid a fee was \$139, increasing nearly \$40 in just under 4 years (2016). This barrier, whether it is necessary to maintain athletic programs or not, is the initial key element to a student athlete participating as part of a district athletic team, as well as having the opportunity to receive many of the aforementioned benefits of sport participation discussed in the previous chapters. Ultimately, discussions and data gathering within districts regarding their pay to participate policies and fees needs to be plentiful, and districts must work collaboratively with internal and external stakeholders regarding the development, implementation, and evaluation of potential, or currently utilized pay to participate policies to develop a clear definition of success to ensure their policies are operating in the best interest of their students and district.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Several recommendations can be made regarding further research in the area of pay to participate policies utilized for extracurricular athletic programs. First, research should be conducted considering perceptions of pay to participate policies of residents and other stakeholders within one specific district. Initiating a mixed methods approach surveying district employees, parents, students, and board members would yield interesting and impactful results. Because school districts are operated through local control, and rely on their community for funding and support, it is important for the communication and understanding surrounding pay to participate policies, and the overall funding of athletic operations be transparent, clearly communicated, and critically analyzed. Voices from within the community population need to be continuously heard to understand the current political and economic climate that may impact

the policy formulation and implementation. This case study approach could also be presented with a focus on a specific outlier typology or model, such as where districts take the overall costs to administer a sport, and divide it by the number of participants in that sport, leading to a different cost for each sport with routinely high variations.

Another area of additional study would be to analyze school districts that have utilized the threat of pay to participate policy implementation, or cutting of sports entirely during levy campaigns, and the resulting outcomes of those levies. It would be interesting to describe the outcomes of the levy campaigns with specific consideration of a pay to participate threat or sport cancellation, as well as the length of time it may have taken to gain community approval, and whether the threat of pay to participate implementation or athletic discontinuation was utilized during previous levy campaigns. Based upon the cases within this study, all five stated the policies were implemented during times of financial distress, with three specifically articulating the reason for development being levy failures.

Research could also analyze the environment of support programming specifically focused on assisting in combatting student athlete pay to participate fees, and the structure that they employ. For example, after the study I conducted with the OHSAA, there were numerous media outlets that shared information due to Secretary of State John Husted and Senator Cliff Hite discussing pay to participate policies and the potential of legislation controlling their usage. Senator Hite also held traveling discussions in numerous districts throughout the state and asked me to speak at one of the events. I was contacted this past year by Right to Win ([www.righttowin.org](http://www.righttowin.org)), a nonprofit organization based out of New York City specifically focused on helping fund students pay to participate policies with a target focus on Ohio schools. After having numerous calls with the founder and other personnel, their structure of financial



distribution was unique as they required each student who applied to complete tasks, one which required them to develop an academic goal. Their goal would become their contract, and Right to Win would provide the athletic department directly with the funds to cover the pay to participate fee. If the student athlete met their academic goal, they would automatically be eligible for funding the following year. Other programs are available through national corporate entities such as the Meijer rewards program, Kroger rewards program, and the Sports Matter program by Dicks Sporting Goods (<http://www.sportsmatter.com/>), as well as through local nonprofit organizations such as the Help All Kids Play Foundation (<http://www.helpallkidsplay.org>) which aims to serve students with funding need in seven specific counties within the Central Ohio region. Foundations are also present throughout the United States, such as the Kids in The Game Organization which serves the state of Oregon. This type of research focus might help bring light to the environment of assistance, and provide awareness to programs that students and families can utilize to assist with pay to participate fee costs.

Additional areas of research would also include completing in depth case studies of school districts that have chosen to incrementally cut, or fully discontinue pay to participate policies, describing their policy analysis and evaluation process, as well as perceptions of board members and school administrators. Recently, Grandview Heights eliminated their fees for sports, as well as arts and lab workbooks for the 2016-2017. Westerville Schools along with New Albany Plain Schools also reduced their fees by \$120 and \$200 respectively (Gilchrist, 2016). It is interesting, a stakeholder from Grandview Heights was attending The Ohio State University Sport and Society Initiative panel discussion where I had the opportunity to present last spring, and they asked a question regarding where should they start. My response, and my

sincere belief is that every district administrator as well as board member should be fully aware of the exact amount of money needed to cover their athletic operations, and the amount they are currently bringing in with their pay to participate policies. This information should also be extremely easily to access on the district websites, and provided in documents sent to the stakeholders within the community. In the article by Gilchrist (2016), a Grandview Heights board member was interviewed stating that their fee elimination “is about public access and public education” and that “sports, band, and other activities are an essential education experience and that fees are a barrier for working families” (Para. 5)

Along those same lines of inquiry, a research study could be conducted surveying school board members of districts that implement pay to participate policies focusing on uncovering their views of pay to participate policies, and how they fit within their respective districts. as well as describing the ways in which they evaluate their policies and define success. Ultimately, it would be extremely interesting school board member’s beliefs in regards to why a policy should or should not be in place. Getting to the root of the motivations and development agendas are important for further discussion and analysis for all districts, as well as state governing entities.

### **Conclusion**

The findings from this multiple case study analysis provide contextual evidence for districts to utilize in furthering discussions regarding the development, implementation, and evaluation processes of their own current, or future pay to participate policies. I believe it also helps set the stage regarding the importance of continuously analyzing pay to participate policies through the lens of the policy process model, and taking a deeper look into whether or not there are intentional or unintentional barriers being placed upon students that may negatively impact their growth and future opportunities. If districts do not clearly understand the why, what, and

how behind their pay to participate policies, they need to develop a structure to gain a deeper meaning of the purpose, process, and impact of their interscholastic athletic fees.

It is time for districts and the states to clearly identify what the definition of a free and appropriate education is, and where athletics falls within that, providing clear documentation and sound evidence moving forward on how a pay to participate policy fits into, and aligns with the districts overall mission, vision, values, and strategic plan. Roth (2003) stated that “if the fundamental task of the school is to prepare children for life, the curriculum must be as wide as life itself” (p. 739), and it is important for districts to discuss the overall impact athletics has on student development and long term success, and where it fits within their educational offerings. If a pay to participate policy is a necessity within a district, then it is the responsibility of the athletic administrator, school administrators, and school board to fully understand every component of its development, implementation, and evaluation to ensure it provides the students with the most opportunities to develop.

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## APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL



BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

School of Educational Foundations, Leadership &amp; Policy

## INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Date:

Time of Interview:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

\_\_\_\_\_, I will start the audio-recording now. Do I have your permission to audio-record our conversation?

I am a doctoral student at Bowling Green State University, and am conducting research focused on the development, implementation, and evaluation of interscholastic athletic pay to participate policies, and how specific districts define success of these policies.

I am requesting your participation in this culminating dissertation, as the final requirement to obtain the Degree of Doctor of Education. I am hoping that the results of this study will inform others about pay to participate policy development, implementation, and evaluation methods and procedures, as well as consider further how success is defined. There is no direct benefit to you from participating in this study.

The research will consist of an analysis of relevant documents related to the pay to participate policy, the athletic department, as well as the school district, coupled with interviews of the respective district athletic administrators. The data collected will provide a better understanding of the intricacies to policy development, implementation, and evaluation of pay to participate policies, as well as specific definitions of success.

I will protect the identities of participants through the use of pseudonyms in this and any future publications or presentations. Participants should understand that they may be quoted directly but that their names will not be used in any part of the written report. All data will be

stored in a secure location and will be destroyed after three years. Please understand that you may withdraw from the study at any time, without prejudice.

Interview Questions: (Structured Questionnaire)

A. Focus #1: Development

1. What factors contributed to the pay to participate policy development?
  1. What problem is / was faced?
  2. What alternatives, if any, were considered in dealing with the problem?
2. When the pay to participate policy discussion began, what steps were taken to develop the pay to participate policy, and ultimately put this on the board agenda?
3. Why / How did \_\_\_\_\_ school district decide to implement the specific consistent fee based type of pay to participate structure?
4. What, if any, were/are the specific goals of the pay to participate policy at \_\_\_\_\_ school district?
5. How did the school district gain support for the policy approval / implementation?

B. Focus #2: Implementation

1. What resources were / are required for implementation?
2. What concerns have been raised in regards to the way in which the policy is implemented
3. Are there any groups within the school or district that help pay or defray the costs of the fee for students?
4. How is the policy communicated with the school & district community / stakeholders?

C. Category #3: Evaluation

1. How is the pay to participate policy evaluated?
2. Who is part of the evaluation, and how often does it occur?
3. Does the school board discuss the policy each year at a school board meeting, and if so, has that discussion changed since the policy has been implemented?
4. Has an evaluation ever caused the pay to participate fee to be discontinued? If so, why?

Interview Questions: (Unstructured Questionnaire)

A. Background / Ice Breaker

1. Tell me a little about the athletic program at \_\_\_\_\_ High School.
  - i. Potential probe areas
    1. Mission, Vision, Values
    2. # of sports and participants
    3. Financial status

B. Focus #1: Development

1. Tell me a little about the pay to participate policy at \_\_\_\_\_ High School?
  - i. Probing / Clarifications:
    1. Typology – why chosen
    2. Process
    3. Policy type
    4. Positives / Negative experiences
2. What factors contributed to the policy's development?
  - i. Probe areas:
    1. What problem is / was faced?
      - a. What alternatives, if any, were considered in dealing with the problem?
    2. How did that develop?
    3. What were the major causes?
      - a. How were the causes affected by the policy action?
    4. Areas of concern?
    5. Specific constituents involved?
3. What, if any, are the specific goals of the pay to participate policy at \_\_\_\_\_ school district?
4. How were equity concerns addressed in the development of the policy?

C. Focus #2: Implementation

1. Tell me about how the pay to participate policy is implemented at \_\_\_\_\_ school district?
  - i. Clarifications: (questions developed further from the documents)
    1. Payment Schedules
    2. Refunds
    3. Waivers / Scholarships
    4. Handling of fees
    5. Communication with students & parents
2. What efficiencies or inefficiencies do you see in the implementation processes?
  - i. Probe areas: (Feedback)
    1. From the athletic administration perspective?
      - a. Administrative concerns
      - b. Feasibility
    2. Feedback from coaches, parents, community members?
  - ii. Least cost for a given benefit or largest benefit for a given cost?

D. Category #3: Evaluation

1. Tell me about how the pay to participate policy is evaluated at \_\_\_\_\_ High School?
2. What methods / procedures are utilized to evaluate the pay to participate policy?
  - i. Participation rates?
  - ii. Amount of income generated?
  - iii. Expenses covered?
3. Has an evaluation ever caused the pay to participate fee to be discontinued?
  - i. Why?
  - ii. Who were the main opponents?
  - iii. What caused it to be unsuccessful?

## APPENDIX B. INFORMED CONSENT LETTER



## Informed Consent Form – Athletic Administrators

**Investigator:** Scott S. Grant  
Doctoral Student, Leadership Studies

**Phone:** 419-306-3002

**NAME OF STUDY:** INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC PAY TO PARTICIPATE POLICIES: A CASE STUDY OF OHIO HIGH SCHOOLS

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:** The primary purpose of this study is to investigate further pay to participate policies within the state of Ohio utilizing a multiple case study analysis, with a specific focus surrounding policy development, implementation, and evaluation. Utilizing data from a 2015 Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) study on pay to participate policies, school district pay to participate policy design can be divided into seven distinct types that are currently being implemented throughout the state. Of the 822 OHSAA member, 58% responded with a fully completed survey. From the data collected regarding the actual policy type, one main typology where student athletes are charged a fee for each sport they choose to participate in, but the fee is the same for every sport, was utilized by 152 districts statewide accounting for 63% of the respondents that had an implemented pay to participate fee policy. Evaluation measures are not currently publicly available for many districts, and although this type of policy is visible and prevalent throughout the country, very little research regarding factors that lead to the development, implementation, and assessment of policy is available. As a result of this study, pay to participate policies will be analyzed and described through an analysis of the policy itself, as well as through interviews with district athletic administrators and/or individuals with policy knowledge. The goal is to describe the development, implementation, and assessment policies and procedures further, which may be of use to school officials who currently have, or are considering a pay to participate policy in their district. This study will fill the void currently present in this research environment.

**POPULATION:** Adult (18 or older)

**SELECTION:** You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Scott S. Grant, doctoral candidate from the College of Education and Human Development at Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio. The results of this research will contribute to the researcher's doctoral dissertation. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are an athletic administrator at an Ohio High School Athletic Association member school that currently implements a consistent fee amount pay to participate policy.

**PROCEDURES:** If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will do the following things:

- 1) You will participate in an interview related to your school districts pay to participate policy, which will focus on the development, implementation, evaluation methods and procedures, as well as the definition of success of the specific policy. The interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes, and will take place in the privacy of an office designated by you at your districts location. With your permission, the interview will be digitally-audio recorded. If you object to being audio recorded, the researcher will take hand written notes.
- 2) Provide any pertinent documents regarding the district pay to participate policy.

**PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY:** You may be uncomfortable answering questions about the topic of pay to participate policies specific to your district. All information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential, and will only be disclosed with the subject's permission. The audio recorded interviews conducted will be strictly for researcher's use, and after each interview is transcribed, a copy of the transcription will be provided to the interviewee. Pseudonyms will be utilized for all transcripts and documentation, to provide an additional layer of confidentiality. The interviewees will be provided the opportunity to edit the interview transcripts so as to reflect their intended responses, and the audio recordings will be housed in a locked safe for the duration of three years, after which

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## APPENDIX C. PAY TO PARTICIPATE POLICY DISCUSSION GUIDE

*Pay to Participate Policy Discussion Guide – Scott Grant (2017)*

DEVELOPMENT	OUTCOMES
<p><b>Internal Analysis &amp; Overview:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why do we currently have, or why are we considering a pay to participate policy? What are our measurable GOALS?</li> <li>• When and how did the policy begin? What was the problem &amp; contributing factors? Is that problem still present? What data do we have to support this?</li> <li>• How much does it cost to operate our athletic department as a whole? How is this communicated to our stakeholders?</li> <li>• What percentage of our overall district budget does this account for? How much does each sport individually cost to operate?</li> <li>• How many participants do we have in each sport? Has this increased or decreased over the past few years?</li> <li>• What is our rate of participation for one sport, two sport, and three sport athletes? Has, or will this be impacted based upon our policy?</li> <li>• How much are students "required" to pay for additional components of participation on each team?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples – camps, spirit wear, fundraisers, team shoes, necessary equipment – What's the base number taking into account all other school fees?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Internal Operations &amp; Strategy:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What policy type is, or will best serve our district &amp; help achieve our GOALS?</li> <li>• What types are other districts using? Have we discussed their experiences? What are potential outcomes for using other types?</li> <li>• Will, or do, we include any financial assistance programs? What resources will, or do we need to implement these? What will, or do those resources cost us?</li> <li>• How do, or will we communicate these financial assistance programs to our stakeholders?</li> <li>• Who manages, or will manage, the pay to participate policy operationally?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication, Collection of Fees, Implementation of Financial Assistance Programs (if applicable), Refunds, Questions, Financial Analysis, Overall Evaluation</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How is, or will this process be communicated? What do our documents currently say? What documents will need created, and how do we make sure they are helpful to internal and external stakeholders, and not creating unintentional barriers?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will we receive feedback from community members?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How is, or will this policy be evaluated: By when, by whom, and what will be produced from the evaluation? How is, or will that be communicated to district stakeholders?</li> <li>• <i>How is, or will success be evaluated?</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>STRATEGIC GOALS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the goals we would like the pay to participate policy to achieve?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Need to be measurable – example, generate \$20,000; Pay for transportation of all athletic teams at a cost of ?)</li> <li>• Perception of Fiscal Responsibility – How will you measure?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>COMMUNICATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documents:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear communication of all goals</li> <li>• History / Purpose / Intent / Accessibility</li> <li>• Overview of WHY &amp; Implementation</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Administrators / AD / Coaches – Education &amp; understanding – Goals &amp; Message</li> </ul> <p><b>RESOURCES &amp; IMPACT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear identification of resources &amp; costs needed to implement &amp; evaluate policy.</li> <li>• Clear identification of impact on athletic administrators role, and need for professional development regarding policy process &amp; financial analysis for management.</li> </ul> <p><b>DEFINE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How your district will be transparent regarding all components of the policy development, implementation, and evaluation, as well as take into account stakeholder input.</li> <li>• Success in regards to a pay to participate policy.</li> <li>• Value of athletics &amp; where it fits within your district.</li> <li>• How the goals and ultimate reason why your district has implemented a fee will be articulated to your internal and external stakeholders?</li> </ul>
IMPLEMENTATION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where are, or will the fees be deposited? How is, or will be money spent?</li> <li>• How is, or will this be communicated transparently to district stakeholders?</li> <li>• Do the documents state processes that are in the best interest of our stakeholders and athletic administrator – deadlines, requirements, waiver programs, etc.</li> <li>• What are the major issues that our athletic administrator &amp; stakeholders sees with the implementation procedures concerning equity, effectiveness, and overall efficiency?</li> <li>• Is it ok for an athletic administrator to work with students on case by case basis? Does the document &amp; policy provide flexibility &amp; safety?</li> <li>• Where will our policy documents be housed? How will we communicate our policy, as well as the reasoning to our stakeholders?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online, in person at OHSAA meetings, through community discussions?</li> <li>• How are we making sure everyone is on the same page regarding why we have it, where the money will go, and what it will be used for?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• What resources will be need for implementation? What will these resources cost?</li> </ul>	
EVALUATION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do we have a formal evaluation process set in place?</li> <li>• By what date will this evaluation take place?</li> <li>• Who will be part of this evaluation?</li> <li>• What will be produced to provide to the internal and stakeholders to ensure they understand the outcomes of the policy for that calendar year?</li> <li>• By what time will be make a decision regarding the follow year?</li> </ul> <p><b>OVERALL &amp; Cycle Restart</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did we achieve our goals for the policy?</li> <li>• Was our policy a success?</li> <li>• What do we need to change for next year?</li> <li>• Revisit Development components – GOALS, participation rates, costs of additional fees for participation in each sport (intended for the next year), etc.</li> </ul>	<p><small>Sources: Drawn from Michael E. Kraft &amp; Scott R. Furlong, <i>Public Policy: Politics, Analysis, and Alternatives</i>, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (CQ Press / Sage Publishing).</small></p>