

Soccer Feasibility Study - 2023

The following is a report that was completed on the feasibility of adding soccer as a sport at Arcola High School. This report is a follow-up to a report done in 2019. This report follows the format of the previous report, which can be found on the district website. The same data was reviewed and compared to the previous report. Some sections needed to be updated because some of the data has changed. But, some of the sections had not changed significantly and that will be reflected in the corresponding sections below.

I. Student Interest Surveys

First, it is important to note that the survey given in 2022 included students in grades 7-11. In the last report, students in Grades 8-11 were surveyed about their interest in high school sports. There were a total of 195 students that completed the survey this year.

The following are the charts that were used in 2019 with the additional survey data from 2022 included. After each chart, there are summary statements. At the end of each section, there are comparison statements about how the 2022 data varied from the 2019 data.

Survey Results for Male Athletes

The results in parentheses represent the 2019 data.

Chart #1 – Football

<i>First Choice</i>	<i>Second Choice</i>	<i>Number of Students</i>
Football	Anything but Soccer	39 (26)
Football	Soccer	16 (13)
Total Football 1 st Choice		55 (39)
Anything but Soccer	Football	3 (5)
Soccer	Football	9 (11)

- There were 67 male athletes that picked football as a 1st or 2nd choice.
- Of the 67 students, 25 of them paired football with soccer.
- There were 55 students that selected football as their first choice and 39 students that chose football without soccer.
- Of the 25 students that paired football with soccer, 17 had indicated they would be willing to be a dual athlete and 8 indicated they would not be willing.
- There was 1 student that chose Soccer (Boys) and Soccer (Coed) as their first and second choice but then chose Football as the 3rd choice. This would indicate the soccer is their first choice and football is their second choice.

- That would make 68 athletes that chose football as first or second choice and 10 that chose soccer 1st then football 2nd.

Chart #2 - Soccer

<i>First Choice</i>	<i>Second Choice</i>	<i>Number of Students</i>
Soccer	Anything but Football	10 (16)
Soccer	Football	9 (11)
Total Soccer 1st Choice		19 (27)
Anything but Football	Soccer	3 (2)
Football	Soccer	16 (13)

- There were 38 total male athletes that picked soccer either with their first or second choice.
- No boys that selected soccer as 1st or 2nd choice chose “coed” over “boys only” as an option. This seems to indicate that most of the boys would prefer to have a “boys only” team but probably would welcome a “coed” team if a boys’ team was not offered.
- Again, 25 of the 38 students had combined soccer with football in some order. That means that there were 13 students interested in soccer without having any interest in football.

Comparison Statements Between 2019 and 2022 Data

1. There continues to be interest in soccer from the students but it seems to be a less than in 2019.
 - There were 19 students that chose soccer as 1st choice compared to 27 the last time.
 - There were 38 students that chose soccer as 1st or 2nd choice compared to 42 the last time.
 - Keep in mind more students and grade levels (5 compared to 4) were surveyed this time.
2. The interest in football seems to be stable if not a little stronger than in 2019.
 - There were 55 students that chose football as 1st choice compared to 39 the last time.
 - There were 67 students that chose football as 1st or 2nd choice compared to 55 the last time.
 - The higher number of students surveyed can account for some of that increase but not all.

Survey Results for Female Athletes

Due to when girls can participate in soccer, it is important to look at the fall results as well as the spring results. In the fall, girls were asked if they were interested in playing “coed” soccer and then asked in the spring about having a “girls only” soccer

team. Charts 3 and 4 below represent fall results and the remaining charts are for the spring. The numbers in parentheses represent 2019 data.

Chart #3 – Volleyball

<i>First Choice</i>	<i>Second Choice</i>	<i>Number of Students</i>
Volleyball	Anything but Soccer	29 (18)
Volleyball	Soccer	11 (8)
Anything but Soccer	Volleyball	3 (1)
Soccer	Volleyball	3 (4)

- There were 46 girls that chose volleyball as a 1st or 2nd choice.
- Of those 46, 29 of them chose volleyball without soccer.
- Also 29 of the 46 said that volleyball would be their 1st choice.
- Of the 11 that said they would be interested in playing coed soccer and volleyball, 9 of the 11 said they would be willing to play dual sports.

Chart #4 – Coed Soccer (Fall)

<i>First Choice</i>	<i>Second Choice</i>	<i>Number of Students</i>
Soccer	Anything but Volleyball	7 (17)
Soccer	Volleyball	3 (4)
Anything but Volleyball	Soccer	2 (5)
Volleyball	Soccer	11 (8)

- There were 23 girls that chose coed soccer as a 1st or 2nd choice.
- 7 out of the 23 said soccer would be their first choice in the fall
- 9 of the 23 girls chose soccer without any combination with volleyball.

The following is a breakdown of the number of athletes that selected the different sports at various ranks. Remember, students could choose other sports (such as water polo, etc.) that are offered in the spring but those results are NOT represented.

Chart #5 – Spring Female Sports (2019 Data)

	<i>1st Choice</i>	<i>2nd Choice</i>	<i>3rd Choice</i>	<i>Total</i>
Soccer	10 (25)	11 (10)	4 (3)	25 (38)
Softball	29 (13)	1 (6)	2 (5)	32 (24)
Track	14 (14)	17 (16)	1 (7)	32 (37)

- Softball had the highest number of 1st choice selections by far.
- There were a total of 61 female athletes that selected Softball, Track and/or Soccer as a 1st, 2nd or 3rd option.

Chart #6 – Female Athletes Selecting One Sport Only (2019 Data)

	<i>1st Choice</i>	<i>2nd Choice</i>	<i>3rd Choice</i>
Soccer	7 (10)	1 (3)	1 (1)
Softball	11 (6)	0 (0)	1 (0)
Track	7 (3)	2 (1)	0 (0)

- There were 30 athletes that selected only one of the three sports being discussed (track, softball and soccer).
- Remember, students had other choices (water polo, etc.) so the students in the chart that have a 2nd or 3rd choice selected one of those sports as first choice.

Chart #7 – Female Athletes Selecting Multiple Sports (2019 Data)

	<i>1st Choice</i>	<i>2nd Choice</i>	<i>3rd Choice</i>
Soccer	3 (15)	10 (7)	3 (2)
Softball	18 (7)	1 (6)	1 (5)
Track	7 (2)	15 (14)	1 (7)

- There were 31 athletes that chose more than one of the three sports being analyzed.
- Of the 31 female athletes that selected more than one sport, 21 of the 31 indicated that they would be willing to be a dual sport athlete in the spring.
- Only 3 of the 31 athletes that selected multiple spring sports had a combination of Soccer and Softball as 1st and 2nd choices. That means that most of the students combined soccer or softball with track.
- A strong majority of the female athletes that chose soccer as their 1st Choice were not interested in participating in the other sports - 8 out of 10. That compared to 10 out of 29 for Softball and 7 out of 14 for Track

Comparison Statements Between 2019 and 2022 Data

1. The interest in playing coed soccer as a 1st choice has greatly diminished from the last survey, from 21 down to 10.
2. The number of female athletes that chose volleyball as a first choice significantly increased from last time, from 26 to 40. But keep in mind there are more students than last time and this survey include 7th graders that often have a lot of kids choosing to play volleyball.
3. A higher percentage of athletes seemed to choose to combine soccer and volleyball (14 out of 23) as compared to last survey (12 out of 34)
4. The number of female athletes interested in playing softball (as a 1st choice) has drastically increased from 2019, from 13 up to 29.
5. The number of athletes choosing spring soccer in spring as a 1st choice has significantly declined from 25 down to 10.
6. The total number of students interested in playing spring soccer (any choice) went down from 38 to 25.

II. Historical Enrollment for Fall and Spring Sports

The following are the participation numbers for the current programs in Arcola. The percentage reflects the percent of the overall student population in the high school at the time (the number of participants in the sport was divided by the high school for that year). The chart includes football, volleyball, girls track and softball because they would be the sports potentially impacted by adding coed soccer or boys/girls soccer.

Chart 8 – Historical Participation

	<i>Football</i>	<i>Volleyball</i>	<i>Girls Track</i>	<i>Softball</i>
2022-2023	49 (24.2%)	28 (13.9%)	TBD	TBD
2021-2022	50 (22.7%)	23 (10.4%)	12 (5.4%)	16 (7.2%)
2020-2021	47 (21.9%)	22 (10.2%)	17 (7.9%)	16 (7.4%)
2019-2020	51 (21.3%)	23 (9.6%)	COVID	COVID
2018-2019	46 (20.3%)	27 (11.9%)	10 (4.4%)	12 (5.3%)
2017-2018	42 (18.7%)	22 (9.8%)	21 (9.3%)	11 (4.9%)
2016-2017	38 (18.0%)	26 (12.3%)	6 (2.8%)	14 (6.6%)
2015-2016	35 (16.4%)	25 (11.7%)	12 (5.6%)	18 (8.5%)
2014-2015	40 (18.5%)	26 (12.0%)	11 (5.1%)	19 (8.8%)
Average	20.2% (18.9)	10.2% (11.2)	5.7% (5.5)	7.0% (6.8)

- Football is the only sport that seems to have an increasing trend in participation.

The following is the high school enrollment, including the projected enrollment next year.

Chart 9 – High School Enrollment History/Projection

<i>School Year</i>	<i>9-12 Enrollment</i>
* 2027-2028	191
* 2026-2027	194
* 2025-2026	187
* 2024-2025	190
* 2023-2024	179
2022-2023	202
2021-2022	220
2020-2021	214
2019-2020	240
2018-2019	227
2017-2018	225
2016-2017	211
2015-2016	213
2014-2015	216

- The 2023-2024 through 2027-2028 enrollments are based on current enrollments at the lower grade levels in the district.
- The data clearly indicates that the enrollment trend is down for the high school over the next several years.

Comparison Statements Between 2019 and 2022 Data

1. The only sport of the four that has seen a positive trend is football. The overall average growth from 2019 to 2022 went from 18.9 up to 20.2.
2. Softball has seen a slight uptick in overall average, which should continue based on the student interest survey results.
3. The trend that was indicated in 2019 was that we were going to see a declining high school enrollment and that trend continues to exist.

III. Schools

Chart 10 on the next page indicates schools within a 65-mile radius that offer soccer.

The data in that chart includes:

- Distance from Arcola; Enrollment; Type of Soccer Program – either “Boys and Girls” or “Coed”; Coop – these are school that offer soccer through a cooperative with another district; Football Status – 11-Man, 8-Man and No Football

The 6 schools that are highlighted in Green are the schools that we identified in the last report that were most similar to us and also had 11-Man football at the time. (Argenta, Fisher, St Theresa, ALAH, Decatur LSA, and Blue Ridge).

The following are statements comparing the data to 2019:

Comparison Statements Between 2019 and 2022 Data

1. There have been several schools that have gone from 11-man down to 8-man because of enrollment and lack of participation since 2019.
2. In the six comparisons schools, two of the schools that still have 11-Man football and Coop soccer (Fisher and Argenta) have cancelled their varsity football schedule in the last two years. That leaves the lowest enrollment school with a stable football program and cooperative soccer program as Macon Meridian with enrollment of 261 students.
3. In the six comparisons schools, two of the schools that still have 11-Man football and do not coop soccer are ALAH and St. Theresa. ALAH is coed and they struggled with participation numbers in soccer last year and St. Theresa is a private school.

4. In the six comparisons schools, two of the schools (Decatur LSA and Blue Ridge) have dropped their 11-man football program and went to 8-man.

Chart 10 – Area Soccer Programs

School	Distance	Enrollment	Type	COOP	Football Status
11-Man F/Coop S					
Argenta-Oreana	45	266.5	B & G	X	11 Man
Fisher	51	176	COED	X	11-Man
Macon Meridian	40	261.5	B & G	X	11-Man
Georgetown Ridge Farm	51	276.5	COED	X	11-Man
Oakwood	58	305	COED	X	11-Man
Warrensburg	53	312.5	B & G	X	11-Man
11-Man F/No Coop S					
Decatur St Teresa	45	230	B & G		11-Man
ALAH	10	326	COED		11-Man
St Joseph Ogden	49	449.5	COED		11-Man
Tolono Unity	23	517	COED		11-Man
Effingham	47	736	B & G		11-Man
Mt Zion	35	763	COED		11-Man
Rantoul	48	772	COED		11-Man
Charleston	22	796	B & G		11-Man
Mattoon	16	929.5	B & G		11-Man
Mahomet Seymour	42	943.5	COED		11-Man
Urbana	31	1177.5	B & G		11-Man
Champaign Central	33	1308	B & G		11-Man
Champaign Centennial	31	1356	B & G		11-Man
Monticello	39		COED		11-Man
8-Man Football					
Decatur LSA	46	108	B & G	X	8-Man
Blue Ridge	55	221	COED	X	8-Man
Schlarman	74	87	COED		8-Man
St Thomas More	35	257.5	B & G		8-Man
No Football					
Altamont	56	222.5	COED	X	None
Decatur Christian	48		COED	X	None
Judah Christian	35	156.5	B & G		None
Mt Pulaski	62	162	COED		None
Effingham St Anthony	44	208.5	COED		None
University High	31	247.5	B & G		None
Teutopolis	48	325	COED		None
Arthur Christian	11		COED		None

IV. Logistics

The cost estimate for adding a program has not really changed much from 2019. Last time, the report indicated that to start our own program it would cost between \$12,000-\$15,000 with then an annual cost of around \$12,000. Joining a cooperative with another district would be around \$5,000 annually.

V. Facilities

High School Soccer Field Requirements

The rule for field dimensions is this: "Field of Play shall be rectangular, 100 to 120 yards long and 55 to 80 yards wide. The following minimums are highly recommended for high school: 110 Yards by 65 Yards." In addition, there are also requirements in terms of coaching and team boxes and also an official area. All of this can be seen on the picture included below (Page 10).

For the purpose of this study, there were four sites considered for a regulation sized soccer field. They included: practice field for football; current practice field for JFL; the official football field; and the current soccer field at Moore Park. Here is some information on those:

High School Football Field – The football field is 50 yards wide. As you extend beyond the football field, there are 6 yards on each side of the field until you get to the track surface. That leaves a total width of 62 yards. But as you move outward from the football field, the field slopes downward and then back upward to the track. The reason for this slope is due to existing drainage tile. It would not be safe to have the playing surface at the lowest part of the slope. In addition, there are covered holes that allows for the water to flow underground. Those are 3 yards from the end of the football field. That really leave 56 yards of playable surface for soccer. This is just over the required minimum of 55 but there would be some safety issues related to having deep holes that close to the playing field. But, there may be a way to make it work. More in depth research would need to be done.

There would be concern on the ability to keep that field in safe playing condition adding 12-15 soccer contests to the football schedule.

- This would not be an ideal location to play actual games.

JFL Practice Field – this area is 73 yards long and 50 yards wide. It is simply too small. In addition, there are many trees and sidewalks in the area. The field would need a lot of work to smooth it out.

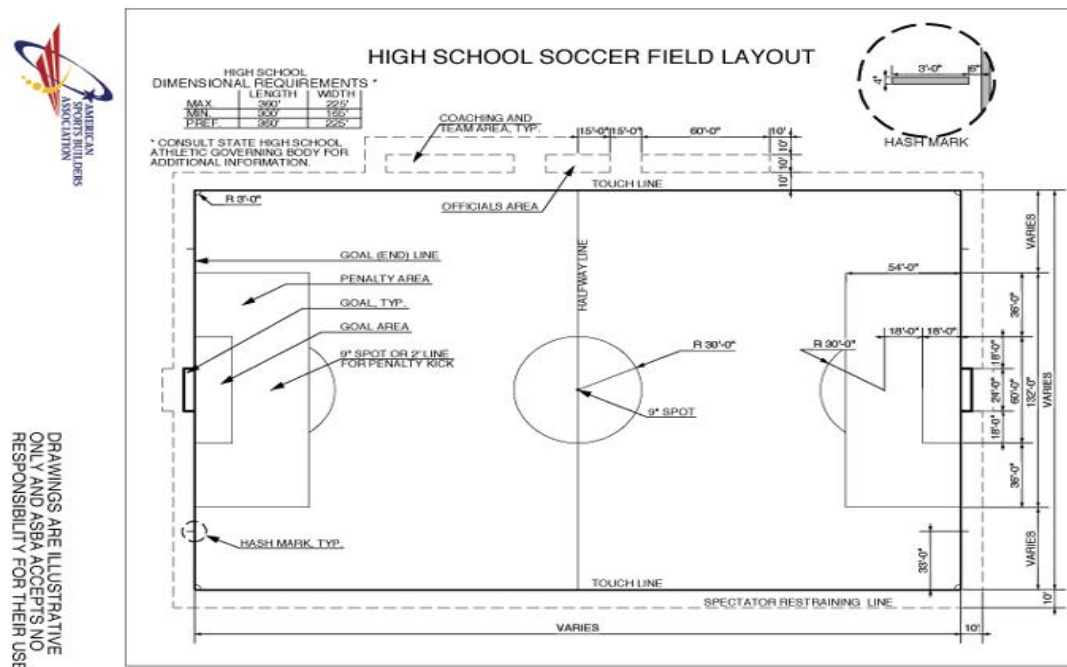
- This area is not a viable option.

Current HS Football Team Practice Field – This area is close to meeting minimum standards but falls short in the area of width. Anything over 50 yards in width would take the field into the ditch on the west side. The area would also be obstructed by the drainage ditch in that area. The ditch and drainage area cannot be renovated without significant cost, if renovation is even possible. The area is right around 120 yards long but that is not squared up. Finding a squared-up area with goals included might not be possible.

- This area could be used as a practice field only but would not meet minimum standards.

Moore Park – this area is very similar to the football field. The recommended regulation size field does not fit in the current soccer field area, especially from a width perspective. The minimum field does fit although it does push the field somewhat close to the road on the west side. There would need to be some upgrades done to that field to make it playable for high school contests.

- This area may be feasible with some upgrades



Comparison Statements Between 2019 and 2022 Data

1. The conditions of the fields have not changed since 2019. There may be two possibilities for playing actual games. But, neither one of them would meet the recommended requirement for high school (which 65 yards wide) but they might meet the 55 width minimum.

VI. Review of Recreation League Participation

We did not collect the specific youth soccer numbers as we did last time but from anecdotal data (interviews) the numbers in the soccer program have continued to grow and the program is more stable than ever. The recreation soccer program has added two competitive teams and are training other coaches to be certified to expand to more competitive teams.

We also conducted interviews on the JFL program. The JFL numbers have declined some over the past couple of years.

Comparison Statements Between 2019 and 2022 Data

1. If the trend of increased youth participation and declining JFL participation continues, this could impact future student interest surveys and football participation numbers at the high school. But as seen in earlier section, that has not started to happen yet.

VII. Benefits to Student Participation

The research cited on the original report still remains accurate.

Comparison Statements Between 2019 and 2022 Data

1. The research in this area continues to be compelling and there is little argument against the premise that increased participation in extra-curricular activities leads to positive student outcomes.
2. But, it is not as simple as saying adding soccer will result in increased participation overall. If the football program would be impacted by soccer, this could lead to less participation in football, especially if the program goes to 8-man.

VIII. Title IX Discussion

Title IX was enacted as a follow-up to passage of the [Civil Rights Act of 1964](#). The 1964 Act was passed to end discrimination in various fields based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin in the areas of employment and public accommodation. The 1964 Act did not prohibit sex discrimination against persons employed at educational institutions. Title IX was then enacted to fill this gap and prohibit discrimination in all federally funded education programs. This legislation has had many direct implications on high school athletic programs to ensure equity between female and male athletic programs.

In order to ensure gender equality, schools must pass at least one of three tests measuring gender equality among athletics the school offers. These tests consist of:

1. Proportional numbers of males and females participating

2. Whether or not the school is making an effort to increase the number of the unrepresented sex
3. If the school has a certain history of one specific sex dominating numbers in a sport, the school is showing an effort to expand the program to the other sex

There are also three requirements to Title IX as it applies to athletics:

1. Effective accommodation of student interests and abilities (participation),
2. Athletic financial assistance
3. Other program components (the “laundry list” of benefits to and treatment of athletes). The “laundry list” includes equipment and supplies, scheduling of games and practice times, travel and daily per diem allowances, access to tutoring, coaching, locker rooms, practice and competitive facilities, medical and training facilities and services, publicity, recruitment of student athletes and support services.

Comparison Statements Between 2019 and 2022 Data

1. Determining compliance with Title IX is more complicated than just having equal number of athletics programs offered. For example, a school could not say we cannot add girls’ soccer because then we would need to add boys’ soccer. It is much more complicated than that.

IX. Other Benefits Presented by Advocates for Soccer

During conversations with community members about the possibility of adding soccer, there are several benefits that have been discussed that do not necessarily show up in other places in this report. These benefits need to be mentioned in this report.

They include:

1. Adding soccer at the school will help bridge the cultural gap that sometimes exists between the school and the community. Soccer is embraced by a large percent of the Hispanic families that live in Arcola and adding the sport would generate more involvement from those parents.
2. Adding soccer would help get more community members involved in the school.
3. With the historical success of Arcola soccer teams, a high school program in Arcola could lead to a high level of success.
4. This success could lead to more name recognition for the district.

X. Cooperative

In order for schools to enter into a cooperative agreement for a sport, both schools must agree that they have interest in participating in a cooperative. Our school district currently has a cooperative with ALAH for golf in the fall season.

As discussed, ALAH currently has a fall coed soccer program. At this time, ALAH has made no official contact with the Arcola School District regarding having an interest in a soccer cooperative. We do know that the participation numbers for soccer in ALAH has declined the last couple years and they did have a tough time fielding a team at the end of their season. But, that is a very complicated situation that would involve the ALAH administration and their school board as well. This would take time and planning.

XI. Conclusions

Some of the conclusions remain the same as in 2019 but some have changed.

Based on all the information discussed above, there are several conclusions that can be drawn. If you want more detail on the data that supports these conclusions, page numbers have been included in parentheses.

1. Football continues to be the top sport of interest for high school boys in the fall and this seems to have increased since 2019. (Pages 1 & 2)

There were 55 students that had football listed as 1st choice this survey compared to 39 in 2019. There were 19 students that chose soccer as 1st choice this time compared to 27 in 2019.

There were 67 students that had football as 1st or 2nd choice for the fall this year compared to 55 in 2019 and there were 38 students that chose soccer as 1st or 2nd choice in 2022 compared to 42 in 2019. And there were 0 male athletes that chose coed soccer as their 1st choice and only a couple as 2nd choice.

2. Volleyball has grown in strength from the previous student interest but the interest in coed soccer for girls seems to have declined. (Page 3 & 4)

There were 40 female athletes that chose volleyball as their 1st choice compared to 26 in 2019 and there were only 10 female athletes that chose coed soccer as 1st choice compared to 21 last time.

3. Softball now has the strongest interest in the spring among female athletes. That has changed since 2019 when soccer was the higher level of interest. (Pages 3 & 4)

There were 29 female athletes that chose softball as 1st choice compared to 13 last time. At the same time, the number of athletes that chose soccer as 1st choice was 10 compared to 25 last time.

4. Most student athletes indicated that they are willing to participate in two major sports at the same time but that doesn't mean that will necessarily occur. (Pages 1 – 4)

We have dual sport athletes now. We currently have it in the fall with Volleyball/Cheerleading; the winter with Girls Basketball/Cheerleading, and in the spring with Softball/Track and Baseball/Track.

There are many challenges when athletes try and participate in two team-based sports. Traditionally in Arcola, we have seen that it has been very hard during Volleyball/Cheer and Basketball/Cheer. It works best in the spring when a sport is paired with track because even though track is a team sport, individuals compete in their own events so track practice times can vary for those individual athletes.

It is probably unrealistic to expect several (there may be some) athletes to play both "soccer and football" or "soccer and volleyball" during the fall unless some sort of significant modification is made to practice schedules, games, etc.

5. Interest doesn't always mean participation

Just because students indicate on a survey that they want to participate in a sport, we know that historically that does not always lead to actual participation in high school. The numbers on the student interest survey are ALWAYS higher than what actually happens. It is much like being a dual sport athlete. It is easy to say, "yes I can do that," but once the student is faced with the challenges and the required commitment, things usually change.

6. There may be sufficient interest to offer soccer for boys only in the fall but that may not be true for girls in the spring. (Pages 1 – 4).

Even though soccer numbers declined in the fall in 2022 as compared to 2019, there still are 19 male athletes that chose soccer as 1st or 2nd choice in the fall but only 10 of them chose soccer without football. The other 9 did choose soccer 1st. But remember, these survey numbers also include 5 grade levels, not 4.

There were only 10 female athletes that chose soccer as 1st choice in 2022 but they also had 11 students that chose soccer as second. 6 of those 11 did choose track as their 1st choice so (as discussed earlier) it is more likely those athletes could do dual sports with track and soccer. Soccer teams generally hope for at a minimum 18 players on a team, with 11 playing at one time. In order to field a team, every single athlete that said they were interested would need to follow through, which is not always the case (see conclusion 5). And again, there are 5 grade levels in this survey.

This is based on just numbers only and does not take into account what impact adding soccer would have on other sports.

7. Title IV does not automatically require schools to add a female sport when they add a male sport and vice versa. (Page 10)

If the district were to have an interest in moving forward with implementing a soccer program (boys, girls or coed), the district would need to complete an analysis with current data to determine feasibility based on Title IV requirements.

8. Soccer would likely have a negative effect on the football program. (Pages 6-8)

It seems more than likely that the adding soccer would have a significant impact on participation in football. For a smaller district, Arcola has done a great job of maintaining football participation. The high school enrollment declined from 240 in 19-20 to 202 in 22-23 but football numbers only went down 2 athletes (from 51 to 49).

This is NOT the trend across many small schools. From reviewing the chart of schools in close proximity, several schools have been forced to drop 11-man football and go to an 8-man program, which is very different.

More specifically, schools similar to Arcola in size that have both football and soccer have really struggled to maintain a football program.

Finally, it is hard to measure the immediate impact that the loss of football athletes to soccer would have on the quality of the football program. This is a big deal considering the successful history of football in Arcola.

9. The field situation is not ideal but would be doable. (Pages 8 & 9)

The only location that could possibly meet the *recommended* standards for a soccer field for IHSA contests would be the current soccer field at Moore Park. The high school football field might be able to accommodate games with the *minimum* field standards but that would need to be looked into more closely

10. The feasibility of offering a coed cooperative soccer program has not been explored in great depth because no interest for a cooperative has been expressed by ALAH, who currently offer the program by themselves. From the interest survey data, it does not appear that offering a cooperative coed soccer program would have an immediate, significant impact on overall numbers for football and volleyball. But the numbers that potentially could be lost could significantly impact the success of the current programs being offered, which could impact the long term viability of the programs.

As stated earlier, there must be interest from both school districts for a cooperative to work. There is not a way to predict exactly what the impact would be in Arcola by adding a cooperative coed soccer program in the fall. But, when looking at two schools very close to us in enrollment, we have seen that both of the schools have struggled to maintain a consistent 11-man football program. Both Fisher and Argenta had to cancel their varsity football seasons over the last two years. Another school our size, Blue Ridge has a coed soccer program and they have completely dropped 11-man football for an 8-man football. That does not mean that is definitely what would happen in Arcola, but it something we need to use when helping predict the impact in Arcola.

In addition, there does not seem to be a ton of interest from our students in coed soccer. But, it is important to realize there may be higher interest if that is the only form of soccer offered.

There were 5 football players that did indicate that soccer was their 1st choice and football was their 2nd choice. Offering a coed soccer program could immediately lead to loss of those players from football. It is important to note that success in a program is very important for maintaining participation. Students want to be a part of a winning program. In a small school, 5 students may not see like a lot but losing 1 or 2 or 3 of your key athletes for football could significantly impact the success of the football program and in turn, erode away at the program.

There were 11 female athletes that indicated that coed soccer would be their first choice in the fall. 3 of those 11 currently play volleyball. The analysis here is the same the one for football in the preceding.

XI. Recommendation

This is a very tough issue. After researching this issue in depth and looking at how the landscape has changed from 2019 to 2022, I am still recommending that the school board does NOT add an IHSA sponsored, competitive soccer program to Arcola High School nor explore a coed cooperative. My rationale for this recommendation is as follows:

If we add soccer, we will lose athletes in our current programs, in particular the football program. Combining this loss with our declining enrollment will lead to the erosion of the football program over time. I cannot recommend starting a new program that will damage the program that is still selected overwhelmingly as the most popular program in the fall by our student athletes.

If over a period of time, the district is forced to move to an 8-man football program, then I think the conversation about soccer drastically changes.