

School Athletics Valued as an Important Part of School Life in Alberta

From the ASAA during the COVID-19 Pandemic

June 25, 2020

In early June 2020, the Alberta Schools' Athletic Association conducted a survey of 397 member school principals, athletic directors and their coaches. There were 2,500 respondents including over 200 principals, over 300 athletic directors and over 2,000 coaching staff. The survey goal was to try and understand how those integrally involved in school sport were feeling, to ask them how they perceive the value of returning to school sport, and to understand their preferences around options for returning to school sport. While it is hard to assimilate thousands of open-ended questions in a short timeline, the questions that allowed for graphical representation are noted below. We will be reviewing the open-ended answers to help guide the association.

What we cannot do right now is paint a picture of what school athletics will look like in the fall of 2020 and whether or not fall championships in golf, cross country running, football and volleyball will proceed as normal, be moved, or canceled as such decisions depend on direction from Alberta Health Services, Alberta Education, superintendents and principals. However, we are staying on top of all COVID-19 related matters, including collaboration with provincial sport organizations, and we will be issuing communications as updated situations around Alberta Education's back to school scenario decision on August 1, 2020, and the Alberta Government's Stage 3 of the relaunch occurs. Our communications to school principals and athletic directors will be via email and we will post the same information to our website and social media.

Data Sample

Total Response: 2,494

The responses we received were from a good distribution of school sizes, zones, and roles within the Alberta high school sport system.

Responses by Role

Principal Responses: 211

Athletic Director Responses: 301

Teacher-Coach Responses: 1594

Non-Teacher-Coach Response: 689

Responses by School Size

14% from 1A Schools (1-99 students in Gr. 10-12)

21% from 2A Schools (100-299 students)

25% from 3A Schools (300-799 students)

40% from 4A Schools (800+ students)

Full Survey Results

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-6GHZLWZF7/>

School Athletics valued as an Important Part of School Life in Alberta

Key findings of the survey we conducted were that school athletics is seen as an important and integral component of the life of a school and presents a significant opportunity for the development of positive attitudes and values in Alberta's students. Some takeaways:

1. **90%** of coaches said they would be comfortable returning to coaching school sport when it is deemed safe to do so; 10% were not as comfortable.
2. When asked to rate on a scale of 1-100 what impact they felt returning to school sport would have on student learning outcomes, with a score of 1 being the lowest negative impact and a score of 100 being the highest positive impact, the average response was **80%**. This finding highlights the perception of that participation in school athletics has a positive impact on academic performance, as many studies have already shown.
3. When asked if the ASAA should modify the nature of its sports (e.g. 3 on 3 basketball, etc.), **94%** of respondents said no. This provides clear direction for the running of ASAA high school provincials; coaches are telling ASAA not modify the sports as we know them at provincial championship level.
4. When asked what their most favoured preferences are if there were significant challenges in running high school sports in 2020/21, the responses were, in order:
 - 36.5% have a later start and finish to each season
 - 21.9% condense the season(s)
 - 17.8% cancel the sport
 - 16.3% completely move the season(s)
 - 7.5% modify the sport
5. When asked what their least favoured preferences are if there were significant challenges in running high school sports in 2020/21, the responses were, in order:
 - 57.7% cancel the sport
 - 26.4% modify the sport
 - 8.1.% completely move the season(s)
 - 4.6% have a later start and finish to each season
 - 3.1% condense the season(s)
6. Respondents were asked if they knew of any school travel restrictions being in place for the fall and while many did not yet know, the principals, as expected, provided more definitive responses. While there is a lot of clarification yet to occur around this question, it was evident that there are more restrictions in place currently in urban centres than in rural centres.

Return to School Sport Survey Post-COVID-19 Summary, June 2020

What is the Comfort Level with Coaching in 2020/21 after return from COVID-19?

The majority of coaches (90%) are comfortable with returning to coaching high school athletics when it is deemed safe to return by the Alberta government. For individuals not returning to coach, factors consistently mentioned were: the additional risk of exposure, the nature of close contact sports for easy transmission of the virus, and having close family members who were more susceptible to Covid-19.

On average, 10% of coaches are not comfortable with coaching again next year. The sports that will be affected the most are: volleyball, followed by rugby, track & field, and basketball. Only 4% of football coaches are not comfortable with coaching again next year.

Sport	Coaches from 2019/20 school year	Coaches comfortable coaching in 2020/21	Percentage Drop (# of Coaches not comfortable)
Badminton	305	280	9% (25)
Basketball	828	744	11% (84)
Cross Country	253	245	4% (8)
Football	343	325	6% (18)
Golf	155	146	6% (9)
Rugby	292	248	16% (44)
Track & Field	454	403	12% (51)
Volleyball	796	653	18% (143)

Cheerleading, curling, team handball, and wrestling did not have a big enough sample size to draw accurate conclusions from the data.

School Athletics and Student Learning Outcomes - Once it is safe to return to school athletics, what do you think the impact of school athletics will be on student learning outcomes?

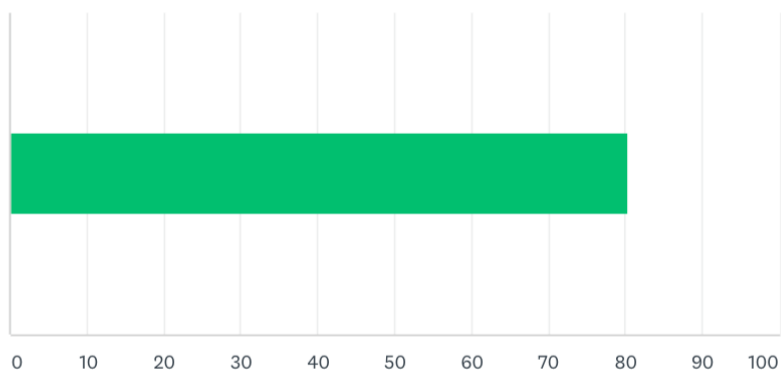
Overall, all respondents feel that there is a strong correlation between school athletics and positive learning outcomes. On a scale of 1 (Absolute Negative) to 100 (Absolute Positive), the response average was 80.

The response average for principals was 75. 2A principals had the lowest average at 71 with 1A principals had the highest average at 78.

The response average for athletic directors was 84. 2A athletic directors had the lowest average at 83 with 3A athletic directors having the highest average at 87.

The response average for teacher-coaches was 79.

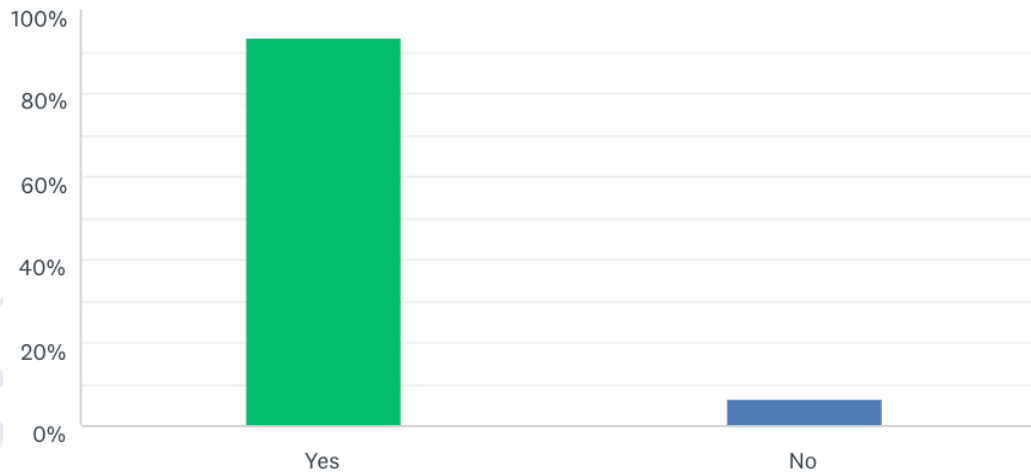
Answered: 2,494 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
Responses	80	200,143	2,494
Total Respondents: 2,494			

Should ASAA Sports Continue Without Modifications?

Overall, 94% of respondents did not want to see any modifications to ASAA sports due to COVID-19. Principals were more inclined to prefer seeing sports modified than athletic directors or coaches. Respondents who were at a 4A school were more inclined to prefer seeing sports modified than smaller schools. Respondents from Calgary were more inclined to prefer seeing sports modified than elsewhere throughout the province.



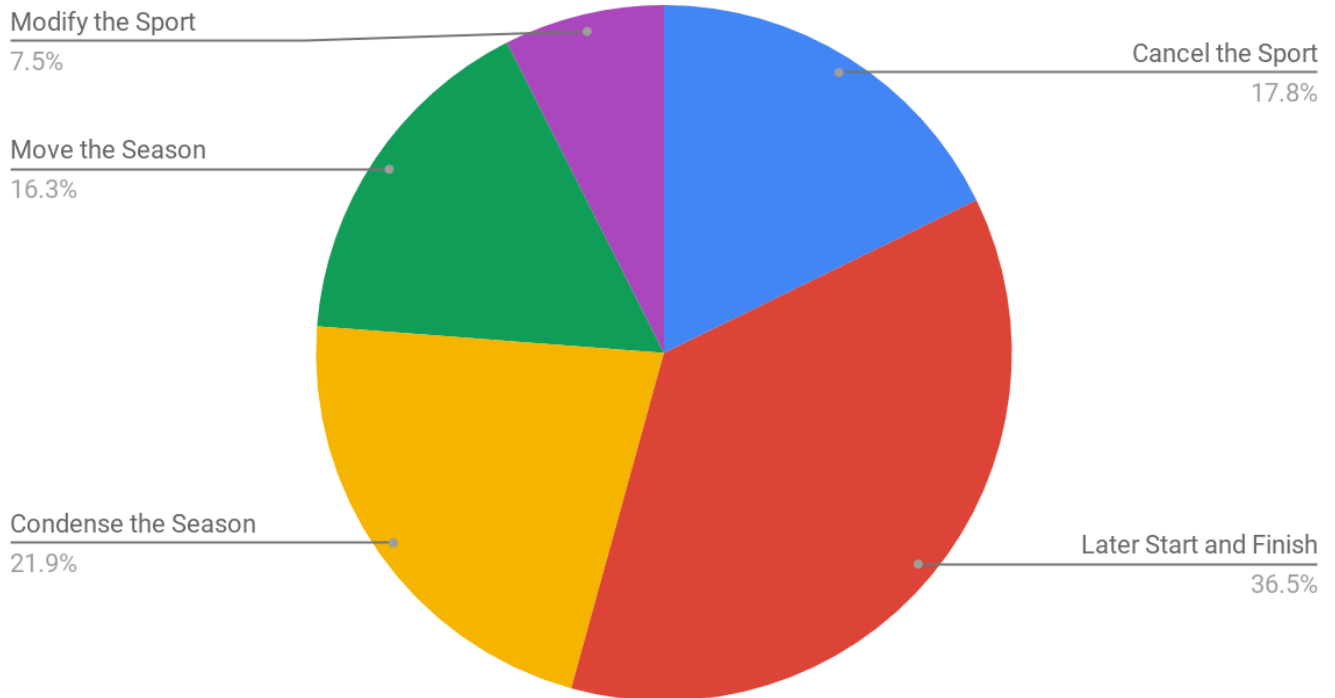
What would like to see happen if there are significant challenges to running sports in the 2020/21 school year?

Overall, people want school sport to happen next year and are very open to what that looks like as long as sports are not modified from their current form.

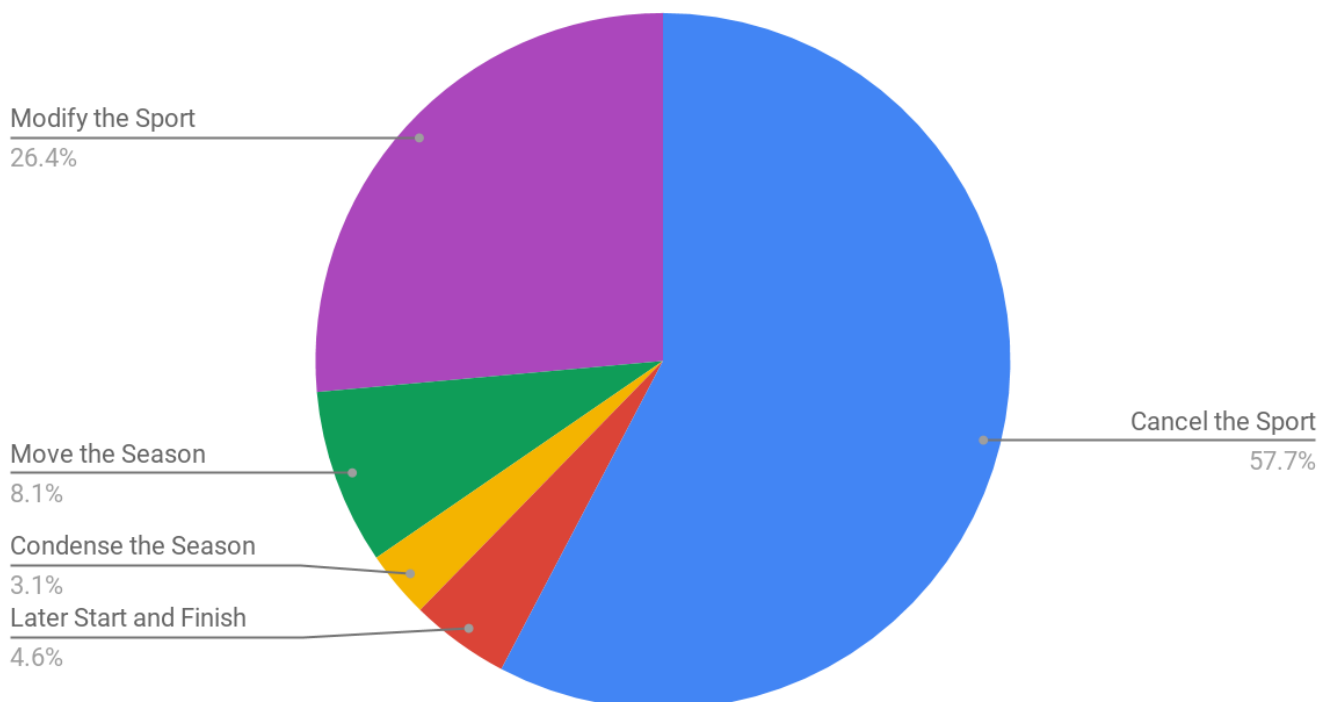
Whilst 50% of principals cited canceling sports as their least favorite of the five options offered, 24% of principals conversely listed cancellation as their preferred option. Principals in Calgary and the North West Zone were the most likely to be in favor of canceling sports next year whilst principals in the South and South Central zones were the least likely to be in favor of canceling sports next year. Principals in larger schools were more likely to be in favour of canceling sports than principals in smaller schools.

Whilst 60% of athletic directors cited canceling sports as their least favorite of the five options offered, 16% of athletic directors conversely listed cancellation as their preferred option. Athletic directors in the North Central and Central Zones were the most likely to be in favor of canceling sports next year. Athletic directors in the North West, Calgary, and South zones were the least likely to be in favor of canceling sports next year. Athletic directors in larger schools were more likely to be in favor of canceling sports than athletic directors in smaller schools.

Overall Most Favourable Option

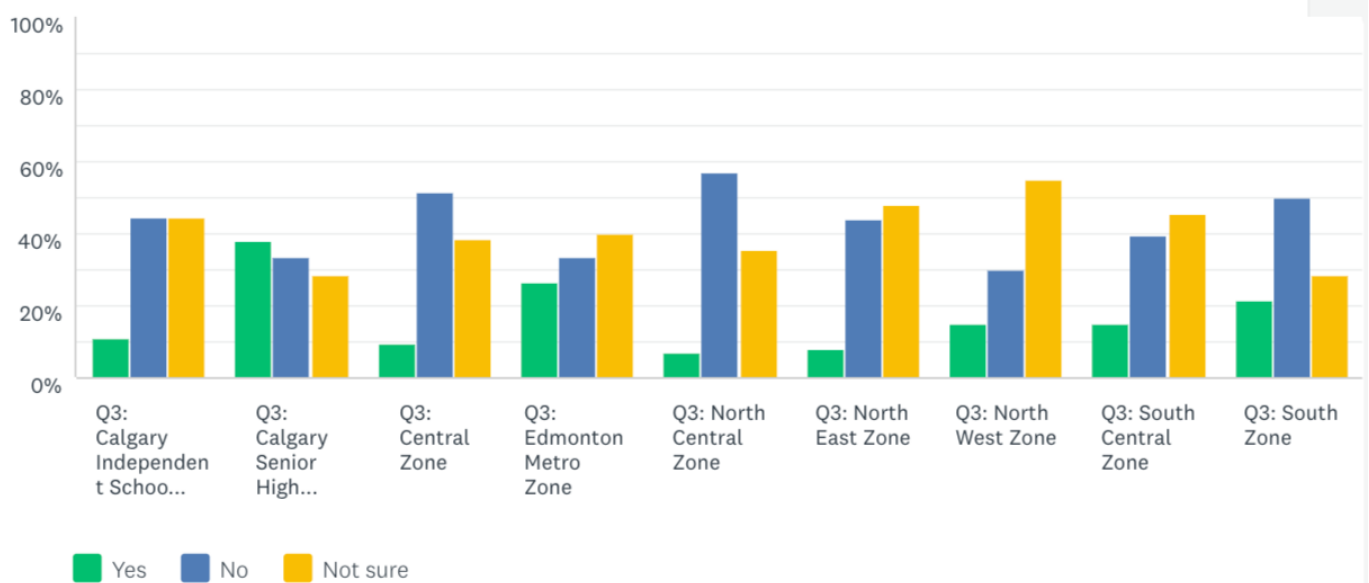


Overall Least Favourable



Travel Restrictions (Principal Responses)

Overall, throughout the province, there is still a significant level of uncertainty whether or not schools will have restrictions on travel in the fall. Major urban centers are more likely than rural areas to have restrictions on travel for the 2020/21 school year.



For more information or any questions related to the survey, please contact:



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