

East Alton-Wood River High School Board Rejects Basketball Start Under Current Situation, Awaits To See If Changes Occur When Governor, IHSA Meet

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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WOOD RIVER - East Alton-Wood River Community High School District 14 Superintendent Dr. John Pearson announced today that the school board voted unanimously on Tuesday night that it would not participate in girls and boys basketball under Gov. J.B. Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Public Health's current order placing it on hold and at a high-risk category.

The Illinois High School Association recently said it would move ahead with boys' and girls' high school basketball in defiance of a previous order by Gov. J.B. Pritzker and the IDPH. Dr. Pearson said there is a meeting tentatively planned for next Thursday, Nov. 19, between the governor, IDPH and IHSA to discuss the basketball situation. He said he hopes clarity emerges from that upcoming meeting.

East Alton-Wood River Community High School District 14 Board of Education does meet again until Dec. 1, so Pearson said if something changed a special meeting would have to be called to discuss the fate of basketball.

“Essentially, the governor issued a warning today if things don’t get better we may go back to a shutdown of the state,” Pearson said, “although he said he didn’t want to do that. We are one of 200 districts that signed a letter asking the governor, IHSA and IDPH to sit down and come to some conclusions about basketball. We can’t do it if we don’t get covered by liability insurance. If you do anything, it is pretty risky.”

Boys and girls basketball practices are scheduled to officially start across the state on Monday, Nov. 16. Dr. Pearson said East Alton-Wood River would continue with no-contact practices for girls and boys to ensure they could quickly move into a season if the governor and IDPH change their stance.

“We can’t scrimmage and have contact right now,” he said. "But we will continue with the non-contact drills."

Dr. Pearson said he is obviously a fan of basketball. John’s father, Elliott, was athletic director at Alton High during the heyday of sports at the school in the early 1970s. John was also a basketball player for the Redbirds, so he has completely understands the importance of girls and basketball to the Oilers athletic program.

