

USEF INTERSCHOLASTIC RIDING PROGRAMS GUIDE

OVERVIEW FOR MIDDLE, JUNIOR
AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS



UNITED STATES EQUESTRIAN FEDERATION
THE NATIONAL GOVERNING BODY FOR EQUESTRIAN SPORT
WWW.USEF.ORG

EQUESTRIAN RIDING PROGRAMS

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Since 1917, the United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) has been committed to the love of horses and to the promotion of fair competition, from grassroots to the Olympics, for the members of the equine community. In all pursuits we undertake, the USEF endeavors to reach the highest levels of performance and excellence.

Student-athletes excel not only on the playing field, but also in the classroom – equestrian athletes are no exception. Through practice, hard work, and training they develop the skills necessary to succeed as students and as athletes. Like many other students involved in athletic pursuits, equestrian student-athletes choose to enhance their academic education and personal growth through sport. The skills developed are transferable far beyond the competition arena and provide a foundation for success both in and out of the classroom.

Equestrian sports combine the challenges and benefits of a team sport with the personal growth and edification of individual competition. Equestrian athletes take the concept of teamwork to the highest level, as they form a partnership with a horse; two independent beings working together and communicating with one another to achieve their goal. This unique blend of team sport and individual competition creates an environment that facilitates fair play, good horsemanship, and personal accountability.

A significant positive relationship between horses and youth was found between horsemanship skills and life skills in a recent study conducted by the American Youth Horse Council and Pennsylvania State University. They found that equine activities develop life skills such as decision making, communicating, problem solving, goal setting and empathy.

Success in the competition arena does not stop with personal growth and development. Equestrian sports are growing rapidly in the collegiate arena with many universities and colleges now offering collegiate equestrian teams and scholarships. Equestrian student-athletes can apply their success in the competition arena to their academics. Their preparation in the classroom and in the competition arena further equips them for success as professionals and members of the community.

According to the American Horse Council, the horse industry has a direct economic effect on the U.S. economy of \$40 billion annually. The horse industry supports 453,000 jobs directly and 1.4 million in total. 4.6 million Americans are involved in the equine industry in some capacity, which means that one out of every 63 Americans is involved with horses. The equine industry thus provides numerous opportunities for advancement and success as trainers, breeders, farriers, nutritionists, veterinarians, and countless other professions. At the USEF, we employ a full time staff of marketing, accounting, human resources, IT, and legal professionals to provide the necessary logistical support for the Federation to serve the equestrian community.

Whether discussing personal enrichment, academic success, or professional opportunities, all of these discussions center on the equestrian student-athlete. Their success in the classroom and competition arena facilitates their success as professionals and members of the community. The academic, personal, and economic skills equestrian student-athletes develop directly benefits their impact in the community.

WHAT'S AVAILABLE?

There are programs located in the United States that promote equestrian sports to middle, junior and high schools. The level of involvement required by the school varies between each organization. Before approaching school administrators about the possibility of forming an equestrian club or team, you should have a clear understanding of what is required from each available option.

- Equestrian team through your school – school sponsored team that competes in an interscholastic organization.
- Equestrian club through your school – school sponsored club of students that meet to discuss their mutual interest in horses. May or may not ride or compete for the school.
- Equestrian team through a local barn – no direct connection to a school but students might attend the same area school. Team may compete in an interscholastic organization.
- USEF Equestrian Athlete program – based on the student's individual time riding and competing. Award may be used for recognition or credit within the school but school involvement is not required for student to participate.

Equestrian sports can help children become better prepared in their adult life by teaching them peer acceptance, time management, fair play, dedication and individual accountability. Most students who participate on an equestrian team ride outside of the school environment; however, by allowing students to be a part of a team and possibly receive school recognition, school administrators are giving students the opportunity to contribute to and participate in a unique school activity that could lead to college scholarships and career opportunities.

IDEAS TO GET YOU STARTED

This information is to assist you in organizing an interscholastic equestrian team/club in your state or area. There are a large variety of requirements from state to state; we suggest that you contact your local school district to determine how to start a new club/team at your school. Once you know your local requirements, we recommend that you first review the websites and contact the already established organizations for advice. In drafting your proposal, be prepared to address the following questions and concerns:

BENEFITS

Identify your goals, what are you trying to accomplish?

How will the students benefit from participation? What are the benefits to support the sport of equestrian?

Why this should be a letter sport?

STRUCTURE

Who can participate?

What type of team or club are you going to offer?

Will it be within one school or an area?

Will you accept students from other schools?

Identify disciplines—offer disciplines that each school deems will flourish the most.

Are you a part of a governing high school equestrian organization?

Where will the team practice?

What horses will team members practice and compete on?

How is the team structured—Junior Varsity, Varsity or middle school?

Competition year—schools might not award letters for scores earned outside the school activity year. Verify with the school what their policy is regarding the competition year with club activities.

COST

Identify costs, particularly any costs to the school. Insurance—what will it cost the school?

COMPETITIONS

When and where will competitions be held?

Who will you compete against?

How many other high school equestrian teams are in the area and who are they?

RULES

Rules and Code of Conduct—students should be required to adhere to their school and club's code of conduct for participation.

Competition Rules—develop competition rules if not governed by an established high school equestrian program.

SAFETY AND LIABILITY

Liabilities—research your state's equine risk law and have copy available on hand.

Address safety concerns.

Risks for the school, coach or advisor.

Extensive waiver.

MANPOWER

List of interested individuals that would be willing to assist the team/club including parties from the surrounding equine community. Identify interested faculty members that would be willing to assist the team/club.

Identify a potential coach.

NEXT STEP

Once you have been approved by the school, follow the steps of the governing interscholastic equestrian organization or refer to examples on the websites to establish your own guidelines. Promote the equestrian program within the school system, local stables, and equine related businesses. This will assist in getting participation but also in recruiting volunteers and sponsors.

RESOURCES

We have listed these resources as they may be helpful or of interest. The listing of these organizations does not imply a formal endorsement by the United States Equestrian Federation.

American Horse Council www.horsecouncil.org

American Youth Horse Council www.ayhc.com

Animal Legal and Historical Web Center <https://www.animallaw.info/> (equine liability laws)

American Equestrian Alliance www.americanequestrian.com

Federal Volunteer Act http://www.fcomi.org/uploads/3/3/7/4/3374831/volunteer_protection_act.pdf (provides civil liability protection for non-profit volunteers)

State Horse Councils http://www.equisearch.com/resources/associations/statehorsecouncils_011707/

USEF EQUESTRIAN ATHLETE LETTERING PROGRAM

The USEF Equestrian Athlete program was created for students to receive recognition for their individual achievements regardless of if their school recognizes equestrian as a sport. Students are responsible for tracking their own hours and competitions which means support from the student's school is not necessary to participate. Individuals who do compete interscholastically are able to use their team practice hours and competitions towards meeting the annual requirements. If requested, the program can provide schools with updates about the student's participation with the goal of initiating conversations with school administrators and encouraging additional recognition through the school.

The requirements for each program year which runs from June 1-May 31 are as follows:

- Current student in grades 5-12 and provide proof of enrollment
- Apply for each year of program and be active USEF member at time of application
- Log at least 100 hours of time riding per year
- Participate in three competitions of any level or type per year

Students who complete the program receive:

- Certificate of Achievement for each year of completion
- Free varsity letterman patch from USEF
- Free lapel pin commemorating each year student completes the program
- Access to official program merchandise
- Email to school administrator notifying them of student's participation and completion of the program, if requested.
- Official recognition of participation in a high school sport from the National Governing Body of Equestrian Sport, USEF. Students may add the accomplishment to their college or scholarship applications.

The program is open to students participating in all breeds and disciplines of equestrian sport. Any level or type of competition can be used to meet the requirements. If you're currently enrolled in grades 5-12 and just now hearing about the program, you're not too late to get started and earn a letter for all four years. The program was expanded to allow any current high school student the opportunity to earn a varsity letter retroactively. You can also get started in the middle of the program year, which runs from June 1 through May 31, and use hours and competitions from before you enrolled.

For more information about the program, visit <https://www.usef.org/lettering> or email lettering@usef.org.

HAVING TROUBLE FORMING A CLUB OR TEAM?

JOIN THE USEF EQUESTRIAN ATHLETE LETTERING PROGRAM AND TRY THESE IDEAS.

Ask your school if it is possible to do the any of the following:

- Present program Certificate of Achievement at athletic or academic awards ceremony
- Include achievement on the student's transcript
- Include achievement in the school yearbook
- Include an article on the student in the school paper or local paper
- Earn Physical Education credit through the program instead of gym class
- Verify school days missed for horse shows through the program
- Create a letter in Equestrian through the school using the program requirements or supplementing the school's own requirements for receiving an athletic letter

Please note that these are *suggestions* for riders to try when attempting to form a club or team, and their schools are *not* required to agree to any or all of them.

EQUESTRIAN RIDING PROGRAMS

Specific programs located throughout the United States offer equestrians the chance to participate in a “club” or “team” with their schoolmates. It is important to understand the different interscholastic riding programs and what they offer. We encourage you to visit their websites for more information regarding riding at the middle, junior and high school level. It is the ultimate goal of the USEF to promote these opportunities across the United States that support equestrian teams, in an effort to educate students on the equestrian sport.

The following information was compiled from the organizations' websites. We encourage you to visit their sites for more information regarding interscholastic riding programs. While every reasonable effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and correctness of the information contained, USEF is not responsible for misprints, out of date information, typographical or other errors. Information is subject to change without notice. These organizations and establishments are independent entities and are not agents of USEF. Information and links are provided purely as a service and such information does not represent an endorsement or recommendation, implied or otherwise of the organizations listed, or any responsibility for the content of such websites.

INTERSCHOLASTIC EQUESTRIAN ASSOCIATION

Website: www.rideiea.org

Area: National

Membership: Over 11,000

Disciplines: Hunt Seat, Western, Dressage

Affiliation: USEF, USHJA, IHSA, CHA, AQHYA, NRHA

The Interscholastic Equestrian Association (IEA) “was formed and organized to promote and improve the quality of equestrian competition and instruction available to middle and secondary school students.” Its objectives include: promoting the equestrian as an athlete; providing students with organized competitive opportunities; setting minimum standards for competition; providing information about the creation and development of school associated equestrian sport programs; and promoting the common interests of safe riding instruction and competition. IEA's mission is to introduce students (primarily ages 11 through 19), in private and public middle and secondary schools, to equestrian sports. There is no need to own a horse.

At IEA shows, none of the riders will supply their own horses or tack. The host team arranges for the horses and equipment which are all provided to the students at the show. The horses are new to the riders. After a short opportunity at orientation, the competitors are judged based on horsemanship, not the horse.

Membership is on an annual basis from May 15th through November 1st. “Membership in IEA shall be open to all individuals, teams, coaches and others interested in supporting equine sports at the middle and secondary school level and who enthusiastically support the goals and ideals of IEA. For teams and riders to participate in IEA competitions, shows and events, an IEA Coach Member must coach the team and all riders.” A Hunt Seat and Western Seat calendar are offered on the website. Zone Chairmen contact information is available for each of zones which include all of the states. The website contains facts on how to get started, rules, points, and other relevant information. (www.rideiea.org)

INTERSCHOLASTIC EQUESTRIAN LEAGUE

Website: www.theiel.org

Area: Los Angeles or Ventura County, California

Membership: Approximately 600

Disciplines: Hunters, Jumpers, Dressage

The Interscholastic Equestrian League (IEL) states that its primary objectives are: "to support and develop athletes for regional and national competition in equestrian sports; to encourage a knowledge of horsemanship; to encourage teamwork in fair and friendly competition; to encourage the development of superior riding skills in young riders; and to take any and all actions that may be considered appropriate to accomplish the foregoing." Fostering regional and national amateur equestrian sports competition is its reason for operation.

Any school located within Los Angeles County or Ventura County is eligible if they are interested in participation in the activities of the IEL. The schools must subscribe to the By-Laws and Rules of the IEL, and a Team Representative and/or Coach must be identified on the completed membership form. Teams are formed by the school. The latest rules, policies and procedures are available online as well as contact information and necessary forms. Only riders in 7th to 12th grade are eligible for membership. The following disciplines are covered in the rule book: Hunter/Equitation/Jumper and Dressage.

INTER-SCHOOL HORSE SHOW

Website: www.interschoolhorseshow.org/

Area: Maryland, D.C, Virginia

Membership: Approximately 500

Disciplines: Hunt Seat Equitation

The Inter-School Horse Show (ISHS) states their mission is to make "horse-back riding more affordable and assessable to young riders, and our series gives 5th-12th grade equestrians of all experience levels the rare opportunity to compete as a team and represent their school in the show ring." This is accomplished through horse show offered in the Varsity and Junior Varsity Divisions. Each division has multiple levels to accommodate riders of all levels. Riders may bring their own horses or lease one from the host schools at shows. Individual and team points are accumulated and an "Invitational" show is held at the end of the year. Membership only requires a team coach, though one may be acquired from the host school for a fee. The website includes a step-by-step process to starting a team and also included useful references such as rules, forms, prices and class lists.

MICHIGAN INTERSCHOLASTIC HORSEMANSHIP ASSOCIATION

Website: www.miha.org

Area: Michigan

Membership: Approximately 2,000

Disciplines: Western, Saddle Seat, Hunt Seat, Timed Events, Fitting and Showing, Trail, Reining

The Michigan Interscholastic Horsemanship Association (MMIHA) states that their goals include promoting continuous growth in programs fostering horsemanship education, as well as encouraging interscholastic participation through sponsored activities. The Junior High School program and High School program headings lead to detailed school district maps within the state. Clicking on a district provides contact information for the district chairperson and a listing of schools for that area. Membership in the High School program (grades 9 through 12) and the Junior Division (grades 6 through 8) is possible only if there is a registered adult coach.

Information on registering as an adult coach, assistant coach or adult volunteer is contained in the Rules. Class listings for high school meets include Western, Saddle Seat, Fitting and Showing, Trail, Hunt Seat, and Equitation over Fences.

Other details available include: a calendar, forms, rules, regions, scholarships, state championships, etc. The information available is very clear and useful. A rulebook is available online and information on Standard Operating Procedures is forthcoming. A horse and rider registration must be completed by the rider which contains the signatures of the rider, parent and owner of horse.

MINNESOTA HIGH SCHOOL EQUESTRIAN ASSOCIATION

Website: www.mhsea.org

Area: Minnesota

Membership: Over 150

Disciplines: Dressage, Eventing, Hunter/Jumper, Western, Reining, Western Games, Equitation/Horsemanship and Pleasure

The Minnesota High School Equestrian Association (MHSEA) is a non-profit organization "that promotes equestrian disciplines as a high school team sport with an emphasis on education, citizenship and recognition of equestrian athletes." Developed in 2001, the program provides young riders the opportunity to represent their schools in team competitions in the sport they love. A program overview and specific discipline details are available on the website along with a variety of informational materials.

Students in grades 9-12 are allowed to join a riding club through the school. Membership requirements include: compliance with school and/or district student eligibility requirements and registration; completion of online registration requirements; completion of required fundraising and volunteer hour requirements; and attendance at monthly meetings or functions. The handbook states that the high school equestrians participating in a MHSEA club "bear the entire financial responsibility for their sport."

The registration form has all states listed, however, the program overview specifically refers to coordinating over 30 high school equestrian clubs across Minnesota. The disciplines noted for participation in that document are Dressage, Eventing, Hunter/Jumper, Western, Equitation /Horsemanship and Pleasure.

NEW HAMPSHIRE HIGH SCHOOL EQUESTRIAN TEAMS

Website: www.nhhset.org

Area: New Hampshire

Membership: 150

Disciplines: English, western, dressage, jumping, trail and timed-games on horseback.

The New Hampshire High School Equestrian Teams (NHHSET) states that they are dedicated to promoting and organizing equestrian competition in high school athletic or activity programs. Their main goal is "for the equestrian athlete to be recognized in the high schools

and to give them an opportunity to achieve that recognition in a fair, positive and educational format." Their youth participation includes students in grades 9 through 12. Students in grades 7-8 with the permission of school can participate on school team as non-riding spirit members. Any high school in the state of New Hampshire is eligible to form a team and join the organization. The website lists four districts: Seacoast, Southwest, South Central, and Capital. Teams may be started through an adult at school who agrees to be the team advisor. She/he will need to obtain the necessary signature(s) from the school administrator stating that the team may use the school's name. The NHHSET must be contacted prior to the June State Board Meeting for consideration in order to compete in the following season.

The latest Rule Book is online for reference. A Coaches Handbook and District Chair Manual are also offered. The website provides the latest news available as well as contact and other relevant information for members and those who are interested in the organization. Athletes are responsible for transportation and care of their horses as well as appropriate attire. Classes include Hunt Seat, Equitation over Fences, Saddle Seat, Dressage, Driving, Western, and Reining.

ORANGE COUNTY INTERSCHOLASTIC EQUESTRIAN LEAGUE

Website: www.ociel.org

Area: Orange Country, California

Membership: Over 200

Disciplines: Hunter, Jumper, Dressage, Western

The Orange County Interscholastic Equestrian League (OCIEL) operates to foster regional and national amateur equestrian sports competition. Their primary goals and objectives are "to encourage knowledge of horsemanship, stable management, equine anatomy and physiology and to promote teamwork in a fair and friendly competition with the young riders from K through 12th grade." Disciplines listed are Hunter, Jumper, Dressage, and Western. Any school is eligible for membership that is interested in participating in the OCIEL activities and willing to subscribe to the By-Laws and Rules. Student (lower school through 12th grade) membership forms must be accompanied by an eligibility form submitted by the trainer.

The OCIEL was founded in 1993. The League seeks to encourage students and parents who have a commitment to the sport and is not limited to those with extensive show experience. The shows are held at the Rancho Mission Viejo Riding Park in Southern California. Official rules, applications, and forms are available on the OCIEL website along with contact and overview information. Disciplines offered include Hunter, Jumper, Dressage, and Western.

OREGON HIGH SCHOOL EQUESTRIAN TEAM

Website: www.ohset.com

Area: Oregon

Membership: Over 1,200

Disciplines: Cattle, Dressage, Drill, Driving, Hunt Seat, Saddle Seat, In Hand, Timed Events, Reining, Showmanship, and Trail

The Oregon High School Equestrian Teams (OHSET) states that they are "dedicated to promoting and organizing equestrian competition in high school athletic or activity programs. It is our main goal to provide recognition in the high schools of the equestrian athlete and to give them an opportunity to achieve that recognition in a fair, positive and educational format." OHSET's goals include encouraging team play, peer acceptance, and good horsemanship. Any high school in the US is eligible to form a team and join; all students in grades 9 through 12 are eligible. The state is divided into districts. The student is responsible for transportation to and from the events as well as all stall, horse and tack expenses. Registrations for team, athlete, and volunteer are available

online as well as other relevant forms and information. Among the disciplines mentioned for competition are Dressage, Hunt Seat, Hunt Seat over Fences, Reining, Driving, Saddle Seat, and Western.

The state (Oregon) is divided into districts. Districts are made up of high schools. Each high school competes as a team. Athletes are affiliated with a high school team. The website provides extensive contact and practical information for those interested in exploring this program.

SADDLE SEAT AND WESTERN SCHOOL LEAGUE OF GREATER LA

Website: www.saddleseatwesternleague.com

Area: Los Angeles, California

Membership: 13 schools

Disciplines: Saddle Seat, Western Seat

Affiliation: United States Equestrian Federation

The Saddle Seat and Western School League of Greater LA ((SWSL) is described as a “non-profit organization founded to promote knowledge of horsemanship and to provide the opportunity for competition for students in grades 6 – 12. We offer this opportunity to riders of Saddle Seat and Western disciplines.” SWSL is not limited to those with extensive show experience. One of its aims is to encourage and support students (from both public and private schools) and parents who have made a commitment to the sport. The purpose of the competitions includes providing team recognition and promoting the sport as an interscholastic activity.

Membership is open to any school located within Los Angeles County or Ventura County (must be willing to subscribe to the SWSL By-Laws and Rules, Policies and Procedures). These are available online. Each rider must complete the Annual School Membership Form as well as the Annual Rider Membership Form. This Rider must sign a section acknowledging that she/he has read and understood the SWSL Rules, Policies & Procedures. This form also includes a section to enter required information for the horse and if a stall is needed.

SAN DIEGO SCHOLASTIC EQUESTRIAN LEAGUE

Website: www.sdsel.weebly.com

Area: San Diego, California

Membership: 17 schools

Disciplines: Hunter/Jumper, Dressage, Western

The San Diego Scholastic Equestrian League (SDSEL) is an organization specializing in high school athletics where students can earn credit and recognition with their school for competing at equestrian competitions. The SDSEL “embraces fair and friendly high school competition and team spirit” with goals of encouraging knowledge of horsemanship and the development of superior riding skills in young equestrians. The league strives to develop student athletes for collegiate level riding as well as for regional and national competition in equestrian sports.

The SDSEL consists of students in grades 7-12 residing or training in any county in Southern California. Students must compete for the school they attend. Riders in the hunter/jumper, dressage, and western disciplines come together to form a team and compete in local San Diego horse shows. The SDSEL competition season begins in January and continues through May. Unlike, other interscholastic groups, members compete on their own horses and in regular competitions. In addition to the regular competition awards, SDSEL members will earn a second set of awards and points towards their individual score and school team in competitions designated as SDSEL competitions.

WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL EQUESTRIAN TEAMS

Website: www.wahset.org

Area: Washington

Membership: Over 500

Disciplines: Cattle, Dressage, Drill, Driving, Hunt Seat, Saddle Seat, In Hand, Timed Events, Reining, Showmanship, and Trail

Washington High School Equestrian Teams (WAHSET) was originally a Washington co-op team that was part of the Oregon state program (OHSET). In 2005/2006, WAHSET (consisting of three districts) split off from OHSET and has continued to grow in the number of participating athletes. It has expanded to six districts (four on the west side of the Cascades and two on the east) and the number of schools has increased as well. WAHSET's mission statement describes its main goal as "recognition in the high schools of the equestrian athlete and to give them an opportunity to achieve that recognition in a fair, positive and educational format." Team play, peer acceptance, good horsemanship, and competition sportsmanship are areas emphasized in this program.

The website states that this program is open to any person in grades 9 – 12 in any school in the United States. District links and contacts (including participating schools) are located in various sections of the website for those interested in joining or finding out about the program. Team and individual registrations are required. Students are responsible for transportation to and from events as well as all stall, horse and tack (equipment) needs. Individual forms and a registration packet (which includes all necessary forms and information) are available online along with other relevant material under the Rules and Registration Information heading. Disciplines noted include Hunt Seat, Saddle Seat, Western, Driving, and Dressage. Contact details for schools, districts and officers are also provided for those seeking further information.

WISCONSIN INTERSCHOLASTIC HORSEMANSHIP ASSOCIATION

Website: www.wiha.us/index.html

Area: Wisconsin

Membership: Approximately 330

Disciplines: Hunt Seat, Reining, Saddle Seat, Trail, Timed Events, Western

The Wisconsin Interscholastic Horsemanship Association (WIHA) is an organization whose purpose is to "promote continuous growth in programs fostering horsemanship education, sponsor activities to encourage interscholastic participation and to have cooperative adult supervised leadership (coaching) for all students in grades 6 through 12 who are desirous to participate regardless of race, creed or national origin and meets the association rules and regulations." The goal of this organization is to "is to get as many schools as possible to recognize this as a sport and allow the students to letter."

UNITED STATES DRESSAGE FEDERATION

Website: www.usdf.org

Area: National

Disciplines: Dressage

Affiliation: United States Equestrian Federation

The USDF Youth Dressage Rider Recognition Pin Program is designed to recognize the accomplishments of youth in the dressage community at all levels. This program is open to students who are currently enrolled in grades 6-12 of a middle/ high school or home school program and are a Group or Participating Member of USDF. Pins can be earned in each year of enrollment in the program.