



The NFHS Voice



## **Mental, Emotional Wellness Among Topics Planned for NFHS National Virtual Student Leadership Summit**

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More than 10 million high school students are preparing for their participation in athletics and performing arts programs this year. After an abrupt end to the 2019-20 season and an up-and-down year in 2020-21, hopes for an uninterrupted year in 2021-22 are running high.

August is a time to initiate game plans and learn playbooks, but it is also time to review Emergency Action Plans, including heat acclimatization programs, and – for at least the near future – protocols for COVID-19 that may be necessary.

The NFHS is one of 12 national sports and medical organizations that have endorsed the White House’s statement released this week encouraging all high

school students to get the COVID-19 vaccine. This is essential to a successful year in high school sports and performing arts.

We believe there are some other key ingredients to success this year. While we have high expectations for the 2021-22 sports and activities season, we recognize that there have been repercussions from the past 17 months. The mental and emotional health – and confidence – of those students in activity programs were compromised at times, and the NFHS is poised to assist students in their return to programs this year.

For the second consecutive year, the NFHS is hosting the nation's only National Student Leadership Summit (NSLS) for high school student-athletes and participants in performing arts programs. After hosting more than 22,000 students over three days last year, the NFHS will continue with its virtual format this year August 8-10. The Sunday-Tuesday summit is free on the NFHS Network but requires registration through the following link:

<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/5131ce0582e94e898572be2bf1ab7a46>

A session on mental health will kick off the conference at 1:00 p.m. EDT on Sunday, August 8. A survey of Wisconsin schools last year indicated that about 65 percent of the state's student-athletes reported anxiety due to COVID-19 closures.

The study confirmed that involvement in sports and activities is vital to the social, emotional and mental health of high school students. **Ivy Watts**, a speaker and advocate for mental wellness, will be the opening session speaker at this year's NFHS National Student Leadership Summit (NSLS).

Watts has recently developed “Athletes Minds Matter” – an all-in-one mental health platform for student-athletes designed to develop their mental wellness for success on and off the field.

Leadership development will be the focus of closing session speaker **Julie Carrier** at 2:30 p.m. EDT on Tuesday, August 10. The CEO of Girls Lead Worldwide, Carrier has been recognized as the “No. 1 Coach for Young Women in the World” and is leading a movement to “empower those who empower girls to empower each other.”

In between these opening and closing sessions are seven dynamic workshop speakers addressing topics such as goal setting, motivational leadership, relationship building, inclusion and finances.

Speakers include **Omari Pearson**, president and founder of Passion to Purpose, LLC, an education-based life skills company; **Deb Hult**, co-founder of Core Trainings who will speak on relationship building; **Deanna Singh**, founder of Flying Elephant who provides individuals tools and courage to imagine, activate and impact the world as agents of change; and **Greg Dale**, professor of sport psychology and sport ethics at Duke University. Information on all sessions and speakers during the three-day virtual conference can be obtained by clicking on the following link:

<https://www.nfhs.org/resources/conferences-meetings/national-student-leadership-summit/>

As student-athletes and performing arts participants return to activities this year after the rigors of the pandemic, this virtual leadership summit is very timely. Many of the issues facing high school students today will be addressed –

emotional and social wellness, conflict resolution, perspective and inclusion, reacting to situations and making good decisions, and developing and maintaining healthy relationships.

The virtual setting for the National Student Leadership Summit will enhance students' ability to build relationships with one another, as summit attendees will once again have the opportunity to interact on the BAND group communication app. Last year, the BAND app served as a conduit to the formation of several subgroups on other social media platforms.

The final two days of the Summit on Monday and Tuesday, August 9-10, would allow for schools already in session to bring all activity participants together to participate in the conference collectively. We would encourage schools to consider this option.

Students involved in athletics and other activities such as speech, debate, music and theatre are the leaders in schools nationwide, and this one-of-a-kind National Student Leadership Summit will provide these individuals with energy and confidence for the year ahead. High school student leaders can click on the following link to register for the August 8-10 NFHS National Student Leadership Summit:

<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/5131ce0582e94e898572be2bf1ab7a46>

*Dr. Karissa L. Niehoff is in her third year as executive director of the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) in Indianapolis, Indiana. She is the first female to head the national leadership organization for high school athletics and performing arts activities and the sixth full-time executive director of the NFHS. She previously was executive director of the Connecticut Association of Schools-Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference for seven years.*