

Steps to Advocate for Girls High School Hockey Teams

These steps are from the experience of Ithaca parents and girls; and from the advice of Mitzi Witchger who started Minnesota's high school girls hockey movement which is now 100 schools strong. Mitzi also founded GREAT! Girls Really Expect A Team and can be reached at great@iquest.net or 317-877-6054. Mary Grainger can be reached at mmgithaca@aol.com or 607-257-3268.

Each local community has its own ways--of funding sports, of thinking about change, of accepting girls sports. The first question to ask is: what do your girls need and expect in order to play this exciting and fun sport.

In some communities, the answer is a school-sponsored hockey team because the boys program is given high priority and respect; in others there may be other challenges such as more equitable distribution of ice times, or the need to have a separate girls association. Look at the situation, ask the girls, and then do what you can to improve the status of the fast-growing sport of girls hockey in your community.

What works for one community/state/section may be very different than what works for another. For example, in Minnesota there are some top players on high school teams and there's still the Minnesota Thoroughbreds elite team. Some smaller school districts cooperate to offer girls one team for several neighboring schools (and there is precedent for this in NYS). In New Jersey, Princeton High School added the sport as a non-cut recreational team; other area girls play with the local Princeton TigerLillies. In Ithaca's first year with a club team, some new skaters are trying the sport of hockey and they have teammates who have played for many years, but aren't interested in a full travel hockey schedule. Vermont's Hartford High School currently plays against travel teams and private schools as they await other VT schools phasing in girls varsity teams. In the Maryland area, a separate association for hockey oversees inter-state and inter-level competition since there are parochial, public and private schools with teams and hockey association teams in the area.