



R&L FUSION

RULES AND PROCEDURES

(UPDATED JULY, 2026)

R&L CO-OP DEFINITIONS, RULES, AND PROCEDURES:

ORGANIZATION:

1. IDENTITY

Team Name – R&L Fusion
Team Logo (see cover)
Co-op Colors – Metallic red, white, and Royal blue
Fight Song – “Hail to the Victors”

2. CO-OP GOVERNING BODY COMPOSITION

Along with the others comprising the Co-op Committee (see below), the Richey and Lambert full School Boards will be in attendance at the all regular co-op meetings to participate in agenda items, discuss, and direct their thoughts on items which call for action, to the Co-op Committee members.

3. CO-OP COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

- A. 2 Board members from each school
 - **Will be the voting parties at the Regular co-op meetings.
 - **Will attend and vote, when necessary, at any Special co-op meetings.
 - **Will be the initial contacts for the Administration, should immediate attention be needed.
- B. 2 non-voting administrators/athletic directors from each school
- C. Student representation is welcome
- D. Hereafter referred to as “Committee”

4. CO-OP MEETING PROCEDURES

- A. **Regular co-op meetings:** will be held after each of our 3 sports’ seasons (fall, winter, and spring), after the conclusion of each 1 week comment period. At that time, AD’s will present reports from those sports, to include all levels (Elem, JH, HS) and will offer recommendations for coaching contracts for the next year.
- B. **Special co-op meetings:** may be called in the event business arises which needs attention, needs to be discussed, and/or calls for action
 - **All meeting agendas items will be gathered and put together by the Co-op Clerk; Agendas will be posted according to open public meeting law, and pertinent information for meeting preparation will be assembled and disseminated by the Co-op Clerk in time for Board members to prepare for the meeting.

5. ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES

- A. **Administration of Cooperative.** The Governing Body will be a hearing board for activities and make recommendations concerning the Co-op. This may include, but is not limited to making employment recommendations, approving rules, providing for rule violation hearings, approving all purchases, and making other decisions necessary for the operation of the Co-op.
- B. **Application Review and Hiring.** Applications by qualified individuals for coaching and other activity positions will be given to each Richey and Lambert School Board Member, reviewed by the Governing Body and recommended for hire to each respective Co-op Committee Member, as necessary.

C. Establishing Salaries. The Governing Body will determine and review salaries for co-op positions, as necessary.

D. Developing Eligibility/Training Rules. The Governing Body will develop, with the input of the athletic directors and coaches, a composite set of rules and procedures that encompass each school's current rules and procedures.

E. Quorum will consist of two school board members from each school.

F. At regular meetings, after discussion has been held, the Governing Body may voice their position to their respective Committee Members. When a vote is called for, Committee members (two from each school) will cast their vote. In the event of a tie, there is no majority according to Robert's Rules of Order, and motion on the table would die.

G. Meetings will rotate between schools. The keeping of the permanent Co-op minutes and supporting documentation will be kept by the Clerks.

H. The Co-op Committee may reorganize office positions each May.

6. HIRING OF COACHES

A. The Committee will be involved in all interviews. The Governing Body may also attend.

B. The Co-op Committee will make all hiring/renewing decisions at the conclusion of each contract for all Co-op positions. The final vote will be cast by the Committee Members, and then by the Governing Body. The governing body will vote to hire formally and if one body does not vote to hire, the hiring fails.

C. All coaches will abide by the Code of Conduct, as outlined in the Coaches' Handbook.

D. All Coaches must pass the recommended MHSA and NFHS Coaching Education and Concussion Programs and must possess a current First Aid Certificate.

E. Coaches failing to view/attend all required MHSA workshops will be responsible for the fine levied by MHSA. This may be withheld from the coaching check or paid directly by the Coach.

F. Co-ed numbers in track and golf count towards the minimum requirement. The Co-op Board may consider participation numbers, however, and make exceptions if warranted.

G. In the event a season is canceled, coaches' stipends may be pro-rated according to the length of season actually held. This will be up to the discretion of the Co-op Committee and Governing Body.

7. COACHES/ATHLETIC EVALUATIONS

A. All Co-op coaches will be evaluated after their season.

B. Athletic Directors, with the assistance of a Principal or Superintendent when necessary will evaluate the Co-op head coaches, the Drill Team Coach, and the Pep Band Directors at the end of each season.

C. The Co-op head coaches and Athletic Directors will evaluate the assistant coaches.

D. Superintendents will evaluate Athletic Directors, Co-op Activity Clerk, Cheerleading Coach, and Pep Band Directors, by May 15th of each year. In the event the Athletic Director is also the Superintendent, other arrangements may be made.

E. ALL Co-op positions will be evaluated.

F. The full Board will make final hiring determination.

8. NOTIFICATION OF COACHES/ADVISORS

All applicants for Co-op positions will be notified verbally and in writing of the Co-op board's decision within 5 days of the board's hiring decision. Superintendents/AD's of the respective schools will notify the employees from their respective schools.

9. LINE OF AUTHORITY

The line of authority will follow the normal chain of command with the Athletic Directors to make decisions which fall within the AD's job description, the Superintendents to make other day-to-day decisions, and the Co-op committee and Governing Body to back up and to make decisions if an extraordinary situation arises. If past practice is not clear on the direction for a combined decision by the Superintendents and there is insufficient time for the Committee to make a decision, the final decision will rest with the administrator in charge or designee

10. COMMUNICATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Procedure Concerns or problems within the program should follow the steps outlined below:

R&L Grievance/Conflict Procedure Involving Coaching Staff, Players, and/or Parents-

R&L supports voluntary resolution of conflicts, problems, and concerns between two parties regardless of their positions or roles. R&L firmly believes most issues can be handled quickly and appropriately to everyone's satisfaction. We encourage athletes who are facing difficulties with a supervising coach to deal directly with the coach. If they are not comfortable or lack the confidence to deal with the situation without a parent present they are encouraged to meet with the coach with the parent present. Underlying assumptions:

1. Coach's decisions regarding athletic play time, game management, practice time and management are issues that will not be dealt with beyond a conversation with the coach.
2. Coaches are to provide a safe environment for the athlete.
3. Consistent communication between the coaches and athletes is expected. If this is not happening, this concern should be shared with the coach as soon as possible.
4. Coaches are not to be approached with concerns immediately following an athletic contest. We believe that time and space allows for better communication if difficulties have arisen.

The following grievance process should be followed in situations in which immediate resolution cannot be achieved:

1. After meeting with the coach and assuming a resolution cannot be achieved, the athlete or parents should request a meeting with the coach and the schools designated Athletic Director(s). The meeting should take place within a reasonable amount of time (10 business days)
2. If a satisfactory resolution cannot be achieved in a meeting outlined in #1, the athlete or parent may request a meeting with the appropriate Principal and/or Superintendent.
3. If a satisfactory resolution cannot be achieved in a meeting with the administration, the athlete or parent may complete and submit a grievance form and appeal to the Co-op Board. The complaint will be heard at the next available meeting. Grievance forms are available at the school offices and in the handbook.

The decision of the Board will be final.

[Richey Policy 1700](#)

[Lambert Policy 1700](#)

Conflict Resolution

In resolving conflict with coaches, the following steps of communication will be followed by the administration, board, parent and athletes:

1. Player and Coach
2. Player & Parent - Coach
3. Player & Parent - Coach & Athletic Director
4. Player & Parent - Coach, Athletic Director & Principal
5. Player & Parent - Coach, Athletic Director, Principal, Superintendent, and Co-op Board

If any of the following situations occur, an athlete should contact the Athletic Director or Administration immediately and report the event in as much detail as possible:

1. Physical or emotional intimidation
2. Inappropriate sexual advances
3. Physical or verbal abuse

11. COMMENT PERIOD

In an effort to provide continual improvement to the Richey/Lambert athletic cooperative, the Co-op board has developed a policy and form for parents and/or student athletes to comment on the athletic program. The form may be obtained from Athletic Directors or Head Coaches, and the form is contained in the Fusion Coaching Handbook and on both school websites. The comment period ends **1 week** after the last Fusion game for that sport.

12. FUND RAISING PROJECTS

Individual schools will make the decisions regarding fund raising projects during games played at their schools.

13. HOMECOMING /DISTRICT TOURNAMENTS:

For each sport the Co-op will sponsor ONE- Public Pep Assembly at "Homecoming", ONE for each post-season football game, and/or volleyball, and boys and girls basketball game or tournaments. Pep Assemblies may be held concurrently if both sports teams advance on (ie—one Assembly together for District volleyball and the 1st round of football playoffs), if it is in the best interest of the students, schools, and communities.

13. SPORTSMANSHIP PROGRAM: GYM/FIELD SPIRIT - LET'S HEAR IT!

This program was adopted in the Winter of 2025 to emphasize the importance of sportsmanship in our home arenas. The goal is to allow administrators, coaches, officials, spectators, and participants to work together to promote good sportsmanship and healthy competition. Posters are displayed for all to see, announcements are made over the PA, and Admin have the ability to use a white card for anyone in attendance who is violating the mission of the program.

TEAM MANAGEMENT:

14. TEAM MEMBERSHIP

A. Extracurriculars offered:

Elementary: Volleyball (6th), Football (6th), Basketball, Track

Junior High: Volleyball, Football, Basketball, Track, Band, Cross Country

High School: Volleyball, Football, Cross Country, Basketball, Track, Golf, Band, Cheer, and Drill Team

A. Elementary teams will consist of students in grades 5 and 6. In the event there are insufficient students in grades 5 and 6 to field a team, students in grades 4 will be drawn upon to fill out the roster. All students in grades 5 wishing to participate will be allowed to participate before grade 4 students.

B. Junior high teams will consist of students in grades 7 and 8. In the event there are insufficient students in grades 7 and 8 to field a team, students in grades 6 and 5 will be drawn upon to fill out the roster. All students in grade 6 wishing to participate will be allowed to participate before grade 5 students. JH Football will consist of 6-8 graders, as well as JH Volleyball. When considering participation numbers, 5th graders may also be allowed to participate in JH Football and JH Volleyball. JH Track will consist of grades 7-8.

C. All students 4-12 will not be allowed to practice without a physical examination.

D. All sex equity laws, policies and rules will be followed when offering opportunities for 4th-8th grades.

E. At the Head Coach's discretion, and upon approval by the MHSA, the 8th grade participant, and his/her parent/guardian, an 8th grader may be permitted to participate in a HS sport, granted they also meet all MHSA and Fusion sport's participation requirements.

F. 8th Grade Participation

The MHSA allows full 8th grade participation in all sanctioned Montana HS sports, with the exception of football, and 8th graders are allowed to participate in JH and HS sports concurrently. Individual schools are allowed local control, in order to adapt this rule to best meet the philosophies and needs of each District/Team.

The R&L Co-op believes in supporting healthy programs at all levels. For this reason, the co-op believes in the importance of 8th grade participation first at the normal junior high level, and then to assist in supporting the high school program, should it be needed and approved by the Head HS Coach.

As a result,

A. For the team sports of volleyball and basketball, Fusion 8th graders may fully participate at the high school level, as long as the following criteria are met:

1. 8th graders participate in their full JH season of their sport of choice first and then may participate in a high school sport. The JH sport must take precedence over any HS sport while the JH season is in session. Concurrent JH and HS play is allowed, however.
2. The Head High School Coach is supportive of the 8th grader playing on the HS team.
3. They follow all MHSA and R&L Fusion Co-op rules and regulations.

4. In an extreme situation and to not penalize an 8th grader who has an advanced sport-specific skill set and maturity, as well as a high academic standing, the Co-op will allow participation immediately at the HS level, should the 8th grader make an informed decision with their parents/guardians and the HS coaches involved to apply for a waiver, with the intention of foregoing their JH season and potentially competing at the HS level only.

This application is available from the R&L AD, must be completed by the 8th grader, and then turned back into the AD one week prior to the first day of practice of the HS sport first impacted. The AD and the HS coaches involved will convene, consider the application, and make a decision as to if the waiver will be granted, prior to the first day of the first HS practice.. The applicant and their parents/guardians will be notified as such.

B. For the more individual sports of cross country, golf, and track, 8th graders may fully participate at the high school level, as long as they apply for the HS season (applications available from the AD) and have been approved by the 1st day of HS practice. Once again, the applicant's advanced sport-specific skill set and maturity, as well as their high academic standing will be considered when granting a waiver for an 8th grader forgoing their JH season and moving up to compete at the HS level only.

C. 8th grade participation in a sport or activity which is co-oped with another school other than Richey or Lambert is not allowed at this point. Before committing to the high school team, however, the Co-op Board requires 8th graders considering this option to first and foremost participate in and complete their JH season in that particular sport.

E. Individual HS athletes may choose to participate in more than one sport per season, but in the best interest of the teams involved, must adhere to the following guidelines:

1. The athlete must discuss their potential dual sport participation with both Head Coaches and AD, so all are aware, and have time for consideration.

2. The athlete will arrange a meeting with both Head Coaches and one or both parents. At the meeting, expectations and practice and game schedules will be considered, and a plan for the season, to accommodate both sports, will be developed collaboratively. This plan will be given to the AD for possible approval. Upon approval it will be typed into a contract, which must be signed by the student athlete, one parent, and both coaches involved. This contract must be on file with the AD 5 days prior to the first practice session in order for the contract to be ratified. At that time, dual participation may begin.

3. As the season progresses, there may be changes which need to be addressed. If so, the parties must re-convene, discuss, agree, and formulate an amendment to the contract. This amendment must also be approved by the AD before the change(s) may be put into action.

D. Cheerleaders: varsity cheerleaders will be determined by the cheerleader coach. The coach and AD will determine the number of cheerleaders for each season. They will be chosen prior to the first day of HS fall sports practices, and if necessary, prior to the first day of HS winter sports.

Varsity cheerleaders will consist of students in grades 9 through 12. In the event there are insufficient students in grades 9 through 12 to field a team, students in grades 7 and 8 will be drawn upon to fill out the roster. All students in grades 9 through 12 wishing to participate will be allowed to participate before grades 7 and 8 students.

E. Drill Team: In the event the Co-op board approves a drill team, a separate contract will be offered by the Co-op board with stipulations and salary as determined by the Co-op board.

17. BAND

Co-op band will perform at all home varsity games and post season tournaments as determined by the Superintendents.

18. INSURANCE/INJURY

A. The R&L Fusion Co-op requires that the parent, guardian, caretaker relative of students participating in the co-op sponsored activities provide verification of their child's health insurance coverage status. The school district does not provide health insurance to pay for injuries of students while participating in co-op sponsored activities. If the caretaker relative elects not to provide health insurance coverage for their child, they are accepting responsibility for any medical expenses incurred by their child in the event they are injured while participating in the activity that is not the result of fraud, willful injury to a person or property or the willful or negligent violation of a law by a trustee, employee, or agent of the co-op.

B. The co-op does not provide student accident insurance coverage for the students. Student accident insurance coverage may be purchased by parents through a private company for a fee. Student accident insurance information is distributed at the beginning of the school year and available throughout the year. A parent seeking coverage must make sure the student accident insurance is in place prior to the first day of practice (provide your insurance information on your athlete's pre-participation physical form)

19. PRACTICE/GAME TIMES AND LOCATIONS

A. Will be determined by Athletic Directors.

1. In accordance with both schools' Student Handbooks, Wednesday evenings are reserved for Family/Church Night. There will be no JH or elementary practices scheduled those days, and HS practices will be concluded by 6:00 pm; ~~football practice is allowed to conclude at 6:30 on Wednesdays.~~ All games and events will not be scheduled for Wednesday evenings, either, unless there are extenuating circumstances, and upon permission by the Administration.

B. All participants will have a "snow home" registered at the school.

C. Practices may be canceled due to weather and road conditions by the Administration.

20. ELIGIBILITY RULES (4th-12th grades)

A. Students participating in extra-curricular activities must be passing all subjects and at a minimum deemed eligible to play, according to the co-op eligibility policy located in Coaches and Athletes handbooks. Eligibility will be determined on Monday of each week by 12:00 Noon. Eligibility will run from Wednesday to Tuesday at midnight.

21. OTHER TEAM MANAGEMENT RULES:

A. **TRAINING RULES:** Training rules have been established by the co-op committee as well as the school board from each school. The training rule policy is part of the Student Handbook of each school and the Coach's Handbook of the Co-op.

B. CURFEW: Without the prior permission of the Coach or Co-op Administration, curfew for all members of this program (players, managers, video personal, cheerleaders, etc.) is set according to the Student Handbook of each school and the Coach's Handbook of the Co-op.

C. DRESS CODE: Every member of the Co-op program must dress in an appropriate manner as representatives of their schools and themselves. While also following our School Handbook Dress Code Policies, all participants (coaches, managers, cheerleaders, players) need to dress appropriately for all day on game days: No blue jeans, T-shirts, sweatshirts, sweatpants, tank tops etc., are allowed. Dressier attire is preferred.

After the competition for the day is complete, athletes are allowed to dress back in their travel gear. Those athletes attending all day tournaments/meets are allowed to wear their uniforms and travel gear. Football Jerseys are allowed for football game day.

D. BEHAVIOR: Students are representing their school themselves. The best behavior will be expected. Violations in this behavior will be dealt with accordingly.

E. TRAVEL: Coaches will travel with the team on the bus. All participants must ride the bus to games and practices, unless approved in advance from administration and/or coach. If a student chooses not to ride the bus home after an away game, the student's parent must sign them off with the Coach on the Passenger Manifest. Students will only be released to an adult unless other arrangements have been made with the Coach or Administrator and parents.

F. PRACTICE/GAMES: All members of the Co-op athletic program are required to attend all practices and games as determined by the Coach. Students absent for all or part of the day, who do not have pre-approval, will not be allowed to participate in games or practices that day. Students who leave on overnight trips must be in school all day on the day the team leaves or they will not accompany the team. No exceptions will be made unless approval has been granted by the Administration for individual circumstances. If an absence such as a Medical / Dental appointment or family emergency has been PRE approved by the Administration the student may participate.

COSTS AND REVENUE:

22. TRANSPORTATION COSTS

A. Each school will be responsible for all costs for transporting students to and from practices.

B. All additional transportation costs (to and from competitions) will be split 50/50. Drivers for such events will use a co-op gas card for fuel for the event. Drivers must make sure the vehicle is full before leaving (this fuel charge belongs to the school owning the vehicle taken), drivers would need to fill the vehicles up after each Fusion event (this is a co-op charge and goes on the co-op gas card which will be in all vehicles), and write the event on the gas receipt, turning the receipt in to the co-op clerk. Drivers other than coaches will log their hours with their school (Lambert or Richey), and the co-op clerk will handle things from there, to include transportation costs as part of the seasonal expenditure report.

C. Bus/van drivers will be included in all team meals or motel arrangements.

23. MEALS

A. Meals will be provided for team members at away games. This will be determined by the Athletic Directors.

24. OTHER CO-OP EXPENSES DEFINED:

A. Purchase requests will be submitted to Co-op ADS and then to Superintendents for approval of a co-op expense.

B. Supplies for each individual school's gym will be each school's sole responsibility

C. If possible, game officials for elem, junior varsity, and junior high games will be MOA and paid accordingly

D. Salaries – each school will pay half of each individual coaching salary.

E. Coaching Meetings & Clinics- may be attended by staff with administrative approval as outlined in the Coaches' Handbook.

F. Any other Co-op costs except those fees assessed for individual school membership in MHSa activities will be split equally between the two schools. The co-op Clerk will tally up the expenses at the end of each month and bill accordingly.

25. UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT

A. The Committee will approve the purchase of uniforms and individual equipment.

B. Coaches will be responsible for a written Co-op inventory of all equipment for their Activity. This inventory of equipment will be checked by the AD's at the conclusion of the Activity and before final salary is paid.

26. TICKET PRICES

A. Game prices for dual gender games: \$8.00 adults, \$6.00 – senior citizens and students (grades 1-12).

B. Game prices for single gender games: \$7.00 adults, \$5.00 senior citizens and students

C. Season passes: Adult pass will be \$50.00, senior passes will be \$30.00 and Student passes will be \$30.00.

D. Passes will be given to:

1. All Board members from both schools and their spouses.
2. Administration and their spouses from both schools.
3. Students.
4. All school staff at both schools.

27. GATE RECEIPTS

A. All gate and other Co-op related receipts will be forwarded to the Co-op Clerk.

B. Workers:

1. Ticket takers - \$15 – per game
2. Clock/books - \$15 per game
3. Line judge/chain gang/libero - \$15 per game
4. Shot Clock keeper - \$15 per game
4. Junior high line judge - \$15 per game

C. Fan Appreciation Night will be held the first home conference Volleyball and Basketball game.

28. TOURNAMENT TICKETS AND CONFERENCE PASSES

- A. These will be determined by Athletic Directors.

29. TOURNAMENT REVENUE

Will be deposited in the co-op fund, rather than to the schools' athletic departments

AWARDS/RECOGNITION CEREMONIES:

30. CO-OP LETTER

Each school will retain their traditional letter

31. LETTERING REQUIREMENTS

- A. Individuals must end the season in good standing in the activity.
- B. Coaching discretion will determine additional requirements.
- C. See Coaches Handbook for lettering criteria.

32. RECOGNITION NIGHT

- A. There will be one Awards Night per year which will rotate between schools.
- B. Senior Parent's Night – will be held at last home event for Volleyball, Football, and Cross Country. Fall Cheer will be recognized at the final home football game. Boys and girls Basketball, Winter Cheerleaders, and band will be recognized at the last home game when both boys and girls play. Track and Golf will be recognized at the Spring Fusion Awards Program. Seniors and their parents will be recognized at this time.

R & L CO-OP SALARY SCHEDULE 2026-27 (3% raise on base stipend)?

Position	Salary
Athletic Directors	\$2704
Head HS Basketball	\$2781
Asst. HS Basketball	\$2266
2nd Asst. HS Basketball (C Squad)	\$1751
JR High Basketball	\$1236
Asst. JH Basketball	\$979
Elem Basketball	\$979
Asst. Elem Basketball	\$773
Head HS Volleyball	\$2781
Asst HS VB	\$2266
JR High Volleyball	\$1236
Asst. JH Volleyball	\$979
Head HS Football	\$2575
Asst HS Football	\$2060
JH Football	\$1030
Asst JH Football	\$773
Head HS Track	\$2575
1st Asst HS Track	\$2060
2nd Asst HS Track	\$1545
Head JH Track	\$1236
1st Asst Track JH	\$979
2nd Asst Track JH	\$773

Head Cross Country	\$2575
JH Cross Country	\$1236
Drill Team	\$773
Pep Band	\$1803
Cheerleading—Fall Season	\$1545
Cheerleading—Winter Season	\$2060
Golf	\$2575
Asst. Golf	\$2060
Co-op Clerk	\$2704
Co-op Secretary	\$1545
<u>3% increase</u> for each year of experience in that sport or activity. 5% stipend of base stipend for advancement each calendar week of post season play in which their competitive sports teams and associated activities must earn the right to advance.	