




## The NFHS Voice



### **High School Sports Fans: Simmer Down or Sit Down**

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If you're a fan of high school sports, we need to talk.

When you're at the game, do you lose control? If so, everyone sees it—the teachers, the officials, the other fans, the parents, and most importantly, the student-athletes. They see you at your worst. And it leaves an impression—not just of you and the school but all high school athletics.

Research consistently underscores that kids look to adults as inspiration for who they want to be and how they want to live. That's because adults set the tone. Adults show what behaviors are acceptable and what aren't. Adults mold perceptions of what it is to be good and bad, and adults pass down the tools to help tell the difference.

So, ask yourself, what difference are you creating? And what molds are you setting?

When you're around kids, do you act like a role model? Are you on your best behavior, knowing that your actions have an impact? Or do you see watchful eyes fixed on you and think this is *my* moment?

The effect you have on young minds is beyond measure. It's deep and lasting, and it's up to you to make it positive.

High school athletics are a place for positivity. They're a place for encouragement and growth where young people should feel safe to find themselves, learn from their mistakes and excel.

Negativity and bad behavior, on the other hand, stop growth in its tracks. They erode confidence, shrink identity and eat away at esteem until nothing is left. Our student-athletes deserve better. Our student-athletes deserve your support, understanding and a pledge to lead by example.

We must show them what it means to keep your cool, especially when facing adversity. It's an essential life skill and one that often takes a lifetime to learn. So, let's start now. At the next game, when the stakes get high and tensions rise, what impression will you leave?

Simmer down or sit down. Let's show them how it's done.

Visit [BenchBadBehavior.com](http://BenchBadBehavior.com) to join the #BenchBadBehavior movement.

*Dr. Karissa L. Niehoff is in her seventh year as chief executive officer 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.*