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Two different perspectives collide

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When the Laurel School District denied students permission to play soccer with Ellwood City's team, tensions grew.

Since 1996, parents and the school board have been debating the soccer issue.

"The only way member schools can come together and have students from other schools participate is through a cooperative school agreement," said Tim O'Malley, executive director of the Western Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic League.

According to a letter from Dr. Sandra L. Hennon, the

superintendent of the Laurel School District, allowing students to play on Ellwood City's team would decrease student participation in other sports.

"Adding a sport at Laurel would negatively impact our existing athletic programs and other co-curricular activities," she said. "To be quite frank, our current enrollment just cannot support the addition of another major athletic team."

April Kennedy — board secretary, coach and referee for the Laurel Soccer Club — doesn't agree.

"I don't understand why they won't let them play in Ellwood City," she said. "I

don't understand this barrier, the bottom line is these children want to play soccer."

Vincent Belgrowicz, president of the Laurel Soccer Club, wants to know why students can not go to another school to play the sport.

"At this very minute, the only thing we have from the school board is a blanket no statement," he said. "They haven't provided us with any facts as to why they don't want soccer in the school."

With hopes of getting another response from the school board in the near future, Kennedy said the

school wouldn't lose any money in the project.

"They won't have to pay for anything," she said. "We just want the blessing of the school. Without their consent, the students can't play on other high school teams. The parents of children in the soccer club will be making the commitment — we just want to see these kids play in high school."