



**WASHINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**PARENT & STUDENT-ATHLETE HANDBOOK**

---

Please keep this handbook for future reference.

2021.2022



## WASHINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT

201 ALLISON AVENUE

WASHINGTON, PA 15301

(724) 223-5091

*Michael Bosnic, Athletic Director*

bosnicm@prexie.us

Fax: (724) 223-5045

### WASHINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT'S MISSION STATEMENT FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES

The Washington School District supports the philosophy that a quality interscholastic athletic program is vital to the positive social, physical, and educational development of students. The interscholastic athletic program enhances and supports the academic mission of the school system. We are committed to promoting the proper ideals of sportsmanship, ethical conduct, and fair play at all athletic contests. We support high standards of good citizenship along with regard for the rights of others.

Being a member of the interscholastic program is a privilege to be earned and maintained throughout the season. Participants are expected to represent themselves, family, team and school in a responsible, sportsmanlike manner.

Dear Parent or Guardian:

The mission statement above is clear in its philosophy that involvement in athletics in the Washington School District (WSD) extends beyond the contests that are generally considered the marquee events of any sport's season. We expect our student-athletes to prepare for and perform in those events to win them but at the same time to also uphold the high standards of behavior and discipline that are expected of them.

As an educational institution, the WSD is committed to teaching our young people to set goals, strive for excellence, and properly handle whatever adversity they encounter along the way. This aim is the same in the classroom as it is on the playing field.

The role of the parent in the education of a youngster is equally as important. Being the parent of an athlete can complicate this role. This handbook, with its guidelines and suggestions, will give you some insights into your role as the parent of a student-athlete in the Washington School District.

Please read the content of this handbook carefully and have your son/daughter read it as well. It contains information regarding various athletic program policies, including the WSD Extra-curricular Code of Conduct. This handbook provides a clear understanding of these policies and also includes the WSD's commitment to the tenets of the PIAA program SPORTSMANSHIP: "The Only Missing Piece Is You!"

While education is a right, participation in athletics is a privilege and along with that privilege are certain responsibilities. In order for you and your son/daughter to understand all that is expected of him/her, please read this handbook carefully. Then complete the Acknowledgement Form and have your son/daughter return the form to his/her coach on or before the first practice or to the high school office.

Michael Bosnic  
Athletic Director

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT-ATHLETE

Coaches expect a student-athlete to adhere to the following guidelines:

1. The student-athlete will attend all of his/her assigned classes, actively participate in all of his/her classes, and follow all classroom rules.
2. The student-athlete is accountable to the rules and regulations set forth in the student handbook.
3. The student-athlete is accountable to the rules and regulations set forth by the PIAA and the Washington School District regarding attendance and eligibility.
4. The possession of and/or use of tobacco products in any form are not permitted and will result in disciplinary action.
5. The selling, providing, possession of, or use of steroids or other drugs or alcohol on or off school property is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.
6. As a member of a team, a student-athlete must agree to and follow all team rules as well as those of the PIAA and the sport he/she participates in. Student-athletes need to remember that they are ambassadors and represent not only themselves but also the coaching staff and the Washington School District. Student-athletes are bound by the guidelines set forth in the Washington School District Extra-Curricular Code of Conduct (see pp. 9-10).
7. The team's goals, welfare and success must come before any individual.
8. Consistently attend practice sessions, team meetings, and contests unless otherwise excused.
9. Be receptive to coaching and various coaching styles and techniques of the various members of our coaching staff.
10. Insubordinate and abusive behavior or profane language will not be tolerated and could result in suspension or dismissal from the team.
11. Team members are responsible for all issued uniforms and equipment. If the issued uniforms and equipment are not returned, the athlete is responsible for the full price of replacing the items.
12. If injured, an athlete must immediately report all injuries to either the coach or athletic trainer.

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF A COACH

In the Washington School District, a coach has the responsibility for the following:

1. The selection of the squad.
2. The determination of the style of play.
3. The teaching and instruction at practice sessions.
4. The determination of who starts and how long an athlete plays in a contest.
5. The decision of who plays in what position.
6. The establishing of team rules.
7. The selection of team captains.
8. The establishing of the requirements to earn a letter.
9. The communication with athletes and parents with respect to when practice sessions will be held.

## PRACTICE SESSIONS AND GAMES

The structure of practice sessions is determined by each coach. These practices are generally closed to spectators as they are an extension of the type of quality instruction student-athletes receive during the day in their classrooms. Distractions and interference with that instructional time cannot be allowed any more than a disruption in an academic setting.

Practices may last two hours, start and end at different times due to changes in scheduling, may be held on Saturdays and over holiday breaks, and may have to be altered due to inclement weather. Each coach will inform parents as to practice times and places.

Spectators at games, however, are very much encouraged. Positive and nurturing support of teams and student-athletes can be very helpful to performance in an athletic contest much like attendance at a band concert or a play.

### PRACTICE/GAME RESPONSIBILITIES

Student-athletes arriving before scheduled times or waiting/loitering after practices or games pose potential problems. Risk of injury and property damage can possibly result from unsupervised gatherings. In part to address this issue, the following guidelines will be used.

The **coach** will be responsible for:

1. Supervising athletes in the locker room at the scheduled arrival time, while on the playing field, and in the locker room afterward, supervising the area until the last athlete's transportation has arrived and all athletes have vacated school property.
2. After a contest, exiting with his/her team from the playing surface in reasonable time.
3. Securing all equipment, locker rooms, and facilities prior to departure.
4. Getting game results called in to appropriate local media.

The **student-athlete** is responsible for:

1. Arranging for transportation to and from practices and games in advance.
2. Arriving at the facility at the scheduled time (not before) and leaving the facility and grounds within approximately one-half hour after the conclusion of a contest or practice.

### ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION

1. Any student-athlete receiving **two** failing grades at the end of a week *during* a grading period is ineligible to compete in an athletic contest until one or both of the grades improves when his/her grades are checked the following week. According to PIAA rules, the student-athlete is ineligible from Sunday through the next Saturday. The student, however, may continue to practice.
2. The Athletic Director/Secretary, who will electronically retrieve from the district's Power Schools/Edgenuity grades of student-athletes who are failing two or more classes, will conduct the weekly grade check each Tuesday/Wednesday around 9:00 am. Teachers who have student-athletes who are failing their classes will then be notified and have until 11:00 a.m. Friday to make grade changes.
3. Any student-athlete receiving **two** failing grades at the end of a nine weeks is ineligible for 15 school days. He/she may continue to practice but not compete in scrimmages or games. After fifteen (15) school days, his/her grades will be checked. The student-athlete may be eligible to compete in contests if he/she is no longer failing **two** subjects.
4. At the end of the school year, according the student-athlete's *final* averages in his/her subjects are used to determine eligibility for the next grading period in the fall. Any student-athlete with **two** or more failing credits for the year will be ineligible for 15 school days.
5. Any student-athlete absent 20 or more days during a semester is ineligible until he/she has been counted present for 45 school days. The second semester of a school year affects the following fall.
6. **WSD Policy 511: Participation in Extra-Curricular Activities**  
At 11 unexcused and excused students are ineligible for the remainder of the semester. At 18 unexcused and excused, students are done for the year, but can take advantage of the Attendance Recovery Plan.
7. A student-athlete cannot turn 19 years of age (grades 9-12) on or before July 1<sup>st</sup>. A student-athlete cannot turn 15 years of age (grades 7-8) on or before July 1<sup>st</sup>.
8. A student-athlete's period of participation in high school (grades 9-12) is eight semesters of eligibility after the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Retentions do not provide exceptions to this rule.
9. A student must have satisfactorily completed all required parts of the PIAA physical form known as the CIPPE in order to practice or participate in games.
10. According to the WSD Concussion Policy, all athletes in designated sports must have an up-to-date IMPACT baseline concussion test, good for two years, on file before they can start to practice.

## TARDY TO SCHOOL/IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION & PRINCIPAL'S DETENTION/EARLY DISMISSAL

Student-athletes who report to school after 9:00 a.m. may not practice or play in contests that day. An excuse that contains the appointment time and release time from a doctor's appointment is the exception to this rule. [Note: For every fifth tardy to school, principal's detention is assigned. See below.]

Student-athletes serving an in-school suspension (ISS) or a principal's detention will be unable to practice or play the day they are in ISS or have detention. Student-athletes serve ISS and detention on the days infractions occur or as assigned by a principal, the dean of discipline, or one of their designees.

An early dismissal before 1:30 p.m. that exceeds the allotted 90-minute mark will result in a student-athlete being ineligible for practice or the game that day. An excuse that contains the appointment time and release time from a doctor's appointment is the exception to this rule. The doctor's excuse must be brought to the high school office or athletic office to be validated.

All extenuating circumstances regarding any of the above must be presented to the principal or his designee in a timely manner. Additionally, please consult "Factors That Affect Participation" on the district's Athletics web page for additional information about participation.

## THE PARENT-PLAYER RELATIONSHIP

Being positive and supportive is important, but adding pressure and unrealistic expectations can be extremely harmful. Allow your children to enjoy and grow from this valuable experience. Numerous national studies indicate that most student-athletes participate in sports for enjoyment. Excessive pressure or expectations can alter this fundamental reason for playing.

Once your child has entered the facility for a contest, please wait until the coaching staff has dismissed him before resuming communication with him/her. When you speak to your children after a game, do not dwell on their play, how many points they scored, or if they started. Instead, ask how the team did, if your child felt he/she played hard and gave 100%, and had a good experience (had fun).

## THE PLAYER-COACH RELATIONSHIP

You may be a former athlete or even coach at some level of play and feel that you are well-versed in your knowledge of the sport your son/daughter plays. Unfortunately, while you may have a heightened appreciation and even knowledge of a sport as a result of your experiences, it must be understood that you *are not* the coach of your son/daughter's WSD team.

The player-coach relationship is perhaps the most critical relationship in interscholastic athletics, and a parent can have a profound effect on this relationship. Although you may not agree with all of the decisions of the coach, how and when you express your feelings can have a decided effect upon your children.

If you express a negative opinion in front of your children, you need to remember that they will return to practice the next day and may carry your convictions with them. At this point, your children will then have to interact with this coach, and you, as a parent, have affected this relationship.

Giving technical or strategic instruction at home is your prerogative, but giving it during a game may interfere and conflict with the instructional process taught in practices and applied during games by the coach. This may ultimately impede your children's progress and, in some cases, the team's.

## THE PARENT-COACH RELATIONSHIP

In your role as parent, you obviously love your children, are concerned about their welfare, and want the best for them. A coach's role is to instruct and guide the team, and your appreciation of and respect for the coach's role are not only crucial but also expected.

Should you have a question for the coach, **DO NOT** approach him/her after a contest. At this time, coaches have other responsibilities, and it may be an emotional time.

One of the responsibilities a coach has at the conclusion of a contest is to have a brief meeting with the players. Student-athletes **should not** pause to talk to parents or friends immediately after the game. These brief meetings with the coach are essential to the learning process involved in athletics.

### ATHLETIC CHAIN OF COMMAND

An Athletic Chain of Command exists in the Washington School District. Should any questions or concerns arise, your son/daughter is to follow the protocol below:

- Player(s) ⇒ Assistant coach(es) ⇒ Head coach ⇒ Athletic Director ⇒ Principal

If there are any questions or concerns involving some aspect of our athletic program, the student-athlete should first contact the appropriate coach. If there is no resolution, the athlete should then go to the head coach, etc.

### EXPRESSING CONCERNS

Should no resolution be achieved through the Athletic Chain of Command, it may be necessary for the parent to contact the coach or Athletic Director. When expressing an occasional concern with the coach, please refer to and use the following guidelines:

1. Never approach a coach immediately after a contest.
2. Call the school to make an appointment that is convenient for both you and the coach.
3. Raise your concern in a calm and civil manner; avoid yelling, being rude, or using foul language.
4. Once you have stated your question or concern, listen to the explanation. Often a parent may be blinded by emotion and this overrides logic and reason. Listening receptively may really help you to understand any explanation that is given.

### TEAM CUTS

While our ultimate goal is to promote the greatest athletic participation possible, it may be necessary in some sports to cut a squad. This may occur due to limitations of our facilities, regulations specific to some sports, travel restrictions, and other factors.

Every coach has the responsibility and authority for selecting the team. The criteria for selecting the team are developed by the coach.

It is also important to remember that there are no guarantees. Players from the previous year's junior varsity (J.V.) team, for example, do not automatically make either the J.V. or varsity squad the following year. Having been a member of the team during the previous year or even being a senior does not ensure that an athlete will make the squad.

Parents should expect that every candidate is treated fairly and given every consideration. Coaches are sensitive to feelings of disappointment and will handle the task as positively as possible, and be available to answer athlete's questions.

While it is understood that being cut is disappointing for many student-athletes and even for their parents, it is unfortunate that not everyone can make a team. Anyone cut is free to try out next season or to try another sport.

### POLICY FOR ATHLETES CHANGING TEAMS

Whether by being cut, by quitting, or by being dismissed, a student-athlete's membership on an athletic team can be altered. While we want to promote participation, we also want to safeguard fairness

and an ethical approach with regard to all coaches and teams. In order to achieve all of the above objectives, the following guidelines will be used.

1. Any player cut from a squad during tryouts is free to immediately try out or join another team.
2. Any player quitting a team is to inform that team's coach before joining a second team. All obligations such as returning uniforms, equipment, etc. must also be completed prior to joining the second team.
3. Any player dismissed from a team must get the approval of the Athletic Director and/or principal before joining another team. All obligations such as returning uniforms, equipment, etc. must also be completed prior to joining the second team.
4. The Athletic Director and/or principal will mediate all problems that arise when a student-athlete changes teams and will have the final decision.

### THE PURPOSE OF A JUNIOR VARSITY (J.V.) TEAM

J.V. teams exist to provide those athletes unable to participate on the varsity team an opportunity to develop skills and gain experience. While the student-athlete's grade in school, size, or skill level may be the limiting factor in not making the varsity team, participation on the J.V. team may enhance the student-athlete's potential to make the team in the future. Some players will play J.V. and also dress for and perhaps play in varsity games. Seniors are permitted to play in junior varsity contests.

A caution, however, must be given. Being a member of a J.V. team does not guarantee that an athlete will automatically move up to the varsity squad the following season. The athletes best suited for varsity competition will make the squad each year.

### ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT TRAVEL POLICY

The Athletic Department schedules travel arrangements for all of the district's athletic teams.

Because part of the experience of interscholastic athletics is sharing in the varied aspects of participation on a team, all team members are to travel as a group to and from all athletic contests.

If necessary, a team member may be released to the custody of a parent/guardian at the conclusion of an away contest if a completed **Contest Travel Release Form** is on file in the Athletic Department. This form may be requested from the coach of the team, from the Athletic Department, or downloaded from the district website and is to be turned in to the high school office prior to departure on or before the date of the request. For extenuating circumstances such as an injury suffered during a contest, an **Emergency Contest Travel Release Form** is available from the coach.

Contact the Athletic Office in advance for other extenuating matters regarding transportation.

Only those with a direct connection with the team are permitted to ride with the team.

### SPORTS BOOSTER CLUBS

In the Washington School District, some teams individually organize booster clubs, and most are parent-led organizations. These clubs generally have the primary goal of raising funds to assist the team. In addition, booster clubs attempt to increase school spirit and to both encourage and promote good sportsmanship between our teams and their opponents.

The booster club is not a vehicle to remove coaches, advance vested interests, or alter Athletic Department policy. It is a service and support organization that works in harmony with the WSD and its athletic programs. All parents are encouraged to join these worthwhile groups and become active members.

## RISKS OF ATHLETIC COMPETITION

Despite wearing protective equipment and despite the supervision and sound instruction by our coaches, there are some risks associated when a student participates in athletics. Injuries in some of our activities can and do occur. In extremely rare cases, death could also result. All student-athletes and parents need to be aware and understand this possibility.

In the Washington School District, we will do all that we can to provide a safe and healthy environment for our student-athletes; therefore, your completion of the Comprehensive Initial Pre-Participation Physical Examination (CIPPE) form in a timely and accurate manner is important.

Additionally, the student-athletes and parents have the responsibility to educate themselves about concussions and sudden cardiac arrest (SCA). Information about these two medical issues is presented during the spring and fall parent meetings, is available on the district website, and can also be found in two separate sections of the CIPPE.

A certified athletic trainer is available to all athletes and is generally stationed where the largest number of athletes practices, unless there is an overlap of seasons due to post-season play. In these cases, the trainer will remain with the team(s) involved in post-season play until post-season play is over.

## SOCIAL NETWORKING

The proliferation of instant messaging via cell phone texts, Twitter, Facebook, and other similar media has led to instances of abuse of the intended purposes of these services. Student-athletes are reminded that engaging in questionable behavior via these media can lead to potential problems for them, their team, their family members, friends, or the school. Disciplinary action will be taken against those student-athletes caught using social networking media in a questionable manner.

## HAZING

In athletic settings, some may view hazing as a harmless rite of initiation or an important team-bonding activity. It is actually a form of harassment and is not permitted in the Washington School District. Disciplinary action will result in cases involving hazing and/or harassment.

## RELATIONSHIP WITH OFFICIALS

There is an age-old refrain often used by irate fans, "How much are you paying the officials?" Please understand that the home school *does not* assign the officials. Today, officials are assigned by the commissioner of each particular sport, and neither team has control of which officials are assigned.

Officials agree to and follow a code of ethics. They really do not care or have a vested interest in which team emerges as the victor. It is also important to understand that the officials are a very necessary part of the game. A contest can not be played without them.

So while you may not agree with all their calls (who does?), please do not harass and taunt them. It is also important to remember that they are in charge of the contest and have complete authority to have unruly spectators removed.

Ejection from a Washington School District venue will likely result in a ban from further attendance at *any* WSD sporting event for the remainder of the year.

## SPORTSMANSHIP

A dictionary definition of sportsmanship refers to it as "abiding by the rules of a contest and accepting victory or defeat graciously." The PIAA defines it as "those qualities that are characterized by



generosity and genuine concern for others. Furthermore, awareness is expected of the impact of an individual's influence on other's behavior."

There is a value system—established in the home, nurtured in the school—that young people are developing. Their involvement in classroom and other activities contributes to that development. Integrity, fairness, and respect are lifetime values taught through athletics, and these are the principles of good sportsmanship. With them, the spirit of the competition thrives, fueled by honest rivalry, courteous relations, and graceful acceptance of the results.

Working to that end, we support the tenets of the PIAA program SPORTSMANSHIP: "The Only Missing Piece Is You!" The premise of this program is to positively change behavior in our schools and reinforce and reward the need for sportsmanship as one of the values taught through educational athletics.

As a parent of a student-athlete, your sportsmanship goals should include the following:

1. Encouraging our student-athletes to perform at their best, knowing others will turn in better or lesser performances, just as in the classroom.
2. Participating in positive cheers that encourage our athletes and discouraging any cheers that would redirect that focus.
3. Learning, understanding, and respecting the rules of the contest, the officials who administer them and their decisions.
4. Respecting and supporting the task our coaches have in educating their athletes.
5. Refraining from the use of vulgar or inappropriate language during contests.
6. Avoiding the taunting of or trash talking to our opponents and instead respecting them as student-athletes and acknowledging them for striving to do their best.
7. Developing a sense of dignity under all circumstances.

The greatest challenge to displaying good sportsmanship becomes adversity. When things are not going well, the easy response is to shift the blame away from us and toward our opponents, or more often, toward the officials. The focus is away from the positive ("Play better or harder!") to the negative ("Bad calls are the reason we're losing.") The officials assigned to our contests are deemed competent, and—although they are not perfect and their interpretation of the action may be different from yours—they are an essential part of the game and are doing the best job that they can.

As teachers/coaches, we feel it is essential that our athletes maintain a positive approach to handling adversity. We need the support of parents, as role models, if we are to accomplish this. Negatively responding to adversity is counter-productive and becomes an embarrassment to our school and the young people on the field of play. Keep all comments positive, keep them upbeat, and enjoy the privilege of viewing our athletic contests.

## **Be A Fan - Not A Fanatic**



## WASHINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT EXTRA-CURRICULAR CODE OF CONDUCT

### *I. Overview.*

Participation in extra-curricular programs is a privilege. With this privilege come certain responsibilities since students in extra-curricular programs represent the Washington School District (WSD) in school, at school-related events, and in the community.

The Washington School District Extra-Curricular Code of Conduct (ECC) establishes guidelines by which students involved in extra-curricular programs are expected to conduct themselves as representatives of the WSD. The ECC holds these special WSD students to a high standard, and it operates both separately and concurrently with all other WSD discipline policies.

Parents are expected to discuss the ECC with their children so that informed and appropriate decisions about behavior are made.

### *II. Team/Organization Rules and the Extra-Curricular Code of Conduct.*

The WSD Extra-Curricular Code of Conduct will serve as a supplement to the rules and regulations established by coaches and sponsors of extra-curricular programs who have the autonomy to administer discipline according to the guidelines of both their individual sets of rules and regulations and the ECC.

The ECC supports the following procedural guidelines as established by individual coaches and sponsors:

- A. Coaches and sponsors of extra-curricular programs create their own sets of rules and regulations which are to be in general agreement with the established policies of the WSD.
- B. Written copies of these rules and regulations are to be given to students participating on teams or in organizations and are to be shared with their parents.
- C. Matters deemed minor in nature will be handled by the coach or sponsor concerned.
- D. Matters deemed major in nature will be brought to the attention of the Athletic & Activities Director, principals, superintendent, assistant superintendent, and Activities Committee. A final decision will be rendered after all available facts are compiled and a proper course of action decided upon by all pertinent parties involved.

### *III. Extra-Curricular Code of Conduct Guidelines.*

- A. The Extra-Curricular Code of Conduct applies to any student who has been identified as having been named a member of an extracurricular program by a coach or sponsor.
- B. The basic principle of the ECC stipulates that any such student who commits an act or becomes involved in an incident in any capacity which reflects discredit to the district or the extra-curricular program he/she represents, or produces unfavorable publicity, is in violation of the WSD Extra-Curricular Code of Conduct and is subject to disciplinary measures administered by the coach/sponsor, Athletic & Activities Director, principals, superintendent, assistant superintendent, Activities Committee or by joint agreement of all concerned parties.
- C. Consequences for violation of the ECC may include but are not limited to suspension or dismissal from an extra-curricular program.
  1. These consequences may apply to any or all extra-curricular programs a student participates in regardless of where or when the violation occurred.
  2. These consequences may carry over from school year to school year.
- D. The WSD Code of Conduct applies to behavior that takes place on or off school grounds. These violations may take place at any time during the student's enrollment in the WSD, including the off season as well as in the summertime.
- E. The Extra-Curricular Code of Conduct will be in effect 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and for 365 days a year.

*IV. Due Process and Appeal Process.*

Any student involved in extra-curricular programs who violates the ECC will be provided with due process. He/she is entitled to be informed of the charges against him/her in an informal meeting with his/her coach/sponsor and/or the Athletic & Activities Director and the principal.

A student involved in extra-curricular programs who has been issued consequences as a result of his/her violation of the ECC may appeal, along with his/her parents, any suspension or dismissal to the building principal who will decide on the proper course of action for reviewing the appeal.