

Middle School Athletic Handbook



WEST OTTAWA MIDDLE SCHOOL ATHLETIC HANDBOOK

Introduction

The purpose of this handbook is to inform our coaches, student-athletes, and their parents/guardians of the West Ottawa athletic rules and policies. It should be understood that the rules set forth are intended to enhance the quality of the experience available through educational athletics by providing a program based on proper discipline and positive values.

Philosophy of Athletics – Middle School

The program of Educational Athletics in the West Ottawa Public Schools is an essential element of a student's instructional experience. Participation in athletics increases instructional time, prepares young people for future life in society, and has been shown to be the highest correlating predictor for high school students' later success in life. Participation in a co curricular activity is an essential part of a complete learning experience. It should be viewed as an extension of the learning process. Student/athletes should understand that participation in athletics is an honor and carries responsibilities to the team, school, and community. It is important that we teach and practice good sportsmanship, respect, self discipline, teamwork, and self-esteem. Learning to win and winning are important goals, but skill development and team play are the primary desired outcomes at the middle school level.

PARTICIPATION IN ATHLETICS IS A PRIVILEGE, NOT A RIGHT.

West Ottawa offers the following interscholastic sports to all 7th and 8th grade students.

GIRLS SPORTS

Cross Country-Fall
Tennis-Fall
Volleyball-Fall
Swimming & Diving-Winter I
Competitive Cheer-Winter I
Basketball-Winter II
Soccer-Spring
Track & Field-Spring

BOYS SPORTS

Cross Country-Fall
Football-Fall
Soccer-Fall
Basketball-Winter I
Wrestling-Winter II
Swimming & Diving-Winter II
Tennis-Spring
Track & Field-Spring

West Ottawa offers the following interscholastic sports to all 6th grade students.

GIRLS SPORTS

Cross Country- Fall
Wrestling- Winter II
Track & Field- Spring

BOYS SPORTS

Cross Country- Fall
Wrestling – Winter II
Track & Field- Spring

Academic Eligibility:

Athletics is a component of our students' educational experience. It is integrated with and supporting of other facets of our program. Student success and learning is the goal of all activities at West Ottawa.

Players in all sports must meet all MHSAA and West Ottawa requirements. All rules regulating eligibility as set down by the MHSAA and West Ottawa Public Schools will be enforced.

Previous Semester: Student-athletes (7th and 8th grade) must have passed at least ten (10) academic classes, during the previous semester of enrollment in order to participate. If the student did not, they are ineligible to compete for 90 school days. (**Note:** First semester 7th and 8th students are exempt from this at the start of the 2011-12 school year. However, they must have passed seven (7) academic classes during the previous semester of enrollment in order to participate).

Current Semester: West Ottawa Public Schools require that a student must be passing **five (5)** of his/her **six (6)** academic classes during the current semester. In-season athletes who do not pass five (5) classes at the end of each eligibility checking period are immediately ineligible until they are passing the minimum five (5) classes. Each week the student's eligibility will be monitored through communication with the teachers, coaching staff, and athletic office. If a student is marked ineligible, he/she will be placed on probation for one week. During this probation period, the student will continue to practice with the team but will not participate in competition. If a student is marked ineligible for a second consecutive week, the student will not practice with the team or participate in competition. The student will address his/her academic progress during this period with assistance from the coach and teachers. If a student is marked ineligible for three consecutive weeks or deemed that student is chronically ineligible, the student can no longer continue to participate during the current semester. This whole process is a means of helping student-athletes enjoy and achieve success in the classroom and on the playing field.

Athletic Eligibility:

Players in all sports must meet all MHSAA and West Ottawa Middle School requirements. All rules regulating eligibility as set forth by MHSAA and West Ottawa Public Schools will be enforced.

Player Eligibility

- **Age:** A 7th grade student must be under fourteen (14) years of age and 8th grade students must be under fifteen (15) years of age prior to September 1st
- **Physicals:** **No student-athlete may practice or try-out for a team without having a completed physical form on file in the Athletic Office.** All physical exams must be dated after April 15 of the previous year.
- **Enrollment:** Students must be enrolled no later than the fourth (4th) Friday after Labor Day or the fourth (4th) Friday of February. Students must be enrolled in at least 50 percent of his/her current course load in the school for which he or she competes.
- **Attendance:** Athletes must be in attendance at school at least 1/2 day or have the permission of the Athletic Director, in order to practice or participate in a contest. Any time out of school must be excused. Violation of this rule shall result in disciplinary action and or the athlete not participating in the next scheduled athletic contest.
- **Awards:** Students may accept a symbolic award that does not have a value over \$25.00.
- **Insurance:** The insurance program for injuries sustained in the inter-scholastic sports program in the West Ottawa Schools is provided by the First Agency, Inc. and the Guarantee Trust Life Insurance Company.

Although our schools have no legal liability, we do have a sincere interest in our players and their parents. It is our desire to make certain that no parent suffers significant financial loss due to any injury sustained in our sports program. The supplemental coverage covers 80% of the cost to a maximum of \$25,000.00 per injury. The cost to each athlete is **\$45.00** per sports season for 9th-12th graders and **\$33.00** per sports season for 7th & 8th graders. It is mandatory that every athlete pay the insurance fee. The insurance payment must be made during the first week of practice. All injuries must be reported to the Athletic Trainer. Medical treatment for a covered accident must begin within 60 days of

that accident. Insurance claim forms are to be picked up and turned into the athletic office within ninety (90) days of the accident.

- **Amateurism:** Students cannot receive money or other valuable consideration for participation in MHSAA sports or have signed a professional athletic contract.
- **Limited Team Membership:** Once the practice season begins, students must end all outside competition on non-school teams. Exceptions during the middle school season in cross country, swimming & diving, tennis, track & field, or wrestling, a member of the school team in that sport may participate in a maximum of two (2) non-school meets or contests in that sport while not representing his or her school.
- **School Suspensions:** If a student-athlete is suspended from school, he/she will also be suspended from participation with his/her team for the duration of the suspension. Suspensions are considered a violation of the Athletic Code of Conduct. Additional suspension from team participation will also be served in accordance to the code enforcement procedures. If a student-athlete is suspended from school during the 'tryout' and team formation period, students will not be allowed to participate or be considered for team formation and participation. A student-athlete can request an appeal for this athletic suspension during team formation from the Athletic Director.

AWARDS:

A participation award will be given to athletes should they meet the requirements established by the coach and Athletic Director.

Scholar Athlete Award: Presented to middle school (6th-8th grade) students who have received a minimum 3.0 grade point average during the first three marking periods, and have successfully completed one or more athletic seasons.

Behavior:

Athletes shall conduct themselves in a manner becoming an athlete and in such a way as to bring no discredit to the athlete, parents, school, or team. Athletes are expected to exhibit good citizenship in and out of the classroom.

Disciplinary action for any behavior that is determined to be unbecoming of an athlete shall be left to the judgment of the Coach and/or Athletic Director.

Maximum Penalty: Suspension up to the remainder of the athlete's career.

* A request for an appeal must be directed to the Athletic Director.

Cancellations:

Tornado Watch or Warning: It is West Ottawa district policy that all events and activities are cancelled when a Tornado Watch or Warning has been issued.

School Cancellations:

Practices

All middle school (6th-8th grade) practices are cancelled.

All 9th - 12th grade coaches should contact the Director of Athletics prior to having any practice. Practices that are held will normally not begin until after 12:00 p.m. Coaches should call the athletic office with their practice schedule, so that the information can be put on the District Hot Line. Coaches will clearly communicate that practices are strictly voluntary, and that the athlete's safety of travel is their top priority. Any athlete who is not able to attend that day will be excused for that practice.

Contests

All middle school (6th-8th grade) contests are cancelled. The decision to cancel or play 9th – 12th grade contests will normally be made after 12:00 p.m. The Superintendent and Director of Transportation will be consulted, whenever possible, prior to making a decision.

Code of Conduct:

Athletes are representatives of our school and their participation in athletics is a privilege. Students and members of our community look to them as examples and role models. Because representing our school is a significant responsibility, and because we believe that athletes should not operate under "seasons of approval" and "seasons of disapproval" for inappropriate conduct, we expect compliance to the following code of conduct standards on a year-round basis. An athlete shall abide by the training rules beginning the day he/she signs up for his/her first sport as a middle school student until he/she graduates or elects to no longer participate in West Ottawa athletics. Such compliance is not limited to a particular sports season, to school sponsored activities, or to school property.

I. Conduct Standards:

A. Athletes are expected to show behavior at all times that will display respect for people, the law, facilities, and equipment. Therefore, conduct considered unbecoming of an athlete and deemed detrimental to the team, school, or community is a violation of this code and the penalty will be determined by the athletic director and principal.

B. Athletes are expected to cooperate with teachers, students, and citizens of our community, and display good sportsmanship towards athletes, officials and spectators.

C. Athletes are not expected to use, possess, conceal, sell, distribute or be under the influence of:

- Tobacco or tobacco products in any form;
- Alcohol or alcoholic beverages in any form;
- Illegal drugs including but not limited to those substances defined as controlled substances pursuant to Federal and/or State statute;
- Mood altering substances;
- Steroids, human growth hormones, or other performance enhancing drugs;
- Substances purported to be illegal, abusive, or performance enhancing, i.e. "look-alike" drugs;
- Drug paraphernalia.

D. Athletes are not expected to engage in acts of cumulative or gross misconduct, including stealing, cheating, but not limited to behavior addressed in the Student Handbook.

E. Athletes are not expected to engage in acts of student hazing. The Board of Education believes that hazing activities of any type are inconsistent with the educational process and prohibits all such activities. Hazing shall be defined as performing any act or coercing another, including the victim, to perform any act of initiation into any class, group, or organization that causes or creates a risk of causing mental, emotional, or physical harm. Permission, consent, or assumption of risk by an individual subjected to hazing shall not lessen the prohibitions contained in this policy. Hazing involves conduct such as but not limited to: illegal activity such as drinking or drugs, physical punishment or infliction of pain, intentional humiliation or embarrassment, dangerous activity, activity likely to cause mental or psychological stress, forced detention or kidnapping, undressing or otherwise exposing initiates. Michigan law also makes hazing a crime, punishable by fine and/or imprisonment.

F. Athletes are not expected to engage in any form of gang activity. Gang activity is described as individual or group behaviors associated with belonging to a band of youths that promotes juvenile delinquency and which has an adverse affect on the athlete's team, the school, or the learning environment. Students shall not engage in

behaviors at school, while on school property, at school related activities, or within the community that promote gang activity as detailed in school board policy #5114. The administration and coaches reserve the right to determine which behavior, dress, or activities are gang related.

G. Inappropriate Use of the Internet: Pictures found on sites that show the student-athlete behaving inappropriately, will be considered a violation of the student code. Such acts can be pictures of students holding alcoholic containers, tobacco products, illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia, or doing other inappropriate acts. Defenses such as the container was empty, etc. will not be a case of defense.

II. Code Enforcement Procedures:

Athletes in violation of the code of conduct will be reported to the coach for interpretation and/or disciplinary action. No athlete will be dropped from an athletic team without the prior approval of the athletic director. Violations may be reported to the athletic director by any coach, faculty member, or source judged to be reliable by the athletic director. Athletes entering the 9th grade will be considered to be on the probation described in step one if they were in violation of the middle school athletic code during 7th and 8th grade. The probation will last two years from the date of the violation. Parents and student athletes will be required to sign the back of the physical card which indicates they are aware of the expectations of the athletic program prior to the athlete participating in sports. Athletes found guilty will be disciplined in the following manner:

A. Step One:

- The athletic director and athlete shall hold a conference at which time the first, second, and third offenses shall be explained. Parents will be notified.
- The athlete's name, the date, and the nature of the incident shall be recorded and kept on file at the athletic office.
- The penalty for step one shall be suspension from 25% of the contests in the present or next sport in which they participate. Suspension will begin immediately. Suspensions may continue into the next season if there are not enough contests left in the current season to fulfill the penalty.

B. Step Two:

- The athletic director and athlete shall hold a conference at which time the first, second, and third offenses shall be explained. Parents will be notified.
- The athlete's name, the date, and the nature of the incident shall be recorded.
- The penalty for step two shall be suspension for 75% of the season. Suspensions may carry over to the next sport season if there are not enough contests left in the current season to fulfill the penalty.

C. Step Three:

- The athletic director and athlete shall hold a conference at which time the first, second, and third offenses shall be explained. Parents will be notified.
- The athlete's name, the date, and the nature of the incident shall be recorded.
- The penalty for step three shall be suspension from all athletics for one calendar year. The suspension will begin immediately.

D. When an athlete has been charged by civil authorities in connection with a felony or misdemeanor, he/she shall be suspended from competition until the Athletic Director, the Coach, and the High School Principal determine whether the code has been violated, and what discipline is appropriate. The penalty will be dependent upon the severity of the offense. Maximum Penalty: Suspension up to the remainder of the athlete's career.

E. Athletes whose violation involves acts of student hazing shall advance an extra step in the discipline process up to step three.

F. Athletes entering the ninth grade will be considered to be on the probation described in step one if they were in violation of the middle school athletic code during the eighth grade. The probation will last two years from the date of the violation.

III. Appeal Procedures:

An appeal is initiated upon the request of a coach, the athletic director, or the student involved. Appeals may be filed within seven (7) calendar days of a decision, and shall be addressed within seven (7) calendar days of receipt.

The first level of appeal is the high school athletic director. He shall either support or overturn a coach's or athletic director's decision as to whether or not the code of conduct has been violated.

The second level of appeal is the Athletic Executive Council. The Athletic Executive Council shall consist of the 7th/8th grade level principal, the 7th/8th grade assistant principal, 7th/8th grade athletic director, and the high school athletic director.

Nondiscrimination Policy:

Unlawful discrimination of a Board member, employee, applicant, student, volunteer, or contractor on the basis of religion, race color, national origin, age, gender, marital status, height, weight, disability will not be tolerated by West Ottawa Public Schools. Harassment on the bias of a protected classification is a form of discrimination. Discrimination and harassment may arise from verbal or physical conduct. Sexual harassment, which is a form of sex discrimination, is governed by Policies #3315, #4111.2, #4212, and #5140, #5143, #5150.

All Board members, employees, students, volunteers, and contractors, of the district are required to comply with this policy. Appropriate disciplinary or corrective action designed to stop the discrimination and to prevent its recurrence will be taken against persons who violate this policy.

A Board member, employee, volunteer, or student ("complainant") who believes that he/she has been subjected to discrimination should promptly notify the building principal, guidance counselor, or Civil Rights Coordinator whose office is located at the Administration Building Office of Human Resources and whose office phone number is 738-5780. Complainants are encouraged to report any conduct, statements, or physical contact, which they believe to be discriminatory.

Officials:

Officiating is not an easy job. Please make every effort to treat game officials with respect before, during, and after any contest. **All communication with officials during a contest will be done by the head coach and the head coach only!** If a comment or point must be made, make it and move on. **At no times will a student-athlete address an official other than to answer a question from that official.**

Participation:

Participation on a West Ottawa athletic team is a privilege and not a right. Membership on a team is to be earned by continuously adhering to the standards of conduct, both in and out of school. No playing time is guaranteed at any level.

Policy for Extra Curricular Education:

Recognizing that at times students are placed in uncompromising situations where they are obligated to more than one co/extra curricular activity, the following policy has been established to clarify student and advisor responsibilities, and to assist all parties in the appropriate resolution of situations resulting from co/curricular scheduling conflicts.

When a student is confronted with a conflict resulting from two or more school-related co/curricular activities being scheduled at the same time, the following procedure shall apply:

1. When a conflict occurs between scheduled practices, the students may choose either activity without loss of membership, academic penalty, or status in the other activity.
2. When a conflict occurs between a competition/performance and a scheduled practice, the student is expected to attend the competition/performance without loss of group membership, academic penalty, or status in the other activity.
3. When a conflict occurs between two competitions/performances, the student may choose either activity after consulting with the adult advisors in a timely manner. If a serious difference of opinion arises, the student and the adult advisors will resolve the conflict jointly.
 - a. The overall importance of the conflicting events will be weighed against each other in this decision process and will serve as a determining factor.
 - b. If, in the opinion of the advisor, both competitions/performances can be attended, the student will be expected to attend both activities.

Adult advisors will make every effort to coordinate schedules annually to avoid scheduling conflicts.

Potential Dangers in Athletic Participation:

Parents and student-athletes should fully understand and appreciate the risk of injury associated with participation in sports programs provided by West Ottawa Schools. Athletic activities can be hazardous and taking part in such activities involves risk taking on the part of the student-athlete and the parents. While reducing injuries to a minimum is a goal of our coaches and administration, the possibility of injuries still exists.

Transportation:

General policy is that all athletes must travel to and from a contest under the direct supervision of the coach. In exceptional cases, parents may arrange with the coach to take their child home with them after a contest. A travel release form must be filled out and signed by the parent/guardian accepting full responsibility for his/her son/daughter. Coaches should retain the release form and return it to the Athletic Director. The Athletic Director along with the coach of the particular sport may refuse any request. Under no condition will an athlete be permitted to return with anyone other than his/her own parents or guardian. It is encouraged that athletes make trips as a team unit. Violation of this policy will justify immediate suspension from the squad.

Uniform/ Equipment Regulations:

School equipment issued to an athlete is his/her personal responsibility and he/she is expected to return the equipment in good condition upon completion of the season. If he/she leaves the squad for any reason, he/she has one (1) week to turn in all equipment. Where there is damage or loss due to carelessness or destructiveness, the athlete will pay for the replacement of items. Equipment should be turned into the coach and not the athletic office. If equipment is not turned in, the following procedures need to be followed:

- Coach must contact the athlete.
- Coach makes a 2nd contact and also contacts the parents.
- Coach makes a 2nd contact with the parents and contacts the Athletic Director.
- Athletic Director contacts athlete and parents.
- Equipment will be treated as stolen property if it is still not turned in.

Failure to fulfill this requirement will prevent the athlete from any further participation in athletics until the matter has been cleared up. No athletic awards will be given to such individuals.

It is suggested that coaches collect all equipment on the day of the last contest to avoid these types of problem

