

SAULT AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**HANDBOOK
FOR
STUDENT-ATHLETES**

SAULT AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS HANDBOOK FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES

INTRODUCTION

The Sault Area Public Schools believes in the educational value of interscholastic athletics, and support a full program of athletic opportunities for males and females. This handbook is designed to give the athlete and parents a clear understanding of the rules and regulations regarding athletic participation. It was adopted by the Board of Education as district policy in October, 2000.

In the Sault Area Schools, athletes are **students first** and **athletes second**. A student who elects to participate in athletics must understand that schoolwork and academics come first. Beyond the classroom, students have chosen to make a commitment to an athletic team. That decision involves self-discipline, sacrifice, and dedication, while never losing sight of the fact that sports should be fun and contribute to the physical, emotional, and social development of the athlete.

At all levels in the program, athletes are expected to demonstrate good sportsmanship in word, action, and attitude. Athletics are an extension of the curriculum and are designed to promote positive sportsmanship, good health, teamwork, commitment, dedication, loyalty to the school and team, and develop a camaraderie that athletes will remember the rest of their lives.

MISSION STATEMENT

We, the athletic staff of Sault Area Public Schools, are committed to providing quality in education, via the students' participation in interscholastic athletics. Therefore, our mission is to work with our students, their parents and community members to create an environment in which all students will demonstrate, both on and off the playing field, the following characteristics:

- A commitment to a healthy lifestyle
- A commitment to the concepts of good sportsmanship, teamwork and educational athletics
- The ability to think critically and solve problems
- Civic responsibility
- The ability to be a self-directed and life-long learner
- Skill in developing and maintaining wellness, self-esteem and self-worth

ATHLETIC PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

The interscholastic program will be conducted in accordance with existing Board of Education policies, rules and regulations. While the Board of Education takes great pride in supporting winning programs, it does not condone "winning at all costs." The athletic program will be conducted in such a way so as to justify it as an educational activity.

The Sault Area Schools Athletic Department believes that a dynamic program in student athletics is vital to the educational and personal development of the student. The athletic program shall be directed so that the welfare of all student-athletes is the primary concern. The major objective of the program is to provide wholesome opportunities for student-athletes to develop favorable habits and positive attitudes with regard to the ideals of educational athletics. These opportunities will contribute to the physical, mental, social and emotional development of the students.

Participation in school-sponsored athletic programs is a PRIVILEGE that carries with it responsibilities to the school, the student body, to the community and the participants themselves. Athletics function as an integral part of the total curriculum. They offer opportunities to serve the institution, assist in the development of fellowship; goodwill, self-realization and they encourage learning the qualities of good sportsmanship.

Lessons in sportsmanship, teamwork, competition and how to win and lose gracefully are an integral part of the teaching in the athletic program. The athletic program will always conform to the general objectives of the school and will be consistent with the general policies of the district. At no time will the athletic program supersede the total educational curriculum in emphasis.

As a member of the Straits Area Conference and the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) Sault Area Public Schools will follow the regulations set forth for interscholastic athletics by these organizations, in addition to those set by the Board of Education.

The policies outlined in this handbook are for the 9th grade – 12th grade athletic program. All policies are in effect from the student's first day of organized team practice to the last day of organized team competition, regardless of the season he / she participates in, for their entire high school career.

SAULT AREA SCHOOLS ATHLETIC PROGRAM

Grade 9

1. Goal: Increase skill development. Coaches are looking for potential and the emphasis will center on skill development and skill repair.
2. Each team member will play in most games providing the coach's criteria for attendance, effort and attitude are met.
3. More defined team concepts will be stressed.

Junior Varsity

1. Goal: Prepare athletes for the next level. Transition period between emphasis on participation and emphasis on winning.
2. Most athletes will play in most games. Skill, practice, attitude, and sportsmanship will determine playing time and starting positions.
3. Further development of basic fundamentals and skill level of each participant.

Varsity

1. Goal: Although the emphasis is on winning, it will never be at the expense of the rules, sportsmanship, health or safety of athletes.
2. Skill, practice, attitude, and sportsmanship determine playing time and starting positions. Not all athletes will play in every contest, but attempts will be made to play athletes whenever possible.
3. Athletes will consistently work to the maximum limits of their athletic abilities.

ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY

HIGH SCHOOL

A student must have achieved a cumulative grade point average of at least 1.5 or a grade point average of at least 1.5 in the previous semester. In addition, the student must be passing all classes during the semester in which he/she competes. Eligibility for current classes will be determined weekly through the use of a weekly progress report.

Progress reports are submitted by teachers each Monday at 3 pm. On Tuesday, a student will be informed by administration if he or she is failing one or more classes. The chart below outlines the process for academic eligibility.

| WEEK | PRACTICE | PLAY |
|-------------------|--|------|
| <i>Week One</i> | Yes | Yes |
| <i>Week Two</i> | Yes | No |
| <i>Week Three</i> | No | No |
| <i>Week Four</i> | <i>A student is eligible to participate when he/she is passing all classes</i> | |

A student's athletic weekly eligibility runs from Tuesday to Tuesday. Incoming freshmen are immediately eligible. Grade point requirements for freshmen begin in the second semester. All students must have weekly progress reports and pass all classes as noted above.

Coaches are allowed to set higher academic standards for individual teams. These standards will be presented at team meetings prior to the start of the season.

Athletes with extenuating circumstances will be handled on a case-by-case basis. A committee consisting of the parent, appropriate teacher, the Athletic Director and the Principal will meet to discuss the situation to determine eligibility.

ATTENDANCE AT PRACTICE/GAMES

Student-athletes are expected to be in attendance at all practices, scrimmages, team meetings, and contests (unless suspended). Student-athletes must be in attendance in school for the full day in order to compete that day. With verification, the Athletic Director may make an exception in the case of a family emergency, funeral, medical appointment, etc.

Appropriate discipline including loss of playing time and dismissal from the team will be used without prejudice or favoritism by the coach and/or athletic director if the student is habitually late or absent. Student-athletes should provide advance notice to coaches if they will be absent for medical reasons, family situations, vacations, driver's education classes, etc.

ATTENDANCE AT PRACTICE/GAMES

Student-athletes are expected to be in attendance at all practices, scrimmages, team meetings, and contests (unless suspended). Student-athletes must be in attendance in school for the full day in order to compete that day. With verification, the Athletic Director may make an exception in the case of a family emergency, funeral, medical appointment, etc.

Appropriate discipline including loss of playing time and dismissal from the team will be used without prejudice or favoritism by the coach and/or athletic director if the student is habitually late or absent. Student-athletes should provide advance notice to coaches if they will be absent for medical reasons, family situations, vacations, driver's education classes, etc.

All student athletes need to attend school the next day beginning with first hour, regardless of the time they arrive home from an athletic event.

AWARDS

School awards include participation certificates and varsity letters. Each program has its own requirements for earning a letter that will be explained by each varsity coach. Athletes must complete the entire sports season to be eligible for team or school awards.

Per MHSAA guidelines, student-athletes may accept a symbolic or merchandise award valued under \$15 for participation in athletics. Banquets, luncheons, dinners, trips and fees are permitted. Cash merchandise certificates etc. are **not** permitted.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

As noted, student-athletes are students first and are expected to conduct themselves properly in the classroom. Student-athletes who are discipline problems in class by being tardy, insubordinate, disruptive, etc. face disciplinary action by the coach, Athletic Director or building principal to include loss of playing time, dismissal or suspension from the team and/or suspension from school.

COACH/ADMINISTRATIVE OBLIGATIONS

Coach. Any coach who suspends an athlete from participating in practices or contests will immediately submit written notification to the Athletic Director. The Athletic Director will review the situation, and if necessary, convene a meeting of the parties involved to review the situation.

Athletic Director. The Athletic Director is responsible for invoking all penalties outlined in the Handbook and for providing suspended athletes the opportunity for due process as outlined below.

Building Principal. The building principal is responsible for the athletic program in his/her building. Accordingly, he/she (or designee) will be advised of all athletic department activity and will act as the first level arbitrator when necessary.

COMMUNICATION WITH COACHES

We are proud of the educational and athletic opportunities available to our students and have committed ourselves to providing programs that all students and athletes can be part of while attending school. If there are situations that require communication with a member of the coaching staff, we are always willing to meet to discuss any concerns. Please note that the following process has proven to be most successful in the resolution of any potential problems.

1. The student-athlete speaks with the coach.
2. If necessary, the parent(s) meets with the coach. (This meeting should be held in private, away from the emotion of a practice or game).
3. If necessary, meet with the head varsity coach of the sport.
4. If necessary, meet with the Athletic Director.

Further meetings could involve the Principal, Superintendent or Board of Education. Those involved should call to arrange a meeting that will be held at the earliest possible time. All complaints/concerns should be handled at the lowest level. However, the next level arbitrator is always willing to meet if previous meetings have not resolved the situation.

DRUG/ALCOHOL POLICY

Athletics and the use of these harmful substances are not compatible. Sault Area Schools and its coaches are concerned about the health and safety of our students. Athletes have an obligation to themselves, their team, and their school. As a member of an athletic team, they represent their families, community and Sault Area Schools. Because we care, the use of tobacco, alcohol and/or drugs will not be tolerated.

It is recognized by medical professionals, health educators, and coaches that athletes perform best when they follow solid training rules that include restrictions on tobacco or e-cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs. Medical evidence is clear: tobacco or e-cigarettes, alcohol, and mood-altering substances produce harmful effects on human beings. Michigan law specifically prohibits use or possession of these materials by students.

Students must refrain from the use of tobacco or e-cigarettes, alcohol, steroids and controlled substances, look-alikes, or mood-altering substances. Therefore, a student-athlete shall not, regardless of the quantity at any time during the school year:

1. Use or possess tobacco, e-cigarettes, or tobacco products, including smokeless tobacco.
2. Use or possess alcohol or a beverage containing alcohol.
3. Use, or possess any controlled substance or look-alike, including marijuana and steroids. Note: (A drug specifically prescribed for the student-athlete by a physician for his/her own personal use is not a violation.)
4. Inappropriately use an over-the-counter or prescription drug.

The athletic department and coaching staff does not condone nor recommend the use of training supplements by student-athletes. Our recommendation is a healthy lifestyle that includes proper nutrition, proper sleep patterns and a commitment to physical conditioning.

The following procedures will be implemented for violations of the athletic department's drug/alcohol policy.

First Violation:

If the violation is smoking tobacco or e-cigarettes, use of smokeless tobacco, or the possession of tobacco, the punishment will be a one game suspension from football and a two game suspension for all other sports. The student will also be required to complete the tobacco cessation program required as outlined in this handbook.

If the violation is the consumption or possession of alcohol, drugs or other chemicals the athletic suspension will be assigned as follows:

| | |
|-------------------------|---------|
| Football | 3 games |
| Soccer | 5 games |
| Volleyball | 5 games |
| Cross Country | 4 games |
| Wrestling | 4 games |
| Basketball | 5 games |
| Swimming | 5 games |
| Hockey | 6 games |
| Bowling | 6 games |
| Track | 5 games |
| Baseball | 6 games |
| Softball | 6 games |
| Golf | 4 games |

Second Violation:

If the violation is smoking tobacco or e-cigarettes, use of smokeless tobacco, or the possession of tobacco, the punishment will be the number of games as specified above.

If the violation is the consumption or possession of alcohol, drugs or other chemicals the athletic suspension will be one calendar year from the date of violation.

Third Violation:

If the violation is smoking tobacco or e-cigarettes, use of smokeless tobacco, or the possession of tobacco, the punishment will be one calendar year from the date of violation. Any further violation regarding tobacco will result in permanent loss of athletic eligibility.

If the violation is the consumption or possession of alcohol, drugs or other chemicals the student will permanently lose their athletic eligibility.

In the case of alcohol or chemical use, in order for the student to participate in interscholastic athletics in future sports seasons, the student must attend the appropriate tobacco or alcohol education program provided by the Sault Health Adolescent Care Center (SHACC) and successfully complete the program.

Reinstatement: Meeting required between parents, athlete, and Athletic Director prior to athlete returning for practice, scrimmage or game. In the case of alcohol or chemical use, evidence of the required assessment must be given at or prior to this meeting.

NOTE: High School suspensions levied at the end of a season extend to the next athletic sport season in which the athlete participates, regardless of the nature of the suspension or the time of year (e.g. a suspension at the end of the spring season carries over to the fall season of the next year). Drug/alcohol suspensions carry over throughout the student-athlete's high school career, i.e. when an offense is punished, the next incident, regardless of the time span in between, will result in the next level penalty.

DUAL PARTICIPATION DURING THE SAME SEASON

IN SOME CASES, ATHLETES MAY COMPETE IN TWO SCHOOL-SPONSORED SPORTS DURING THE SAME SEASON WITH APPROVAL FROM THE PARENTS, BOTH COACHES INVOLVED AND THE ATHLETIC DIRECTOR AND THE BUILDING PRINCIPAL. Student-athletes and their parents must remember the extreme commitment that this decision involves and must exercise extreme caution prior to requesting permission for the athlete to pursue dual participation. The athlete must declare a primary sport and a secondary sport. On game day, the primary sport will take precedence. The athlete and the coaches involved will coordinate attendance at practices, scrimmages and contests. Per MHSAA guidelines, no student athlete may compete in more than one sport competition per day. If a dual sport athlete violates the conditions outlined in the Handbook, any disciplinary action will affect participation in both sports.

DUE PROCESS

If a suspended student-athlete wishes to appeal any suspension, the Athletic Director must receive written notification within 48 hours of the suspension. Upon receipt of written notification, the Athletic Director will convene an ad-hoc committee, which will review the situation. The committee will consist of the Athletic Director, the coach involved, at least two faculty members (one of whom will be a coach) and the Principal (or his/her designee). The committee will convene at the earliest possible time and will make a decision within 24 hours of its meeting. Further appeals by the suspended student-athlete may be made in accordance with district policy. The student cannot participate during the appeal process.

ELIGIBILITY

The Sault Area Middle and High Schools are members of the Michigan High School Athletic Association and accordingly follow the MHSAA's guidelines for student eligibility. All rules for participation in interscholastic athletics are set forth in the MHSAA Handbook. (The MHSAA allows exceptions to some eligibility requirements; please confer with the Athletic Director if you have a question regarding eligibility). Listed below are a few of the major components of the MHSAA eligibility guidelines.

HIGH SCHOOL

- Students must be enrolled in the High School not later than the fourth Friday after Labor Day (1st semester) or the fourth Friday of February (2nd semester).
- A student must be enrolled in the High School for which he/she will compete for at least 20 credit hours. Twenty credit hours is defined as meeting requirements of courses toward graduation for which credit will be granted and which meet approximately 20 hours per 5-day week over a period of weeks.
- A student enrolled in grades 9-12 who transfers from one high school to another is ineligible to participate in interscholastic athletics for one full semester in the school to which the student transfers. The MHSAA has listed many exceptions to this rule; contact the Athletic Director for clarification. Please note that students attending Sault High School under the Schools of Choice option are not immediately eligible to participate.

EQUIPMENT

All equipment, uniforms, etc. given to student-athletes must be returned at the conclusion of the season in good condition. Student-athletes will be financially responsible for items returned in poor condition or not returned at all. Athletes will not be allowed to participate in any other sport until obligations from previous sports are resolved.

GAME DAY ATTIRE

Student-athletes are required to dress appropriately for home and away games. Boys are expected to wear slacks, collared shirt and tie. Girls are expected to wear a dress or slacks/skirt and blouse or sweater. Blue jeans, t-shirts, hats, saggy pants, clothes that advertise tobacco or alcohol products or otherwise depict the "grunge" look are not appropriate and will not be tolerated.

HAZING/BULLYING

Hazing/Bullying is defined as a form of initiation or harassment that ridicules or intimidates. The Sault Area Schools Athletic Department does not tolerate hazing or bullying in any form, written or verbal. Reported cases will be investigated to the fullest and appropriate disciplinary actions, up to and including permanent loss of athletic eligibility will be administered. Intimidations through social media and other electronic means are considered hazing/bullying and will not be tolerated.

INFRACTIONS

The Sault Area Schools Athletic Department supports the constitutionally protected right that individuals are innocent until proven guilty. However, in cases involving student-athletes, these situations detract from the image of the team and the program, and contribute to a loss of focus by other members of the team. Therefore, an individual involved in an infraction that is not covered under other policies in this handbook may be suspended from participation until the situation is resolved.

INJURIES

All injuries and illnesses must be reported to the coach immediately. Student-athletes will need written clearance from a physician to resume practice and competition after an injury or illness requiring medical attention.

MEDICAL INSURANCE

Medical insurance is not required to compete in interscholastic athletics, but due to the inherent risks associated with athletics, the district strongly recommends that student-athletes have coverage.

NCAA AND THE COLLEGE-BOUND STUDENT-ATHLETE

The National Collegiate Athletic Association Clearinghouse has strict academic criteria that must be satisfied if student-athletes desire to participate in collegiate athletics. If a student wishes to attend college and participate in athletics, the counselor must be advised so that the proper courses may be scheduled.

OTHER SITUATIONS

Student-athletes who commit infractions not covered in the Handbook that detract from the mission or philosophy of the athletic department face possible disciplinary action. The Athletic Director will investigate each case and if warranted, will convene an ad-hoc committee (as provided for in Due Process), which will determine appropriate disciplinary action.

OVERLAPPING SEASONS

When sports season overlaps, athletes will not be expected to train or practice for the new sport until the first season has ended. Athletes will not be penalized for beginning the second sport late, but will not be allowed to compete until the coach is certain the athlete is properly prepared.

PARENTAL CONSENT

A student-athlete must have the expressed, written consent of the parent(s) or guardian(s) to participate in the athletic program. A consent form is included with the handbook. All consent forms will be kept on file in the athletic office.

PHYSICALS

A student-athlete may not tryout, practice or compete until a physician certifies that he/she is physically able to compete. The exam must have been given after April 15th of the previous school year. An MHSAA physical form is required.

BASELINE CONCUSSION TESTING

Any student athlete participating on a Sault Area High School sponsored athletic team is mandated to undergo Baseline Concussion Testing. These tests are offered through the S.H.A.C.C. and are free of charge to all student athletes.

RETURN TO PLAY ACCESS

1. Student Athletes who have been diagnosed with a concussion are referred to and evaluated by the SHACC FNP or their Primary Care Physician.
2. Physical and cognitive rest until symptom-free for 48 hours.
3. Repeat Impact Testing at SHACC until scores are in acceptable range.
4. Referral to WMH Rehabilitation for B.R.A.I.N. protocol.
5. Student is cleared for game participation by M.D.
6. SAHS Athletic Director is notified and is given a completed MHSAA concussion return to play form.

PROMOTION TO HIGHER LEVEL TEAMS

From time to time, underclassmen may be moved to higher-level teams, (e.g. freshman to JV or JV to varsity) for all or part of a regular or post-season. Moving up to play with a higher-level team is a serious decision and should be given a great deal of thought by the athlete and his/her parents. Coaches will discuss possible moves with the parents, the athlete and the Athletic Director prior to any changing of teams. The philosophy of the athletic department with regard to moving up is that changing teams will occur only if it is in the best interest of the athlete. No athlete will move up without receiving considerable playing time at the next level. If necessary, athletes will be reassigned to their original teams.

QUITTING A SPORT/REMOVAL FROM A SPORT

Any athlete who quits a sport may not compete in another sport during that same season without the approval of both the Athletic Director and the coach of the team the player wishes to join. No permission will be granted if the sport season is more than 20% complete. Any athlete who is suspended from one team may not compete for another team during that sport season.

REPORTING OF VIOLATIONS

Alleged violations. Shall be reported in writing (signed and dated) to the Athletic Director or Principal. An acceptable source in reporting violations is defined as a direct eyewitness to the violation. The Athletic Director may convene an ad-hoc

committee (as provided for under Due Process) to investigate the allegations. The person reporting the violation may be directed to discuss the situation with the Athletic Director and/or other parties as determined by the Athletic Director.

Hearsay. Information not reported in the above matter will not constitute grounds for application of penalties. If however, after reasonable efforts to investigate the situation have been made by school officials, the athlete admits to the violation or his/her parent(s)/guardian(s) are convinced as to the guilt or if they request application

SAFETY

The safety of all team members is of utmost importance. Student-athletes are required to report all faulty equipment and safety hazards to coaches immediately.

SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS

Student-athletes who are suspended from school **may not** practice or compete during the suspension. Further, if a student is suspended from school, there may also be a suspension from participation in athletics.

SPORTSMANSHIP

Student-athletes represent their school, their community, and their family, and good sportsmanship is expected at all times. Poor behavior before, during, or after practices and competitions **will not be tolerated**. The coaching staff and/or Athletic Director will employ appropriate disciplinary measures including loss of playing time, suspension and/or dismissal from the team when violations occur. Level and length of disciplinary measures will be determined by the severity of the infraction.

SUMMER SCHOOL

Attendance at summer school does not have any effect on a student's grade point average. Therefore, if a student is not academically eligible (with regard to the grade point average requirements) prior to attending summer school, he/she will not be eligible for athletics in the next semester regardless of academic performance at summer school. Successful completion of summer school classes does count towards the number of classes a student must pass to remain eligible. Therefore, if a student passes required summer school classes, he/she may be eligible to compete as a result. Please see the Athletic Director for clarification on individual situations.

TRAVEL

Student-athletes must ride the bus with the team to and from all scrimmages, practices, and competitions. Exceptions to this policy **may** be made for sufficient reason if prior arrangement is made in writing through the office of the Athletic Director. Coaches may waive the policy only for valid emergency reasons that arise at a time when the Athletic Director is not available, and will only release an athlete to his/her parent/guardian.

