

**Saline Area Schools Athletic Department
Philosophy & Philosophical Guidelines for Parents of Athletes**

The athletic department would like to take this opportunity to share with you information about the Saline Area Schools Athletic Department. The athletic program has several integral players: the athletes, coaches, parents, and school staff. The focus of these key players should be on what school sports are all about – the team. School sports promote the ideas of teamwork, discipline, personal sacrifice, hard work, sportsmanship, healthy lifestyle, and loyalty to school and community.

ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT CORE VALUES

- ✓ *Team*
- ✓ *Integrity*
- ✓ *Responsibility*
- ✓ *Accountability*
- ✓ *Honesty*
- ✓ *Loyalty*
- ✓ *Respect*

**The core values are the foundation on which the department's goals and philosophy are built on.*

Our athletic program is dedicated to the following objectives:

1. Provide all athletes with the best teaching and coaching personnel possible.
2. Provide all athletes with the best facilities and equipment possible.
3. Provide the opportunity for all athletes to participate in the best interscholastic programs possible.
4. Provide the opportunity for all spectators to identify with and support the teams of our school.
5. Provide all athletes an opportunity to grow physically and emotionally through participation in the athletic program.

The Goals of Athletic Participation:

1. **Saline Area Schools athletes learn teamwork.** Through teamwork our athletes develop self discipline, respect for authority, and the spirit of hard work and sacrifice. Athletes accomplish this by placing the team and its goals higher than personal desires.
2. **Saline Area Schools athletes learn to be successful.** Our athletes will not always win, but they will succeed when they continually strive to do so.
3. **Saline Area Schools athletes learn to be good sports.** Our athletes will learn to accept a win with grace and humility. Our athletes will also learn to accept their defeats with dignity, knowing they have done their best. Our athletes will develop positive social traits, such as emotional control, honesty, cooperativeness, and dependability.
4. **Saline Area Schools athletes will learn desirable health habits.** Our athletes will understand the importance of good health habits, such as a well-balanced diet, exercise, and abstaining from harmful substances.

Saline Area Schools Athletic Department Philosophy:

1. **The value of participation in Saline Area Schools athletics.**

Participation in athletics at Saline High School is an integral part of the overall education process. It is our belief that the lessons learned on the playing field are in many ways lessons of life.

Athletics at Saline teach the following lessons:

- The value of setting common, achievable goals that will challenge the team.
- The value of teamwork and working together to achieve those common goals.
- The value of sportsmanship.
- The value of setting individual goals to support the team and then working hard to achieve them.
- The value of accepting responsibility.
- The value of having a desire to succeed.
- The value of developing healthy lifestyle habits.
- The value of respecting authorities, teammates, opponents, fans, the school, and community.

2. Athletics Philosophy for Middle School Athletics:

Saline Area Schools believes that students need to be able to explore athletics at the age where they are learning about themselves and their abilities. Participating in athletics allows students to discover abilities that were untapped and can give them focus in the classroom. The SEC (our conference affiliation) encourages equal playing time for Middle School student athletes and has rules governing playing time in some sports. Saline Area Schools is quite proud of our coaching staff's support of the League mandates for equal playing time. We attempt to give students the opportunity to develop their skills in a sport by maximizing both practice and game time. Hard work, sacrifice, and desire are the keys to success in sports and in life. These components of success are encouraged and developed in our athletic program.

3. Philosophical Differences for Participation at Different Levels:

- 7th and 8th grade athletic experiences should serve as a time of exploration and discovery as student athletes participate in interscholastic sports for the first time. Practice and playing time are maximized to benefit the development of the athletic skills. Playing time is determined by first providing all who are able to participate the opportunity, while taking into consideration effort, attitude, etc., during practice.
- The 9th grade level serves as a transition year during which the concepts of exploration and discovery give way to the development of the cornerstones for success. Fundamentals of the sport are emphasized along with a commitment to the sport.
- At the J.V. level the athlete needs to discover what it takes to be a successful athlete at Saline High School. Dedication, desire, and willingness to sacrifice for the good of the team are just three of many character traits that begin to be emphasized.
- The Varsity level is the culmination of the athletic experience. Emphasis at this level is on the use of the fundamentals of the sport, dedication, desire, hard work, and sacrifice for the team to succeed. Success should not be always measured by wins and losses. Success can be measured by the quality of the effort and performance, how the team represents the school and community, how the team measures up its potential, and if the team achieves its goals.

4. Participation is a privilege, not a right.

Participation is a privilege for all students who choose to participate; it is not a right. We maintain strict standards in academics, behavior, and making healthy choices. We believe our athletic programs represent the school and community. It is because of this belief that we hold our student athletes to a high standard. We emphasize dedication and commitment to the team and program, a desire for success, and sacrificing personal goals for team goals.

5. Participation in out-of-season sports while a member of an athletic team at Saline Area Schools (SAS).

- Saline Area Schools expects students participating in athletics for SAS to be committed to the sport in season. As a result the student should not compromise the school team concept by participating on an out-of-season team.
- MHSAA defines our sport seasons. There are limits on how coaches interact and work with student athletes during the off season. There are many reasons for this, but one of the most important is because student athletes need to do other things.
- MHSAA and Saline Area Schools promote the idea of a well-rounded student athlete. Participating in various sports with their school friends throughout their high school years will become some of the most memorable experiences students take with them.

6. Parental Involvement in sporting events and athletics:

- Parents should practice sportsmanship as well as their student athletes. Parents need to remember the purpose of educational athletics: to train young people for life, but also to allow student athletes to have fun. Parents can be the biggest role model for student athletes when it comes to their understanding of

sportsmanship; therefore, parents should exhibit the qualities of fairness, courtesy and grace in winning and defeat at home or away games and events.

- Goals for parental sportsmanship include:
 - Maintaining dignity under all circumstances.
 - Respecting the rules of the game.
 - Respecting the officials who administer the rules.
 - Respecting opponents.
 - Acknowledging opponent's efforts to do their best.
 - Refraining from disrespectful or disruptive behavior.

- Parents' actions, and reactions to situations, can have a significant impact, not only on their particular student athletes, but on the whole program. Parents should reflect on the possible consequences of their actions beforehand.

- Regarding officials, parents need to remember:
 - SAS attempts to hire the best officials available.
 - Anyone can have a bad day, and we all make mistakes.
 - Most officials do what they do because they love to be involved with sports and kids.
 - When something happens a parent disagrees with, keep in mind:
 - The official has a better view.
 - It's better to take a deep breath and calm down rather than reacting hastily.
 - You are modeling either good or bad sportsmanship to everyone present who witnesses your behavior.

- Positive athletic parenting – emphasize the following:
 - Play the sport for the enjoyment of the experience.
 - Do not make the focus scholarships for college.
 - Be a positive motivator (four positives for each negative).
 - Do not degrade the coach or his/her staff – use opportunities to reinforce the life lesson that everyone makes mistakes, including coaches.
 - Encourage participation in several sports (three max for the schools).
 - Specialization has led to student athletes' decreased enjoyment, burning out, and dropping out of the sport. When parents follow the trend of committing large amounts of finances and time for lessons, travel, etc., for a child's development in one sport, undue pressure may be placed on the child to be exceptional and/or earn a scholarship.
 - Be realistic about your child's ability.
 - Don't be envious of other athletes' abilities or skills.
 - Remember, the coach sees all the athletes at practice every day, in competitive drills, etc. He/she knows the abilities at this stage of development, not how good someone was in the past.
 - Emphasize commitment to the program.
 - But never sacrifice academics for athletics.
 - Encourage good decision making.
 - Encourage your child to be a leader. All team members have leadership responsibilities.

7. The 24 Hour Rule

- This is a tool for giving "space and time" to allow discussions to occur in a fruitful environment. Parents who are upset with a child are encouraged not to discuss anything about the game, etc., for 24 hours. Twenty-four hours later it may be discussed in a calm manner, without the emotions from the day before, and many times, it just isn't as important as it seemed the day before. Lessons are still taught and learned the next day, but all involved have a better chance of doing so in a more constructive setting.

- This rule also works well with parent-coach interactions. If something is bothering you about your child's status on a team, etc., give yourself 24 hours before you contact the coach (You should never contact a coach immediately after a contest). The time will give you a chance to search for different perspectives, which may provide a new way to look at the situation. Discussions with the coach will be much more productive without intense emotions.

8. Addressing a Concern and the Chain of Command

Concerns that may arise will be of two types. First, your student athlete may bring a concern he/she has with the coach or team to your attention. To deal with this type of concern, the best course of action is to be a good listener, and encourage your child to figure out options and try to deal with the concern on his/her own. One of the life lessons learned from participating in Athletics is how to deal with challenges. Your student athlete should be able to discuss most issues with the coach on his/her own behalf. The second type of concern may come from you as the parent. Whether you've been a sounding board for your student athlete's concerns, or whether you've drawn conclusions on your own, you may at some point feel that you need to contact the coach directly about your child. Please keep in mind that the coach interacts with the student athletes daily and is the best person to relay information to you about what's going on. In addition, when you ask for a meeting with a coach, it is expected that your student athlete will be a part of the meeting. Since the focus of the meeting will be centered on your student athlete, we believe that athlete needs to be present at the meeting. Getting all parties involved in the discussion will assist in coming up with a plan to address the issue. Once you have met with the coach, if you feel you need to pursue the issue further, contact the athletic director. At this meeting it is also expected that your student athlete be present. After that, you may always appeal or address your concerns to the next administrative level. The chain of command goes from the coach, to the athletic director, to the principal, to the superintendent.