

Newton County School District Student Athletic Handbook

NEWTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT MISSION STATEMENT AND PHILOSOPHY

The mission of the Newton County School District (NCSD) is to provide and maintain a safe, competitive playing environment for our athletes, coaches, and fans, while stressing the importance of academics, sportsmanship, and social integrity. Every effort is made to ensure that our student-athletes reach their full potential and become well-rounded, productive citizens. All student-athletes of Newton County Schools must be in compliance with school board policies, procedures, and regulations found in the Scott County Schools Student Handbook. In addition, the athletic programs of Newton County School District must be in compliance with all rules and regulations established by the Mississippi High School Activities Association (MHSAA) and the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE). Athletics should function as an integral part of the total curriculum of the school system. Opportunities should be provided for student-athletes to develop positive and responsible habits that will carry over into adulthood.

INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS

Interscholastic athletics shall be administered as a part of the regular school program and shall be under the same administrative control as all other parts of the educational program. Only students enrolled in grades 7 - 12 shall engage in interscholastic athletic contests. The Newton County School District shall provide qualified personnel for coaching and supervising all individual sports. All interscholastic athletic events in which the NCSD participates shall be conducted under the rules and regulations of the Mississippi High School Activities Association (MHSAA). All students participating in athletics will be required to have on file: (1) a current year physical, (2) copy of birth certificate, (3) athletic participation consent form which includes proof of medical/health insurance signed by the parent, (4) random drug test consent signed by the parent, (5) medical consent and release signed by the parent, and (6) concussion information acknowledgement signed by the parent.

It is the explicit responsibility of the head coach of the athletic activity involved to ensure that all these requirements are completed and documentation is properly on file prior to any practice or events associated with the activity.

The NCSD Interscholastic Program shall:

- Open all sports to all eligible students in the district.
- Give every eligible student an opportunity to be a member of a squad; however, membership on a squad does not necessarily guarantee participation in contests.
- Teach the proper fundamentals to each participant.

- Encourage participation by as many students as possible.
- Have the best interest of the participants as the first consideration.

It is recognized that a well-organized and well-conducted athletic program is a potent factor in the morale of our student bodies and an important phase of good community-school relations. Too great of an emphasis on winning at all costs or a too consistent record of losing contests are both harmful to the development of good attitudes among our students and the public.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION

To participate in athletics, a student must:

1. Live with one's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) within the NCSD or have a parent(s) or legal guardian(s) that is employed by NCSD.
2. Turn in and/or have on file (a) current school year physical, (b) signed athletic participation consent/release form, (c) signed drug test screening form, (d) signed concussion form, and (e) signed athletic handbook form. The school specific forms will be given to each athlete to have signed and returned, and a copy is also included in the "Forms" section of this handbook for reference.
3. Complete the MHSAA Star Sportsmanship On-Line Program. Middle school students must complete the Star Program before their sports season ends. High school students must complete the Star Program before post-season play begins.

MHSAA academic eligibility rules require each student participating in MHSAA sanctioned competitions to make "satisfactory progress toward graduation." Each school district determines the requirements for "satisfactory progress toward graduation" through its graduation requirements. Additionally, according to Mississippi law, a student must maintain a grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.0 or a "C" average. In Morton Schools, a "C" average is equal to a 70.

MHSAA Academic Eligibility Rule – High School

- Satisfactory Progress Toward Graduation – School District Determination
- MS Law – Student must maintain a GPA of 2.0 or a "C" average.
- 9th Grade Begins HS Eligibility – Fall eligibility: Promoted to 9th grade, with at least an overall 2.0 GPA or "C" average of all 8th grade courses.
- Semester Eligibility – For grades 9-12: Overall average of all course grades must equal to at least 2.0 GPA or "C" average.

Middle/Junior High School Eligibility Rule

- Must be promoted – If not promoted, the student is ineligible for the entire year.
- Must have passed 4 basic courses. (English, Math, Science, Social Studies)
- The average of those 4 basic courses must be a “C” or above.
- The same guidelines apply at the semester.

Middle/Junior High School Eligibility for Participation at the High School Level

Fall Eligibility

- Must be promoted - if not promoted, the student is INELIGIBLE for the ENTIRE year
- Must have passed the 4 Core Courses (English, Math, Science, Social Studies)
- The average of the 4 core courses must be a “C” or above.

Spring Semester Eligibility

- The average of the 4 core courses must be a “C” or above.
- Do not have to be passing all 4 core courses, but the average of those 4 core courses must be a “C” or above.

Age Limits

- A 7th grader must not have reached 14 years of age prior to August 1st of the current school year.
- An 8th grader must not have reached 15 years of age prior to August 1st of the current school year.
- Once a middle school student “plays up” with a JV or varsity team, he/she may not be transferred back to a junior high team in that sport.

Regaining Eligibility

- A student who is not eligible at the beginning of the school year may become eligible for the second semester by using the formulas previously listed. This may happen only once during the student’s athletic career!

ATHLETIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Participation in athletics is a privilege, not a right. All student-athletes must maintain a strong sense of dedication, discipline, and desire in order to achieve their best. The following policies and procedures align with the NCSD Student Handbook and serve as a supplement to it. It is expected that all student-athletes remain in compliance with these rules.

1. School Attendance and Athletic Participation – In order to be eligible to participate in a competition or practice on a school day, a student-athlete must attend school at least 63% of the school day. **A school related absence will not affect this rule.** Any other absence or partial absence must be approved by the principal in order to participate in any competition or practice on the day in question. **Documentation may be required. (i.e. doctors excuse, funeral)**

Student-athletes are expected to be at all practices. If, for some reason, an absence from practice is necessary, the student-athlete or his/her parent should notify a coach of that sport in advance. Money or valuables should NOT be left in the dressing room during practice or at any other time. **These are the student-athlete's responsibility.**

2. **Student-Athlete Behavior** – Student-athletes are expected to maintain proper behavior during school, practice, games, and travel, as they are representatives of the school district. The use of alcohol, tobacco, vapes, or illegal drugs will not be tolerated.

3. **Equipment** – Student-athletes will be responsible for any equipment and/or uniforms issued to them during a sport's season. Any damaged or lost equipment or uniforms will be replaced at the expense of the student-athlete and/or their parents/guardian. **Student-athletes will be responsible for the purchase of some athletic equipment.**

4. **Travel** – Student-athletes will travel to athletic contests on the team bus. At the discretion of the head coach, players may return home with their parents if properly signed out. Only the parent is allowed to sign for the student-athlete. Any exception to this may be granted by written request to the school principal. Notification should be given at least a day in advance.

INSURANCE

All student-athletes must have health and accident insurance to participate in athletics. The SCSD is prohibited by law from paying any expense incurred for any accident involving a student on school property or participating in school activities, and does not provide health or accident insurance for participants in athletic or activity programs.

PRIORITY SPORT DESIGNATION

If a student-athlete is a member of two or more athletic teams whose seasons overlap, the Sport that begins first will be designated at the Priority Sport. The sport that is designated as the priority should take precedence for that school year. (Example: Football would be priority sport before basketball; Basketball would be priority sport before baseball/softball). (Sport will take precedence over activities, practices etc.) If your student is a multisport athlete they will need to communicate with both coaches. In the event of a conflicting schedule where there can be not agreement between coaches then the student athlete will have to choose the sport or activity they wish to participate.

QUITTING A SPORT/BEING DISMISSED FROM A SPORT

Any student-athlete that quits a sport or is dismissed from a sport before the season ends will not be eligible to participate in another sport until the regular season of the sport dropped is

over, unless there is a mutual agreement between the two coaches that are involved. In the event of the dismissal of a student-athlete from a team, the parents will be contacted.

PARENT/COACH COMMUNICATIONS

Both parenting and coaching are extremely difficult vocations. By establishing an understanding of each position, we are better able to accept the actions of the other and provide a greater benefit to our student-athletes. As parents, when your child becomes involved in our program, you have the right to understand what expectations are placed on your child. This begins with communication from the coach of the child's program.

Communications You Should Expect from Your Child's Coach:

1. Philosophy of the coach
2. General expectation
3. Locations and times of all practices and contests
4. Team requirements, special equipment, strength and conditioning programs
5. Procedure if your child is injured during practice
6. Team rules, guidelines and consequences for infractions

Communication Coaches Expect from Athletes/Parents:

1. Concerns related to your child's general welfare
2. Notification of any schedule conflicts well in advance
3. Notification of illness or injury as soon as reasonably possible

Appropriate Concerns to Discuss with Coaches:

1. Ways to help your child improve
2. Concerns about your child's behavior

It is very difficult to accept your child not playing as much as you hope. Coaches are professionals; they make decisions based on what they believe to be the best for the team and all student-athletes involved. Certain topics, such as the ones listed previously, can be and should be discussed with your child's coach. The topics listed below should **NOT** be discussed with your child's coach:

1. Playing time
2. Team strategy
3. Play calling
4. Other student-athletes

There are situations that may require a conference between the coach and student-athlete, or coach and parent. These conferences are encouraged, but NEVER after a game when emotions may be high. It is important that all parties involved have a clear understanding of the other person's position.

If You Have a Concern to Discuss with a Coach:

1. Call or email the coach to set up an appointment.
2. If the coach can't be reached, call the department of athletics to help set up the meeting for you.
3. **Please never attempt to confront a coach before or after a contest or practice. These can be emotional times for both the parent and coach. Meetings of this nature usually do not promote positive resolutions.**

What to do if the Meeting with the Coach Doesn't Provide a Satisfactory Solution:

1. Call and set up an appointment with the athletic director to discuss the situation.
2. At this meeting the appropriate next step can be determined.

VARSITY LETTERING POLICY

Each sport will set requirements for earning a varsity letter. These requirements must be on file with the athletic director. **The NCSD will NOT be responsible for paying for letterman jackets. The entire cost of the letterman jacket will be the sole responsibility of the student-athlete or that particular sports' booster club may assume the responsibility of purchasing letterman jackets.** Orders for jackets will be placed once in the Spring of the school year. To receive a jacket, an athlete must letter two years in the sport.

HAZING

The National Federation of High Schools (NFHS) defines hazing as "Any humiliating or dangerous activity expected of a student to belong to a group, regardless of their willingness to participate." Hazing includes acts that carelessly or intentionally endanger the physical or mental health or the safety of another person for the purpose of initiation or as a condition for membership or affiliation with a school organization or promotion to a grade level.

Examples of hazing include, but are not limited to the following:

- Forced consumption of any drink, drug, or controlled substance
- Forced prolonged isolation
- Forced exposure to the elements
- Forced participation in pranks or unlawful acts
- Other forced activity
- Sleep deprivation
- Carrying physically heavy items
- Other activities that cause humiliation, physical, or mental harm

Mississippi has a strong Anti-Hazing Law that provides for punishment in the form of fines and/or imprisonment to a person or persons found guilty of hazing. The NCSD has a zero tolerance policy toward hazing. Student athletes are not to participate in any form of hazing

activities. Student athletes should report any acts of hazing to a coach, a principal, or the director of athletics.

CYBER BULLYING

Cyber bullying includes, but is not limited to, the following misuses of technology: harassing, teasing, humiliating, intimidating, threatening, or terrorizing another student or staff member by way of any technological tool, such as sending or posting inappropriate or derogatory email messages, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs) which has the effect of:

- a. Physically, emotionally or mentally harming a student
- b. Placing a student in reasonable fear of physical, emotional or mental harm;

Bullying shall mean an intentional electronic, written, verbal or physical act or series of acts:

- a. Directed at another student or students
- b. Occurs in a school setting
- c. That is severe, persistent or pervasive
- d. That has the effect of doing any of the following:
 - i. Substantially interfering with a student's education;
 - ii. Creating a threatening environment; or,
 - iii. Substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

NCSD has a zero tolerance for any form of cyber-bullying. Athletes involved in the practice of this behavior may face disciplinary actions or suspension from the athletic team.

COLLEGIATE ELIGIBILITY & THE NCAA ELIGIBILITY CENTER

To participate as a freshman at a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I or Division II college or university, a student athlete must fulfill the academic requirements of the NCAA. The NCAA Eligibility Center must certify these requirements. Any senior student athlete that intends to participate in Division I or II athletics, as a freshman, must register and be certified by the NCAA Eligibility Center. Student athletes should register with the NCAA Eligibility Center before or early in their senior year. The application and registration process are available online at www.ncaa.org/eligibilitycenter.net or may be obtained in the counselor's office or athletic department.

TOOLS FOR COLLEGE-BOUND STUDENT ATHLETES

Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete is available in the athletic department or on-line at

www.ncaa.org. This is a great tool to better serve the student-athletes and their parents with the process of preparing for the selection of a college or university. The guide focuses on key

elements as they occur from the beginning and through the final decision. In addition, it also includes the NCAA Eligibility Center procedures.

The Student Athlete and College Recruiting is a valuable educational tool for the student athlete

(and their parents) that aspires to attend college and participate in collegiate athletics. This handbook covers the following four subjects: academics, athletics, marketing, and recruiting. This resource tool is available at www.dynamitesports.com or from Dynamite Sports, P.O. Box 101, Lemoyne, Pa. 17043-0101 (717-554-4950)

Please be aware that all recruiting “agents” are not the same, they should never ask you for money, or guarantee they can get your student-athlete a college scholarship.

**Newton County School District
Student Athletic Handbook**

The purpose of this handbook is to present clear guidelines that cover specific aspects of the overall athletic program in the Newton County School District and to provide specific policies and procedures that pertain to these programs. The Newton County School District Student Athletic Handbook is available to view on the Newton County School District Website.

<https://www.newton.k12.ms.us/>

By signing below, I acknowledge that the Newton County School District Student Athletic Handbook is provided online. I also understand that as a parent or guardian of a student-athlete in the Newton County School District it is my responsibility, as well as my child's responsibility, to read the contents of this handbook and to adhere to the policies and procedures outlined.

Printed Name of Student Athlete: _____

Signature of Student Athlete: _____

Printed Name of Parent or Guardian: _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian: _____

Date: _____

The return of this form is a requirement for eligibility to participate in any athletic program or extracurricular activity in the Newton County School District. Forms should be returned to the appropriate coach, sponsor, or director.

