

NORTHWESTERN R-I

SCHOOL DISTRICT

ATHLETIC HANDBOOK

Student & Parent/Guardian Edition

ADMINISTRATION & ATHLETIC LEADERSHIP

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Eligibility • Academics • Attendance • Conduct • Participation

Purpose

This handbook provides a concise athletic participation guide based on the Northwestern R-I School District handbook provisions supplied for this document. It is intended to help student-athletes and parents/guardians understand the district's eligibility, academic, attendance, conduct, and disciplinary expectations.

Important: This handbook summarizes the supplied school-handbook provisions. The official Northwestern R-I School District handbook, Board policies, administrative decisions, and applicable MSHSAA rules remain controlling when a conflict or situation is not specifically addressed here.

1. ATHLETIC ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility is a privilege granted by the school that allows a student to participate in interscholastic athletics. Eligibility is not a student's legal right. Students must meet all school-adopted standards before the school may grant athletic eligibility.

The Northwestern R-I handbook states the following eligibility standards:

- MSHSAA eligibility rules must be complied with in full.
- A student must be a credible high school citizen as defined by the MSHSAA handbook.
- A student suspended from any class or from school is ineligible for athletic participation for the period of suspension.
- Repeated violations of school rules may result in a student being declared ineligible.
- For an eligibility situation not specifically covered by the rules, the principal may rule a student ineligible.
- A student must participate in 14 practices before playing in the first contest, unless the student was a member of a team during the preceding season.

Pre-Participation Physical: A student must have a current physical on file and completed prior to participating in the first practice. A student may not participate in the first practice until the required physical has been completed and documentation has been submitted as required by the school.

2. ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY

Students in grades 6–12 who participate in extracurricular activities must be currently enrolled in courses offering at least 6 units of credit. A student becomes ineligible if the student fails more than one subject and/or fails to maintain a C average in all courses. The handbook also states that a student who fails to make standard progress in special education classes becomes ineligible.

Grade checks: Grade checks are administered at each mid-quarter and quarter. Students who lose eligibility because of grades are allowed to practice but may not participate in or attend extracurricular events while ineligible.

Regaining eligibility: Two-week grade checks are administered throughout the school year for students who are ineligible. If the student meets the stated grade requirements at a two-week grade check, eligibility is reinstated. Otherwise, the student remains ineligible until the next two-week grade check.

Coaches and organizational sponsors may establish Extracurricular Codes of Conduct that go beyond the minimum participation requirements stated in the district handbook.

3. ATTENDANCE ELIGIBILITY

Students must attend at least one-half of the school day in order to participate in or attend an extracurricular activity. Funerals, court-ordered appointments, and medical excuses are handled on an individual basis. Eligibility for a Saturday activity is determined case-by-case.

Students who participate in school-sponsored activities requiring them to miss a day of school must be present the day before the activity. If a student is absent the day before without documentation (such as medical or parent documentation), the student may not be allowed to attend the next school-sponsored activity requiring time away from school. Each situation is reviewed by administration.

A student under any type of disciplinary suspension is not eligible to attend or participate in extracurricular activities until the suspension period is over.

4. STUDENT CONDUCT & ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION

Athletes are students first and are expected to follow the Northwestern R-I Student Code of Conduct and all school rules. Repeated violations may affect athletic eligibility, and a suspension makes a student ineligible for athletic participation during the suspension period.

Disrespectful Conduct or Speech: Inappropriate verbal, written, symbolic language, or gestures directed at a staff member or student may result in disciplinary consequences.

Disruptive Speech or Conduct: Conduct that materially and substantially disrupts classroom work, school activities, or school functions may result in disciplinary consequences.

Fighting: Mutual combat may result in suspension and documentation in the student's discipline record.

Theft/Vandalism: Theft, attempted theft, possession of stolen property, or willful damage to school, staff, or student property may result in suspension or expulsion.

Weapons: Possession or use of prohibited weapons or instruments used to inflict physical injury carries serious disciplinary consequences.

5. ALCOHOL, DRUGS, TOBACCO & VAPOR PRODUCTS

The district prohibits the use, sale, transfer, possession, or being under the influence of alcoholic beverages or controlled substances on school property, school-owned or approved transportation, or at school-sponsored or school-approved activities where students are under district jurisdiction.

Violations are subject to disciplinary action up to and including suspension or expulsion and may include referral for prosecution. The district policy states that strict compliance is mandatory.

The Student Code of Conduct also addresses possession or use of unauthorized prescription drugs, alcohol, narcotic substances, counterfeit drugs, drug-related paraphernalia, tobacco products, electronic cigarettes, and vaporizing devices on school grounds, buses, or at school activities.

Athletic expectation: Student-athletes are expected to understand that conduct prohibited by district policy can directly affect school discipline and athletic eligibility.

6. SUSPENSION & ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION

Students serving an out-of-school suspension are not permitted on school grounds during the school day and may not participate in or attend extracurricular activities while suspended. A student may return to regular classes after completing the suspension and participating in the required conference with the student, parents/guardians, and principal.

The district also states that students assigned In-School Suspension must remain in the ISS room, stay on task with schoolwork or reading, and follow the ISS cell-phone requirements.

7. CELLULAR DEVICES & ELECTRONIC DEVICES

The Student Code of Conduct identifies misuse of cellular devices, including student cell phones, digital cameras, smart watches, Bluetooth headphones, and similar electronic devices, as a disciplinary matter during school hours of 7:45 a.m.–3:37 p.m.

Because athletic activities may occur before or after regular school hours, student-athletes should follow the specific directions of the school, coach, activity sponsor, and host facility regarding electronic devices during practices, contests, travel, and team activities.

8. ATHLETE RESPONSIBILITIES

- Maintain academic eligibility and communicate promptly with teachers and coaches when academic concerns arise.
- Attend school as required and understand how attendance affects extracurricular eligibility.
- Complete the required pre-participation physical before participating in the first practice.
- Follow MSHSAA rules, Northwestern R-I School District rules, and team expectations.
- Demonstrate credible citizenship and respectful behavior toward teammates, opponents, coaches, officials, staff, and spectators.
- Avoid conduct that could result in suspension or loss of eligibility.
- Understand that eligibility questions not specifically addressed in the rules may be decided by the principal.
- Complete required practices before competing in the first contest when the 14-practice requirement applies.
- Represent Northwestern R-I School District appropriately at home and away contests and during team travel.

9. TEAM MEMBERSHIP & COMMITMENT

- Once a student-athlete accepts a position on a team, they are expected to make the commitment to attend practices, contests, team activities, and required meetings.
- Students are expected to communicate with their coach in advance when they will miss a required activity.
- Unexcused absences may result in disciplinary consequences, reduced playing opportunities, suspension from team activities, or dismissal from the team.
- Coaches may establish additional attendance and commitment expectations for their individual programs.
- Participation in another school activity does not automatically excuse a student from an athletic obligation. Conflicts should be communicated and resolved with the coaches/sponsors involved.

10. QUITTING A TEAM

- Students are strongly encouraged to fulfill their commitment to a team once the season begins.
- A student who wishes to quit a team should first meet with the coach and, when appropriate, the athletic director or principal.
- Students who quit a team may be restricted from participating in another athletic program until the current season has concluded, unless administration determines otherwise.
- School-wide or MSHSAA eligibility rules will continue to apply.

11. MULTI-SPORT PARTICIPATION

- Northwestern R-I encourages students to participate in multiple sports.
- Students participating in more than one sport during the same season must communicate scheduling conflicts to all coaches involved.
- Coaches and athletic administration will work together to establish reasonable expectations when practices, contests, or other required activities conflict.
- Academic responsibilities remain a priority regardless of the number of activities in which a student participates.

12. PRACTICE & CONTEST ATTENDANCE

- Athletes are expected to arrive on time and prepared for all practices, contests, meetings, and team activities.
- Missing practice without prior approval may result in consequences determined by the coach.
- Being present at school does not automatically excuse an athlete from practice or a contest.
- Students are responsible for communicating absences to their coach as soon as possible.
- Repeated attendance issues may result in additional team consequences or loss of participation privileges.

13. INJURIES, ILLNESS & RETURN TO PLAY

- Student-athletes must immediately report injuries, illness, or symptoms that may affect their ability to safely participate.
- Coaches have the authority to remove a student-athlete from participation when there is a concern regarding safety.
- Students must follow the directions of medical professionals, athletic trainers, school personnel, and coaches regarding participation following an injury.
- A student-athlete may be required to provide appropriate medical documentation before returning to participation when circumstances warrant.
- No athlete should feel pressured to participate while injured or ill.

14. ATHLETIC EQUIPMENT & SCHOOL PROPERTY

- School-issued uniforms, equipment, practice gear, and other athletic property are to be used responsibly and maintained in good condition.
- Students are responsible for returning all school-issued equipment at the conclusion of the season or when requested by the coach.
- Lost, stolen, or intentionally damaged equipment may result in the student being responsible for replacement or repair costs in accordance with district policy.
- Students should not use athletic equipment without permission from a coach or authorized staff member.

15. TEAM TRAVEL

- Student-athletes are expected to follow all school transportation rules and coach directions while traveling.
- Students are expected to remain with their team unless released by an authorized coach or administrator.
- Appropriate behavior is expected on school buses, vans, and at visiting schools and facilities.
- Students may be released to a parent/guardian following a contest when the coach's established procedures are followed.
- Coaches may establish additional travel procedures based on the circumstances of a particular trip.

16. LOCKER ROOM & FACILITY EXPECTATIONS

- Athletes are expected to maintain clean, safe, and respectful locker rooms, gyms, fields, weight rooms, and other athletic facilities.
- Horseplay, hazing, bullying, harassment, vandalism, and inappropriate behavior are prohibited.
- Students are responsible for securing personal belongings. The school is not responsible for lost or stolen personal items.
- Only authorized individuals may enter team locker rooms or restricted athletic areas.

17. HAZING, BULLYING & HARASSMENT

- Hazing, bullying, intimidation, harassment, and initiation activities are prohibited regardless of whether the conduct is described as a "tradition," "joke," or "team bonding."
- Athletes are expected to report concerns involving themselves or teammates to a coach, athletic director, principal, or other trusted school employee.
- Violations may result in school discipline and/or team consequences.

18. SOCIAL MEDIA & DIGITAL CONDUCT

- Student-athletes are expected to represent Northwestern R-I appropriately on social media and other digital platforms.
- Posts, messages, photographs, videos, or other digital content that violate school rules, threaten or harass others, disclose confidential team information, or bring significant discredit to the school may result in disciplinary or athletic consequences.
- Athletes should understand that content posted online may remain publicly accessible even after it is deleted.

19. COACH-ATHLETE COMMUNICATION

- Student-athletes should communicate directly and respectfully with their coaches regarding team matters.
- Concerns should be addressed privately and appropriately rather than through social media or public confrontation.
- Coaches may establish communication procedures for their individual programs.
- Students should not expect coaches to respond immediately to messages outside reasonable communication hours.

20. PARENT/GUARDIAN & COACH COMMUNICATION

- Parents/guardians are encouraged to support their student-athlete while allowing coaches to coach and students to advocate for themselves.
- Questions or concerns should be addressed respectfully and through the appropriate chain of communication.
- Parents/guardians should not approach coaches immediately before, during, or immediately after a contest to discuss playing time, strategy, or other emotionally charged concerns.
- A recommended communication sequence is:
 1. Student-athlete → Coach
 2. Parent/Guardian → Coach
 3. Parent/Guardian → Athletic Director
 4. Athletic Director/Parent/Guardian → Principal, when necessary
- Playing time, starting positions, team strategy, and individual coaching decisions remain within the coach's professional discretion.

21. PLAYING TIME & TEAM ROLES

- Team membership does not guarantee a specific amount of playing time.
- Playing time, starting positions, event entries, and team roles are determined by the coaching staff based on factors such as performance, effort, attendance, attitude, academics, team needs, and adherence to team expectations.
- Coaches are not required to disclose or debate individual coaching decisions with other parents or spectators.
- Student-athletes are encouraged to ask their coach respectfully about areas in which they can improve.

22. SPORTSMANSHIP

- Student-athletes, coaches, parents/guardians, and spectators are expected to demonstrate good sportsmanship.
- Respect must be shown toward officials, opponents, coaches, teammates, school personnel, and spectators.
- Profanity, taunting, fighting, inappropriate gestures, disrespect toward officials, and unsportsmanlike conduct are prohibited.
- Northwestern R-I may impose consequences for inappropriate behavior at athletic events regardless of whether the event occurs at home or away.

23. SPECTATOR & PARENT EXPECTATIONS

- Parents and spectators are expected to support all student-athletes positively.
- Spectators should not coach from the stands, criticize officials, confront opposing players/coaches, or engage in inappropriate behavior.
- The school reserves the right to remove individuals from athletic events for inappropriate or disruptive conduct.
- Spectator behavior should reflect the values and reputation of Northwestern R-I School District.

24. FUNDRAISING & TEAM ACTIVITIES

- All athletic fundraising must be approved through the appropriate school/district process.
- Students and parents participating in fundraising are expected to follow school procedures and accurately handle funds.
- Team fundraising should not create pressure or require students to personally cover fundraising obligations unless permitted by district policy.
- Coaches should communicate fundraising expectations clearly to athletes and families.

25. USE OF SCHOOL FACILITIES & WEIGHT ROOM

- Athletic facilities and equipment are available for authorized school purposes.
- Students must follow all posted safety rules and coach/staff instructions.
- Students may not use the weight room, gym, fields, or other athletic facilities without appropriate supervision or authorization.
- Horseplay or unsafe use of equipment is prohibited.

26. ATHLETIC AWARDS & RECOGNITION

- Each athletic program may establish objective criteria for varsity letters, awards, team recognition, captain selection, and other honors.
- Criteria should be communicated to student-athletes at the beginning of the season whenever reasonably possible.
- Coaches retain discretion regarding awards when circumstances are not specifically addressed by established criteria.

27. TEAM CAPTAINS & LEADERSHIP

- Team captains or other student leaders are expected to model appropriate behavior, work ethic, sportsmanship, and leadership.
- Leadership positions may be assigned, elected, or selected by the coaching staff depending on the sport.
- Captains do not possess authority over other students and must follow the direction of the coaching staff.

28. ATHLETIC COMMUNICATION & EMERGENCY INFORMATION

- Parents/guardians are responsible for providing the school with current emergency contact information and notifying the school of changes.
- Coaches may use school-approved communication methods to communicate schedules, cancellations, transportation information, and other team-related information.
- Schedule changes may occur because of weather, facility availability, transportation, officials, opponents, or other circumstances.

29. WEATHER & ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

- The safety of student-athletes takes priority over practice or competition.
- Practices and contests may be modified, postponed, relocated, or canceled because of severe weather, heat, lightning, poor air quality, unsafe playing conditions, or other environmental concerns.
- Coaches and administration will follow applicable school, MSHSAA, and facility safety procedures.

30. TRANSPORTATION & DRIVER EXPECTATIONS

- Students must follow all district transportation rules when traveling for athletics.
- Students may not drive themselves or other students to athletic events unless specifically permitted by district policy and approved by the appropriate administrator.
- Seat belts must be worn whenever required.
- Students are expected to maintain appropriate behavior throughout athletic travel.

31. STUDENT-ATHLETE ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITY

- Student-athletes are students first.
- Students are responsible for completing assignments, attending classes, seeking assistance when needed, and communicating academic concerns.
- Coaches may monitor academic progress and may establish additional academic expectations for their programs.
- Athletic participation should never be used as a reason to neglect academic responsibilities.

32. POLICY ACKNOWLEDGMENT

By signing the athletic handbook acknowledgment, the student-athlete and parent/guardian acknowledge that they have received, reviewed, and understand the expectations outlined in the Northwestern R-I Athletic Handbook. They understand that participation in athletics is a privilege and that student-athletes are expected to comply with Northwestern R-I School District policies, MSHSAA rules, and applicable team expectations.

STUDENT-ATHLETE & PARENT/GUARDIAN ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Please read the Northwestern R-I Athletic Handbook and the applicable school handbook provisions before signing. By signing below, we acknowledge that we have received and reviewed the expectations summarized in this athletic handbook.

Student Name: _____

Sport/Activity: _____

Grade: _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Acknowledgment

We understand that participation in Northwestern R-I athletics is a privilege and that eligibility may be affected by academic performance, attendance, conduct, suspension, completion of the required pre-participation physical, and other school or MSHSAA requirements. We understand that the official Northwestern R-I School District handbook and applicable MSHSAA rules govern eligibility and participation.

Student-athlete initials: _____ Parent/Guardian initials: _____

Questions/Notes:
