

## Athletics Department Procedures

### Squad Limits and Squad Selections

Many sports teams have no squad limits; therefore, all students who meet eligibility requirements and participate in try-out activities/practices become part of the team. However, the nature of certain sports limits the number of team members who can be effectively managed by the coaching staff and/or facilities. Coaches, as the designated professionals in charge of these sports will make student-athletes aware of the criteria for selection. The coaches will maintain records of try-out evaluations, and will provide sufficient opportunity to fairly evaluate and rank student-athletes.

Students not selected for a squad may be permitted to try-out for another sport during the same season, provided the selection process for that team has not been completed and the head coach is agreeable to the tryout. The student-athlete must obtain approval from the coach no later than two days after receiving notification that he/she was not selected for the first sport he/she attempted to join.

### Team Travel

All athletes must travel to and from away competition via the transportation provided by the SCASD. Only with advance notice to the coach, and when circumstances warrant, will exceptions be extended to this procedure. The exception will be made **only** when the student-athlete is to be transported to or from an event by his/her parent or legal guardian. Athletes who miss the bus and arrive at a contest are not permitted to participate unless the coach gave prior approval to the student-athlete's parent or legal guardian.

Circumstances may warrant overnight travel to sporting events. In that case, all school district/athletics department/team policies, procedures, rules and regulations are in effect. In addition, each student-athlete has the responsibility for making the trip a positive and enjoyable experience for all. Violations of these standards will result in disciplinary action according to the appropriate Student Handbook, Athletics Department Handbook and Team Handbook.

### Practice and Competition Attendance Requirements

A Little Lion athlete should regard his/her attendance at all SCASD practices and competitions as a very high priority. Two reasons support this expectation:

**First**, given that the competition is extremely keen among SCASD students to be selected for a position on a team's roster or to achieve a starting role on one of our teams, it is expected that students who are successful in gaining these opportunities utilize their participation to its fullest capacity. Missing practice or competition may hinder an athlete's individual skill, attitude and knowledge development; weaken his/her role on the team; and affect the team's performance and chances for success.

**Secondly**, PIAA By-Laws base an athlete's post-season eligibility upon attendance at his/her school's practices and competitions: Article IX, Section 5 states, "A student who participates as an individual or as a member of a team in a sport in an athletic program other than that of the student's school, who is enrolled at a school having a team in that sport, shall be ineligible to participate in the District or Inter-District Championship Contests in that sport unless the student has been in uniform and available to participate as a member of the student's school team in that sport for at least 75% of the regular season contests...and if a student's practice in an athletic program other than that of the student's school does not meet the practice requirements of the student's school as determined by the Principal, the student shall be ineligible to participate in the District or Inter-District Championship Contests in that sport."

1. Circumstances generally approved by the SCASD for absence from school (illness/injury, religious observance, educational trip, co-curricular field trip, special academic pursuit, family commitment or doctor's appointment).

Considerations-

Athletes should always communicate an upcoming absence as far in advance as possible to the head coach.

Because of the broad scope of district activities, conflicts may occur between an athletic event and another SCASD-sponsored activity. When a conflict occurs, the athlete and coach should work out a solution that will be in the best interest of the student-athlete utilizing these criteria:

- The relative importance of each event...
- The importance of each event to the student...
- The contribution the student can make to each activity...
- When the events were scheduled...

Once the decision has been made, the student will not be penalized by the coach or sponsor of the event not chosen; however, playing time or starting restrictions may be imposed as appropriate to the situation.

2. Missing any beginning-of-the-season try-out or practice sessions because of family vacation only when the athlete provides written notice of his/her plans to the head coach at least one week prior to the first day of official practice/try-out. In addition, the athlete must be in attendance for his/her try-out session(s) for teams that make cuts before the final squad selection has been made.

3. Participation in the practice, inter-school practice, scrimmage or competition of another program in the same sport during the same season when these requirements have been met:

- The Principal, with the agreement of the head coach, waives the requirement of Article IX, Section 5 because of the student's failure to meet the 75% requirement results from illness, injury or the student's failure to meet another PIAA eligibility rule.
- The Principal, with agreement of the head coach, determines that practice in the athletic program other than that of the student's school meets the practice requirement of the school.

### Consequences for Unexcused Absences

Failure to follow these rules, or any additional team-specific rules publicized by the coach, will result in consequences being charged to the student-athlete. Action may include, but is not limited to, suspension from team activities or dismissal from the squad.

It is intended that compliance with these attendance requirements will help each athlete to best develop his/her own talents and to best contribute to the development of the strongest possible interscholastic athletics program.

### Playing Time

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### **Middle School/Junior High**

At the Middle school/junior high level, athlete participation and development of skills in a sport are valued above the winning of contests.

### **Junior Varsity**

At the junior varsity level, instruction and the development of individual skills for all athletes continues to be emphasized. However, team success in interschool competition is also valued.

### **Varsity**

At the varsity level, coaches have the dual responsibility of fostering individual skill development and achieving team success. To achieve this end, the most effective student-athletes, regardless of grade level, will be given the opportunity to further develop their athletic abilities and to work together to develop a strong desire to attain the highest possible levels of team success.

It is the charge of each sports team's coaches solely to make determinations regarding playing time based upon their observation and evaluation of athletes during try-outs, practices and competitions in accord with the principles of the SCASD's philosophy of interscholastic athletics.

### **Multiple Sport Participation**

Students are encouraged to participate on as many different sports teams as they can during their school careers. However, for a student to participate on more than one team per season is extraordinarily difficult, and most often not in the best interest of the student or the teams. Exceptions to this policy require the approval from the Director of Athletics.

### **"Playing Up"**

There may be a circumstance in which the skill level of a student enrolled at a particular grade level of a sport and the nature of the team/sport/competition warrant the student participating on a team that is offered for students of a higher grade. When an initiative to do so is made, PIAA By-Laws must be followed; coaches, parents, the student and administrators must be in agreement that this move is in the best interest of the student. This option is never available to students below the entry grade level at which a particular sport is offered.

### **Suspension from a Team**

Suspensions from a team may be made by the coach of the sport, athletics director or building administrator. The coach, athletics director and/or the building principal will confer with one another before such action is taken. Causes for suspension include violations of team, athletics department, school and District rules and/or policies:

If an athlete is under investigation for dismissal from a team, the coach, athletics director or building principal may invoke suspension until the investigation is complete.

- If an athlete has been suspended from a team, he/she has the right to due process as explained in this document
- When under suspension, an athlete may not participate in nor accompany a team to practices, meetings or competitions.

### **Dismissal from a Team**

Removal of an athlete from a team may be made by the coach of the sport, athletics director, or building principal for severe or repeated violations of team, department, school or District rules and/or policies. The coach, athletics director and/or building principal will confer with one another before such action is taken.

If an athlete has been dismissed from a team, he/she has the right to due process as explained in this document.

Any athlete dismissed from a team will not be permitted to participate on another team during that sport's season. School board policy may further restrict a student's participation for the remainder of the school year.

### **Due Process**

The following procedure has been developed to provide due process in the event an athlete is suspended or dismissed from a team:

- The coach, athletics director or building principal will notify the athlete and the athlete's parent/guardian of the suspension or dismissal, its date/time of effect, and the reasons for issuing such action. This notification may take place in person or by phone call. In the event that personal contact or a phone call is not successful, notice will be delivered via certified mail.
- The athletics director or building principal will conduct a conference, if such is necessary, with the athlete and his/her parent/guardian as soon as possible following the incident to explain the details of the suspension or dismissal.

Nothing contained in this process denies a student or parent/guardian of his/her right to appeal to the superintendent, school board, the courts, or to be represented by counsel at any stage of the process.

### **Athletic Awards**

"S" award criteria are determined by the coaching staff of the individual sport. These criteria may include, but are not limited to, playing time, points scored, dedication, co-operation, loyalty, leadership, a sense of fair play, and years of service. Certificates of recognition are awarded for each sport and sport level; however, only one chenille is awarded to an athlete at the middle school/junior high, junior varsity and varsity levels, regardless of the number of sports in which a letter is earned.

Students dismissed from the team for disciplinary reasons or who elect to leave the squad prior to the completion of the season forfeit their eligibility for awards.

### **Coach/Athlete/Parent Relations**

An effective working relationship among the "athletic triangle" of coach, athlete and parent benefits the quality of each person's experience and contributes significantly to the success of the entire team. Establishing this relationship requires that each of the three individuals understands his/her role in the process and communicates openly and honestly with the other persons.

To open the communication channels, the coaching staff is responsible for staging a pre-season orientation meeting at which time they will cover topics such as the following:

- Introduction and related background experiences of the coaching staff and program support staff
- General plans for the upcoming season
- PIAA, District, school, department and team philosophies, procedures, rules and expectations as covered in the Athlete's Handbook and team handouts
- Locations and times of practices and competitions
- Helpful tips on how parents/guardians can best support their child during the season

- How best to reach the coach (by phone or e-mail) and a confirmation of how best to reach each parent/guardian.

Athletes and their parents are responsible for asking questions to clarify their understanding of any topics discussed at a meeting or published in any other printed material (such as the "Athlete's Handbook"). Athletes and parents are also responsible for confirming mailing addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses and must inform coaches of any anticipated conflicts in the proposed practice/competition schedule.

With this foundation in place, it is anticipated that communication between any of the parties can easily and respectfully be conducted throughout the season. However, the most critical time for the working relationship to be employed is when a concern or conflict arises about an expectation or comprehension of a policy/procedure. Topics **that are accepted as appropriate for discussion are:**

- The athlete's academic performance
- The athlete's behavior in school, with the team or in the general public as it pertains to the team's reputation
- The athlete's role on the team
- The application of PIAA, District, department and team philosophies, procedures, rules and expectations for our athletes
- Suggestions to improve an athlete's skill acquisition, knowledge and attitudes relevant to the sport.
- Information about recruiting and recommendations about an athlete's suitability for play at collegiate levels.
- Management of injuries incurred by the athlete.

However, there are also topics **which are NOT appropriate for discussion.** These include certain prerogatives for which the coach alone has jurisdiction with the bounds of school district philosophies, regulations and policies:

- Other player's roles on the team
- Selection, placement and determination of playing time
- Establishment and enforcement for all guidelines and training rules related to the activity
- Appointment of practice times, dates and procedures
- Preparation and execution of all travel arrangements for the team
- Creation and implementation of competition strategies
- Management/determination of all awards

In a time of question or conflict concerning an appropriate topic, the following procedures are to be followed in the attempt to resolve the problem:

Avoid telephone and e-mail discussions if possible. Speak face-to-face with the other individual(s) so that the most complete communication takes place.

The first level of contact should always be between the athlete and coach; however, this contact should be made at a time other than during a practice or competition. Speaking privately in the coach's office or in a place away from other team members is preferred.

If the problem is not resolved at this primary-level meeting, a conference which includes the coach, athlete and parent/guardian is in order. However, none of these persons should be confronted immediately before or after a practice/competition to discuss the matter; always call or e-mail to set up an appointment. If a coach can not be reached in this manner, the parent/guardian should contact the athletics office in order to obtain assistance in reaching the coach.

If a resolution still is not gained after this conference, contact the athletics director in for his input as to how to proceed. He/she will give due process and consideration to all of the involved parties while attempting to bring the matter to a reasonable conclusion. SCASCD Policy #906 ("Public Complaints") may be initiated at this point if dissatisfaction with the athletics director's ruling occurs.