

PITTSFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ATHLETIC HANDBOOK

FOR

ATHLETES, PARENTS, & COACHES

INTRODUCTION

The athletic program is an important supplement to the Taconic and Pittsfield High School academic curriculums. Close to twenty interscholastic athletic programs are offered at each of our high schools, with over forty varsity and junior varsity teams existing. All students are urged to become involved in this important part of the academic experience. The purpose of this handbook is to give interscholastic coaches, athletes, and parents a reference guide to clarify questions on detail and policy. It is hoped that all will become familiar with the contents and keep it handy for reference.

ATHLETIC PHILOSOPHY

The athletic programs within Pittsfield Public Schools are successful due to close cooperation among staff, students, and parents. We solicit your cooperation for the continued success of our programs. All student-athletes must comply with the rules and regulations of the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA). However, school rules may supersede MIAA regulations. Failure to comply with these rules will result in disciplinary action, which may include exclusion from school athletic programs.

The Pittsfield Public School's athletic program should provide a variety of experiences to aid in the development of favorable habits and attitudes in students that will prepare them for adult life in our society. The program seeks to promote mental, emotional, and social health in addition to the physical development necessary for an active life. Emphasis is given to the teaching of skills in diverse physical activities and educating students in the concept of fair play, cooperative effort, and the ability to handle adversity. The school district encourages each student to become engaged to the best of their ability in the sports of their choice. The Pittsfield Public Schools will attempt to provide as many levels of participation as is feasible given adequate facilities, staff, and financial resources.

PURPOSE OF INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS

- The opportunity to learn new skills and improve upon old skills.
- The opportunity to develop physical vigor and desirable habits in health and safety.
- The opportunity to develop new friendships.
- The opportunity to observe and exemplify good sportsmanship.
- The realization that athletic competition is a privilege that carries with it certain responsibilities.
- The chance to learn that violations of rules brings penalty – and that this same sequence occurs throughout life.

***Student Athletes and Parent/Guardians
are required to sign & return the last three
pages of this handbook.***

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PITTSFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOL ATHLETES

Being a member of a Pittsfield Public School athletic team is the fulfillment of an early ambition for many students. The attainment of this goal carries with it certain traditions and responsibilities that must be maintained. A great athletic tradition is not built overnight. It takes the hard work of many people over the years. As a member of an interscholastic team, you have inherited a wonderful tradition – a tradition that you are challenged to uphold.

We desire to win, but only with honor to our athletes, our school, and our community. Such a tradition is worthy of the best efforts of all concerned. When you wear your school colors, we assume that you not only understand our traditions, but also are willing to assume the responsibilities that go along with them. However, your contributions should also be personally satisfying to you.

You assume a leadership role when you are a member of an athletic team. Because of this leadership role, you can contribute greatly to school spirit and community pride.

Responsibilities To Yourself

One of the goals associated with athletic participation is to broaden yourself and develop strength and character. You owe it to yourself to experience the greatest possible good from your school experience. Your studies and your participation in extra curricular activities prepare you for life as an adult.

Responsibilities To Your School

As a team member, you are contributing to the reputation of your school. You should participate in athletics to the best of your ability. The student body and citizens of the community recognize you and will judge our schools by your conduct and attitudes – both on and off the field.

Responsibilities To Others

As a team member, you also bear a heavy responsibility to others. You should always strive to conduct yourself in a manner that makes your family, teammates, and community proud. You are expected to measure up to a code of conduct that exemplifies the role you play as a leader. The younger students in the Pittsfield Public School district are watching you. They will imitate you in many ways. Set good examples for these students.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS

All athletes shall abide by a Code of Conduct that will earn them the honor and respect that participation in interscholastic athletics affords. Any conduct that results in dishonor to an athlete, team, or school will not be tolerated. Acts of unacceptable conduct tarnish the reputation of everyone associated with the school district and our athletic program.

This athletic handbook represents the minimum standard of conduct for athletes. Individual coaches, principals, and school administrators may recommend stronger penalties. It is the obligation of the administration, coaching staff, and all district employees to enforce this policy.

SPORTSMANSHIP

The Pittsfield Public Schools Athletic Department believes that interscholastic competition involving member schools of the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) should be governed by the basic principles of good sportsmanship. We believe the development of good sportsmanship through the practice of ethical behavior and moral reasoning is one of the acknowledged objectives of interscholastic athletics. We, therefore, expect school administrators, coaches, athletes, and spectators to know and embrace the following fundamentals of sportsmanship:

1. Respect should be demonstrated for athletic opponents and for their school at all times.
2. Respect should be demonstrated for the officials at all times
3. Knowledge of, and proper respect for the current rules of the contests, should guide the behavior of all participants. Rules are essential for a fair contest.
4. All participants should strive to maintain self control at all times. The desire to win cannot be accepted as a reason for irrational behavior.
5. All participants and spectators should learn to recognize and appreciate skill in performance regardless of school affiliation.

The use of profanity, as well as the taunting of officials, opponents, or spectators will not be tolerated. Student athletes and spectators are expected to demonstrate the values of sportsmanship.

The behaviors and reactions by spectators play an important role in their school's athletic reputation. Spectators are reminded that they are held to the same sportsmanship standards as participating athletes. It is important to respect and respond enthusiastically to participating teams, censure fellow spectators whose behavior is inappropriate, be positive toward participating players and coaches regardless of the outcome of the contest, and respect the judgment of the officials and coaches. Failure to comply with sportsmanship standards will result in disciplinary action.

ATHLETIC DRUG, ALCOHOL, and TOBACCO POLICY

Participation in athletics is a privilege, not a right. Student athletes are in a highly visible setting of leadership and/or competition/performance. Therefore, student athletes will be held accountable for their conduct and behavior when they choose to participate in athletics and represent the Pittsfield Public Schools. The athletic drug, alcohol, and tobacco policy is designed to help students and parents cope with use of these substances and provide guidelines for each student/family to receive assistance as needed.

From the earliest fall practice date, to the conclusion of the academic year or final athletic event (whichever is latest), a student shall not, regardless of the quantity, use, consume, possess buy/sell, or give away any beverage containing alcohol; any tobacco product; marijuana; steroids; or any controlled substance. This policy includes products such as “NA or near beer”. It is not a violation for a student to be in possession of a legally defined drug specifically prescribed for the student’s own use by his/her doctor.

Minimum Penalties for Violations:

First Offense - Incident occurring outside of a school related activity:

When the Principal confirms, following an opportunity for the student to be heard, that a violation occurred, the student shall lose eligibility for the next consecutive interscholastic contests totaling 25% of all interscholastic contests in that sport. No exception is permitted for a student who becomes a participant in a treatment program. It is recommended that the student be allowed to remain engaged at practice through the duration of the suspension for the purpose of rehabilitation.

First Offense - Incident occurring inside of school or during a school related activity:

When the Principal confirms, following an opportunity for the student to be heard, that a violation occurred, the student shall lose eligibility for the next consecutive interscholastic contests totaling 40% of all interscholastic contests in that sport. No exception is permitted for a student who becomes a participant in a treatment program. It is recommended that the student be allowed to remain engaged at practice through the duration of the suspension for the purpose of rehabilitation.

Second Offense – Any incident occurring inside or outside of a school related activity

When the Principal confirms, following an opportunity for the student to be heard, that a violation occurred, the student shall lose eligibility for the next consecutive interscholastic contests totaling 60% of all interscholastic contests in that sport.

Third & Subsequent Offenses –

Following the third or subsequent violations, the student shall lose eligibility from interscholastic athletic participation for one (1) calendar year.

If after the third or subsequent offense, the student of his\her own volition becomes a participant in an approved chemical dependency or treatment program, the student may be certified for reinstatement in MIAA activities after a minimum period of six (6) weeks or six (6) contests, whichever penalty is greater. The director or a counselor of a chemical dependency treatment center must issue such certification.

Penalties that occur will be administered for the sport and\or extracurricular activity taking place at the time of the violations. If the penalty period is not completed during the season of violation, the penalty shall carry over to the student’s next season of actual participation, which may affect the eligibility status of the student during the next academic year.

Incidents occurring inside of school related activities are defined as violations taking place at district sponsored activities including, but not limited to : school dances, proms, athletic events, classes, field trips, and other events taking place on and off campus.

Penalties shall be cumulative each academic year, **but serving the penalty could carry over for one year. Or**, if the penalty period is not completed during the season of violation, the penalty shall carry over to the student’s next season of actual participation, which may affect the eligibility status of the student during the next academic year. **(e.g. A student plays only football: he violates the rule in winter and/or the spring of same academic year: he would serve the penalty [ies] during the fall season of the next academic year)**

1st Offense - 25%	
# of Events\Season	# of Events\Penalty
1-7	1
8-11	2
12-15	3
16-19	4
20 +	5

2nd Offense - 60%	
# of Events\Season	# of Events\Penalty
1-3	1
4	2
5-6	3
7-8	4
9	5
10-11	6
12-13	7
14	8
15-16	9
17-18	10
19	11
20 +	12

School Related Offense - 40%	
# of Events\Season	# of Events\Penalty
1-4	1
5-7	2
8-9	3
10-12	4
13-14	5
15-17	6
18-19	7
20 +	8

ACADEMIC AND ATTENDANCE STANDARDS

In order that local eligibility standards reflect a greater emphasis on classroom achievements, and with participation in athletics viewed as a privilege, the following policies apply to academic eligibility for student athletes.

- All student athletes must carry 50 CREDITS during their sport season.
- In the grading period immediately preceding their chosen sport season, all student athletes must carry and pass the equivalent of 50 CREDITS which count toward graduation.
- To be eligible for fall sports, students are required to have passed and receive the equivalent of 50 credits in the last grading period of the previous academic year.
- A student's eligibility will be determined prior to the start of each athletic season, as well as at the conclusion of each grading period.
- Students who are members of a school team must be present for at least FIVE CONSECUTIVE CLASS PERIODS in order to be eligible to participate in relevant after-school, weekend, or vacation events. Students may appeal emergency cases to the principal who will review on an individual basis. Only a personal waiver from the school principal will supersede this regulation. Any student who participates in a practice or game, but is not in school for the required consecutive five periods, will result in suspension from the sport for one week.
- Student athletes who are absent from school on a Friday prior to weekend athletic competitions are not eligible to participate in those contests. Only a personal waiver from the school principal will supersede this regulation.
- Student athletes are expected to attend all practice sessions unless absent from school. Only the principal, head coach, or designated assistant may excuse team members from practice.
- Any student who is under suspension from school may not participate in any game or practice during the period of suspension. Violations of this rule will result in suspension from that sport for the remainder of the season.
- Those students who chronically absent themselves from school the day following a game, or are chronically tardy to school on the day after a game, will be subject to suspension from that sport after an initial warning from their coach.
- A student cannot participate in any athletic interscholastic athletic contest during the period of ineligibility, nor will activity fees be refunded.

TEAM STANDARDS

In addition to the school regulations that are in effect at all times, athletes must:

- Attend all practices and contests unless excused by the coach.
- Demonstrate respect for fellow teammates, coaches, game officials, and opponents.
- Demonstrate loyalty to their team and coaches.
- Demonstrate control over emotions and speech.
- Demonstrate constant effort to improve.
- Ride the team bus to and from all away athletic contests in which transportation is provided by the school.

Violation of team standards may result in disciplinary action by the coach. This may include suspension, ranging from one game to all games on the schedule. The coach will refer infractions to the Principal and Athletic Director.

PUNITIVE ACTION

Any punitive action taken by the administration, teacher, or any academic requirement imposed by a teacher, takes precedent over practice or an athletic contest immediately after notice is given to the student involved.

PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS

All athletes must have passed a physical examination and completed all proper medical questionnaires and forms concerning insurance before they may practice or participate in any athletic contest (period of practice is defined in the MIAA handbook).

ACTIVITY FEES

The Pittsfield Public Schools have adopted a policy that requires a \$100 fee for participation in interscholastic athletics. The fee for athletic participation is assessed to students on a per sport, per season basis. Provision is included for review of hardship. These activity fees are used to defray only a part of the expenses of our athletic program.

Each head coach is responsible for collecting fees and forms from student athletes. All fees are non-refundable after the first game\competition and paying the fee does not guarantee the athlete's playing time.

INSURANCE

The Pittsfield Public Schools shall not be held responsible in any way for injuries that may be sustained while a student is engaged in practice or competition. All athletes are encouraged to have coverage by private or school insurance.

CONFLICTS IN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

An individual student who attempts to participate in multiple extra-curricular activities will, undoubtedly, be in a position of conflict of obligations.

The Pittsfield Public Schools Athletic Department recognizes that each student should have the opportunity for a broad range of experiences throughout his\her high school career. While an attempt will be made to schedule events in a manner so as to minimize conflicts, individual students have a responsibility to avoid continuous conflicts. This would include being cautious about participating in too many activities and being conscience of commitments associated with various activities, teams, and organizations. One of the many life skills connected to athletic participation is the ability to resolve conflicts and make decisions based on the commitment associated with participation and the affect participation has on an individual and group.

UNIFORMS\EQUIPMENT\FACILITIES

All student athletes are responsible for the proper care and security of equipment, uniforms, and lockers issued to him\her. All athletic equipment is the property of the Pittsfield Public Schools. Therefore, school equipment may not be taken from the building for the use of any other organization or for personal use. Any exception must be approved by the coach or athletic director.

All equipment issued to an athlete must be returned at the end of the athletic season. Athletes failing to return equipment in proper condition will be subject to a financial penalty and denied the right to participate in athletics until the equipment is returned or replaced. Equipment that is not returned for any reason, or that is damaged beyond normal wear and tear must be paid for at current replacement costs.

The athletic facilities, and its contents, are the property of the Pittsfield Public Schools. It is expected that student athletes make use of the facilities responsibly. Students are not permitted to mark or deface the facilities or its contents. In such cases, students in violation will be assessed a fine and face additional Code of Conduct penalties.

HAZING

Hazing is defined as performing any act or coercing another, including the victim, to perform an act of initiation toward a student or other organization that causes or creates a substantial risk for mental or physical harm. This activity is prohibited. No student athlete shall plan, encourage, or engage in any form of hazing associated with athletics. Students in violation of this policy may be denied participation in athletics and may be subject to additional penalties.

TRANSPORTATION

All athletes are expected to travel to and from contests in a district bus. With advance written permission, a parent or guardian may transport his or her child. Athletes may not be transported by those NOT considered the parent or guardian.

PARENTAL\GUARDIAN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ATHLETIC POLICIES

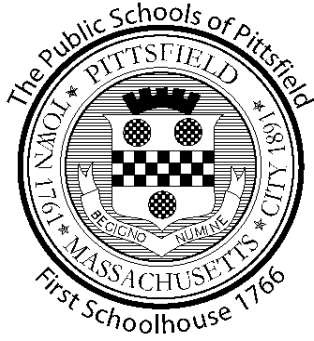
Upon entering high school or trying out for an athletic team, students will be presented with this handbook containing all of the necessary forms and information for participating in athletics.

Each parent or guardian shall read all of the enclosed material and certify that they understand the athletic eligibility rules and policies of the Pittsfield Public Schools. This signed document will be filed in the athletic director's office.

Prior to the first day of participation in practice, all athletes must have the following items on file in the athletic office:

- Updated Physical Form
- User Fee Payment
- Parental Consent\Emergency Medical\Liability Agreement Form
- Athletic Code of Conduct Form

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Athletic Handbook

Agreement

I, the undersigned, agree to adhere to this athletic code, realizing that failure to do so will result in actions described in the Pittsfield Public Schools Athletic Handbook.

_____ Date

_____ Student Signature

_____ Parent\Guardian Signature

_____ will be covered by:
Name of student

School Insurance: _____ Private Insurance: _____

Date Of Physical: _____ Name Of Physician: _____

