



Hillsborough County
PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Preparing Students for Life

MIDDLE SCHOOL ATHLETICS HANDBOOK

Revised July 1, 2017

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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PLATFORM STATEMENT

Athletics are historically and socially significant in our national culture. Athletics provide a primary means through which we develop and maintain the physical vigor and stamina required to realize our potential as Americans. Athletics provide a primary means to develop habits, attitudes, and ideals requisite to ethical competition and effective cooperation in a free society. Athletics provide healthful and wholesome leisure time activities for our citizens and youth. Athletics have a powerful appeal for young people during their formative years. Athletic activities further the harmonious development of our youth. Athletic experiences should be offered to all students in the schools of Hillsborough County.

PRINCIPLES OF ATHLETICS

To fully use the potential in athletics for educational experiences, interscholastic programs should be organized and conducted in accordance with these six basic principles:

- a. Interscholastic athletic programs should be regarded as integral parts of the total educational program and should be conducted so that they are worthy of such regard.
- b. Interscholastic athletic programs should supplement rather than serve as substitutes for basic physical education programs, physical recreation programs, and intramural athletics programs.
- c. Interscholastic athletic programs should be subject to the same administrative control as the total educational programs.
- d. Personnel with adequate training in the principles of coaching should conduct interscholastic athletic programs.
- e. The welfare of the participant should be placed above any other consideration. What happens to the athlete who participates in the sports program is of primary importance. His or her welfare should transcend any other consideration. Victory is highly desired, important, and should be sought, but not at the sacrifice of other values concerned with the development of the participant.
- f. Interscholastic athletic programs should be conducted in accordance with the letter and spirit of the rules and regulations of appropriate conference, state, and national athletic associations.

THE RESEARCH

Research has shown that the involvement in sports is a safe alternate activity for young people. Youth sports are a deterrent to negative behavior and allow children to participate in positive fulfillment at a critical stage of their young lives. According to the President's Council on Physical Fitness¹, early intervention is recommended as a tool to curb delinquent behavior that may continue over a lifetime. The role of sports as a safe alternate activity to violence and intimidation is gaining interest due to increasing concern

¹ President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports Research Digest, September 1997, Series 2, No.11.

with flourishing gang membership. Youth sports are considered a venue for reflecting or shaping society's acceptance or disapproval for violence and aggression. Intervention is crucial in the lives of youth that are facing a pivotal choice about whether or not to join a gang. Youth sports can offer an alternate activity that provides some of the same qualities as gang membership (peer relationships, competition, being part of a "team", social values, etc.) but it does so in a positive way.

Competition that provides a student with opportunities to pursue his or her personal best fosters competence and mastery, physical fitness, and emotional well being. According to a recent Health Bulletin² participants in team sports, such as basketball or soccer, or in individual team events, such as in track and field, learn the skills to risk appropriately and to accept the consequences of their actions. Sports are also a great stress buster. Concentrating on sports skills and performance quiets the mind and allows students to work off tension.

Being on competitive teams teaches boys and girls how to lead and how to cooperate, and those abilities serve them well in the world of work and in their interpersonal relationships. Mastering the rules and skills of team sports requires concentration and attention to detail qualities that go a long way in the classroom, too. In addition, once they master any set of skills, students become more confident about trying new things.

Students who compete effectively know the value of preparation. Competition requires them to set and achieve goals and also allows them to take pride in their accomplishments. Since most young people at least occasionally get down on themselves, working toward their personal best nurtures feelings of self-worth.

Competitiveness is a vital part of athletics. With all the positive aspects of competition stated, it must be also stated that the middle school philosophy has components that include all students with respect to participation. For this, schools must be presented options for completing the task of inclusion of all students. While teams that participate against other schools will have competitive contests, all students will have the ability to showcase their talents in events as well.

AT-RISK STUDENTS

The Middle School Athletics Program is expected to directly affect 8,000 children in grades six through eight in 2011-2012. An unknown number of children will be involved indirectly as spectators at the athletic contests. There are approximately 45,000 students in the 46 middle schools in Hillsborough County. No other extracurricular program involves more children, directly and indirectly, than the athletic program. Students who have displayed academic and behavior problems in the past will be aware of the athletic participation guidelines and will therefore know that grades and conduct must improve in order to participate on the sport teams. All of the schools reported that attendance, grades, and conduct among the participants were enhanced during the sport season. We have found that many students who we consider at-risk for dropping out of school are

² Health Bulletin; Glencoe/McGraw-Hill; Fall 1997

refocused in a positive way through their active participation in the sports program. Sports for many of these students may become the only reason they remain in school. If we give them the opportunity before they reach high school to enjoy the benefits of athletics, perhaps we will be able to keep them in school and allow them to become more productive citizens.

MIDDLE SCHOOL ATHLETICS

1. Athletic programs are open to all 6th, 7th, and 8th grade boys and girls.
2. Weekly progress reports will be checked. One "F" in conduct for the week will disqualify the student from athletic participation for the coming week.
3. Any athlete assigned in-school suspension (ISS) or out-of-school suspension (OSS) must sit out a minimum of one game.
4. Players must have a 2.0 GPA from previous nine-week grading period to try-out for a sport. During the first nine-week period, sixth grade students will not need a 2.0 GPA to try-out for basketball however; they must meet the conduct requirement. Grades should be checked after each nine-week period to verify eligibility. Beginning January 2018, eligibility will be determined by semester. Students without documentation of grades are ineligible.
5. Practice is limited to a maximum of 1 1/2-hour duration.
6. In case of inclement weather, the host school administration will communicate with the visiting school and the Athletics Department in regards to cancellation and/or rescheduling dates.
7. The National Federation of State High Schools rulebooks are the governing source for rules interpretation.
8. Any player displaying unsportsmanlike behavior or any misconduct will be removed from the game and may not return during that game or the next contest.
9. Each sport will have a limited contest dress list (except track and field); however, practice squads may be unlimited and coaches may change their dress list at their discretion. All students interested in playing a particular sport may be encouraged to participate on the practice squads. Coaches are responsible for selecting those players who may best represent their school.
10. Age of students – an 8th grade player must not have reached 15 years before September first.
11. The district should provide an insurance program similar to the high school program. Parents pay the cost of the insurance. Arrangements should be made to accommodate any student who is unable to pay for the insurance.
12. Athletes will wear T-shirts as game jerseys. Shorts could be from their PE uniform or similar and must be a solid color. Shirts will be numbered on the back. The T-shirts will be used for all the sports and should be collected and issued accordingly. Home team will wear color T-shirt and visitors will wear gray.

13. Each middle school should be allocated funds to help offset any special costs.
14. Physical education equipment should be not used for the middle school athletics program. The Athletics Department will provide a standard set of equipment for each school. Additional supplies must be requested from the Athletics Department.
15. The respective associations should do officiating. However, since the middle school contests will be during the off season, the associations should be able to provide one/two officials at a reduced rate. The host school will pay the officials. After the official has arrived to cover a particular game and the game has to be canceled, the official should be paid the full rate.
16. The middle schools should be clustered into geographical groups of five to six schools each. Schools only compete within their cluster.
17. Rosters will be submitted to the Assistant Principal and then to Top Team Score prior to the first contest in all sports excluding track. Game day rosters should be provided for basketball, volleyball and track.
18. If a coach is removed from a contest by an official for unsportsmanlike behavior, the district athletic office will investigate the situation and render a decision on game suspension.
19. Limit of Eligibility: A student may participate in middle school athletics for three years. The first year as a sixth grader, the first year as a seventh grader, and the first year as an eighth grader. Eligibility begins with the promotion to the next grade.

MIDDLE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Responsibilities:

1. Prior to Contest
 - a) Verify all personnel processing (coaches, game managers etc.).
 - b) Verify eligibility rosters prior to the first contest and submit to Top Team Score.
 - c) Verify transportation and security.
 - d) Request schedule changes prior to the season, if needed.
 - e) Communicate with high school administration, if needed.

2. At Site
 - a) Attend all contests.
 - b) Introductions with game officials.
 - c) Monitor crowd.
 - d) Make decisions on weather related issues.
 - e) Remain at site until all students from your school have vacated the site.

MIDDLE SCHOOL GAME MANAGER

Responsibilities:

1. Host and non-host:
 - a) Attend contest from start to finish.
 - b) Arrange for transportation to contest.
 - c) Provide faculty and staff pass list.
 - d) Assist host game manager as needed.

2. Host:
 - a) Communicate with senior high assistant principal for administration when playing at a high school site.
 - b) Facility set up (and clean up when necessary)
 - c) Hire and pay security.
 - d) Pay officials.
 - e) Hire and pay all game personnel
 - f) Pay all game managers.
 - g) Submit game report at conclusion of contest.

3. Non-host:
 - a) Assist host site coordinator.
 - b) In Track and Field, prearrange a minimum of three people to help the host school.

MIDDLE SCHOOL HEAD COACHES

Responsibilities of all head coaches:

1. Directly responsible to the assistant principal for administration for the proper operation and supervision of their athletes in practices, competition, and transportation.
2. To be loyal to their school, principal, and county administrative policies.
3. Responsible for care and storage of equipment.
4. Responsible for complete inventory of equipment.
5. Attend meetings pertaining to their sport.
6. Turn in form Application for Athletic Participation form to the assistant principal for administration on each participant before issuance of equipment or practice. (To include managers, statisticians, and student assistants)
7. Turn in eligibility request and birth certificates as needed to establish eligibility of team members.
8. Responsible for facilities used by their sport. Turn in to the assistant principal for administration any needed maintenance requirements.
9. It is required during the season that each team member takes around their grade and conduct form weekly. Review these each week before participation for conduct or academic problems.
10. Fill out an accident report on any athlete who becomes injured during practice or competition.
11. Responsible for setting up required facilities for all home contest involving their sport. This includes arranging for officiating of intersquad contest.
12. Carry out the policies and procedures of athletics as approved by the School Board of Hillsborough County, Florida.

BASKETBALL

1. Fall season – practice begins 2 days following the first day of school for students.
2. Five or six games schedule - one or two game(s) per week
3. Mouthpieces are required.
4. Dress roster of up to 18 for inscholastic competitions. Unlimited practice and intersquad rosters. Being a member of the dress roster does not guarantee playing in each contest.
5. Running clock - 20 minute halves; clock may be stopped last 2 minutes of the game. Two 1 -minute time-outs per half (clock stops). Five minute halftime. Four minute overtime with running clock, if needed.
6. The NFHS basketball rules will be followed - including the tracking of personal fouls. The following exceptions to the NFHS rules will be allowed:
 - Rule 3 section 4 -uniforms
 - Rule 5 sections 5 to 11 - playing time and time-outs
7. Use two West Coast Officials as referees. West Coast Officials will be paid at the rate approved in the school board's contract.

GIRLS FLAG FOOTBALL

1. Fall season - practice begins the week following the final regular season scheduled basketball game.
Matches begin the week following 10 student school days of practice
2. Sites will be the same as boys' volleyball whenever possible.
3. Mouthpieces are required.
4. Dress roster of up to 25 for interscholastic competitions. Unlimited practice and intersquad rosters. Being a member of the dress roster does not guarantee playing in each contest.
5. NIHRSA Rules will be followed in conjunction with high school flag football.
6. The West Coast Officials Association will provide three officials per contest. They will be paid as stipulated in the contract as approved by the School Board

BOYS VOLLEYBALL

1. Fall season - practice begins the week following the final regular season scheduled basketball game.
Matches begin the week following 10 student school days of practice
2. The schedule will be five or six dual matches as determined by the Athletics Department.
3. Dress roster of up to 18 for interscholastic competitions. Unlimited practice and intersquad rosters. Being a member of the dress roster does not guarantee playing in each contest.
4. The NFHS volleyball rules will be followed.
5. Matches will consist of 2 out of 3 games to determine the winner. All games will be rally scoring. The first two games score shall be 25 points with a least a 2-point advantage over the opponents. The third game shall go to 15. The winner must win by two.
6. Height of the net should be seven feet and eleven and five eighth inches (7 feet, 11 5/8 inches).
7. Use one volleyball association official. The volleyball official will be paid at the rate approved by the School Board's contract.
8. The libero can be used and must wear a different color uniform top.
10. Compression shorts are prohibited.

TRACK AND FIELD

1. Fall season - practice begins the first Monday following the last scheduled regular season girls' flag football/boys' volleyball games.
2. Unlimited dress and practice roster.
3. Each school will field a boys' team and a girls' team
4. 6 running events and 2 field events for middle schoolers:
 - Running long jump
 - Shot put - 6 pounds (for girls), 4K for boys
 - 100 meter dash
 - 800 meter run
 - 800 meter relay (4 x 200) *max of 2 entries* per school
 - 400 meter dash
 - 200 meter dash
 - 400 meter relay (4 x 100) *max of 2 entries* per school
5. The NFHS track and field rules will be followed. The following exceptions to the NFHS rules will be allowed:
 - a) Students can compete in 3 total events.
 - b) Four students may be entered for each event in an area meet and two relay teams. The top three in every event at the cluster meet advance to the county championship. Only one relay team per school may advance to the county championship.
 - c) Students may participate in back to back running events.

SOCCER

1. Winter season - Practice begins in January, date TBA. Games begin the week following 10 student school days of practice.
2. Five or six game schedule.
3. Mouthpieces and shin-guards are required.
4. Dress roster of up to 20 for interscholastic competitions. Unlimited practice and intersquad rosters. Being a member of the dress roster does not guarantee playing in each contest.
5. Two 25 minute halves, 5 minute halftime. Overtime will proceed directly into penalty kicks until finished.
6. The NFHS soccer rules will be followed. Exceptions to the NFHS rules will be allowed:
 - Rule 3, section 3 Substitutions: Unlimited substitutions at any stoppage of play will be allowed.
 - Rule 4, section 1 Numbering of jerseys.
7. Use one soccer association official. Soccer association official will be paid at the rate approved by the School Board's contract.

BOYS FLAG FOOTBALL

1. Spring season - practice begins the week following the final regular season scheduled soccer match
Matches begin the week following 10 student school days of practice
2. Sites will be the same as girls' volleyball whenever possible.
3. Mouthpieces are required.
4. Dress roster of up to 25 for interscholastic competitions. Unlimited practice and intersquad rosters. Being a member of the dress roster does not guarantee playing in each contest.
5. NIHRSA Rules will be followed in conjunction with high school flag football.
6. The West Coast Officials Association will provide three officials per contest. They will be paid as stipulated in the contract as approved by the School Board

GIRLS VOLLEYBALL

1. Spring season - practice begins the week following the final regular season scheduled soccer match
Matches begin the week following 10 student school days of practice
9. The schedule will be five or six dual matches as determined by the Athletics Department.
10. Dress roster of up to 18 for interscholastic competitions. Unlimited practice and intersquad rosters. Being a member of the dress roster does not guarantee playing in each contest.
11. The NFHS volleyball rules will be followed.
12. Matches will consist of 2 out of 3 games to determine the winner. All games will be rally scoring. The first two games score shall be 25 points with a least a 2-point advantage over the opponents. The third game shall go to 15. The winner must win by two.
13. Height of the net should be seven feet and four and one eighth inches (7 feet, 4 1/8 inches).
14. Use one volleyball association official. The volleyball official will be paid at the rate approved by the School Board's contract.
15. The libero can be used and must wear a different color uniform top.
10. Compression shorts are prohibited.



MIDDLE SCHOOL COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIPS

Basketball

Male/Female Team Winners from each cluster:

- Played the week following the regular season.
- Quarterfinals at Middle School sites on Monday.
- Semifinals and Finals at High School site on Wednesday and Thursday.

Track

Top three finishers from each cluster meet:

- Meet run on the week following the regular season.
- Meet will consist of Preliminaries and Finals.

Soccer

Male/Female Team Winners from each cluster:

- Played the week following the regular season.
- Quarterfinals, Semifinals, and Finals at High School sites on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

Volleyball

Team Winners from each cluster

- Played the week following the regular season.
- Quarterfinals at Middle Schools on Monday., Semifinals and Finals at High School sites on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Football

Team Winners from each cluster

- Played the week following the regular season.
- Quarterfinals at Middle Schools on Monday, Semifinals and Finals at High School sites on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Determining Cluster Winners in Basketball, Soccer, Football, and Volleyball:

1. Fewest Losses.
2. Head to head competition.
3. In case of a 3-way tie, there will be a play-in scenario on the last Friday of the season. A blind draw will determine the seeding. In basketball, soccer and football, the play-in will consist of a half; in volleyball, a play in will consist of one game to 25 points.

Seed #1 will host and the format will be as follows:

1st Half – Seed #3 vs Seed # 2

2nd Half – Seed #1 plays winner of prior contest

Championship brackets will be determined by a blind draw with same seeds for both boys and girls.

MIDDLE SCHOOL CLUSTERS – 2017/2018

East		South East
Burnett		Barrington
Jennings		Burns
Marshall		Eisenhower
Mulrennan		Randall
Tomlin		Rodgers
Turkey Creek		Shields
West		West Central
Davidson		Adams
Farnell		Pierce
Hill		Sligh
Martinez		Van Buren
Smith		Webb
Walker		Sulphur Springs
North		South West
Benito		Coleman
Buchanan		Madison
Greco		Monroe
Liberty		Roland Park
Turner/Bartels		Tinker
		Wilson
Central		East Central
Ferrell/Franklin		Dowdell
Memorial		Giunta
Orange Grove		Mann
Rampello		McLane
Stewart		Progress Village
Young		Williams