

DAANJ

Directors of Athletics Association of New Jersey

A MANUAL FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETICS

A Vital Part of Education



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Manual Revisions (11/2024)

Introduction

The main purpose of an interscholastic athletic program is to provide educational experiences for the participants as an extension of the school's curriculum. There is no secret that a sound interscholastic athletic program can make significant contributions to a school's overall educational program. A well-organized and directed interscholastic athletic program is an integral part of the total educational experience and is a privilege that should be made available to all students willing to commit to an educationally-based athletic program.

Athletics provides opportunities for growth, development, sportsmanship, and citizenship. Athletic programs often help identify communities through their traditions, rivalries, history, and championships won. Athletic programs are an essential part of the total education experience and should serve as an extension of the classroom. The community should be willing to support educational and athletic programs that are built on the foundation of sound policies and good practices.

The Director of Athletics is an ever-evolving administrative position with the main purpose of providing leadership and oversight, to effectively run the interscholastic athletic program of a school. The Director of Athletics should be prepared to meet various day-to-day operations as well as provide the vision for the future of the athletic program. The responsibilities of the position continue to become more challenging and the various duties require that the person in this role have exceptional management and communication skills. The Director of Athletics must be able to convey the program's expectations to all stakeholders to develop student-athletes in an education-based program.

The purpose of this manual is to guide both veteran and new athletic administrators in the various responsibilities of the position and to assist them with tools to be effective leaders. We hope that this manual gives direction to the development of an educationally-based athletic program for middle and secondary school students, by providing proper administration through competent leadership.

CHAPTER I

Board of Education & Administrative Responsibilities

The profile of the high school athletic program in most New Jersey schools is directly traceable to the Board of Education which develops/approves policies for the schools of their community. Superintendents play a critical role as they are responsible for the implementation of the policies and philosophy of the Board of Education and for ensuring that all schools in their district are effectively run. Another critical role is that of the high school Principal. The Principal of the high school reports to the Superintendent and is directly responsible for putting into action the policies and philosophy established for the schools.

Each group has certain responsibilities which are primarily delegated to them. In an attempt to list these duties and responsibilities please note that not every responsibility is addressed, only major areas as it relates to the overall administration of a sound athletic program are listed.

The Board of Education is responsible for:

1. Developing policies for the administration of athletic programs.
2. Developing a philosophy for athletic competition to meet the needs of the students and community.
3. Budgeting funds to provide equal opportunity for all students.
4. Approving assignments of all coaches recommended by the Superintendent and Principal.
5. Providing insurance for athletic teams.
6. Providing for the services of a team physician.
7. Providing for safe transportation of athletic teams.
8. Accepting bids for athletic equipment and supplies through recommendations of the Superintendent, Principal, and Director of Athletics.
9. Providing the services of a certified athletic trainer (full or part-time depending on the size and scope of the program).

The Superintendent of Schools is responsible for:

1. Executing the Board of Education policies and regulations.
2. Assuming general supervisory responsibility for all programs in the schools, including athletics.
3. Assisting in the development of written policies and procedures which include the philosophy of the sports programs for the Board of Education.
4. Working with the Principal of each school to determine other staff duties.
5. Assisting in the development of job specifications for the position of Director of Athletics and coaches.
6. Assigning coaches on the recommendation of the high school Principal.
7. Reviewing requests for budgetary funds for the athletic program before submission to the Board of Education.

The School Principal is responsible for:

1. The total athletic program in their school.
2. The oversight of all eligibility rules of the NJSIAA and league/conference of which the school is a member.
3. Signing and validating all requests from the NJSIAA.
4. Recommending to the Superintendent and Board of Education all coaching assignments.
5. When applicable, submit all athletic contracts with financial agreements to the Superintendent and Board of Education for approval.
6. Representing his/her school at league, county, and/or state meetings (This is generally delegated to the Director of Athletics).
7. In coordination with the Director of Athletics, regularly assessing the athletic program and reporting findings to the Superintendent and Board of Education.
8. Submitting an annual athletic budget to the Superintendent and Board of Education for subsidization of athletic programs.
9. Ensuring athletic vouchers for payment, dues or fees, and/or other expenses are paid by the Board of Education.
10. Submitting requests for insurance coverage of athletic teams to the Superintendent and Board of Education.

CHAPTER II

Qualifications, Duties & Responsibilities of the Present-Day Director of Athletics

In New Jersey Secondary Schools (both public and non-public), the number of schools and sports programs has increased over the past 30 years. These programs involve a growing number of skilled personnel needed to coach the student-athletes of today. In the past, it was common to have one coach in charge of many different teams. It was also common to have only a varsity-level team. Currently, it is rare to find a school having one person coaching all teams, but more common to have multiple staff members involved in coaching athletic teams. It is also more common for schools to have two or three levels of play (Varsity, Junior Varsity, and Freshman) and a separate coach or coaches hired for each level. These changes have forced Boards of Education to focus attention on the development of well-rounded athletic programs. These programs demand leadership that brings out the best talents of all personnel.

The many responsibilities delegated to the high school Principal make it necessary that duties in the area of interscholastic athletics be assigned to a qualified individual to lead that program. A successful athletic program requires an organized, dedicated, and experienced individual with a deep sense of responsibility toward the position of Director of Athletics. It requires a committed individual who will work tirelessly to make the area of athletics an exceptional part of the school's educational program.

The administration and supervision of interscholastic athletics places an enormous amount of responsibility on the Director of Athletics. The quality of the individual leading the program often determines to what degree and how effectively the athletic program is meeting its goals and objectives. To make things more challenging, oftentimes the role of the Director of Athletics is tied to additional duties. It is not uncommon for the Director of Athletics to serve as the department chairperson of Health & Physical Education, director of co-curricular activities, and/or assistant to the principal (disciplinarian).

It is the aim of the Directors of the Athletics Association of New Jersey, Inc. (DAANJ) to enhance the position of the Director of Athletics and be an example to local, state, and national associations of how this is accomplished. Definite standards must be set and required of an individual for him/her to be able to fill the position. The Directors of Athletics Association of New Jersey, Inc. recommends the following personal and professional qualifications for those seeking to be an effective athletic administrator:

Personal qualifications:

- Strong leadership ability.
- Understanding of the total educational program and how athletics complement educational programs.
- Exceptional organizational and administrative ability.
- Knowledge of the skills of scheduling, budgeting, purchasing, and care of equipment.
- Ability to effectively communicate with civic groups regarding the athletic program.

Professional qualifications/certifications:

- Hold the appropriate New Jersey Department of Education Certification (Supervisor Certificate / *Administrator Certificate) *currently not required.
- Minimally possess a BA or BS degree, with the aim of a master's degree.
- Have prior experience as an athletic coach.
- Possess Registered Athletic Administrator (RAA) designation by the NIAAA working towards Certified Athletic Administrator (CAA) designation with the goal of Certified Master Athletic Administrator (CMAA).

Duties and Responsibilities

The ever-expanding and broadening of athletic programs call for a highly organized and tactful individual to successfully perform the many and varied duties that are required.

Below are some of the many duties and responsibilities of the Director of Athletics.

Be responsible to the Principal for all matters involving interscholastic athletics.

The Director of Athletics is the specialist in the field of athletics and shall make program recommendations as well as keep the Principal informed concerning all matters about athletics.

Represent the school at athletic meetings.

This would include all conferences, county, state, and other meetings in which the school is a member or involved. Serving as the Principal's designee, it is the responsibility of the Athletic Director to inform the Principal of what has transpired.

Annually prepare the budget to cover the required expenditures necessary to conduct the total interscholastic athletic program.

This would include all facets of the athletic program. Great care must be given in the preparation of the budget so that the needs of all activities are given proper consideration. Careful analysis should be given to meet the needs of both male and female athletic programs.

Be responsible for submitting requisitions for all athletic equipment and supplies.

Head coaches should be consulted regarding the equipment and supplies needed, including complete description (sizes, color, trim, composition, etc.), manufacturer, and number.

Keep on file a complete financial record of receipts and expenditures.

Each game's receipts should be carefully checked so that the number of tickets sold balances with the money received. A record of all bills and checks used to pay those bills should be readily available. An assistant or associate Director of Athletics may be placed in charge of all financial records, but the total financial picture should be under the direct control of the Director of Athletics.

Keep an inventory of all athletic equipment and supplies.

With the help of a staff member, coach, or the equipment manager all equipment and supplies should be inventoried at the end of each sports season.

Hold professional meetings with the members of the athletic department.

Regular meetings should be scheduled at the beginning of each sports season, fall, winter and spring and at the end of the school year.

Arrange schedules for all athletic contests and file contracts in the athletic office.

A contract or agreement should be prepared for all athletic contests. This generally occurs for contests set up outside of a division/conference schedule. Contests should be confirmed and verified well in advance of the actual participation date.

Arrange for payment of home game officials/personnel.

The Director of Athletics should have on file a written contract or electronic confirmation with each official (or crew chief) assigned to work at their school. There are many scheduling and payment platforms currently available (Zebraweb / RefPay) that assist with payment. When possible, checks should be made out in advance so that officials and game personnel can be paid the day they work. When that is not possible it is the role of the Director of Athletics to work with the business administrator to ensure timely payment of officials and personnel.

Maintain complete athletic records for all sports.

This would include such things as:

- Scores of all contests.
- Win/loss records for all teams.
- List of student-athletes eligible to compete.
- Team rosters.
- Letter winners.
- Team captains.
- Individual & team honors.
- Running inventories.
- Equipment requisitioned.
- Assignment of coaches.
- Salary guides of coaches.
- Financial receipts.
- Transportation schedules/payment.
- Team schedules.

Check the eligibility of all athletes.

All athletes should meet all state (NJSIAA) eligibility requirements as it relates to age, academic credits, semesters in secondary school, as well as transfer rules, and scholastic standing. There may be additional local requirements such as participation fees, insurance, parental permission, and additional academic standards. Appropriate lists should be kept on file.

Ensuring the coaching staff is appropriately certified and trained for emergencies.

The Director of Athletics shall make sure that all coaches are properly certified (NJDOE and NJSIAA) as well as trained in CPR/AED and First Aid. Completion of NFHS Fundamentals of Coaching (blended version) must be completed as well as concussion and heat acclimatization certification.

Be responsible for the care, maintenance, and storage of all athletic equipment.

The Director of Athletics must impress upon all coaches the need for their cooperation in this matter, particularly in the issuing and receiving of uniforms. Some companies that clean uniforms and recondition equipment will store the equipment during the off-season.

Be responsible for publicity and media releases concerning athletics.

This is often a neglected area, yet it is most important that a favorable image of athletics be presented to the public. The time spent preparing media releases that can now be shared through websites, electronic or social media will be more than worth the effort resulting in good public relations.

Assume leadership in the development of the varsity, junior varsity, and freshman or junior high programs.

To optimize program growth and development, the Director of Athletics must assume a leadership role in organizing the progression of each team sport through high school. Within the rules and guidelines of the NJSIAA, the director should look to foster relationships with developmental programs.

Attend/administer home contests and when possible attend away contests or appoint a representative to serve as a designee.

As the leader designated to ensure the smooth operation of each contest, it is necessary to attend as many contests as possible and when that is not possible, assign a designee to assist in this role. It may be necessary to attend away contests, not just to support your program but to assist the host school in the administration of an athletic contest.

Make sure all athletes have medical examinations according to state and local regulations.

According to New Jersey Department of Education guidelines and by the NJSIAA, it is in the best interest of all student-athletes to ensure they are medically cleared to participate.

Ensure that all athletes are properly covered by insurance.

No student should be allowed to participate until it has been ascertained that they are adequately covered by insurance as required by their local school board. Many boards of education purchase liability insurance that covers athletic participation. Claim procedures should be clearly documented.

Approve all recommendations for athletic awards.

Each coach should submit to the Director of Athletics, for approval, the members of their team who are being recommended for letters or awards.

Provide for the proper administration and supervision of all athletic contests.

This may include:

- Selling and taking tickets.
- Arranging for sufficient police coverage or crowd control.
- Arranging for medical and/or ambulance coverage.
- Providing seating/restroom facilities.
- Providing necessary facilities for the visiting team.
- Ensuring game equipment/facilities are prepared for competition.

Recommend the best-qualified candidate available for coaching positions.

The Director of Athletics should recommend to the Principal the staff members who are qualified for vacant coaching positions in the athletic department.

Have a thorough knowledge of the NJSIAA rules and regulations as well as county and conference regulations.

Not only should the Director of Athletics have a thorough knowledge of the NJSIAA, county, and conference rules and regulations, but should be responsible for seeing the coaches, too, have a working knowledge of the rules and regulations.

Have a thorough knowledge of NCAA Eligibility.

The Director of Athletics should be able to guide student-athletes seeking to participate in athletics at the collegiate level. He/she should be able to work with parents, athletes, coaches, and the Director of Guidance providing accurate information regarding college athletic participation.

CHAPTER III

Staff Development & Evaluation

In any interscholastic Athletic program, a large number of coaches are needed for the successful operation of the program. One of the first things to be accomplished is the formation of a general philosophy for the school. The athletic department philosophy/mission statement should have input from the coaching staff and should mirror the major philosophies of the school. These principles should guide the direction of the department and the attitudes & beliefs of the coaching staff.

The Director of Athletics should have periodic meetings with the Principal to discuss the procedure and methods of maintaining/improving the professionalism of coaching positions. In the appointment of athletic coaches, recommendations from the Director of Athletics should be closely examined before selections are made by the administration and the Board of Education.

Topics for discussion should include:

- The time needed to fulfill coaching duties.
- When applicable, flexibility in teaching schedules.
- In-service training for the development of coaches.
- Coaching salaries.
- Coach's opportunities for professional development.

Coaching manuals should be created/updated with information about the administration of the athletic program. The manual should include information on policies and procedures such as:

- Athletic eligibility.
- Physical examinations.
- Parental consent & permission forms.
- Care & prevention of injuries.

- Insurance.
- Equipment handling.
- Scheduling.
- Transportation.
- Athletic awards.
- State and Conference regulations.
- Assemblies & banquets.
- General policies of the school are set by the Board of Education and the administration.

Evaluation

Evaluation of the coaching staff is one of the most important roles of the Director of Athletics. How often this is done will depend on the staff and how they meet the needs of the athletic program, but best practices would indicate seasonally at a minimum. The quality of the staff must be an ongoing concern and the process of evaluation is extremely important in providing positive feedback and the need for improvement in specific coaching areas.

The evaluation criteria of coaches generally center around the following areas:

- Leadership ability.
- Conduct.
- Quality/Caliber of instruction.
- Knowledge of coaching techniques.
- Application of coaching techniques.
- Relationships with players.
- Relationships with parents.
- Rapport with the community.
- Rapport with the coaching staff.
- Providing for the growth of the program.
- Knowledge of sporting rules (conference, county, state).
- Character development.
- Sportsmanship.
- Planning.
- Budgeting.
- Management.
- Discipline application.
- Monitoring of academic progress of players.

The primary emphasis of evaluation must be on providing feedback to coaches to improve their skills which ultimately improves the athletic program.

CHAPTER IV

Financing

Each year the cost of running comprehensive school programs is a challenge. In the same manner that costs have increased for most other services, increases of all kinds have occurred in athletics. Equipment, uniforms, officials' fees, and transportation take a very large share of any athletic budget. This financial burden on programs is a continuing challenge even when local school districts fully fund athletic programs. Some programs are forced to utilize alternate methods of funding. It is becoming more common for schools to impose athlete participation fees, require fundraising efforts, or utilize gate receipts/admission fees to offset program costs.

The most desirable approach to financing athletic departments is having the local school district maintain full responsibility for the whole cost of the athletic program. If interscholastic athletics are an integral part of the school program, then it is necessary to finance its endeavors as a part of the total educational experience. Coaching equates to teaching whether it takes place in the classroom, on the field, in the gym, or in the swimming pool.

Athletics offers opportunities for students to build character, and self-esteem, promote sportsmanship & citizenship, and serve as ambassadors of the school and the community. Interscholastic programs are vital to the total educational experience and when administered soundly require the financial commitment that is afforded to other vital educational programs of the school. When athletic programs are educationally based, Boards of Education can more easily justify the money spent for gymnasiums, athletic fields, swimming pools, coaching salaries, uniforms, officials' fees, equipment, etc. as part of the total school budget.

CHAPTER V

Management of Athletic Events

As an integral part of a school's educational program, the management of athletic contests should conform to the principles of the broad field of education and to the tradition of the field of Athletics itself. The Director of Athletics, who is responsible for the conduct of the program according to such principles and traditions, has many duties more essential than just the staging of athletic contests. There are several important steps to follow in preparation for an athletic contest, among which are the following:

Contracts:

- The staging of all athletic events should be preceded by some method of a written contract (Conference Schedule, email agreements, digital correspondence, etc.). The contracts should be concise, but comprehensive enough to clarify all agreements between the participating schools.
- Contracts should be checked and confirmed prior to games to be certain that the date, time, and location of the contest are correct.

- Coaches should be familiar with the contracted obligations.

Selection of officials

Generally, officials are secured by the conference assigner and the following should be considered:

- The selection of certified officials should be utilized for overseeing athletic contests.
- Game officials should be carefully selected, based on their ability to administer and regulate the game in the most effective manner possible and in the best interest of competition and sportsmanship.
- In the selection of officials, contracts should be made stipulating the date, time, fee, location of the game, and capacity in which he/she is to officiate.
- The Directors of Athletics as well as coaches should rate officials and provide feedback to their assigners. This is one way to improve the quality of officiating.

Facility preparation

The Director of Athletics is responsible for the supervision of all facilities. Important responsibilities include:

- To inspect and report the condition of indoor and outdoor facilities.
- Ensure that all facilities and physical equipment are safe for athletic competition.
- Coordinate the scheduling of facilities for all sports contests.
- Coordinate with the Supervisor of Maintenance, repair, and maintenance of the home facilities: All athletic fields, facilities, and gymnasiums (including physical education facilities).
- Hire or make necessary arrangements to provide ushers, security, and other services required by the athletic operation.
- Assume responsibility for the assignment of keys to all athletic facilities.
- Securing alternate athletic facilities for the school's teams if home facilities are not available on the school campus.
- Ensuring the facility for the contest is unencumbered, clean, orderly, and ready for visiting teams and spectators.
- Ensuring playing areas are lined and equipped to conform to the official rules of each sport.
- The facilities must be such as to provide for an overall safe environment.

Scheduling of facilities

The Director of Athletics must schedule the use of facilities to avoid conflicts as well as to ensure access to all teams. Responsibilities include:

- Schedule contests and practice sessions in such a manner as to avoid conflicts in facility usage as well as to ensure equitable use of facilities.
- Resolve facility conflicts that may develop from within teams of the athletic department.
- Establish that the use of a facility or field for an athletic contest should take precedence over a practice for any other team.
- Scheduling facility usage by recreation or other outside community groups.

Hosting Visiting Teams and Officials

- Visiting teams and officials should be received and treated as guests.
- Steps should be taken to provide officials with facilities away from teams, coaches, and spectators.
- Teams and officials should enjoy safe and easy access to the playing area and dressing rooms.
- Informational material should be sent to opposing schools and officials as to uniforms, location of visitor's bench, time of pregame ceremonies, gym or field access, and other pertinent information.
- Parking information should be sent to visiting teams and officials.
- Passes or complimentary tickets should be sent in advance.

Arrangements for spectators

The Director of Athletics shall:

- Provide for the comfort and safety of spectators.
- Attempt to anticipate all problems and handling of spectators.
- Only recognized press passes are permitted near the field of play.
- Prohibit the use of alcohol and smoking at interscholastic events as prohibited by state law.
- Ensure ushers/crowd control are identified and supported with authority.

Ancillary Services

- Food concessions, although usually administered by an outside organization, should be properly managed with reasonable and fair prices and the quality must conform to the best health standard.
- Steps should be taken to have medical coverage at every event possible. Following district/conference rules, a physician may be necessary at certain events. In the event medical coverage is not available, emergency action plans should be in place to care for the needs of student-athletes.
- First aid treatment for spectators should be provided. Such Aid is often provided by the Community First Aid Squad.
- Communication services (phone, internet, etc.) shall be made available for local media.

Game Summary

- Scores (individual and team) should be recorded.
- An accurate report of expenses/finances should be created at the end of the game as per local district policies.
- Procedures for payment of officials should be followed by local district policy.
- All records for historical purposes should be recorded and filed.

It is recommended that the Director of Athletics develop a checklist of procedures for home and away games in preparation for successful athletic administration.

CHAPTER VI

Facilities and Equipment

To provide the greatest number of opportunities for student participation, interscholastic athletics should be available to as many student-athletes that can be taught and supervised properly, and for which there are appropriate facilities and equipment. As the Director of Athletics, one of the primary responsibilities is to create and promote a healthy, non-threatening, and respectful environment that provides each student-athlete the opportunity to develop skills and learn responsibility. In doing so, the management of facilities and all equipment associated with your programs is under your care. This role must be understood and taken seriously.

There are fourteen duties for Athletic Administrators and Athletic Coaches related to negligence litigation:

1. DUTY TO PLAN
2. DUTY TO SUPERVISE
3. DUTY TO ASSESS ATHLETES' READINESS FOR PRACTICE AND COMPETITION
4. DUTY TO MAINTAIN SAFE PLAYING CONDITIONS
5. DUTY TO PROVIDE PROPER EQUIPMENT
6. DUTY TO INSTRUCT PROPERLY
7. DUTY TO MATCH ATHLETES
8. DUTY TO CONDITION PROPERLY
9. DUTY TO WARN
10. DUTY TO ENSURE ATHLETES ARE COVERED BY INJURY INSURANCE
11. DUTY TO PROVIDE EMERGENCY CARE
12. DUTY TO DEVELOP AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN
13. DUTY TO PROVIDE PROPER TRANSPORTATION
14. DUTY TO SELECT, TRAIN AND SUPERVISE COACHES.

Two of the fourteen duties related to negligence litigation are related to Facilities and Equipment.

1) DUTY TO MAINTAIN SAFE PLAYING CONDITIONS – Coaches and Directors of Athletics are considered trained professionals who possess a higher level of knowledge and skill that permits them to identify foreseeable causes of injury specific to a sport and inherent in defective equipment or hazardous environments. Courts have held athletics supervisors responsible for improving unsafe environments, repairing, or removing defective equipment, or disallowing access to unsafe equipment or environments. The use of sport-specific equipment safety checklists can help enhance the safety of participants. In addition, weather conditions must be considered. Athletes should not be subjected to intense or prolonged conditioning during periods of extreme heat and humidity or when frostbite may be a factor. In addition, a plan for monitoring and responding to dangerous weather conditions is necessary. Building codes and

laws must be observed and implemented concerning capacity, ventilation, air filtration, and lighting.

2) DUTY TO PROVIDE PROPER EQUIPMENT – Coaches and athletic administrators must ensure athletes are properly equipped with equipment that is appropriate for the age and maturity of the athletes and that is clean, durable, and safe. Fitting should be carried out per the manufacturer's specifications. This is especially important for protective equipment which must carry a National Operating Commission on Safety in Athletics Equipment (NOCSAE) certification and must be checked for proper fit and wearing. Athletes must wear protective equipment any time they are exposed to the full rigors of contact in practice or competition. The selection of equipment must also consider the age and maturity of the athletes.

When dealing with your facilities some of the policies and procedures a Director of Athletics should consider are:

- Participation in planning, designing, and procurement of facilities for athletics.
- Use of all available resources in promoting understanding and support for purchasing/upgrading of athletic facilities.
- Determination of use of facilities through consultation with program personnel and proper administrative authorities.
- Responsibility for proper maintenance of facilities through cooperation with maintenance staff.

Directors of Athletics can prevent the loss of equipment by careful planning and organization. At the end of the season, all equipment should be collected, cleaned, repaired, and stored. It is important to inventory all supplies and equipment. Many reconditioning companies will pick up equipment, clean, repair, and store your equipment during the off-season, and return it ready for use when needed.

CHAPTER VII

Public Relations

*(Excerpts taken from a 1/10/14 Article - Athletic Administration/Coaching -
<https://coachad.com/author/dr-david-hoch/>)*

By Dr. David Hoch

The Director of Athletics must first recognize that the community judges the schools by the people who represent them. This means that the Director of Athletics, the coaches, the athletes, and the entire student body will serve as public relations agents at home as well as during away competitions. The position of Athletic Director occupies a highly strategic and sensitive position concerning public relations of the high school, particularly as it relates to the programs for which he/she is responsible. The Athletic Director must be ever alert to the opportunities that are open to him/her because of the relationship with the community.

As the Director of Athletics, you are busy with a multitude of other details, tasks and responsibilities. But make no mistake, you are the director of public relations for the athletic program and perhaps the lead person for the entire school. Athletics is, after all, the most visible aspect of education. It is not the most important feature of a school, academics are, but it is often the largest or sole component upon which the community judges a school. Due to the role that athletics plays, many have opinions, and this is where public relations come into play.

Even casual fans will know the scores of games, seasonal records, and who the leading scorers are for the various teams. As the public relations person, you must promote all of the positive aspects, beyond winning, that are involved in your program and there should be many. If you don't perform this role, who will? In your role as the public relations director, here are some ideas to help in this pursuit.

Embrace preseason meetings.

Think of your preseason parents' meetings as the premier, proactive public relations effort of the school year. This is your opportunity to not only present necessary information about your program, but to do it in a positive, enthusiastic manner. You set the tone for the season, establish expectations, and develop a good working relationship with parents. This is basic public relations.

Use of websites.

Post articles on both the school and athletic department sites that positively highlight individuals and teams. While the local media will highlight scores and leading scorers, you must take a slightly different slant and feature an athlete who overcame adversity or a team that performed well despite being outmatched. And don't forget to include illustrative photos.

Use of social media

Employ the same approach with your athletic department's Twitter, Instagram, or other social media accounts, or send a weekly or monthly email newsletter. All of these vehicles accomplish the same goal. Any time that you can provide your parents and community with updates concerning your student-athletes and teams is worthwhile in terms of public relations.

Creation of newsletters

Don't forget that you can still use a hardcopy newsletter format. This technique can be extremely useful in communicating with parents, booster club members, and selected community members. It may be possible to include pertinent articles and notices in newsletters that are already established and employed by the school such as your Parent-Teacher Association or booster club newsletters.

Host informative gatherings/special evenings

Inform your parents, athletes, administration, and board members of your intention to share valuable information. This may include various topics such as Recognition of the signs, symptoms, and treatment for concussions. Other important topics may be the basics of college athletic recruiting, athletic policies and procedures, and other critical issues that arise in your setting. Your public image and respect will rise with each successful effort to assist your parents.

Recognize outreach efforts

Think creatively and publicize your teams' community service efforts. While the primary and obvious purpose of these activities is to help organizations and individuals in the community, it also has excellent public relations value. Let everyone know what you do!

Reach out to media

Invite the local media to your awards banquet or evenings. While they may be unable to attend, you can get credit for the invitation and still send them the names of the award winners for all of your teams. In essence, you are providing the local newspapers, radio stations, and television stations with great positive examples of young people achieving success.

Create programs

Whenever possible, produce programs for your awards banquet or special evening. Granted, an athletic administrator probably doesn't have the time to personally complete this project, but with a little work, you can seek the assistance of a member of the coaching staff, a booster club member, or a parent volunteer who is willing to undertake this project. These programs often become keepsakes for parents and grandparents, and they represent a great public relations effort.

Provide media with positive stories

Provide the local media with article ideas to feature athletes who exhibited exceptional sportsmanship and served as a leader for other team members and fans. Athletes who have

overcome a serious injury or exceptional hurdles to play the sport or to make the team also serve as great subject matter. Collectively, these stories would fall under the category of human interest and provide outstanding public relations value.

Use email alerts

Use the email notification feature involving game cancellations associated with Internet scheduling sites. This application instantly and automatically alerts parents or anyone who signed up for the notification feature that a game has been canceled. Not only will this feature cut down on phone calls asking if a game is still being played, but it also increases the appreciation from some of your stakeholders and hence it is good public relations.

Respond to messages

Always respond to messages (phone and email) promptly. This shows that you are conscientious, dependable, and committed to the development and welfare of young people. Even in the face of possible complaints or problems, your response should always be polite, positive, and professional. This should be the public relations image you want to project.

Post signage

Use signage to welcome fans to your venues and set the standards for behavior and sportsmanship. Creating a positive, education-based environment is a great example of a public relations initiative that should be undertaken by an athletic administrator.

Confront problems

Addressing any misinformation, concerns, or community-wide questions by using whatever efficient methods available to you — social media, websites, etc. making corrections and providing the appropriate information is an important step in creating a good public image. While many athletic administrators may not have considered that one of their responsibilities is to lead the public relations efforts for the athletic department, it is vital. Your school's image, not only of the athletic program, may largely be dependent upon your effort or lack thereof. Public relations is the effort to present the positive, valuable aspects that individuals and organizations may have accomplished and to minimize the effects of a problem or mistake. Don't miss this opportunity to present the image that you want and deserve.

CHAPTER VIII

Athletic Awards

The practice of recognition in the form of school letters and awards is not confined to the areas of Athletics; many of our programs give awards, recognition prizes, scholarships, and special identification for individuals and groups who achieve or participate in co-curricular and extracurricular activities.

The main purpose of any kind of award on the high school level should be to give the athlete recognition for their accomplishments. Athletic awards are given in recognition of outstanding athletic achievement and service to the school or program. Athletic awards should not be given as compensation for services rendered. All-League, All-Conference, All-County, and All-State Awards can give an athlete the public relations they may deserve if they have been an outstanding performer. This type of honor can aid their acceptance to a college or university as well as allow them to participate at the next level.

“Varsity” letters and certificates for athletes seem to be the most widely approved awards given. There are various special awards a department may give, and these are usually recognized by honoring the athlete with a variety of plaques or trophies. Awards should be meaningful and specific with established guidelines or criteria for determining recipients. Although the type and number of awards will vary in each program, most coaches and athletic administrators agree that athletic awards are appropriate and a meaningful part of the athletic experience. Consideration should be given so that all awards presented are defined and meaningful. Special attention should be given to the rules established by the NJSIAA to ensure that special awards do not violate any rules or student amateurism.

What is important in a school athletic program is to have an organized system of giving awards that is educationally sound, economically reasonable, and within the limitations of the rules established by the State Athletic Association.

APPENDIX

Resources / Organizations

DAANJ - Directors of Athletics Association of New Jersey

<http://daanj.org/>

The Directors of Athletics Association of New Jersey is a professional organization for New Jersey high school athletic administrators. The DAANJ works closely with the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association to promote interscholastic athletic programs in the state. Currently, there are over 300 active High School Athletic Directors and over 100 retired athletic directors who are registered as members of the DAANJ. The following are among the many purposes of the DAANJ:

- To support and improve athletic programs in the schools of the State of New Jersey.
- To promote a professional relationship among Principals, Superintendents, Board of Education members, and Directors of Athletics.
- To improve and promote mutual understanding and the best working relationships among secondary schools in the State.
- To promote a program of interscholastic athletics that will be in harmony and contribute to the educational philosophy of the secondary schools in the State.

NCAA - National Collegiate Athletic Association

<http://www.ncaa.org/>

The National Collegiate Athletic Association is a member-led organization dedicated to the well-being and lifelong success of college athletes.

NCAA Eligibility Center - <https://web3.ncaa.org/ecwr3/>

NFHS - National Federation of State High School Associations

<https://nfhs.org/>

The NFHS promotes amateur sports participation and athletics programs at the high school level. In addition, the NFHS provides leadership in the field of high school athletics/activities administration, establishes rules and regulations for the sanctioning of high school athletics/activities events, and formulates model rationales for high school eligibility rules for use by high school athletics/activities administrators.

NFHS Learn - <https://nfhslearn.com/>

NIAAA - National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association of America

<https://members.niaaa.org/>

The NIAAA champions the profession of administering athletic programs in our nation's high schools and middle schools. No other body values, promotes, preserves, supports, and stands ready to uplift the cause of the athletic administrator, as does the NIAAA. Providing education, leadership, and service platforms allows the NIAAA to best help colleagues network, choose from resources, draw from practices, and give back to their profession while advancing in their careers.

NJSIAA - New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association

<https://www.njsiaa.org/>

The NJSIAA, a private, voluntary Association is committed to serving all types of student-athletes, its member schools, and related professional organizations by the administration of education-based interscholastic athletics, which support academic achievement, good citizenship, and fair and equitable opportunities. The NJSIAA is the recognized state authority on interscholastic athletic programs.