

# **Middlesex County Public Schools**



## **Student-Athlete/Parent Handbook**

**2025-2026**

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## MCPS STUDENT-ATHLETE/PARENT HANDBOOK SIGN-OFF FORM

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## **PURPOSE OF HANDBOOK**

The purpose of this Handbook is to provide pertinent information to students and their families regarding participation in the Middlesex County Public Schools VHSL Athletics and Activities programs. Students are expected to read and become familiar with its contents. Coaches, teachers, and administrators will expect students to know the contents of the Handbook and will refer to this Handbook whenever questions arise.

Parents are requested to discuss the contents of the Handbook with their son/daughter. Having a common understanding of the rules and regulations that govern extra-curricular activities will assist in significantly reducing concerns and unforeseen problems.

### **Mission**

We are dedicated to engage, inspire, and empower our students as they develop into confident, passionate, and responsible citizens.

### **Vision**

Our students will actively learn through innovative ways to achieve their goals and pursue their dreams.

### **Core Values**

Citizenship: *Contributing to the greater good of the community*

- o Understanding thoughts, feelings, needs of others
- o Treating others with respect
- o Acting with others' best interest in mind
- o Taking responsibility for own actions
- o Standing up for your beliefs

Collaboration: *Working together to pursue our mission*

- o Earning and giving trust
- o Communicating clearly and listening generously
- o Accepting different perspectives
- o Navigating conflict with respect
- o Leading by example

Creativity: *Using imagination to solve problems & implement new ideas*

- o Thinking critically
- o Taking healthy risks and trying new things
- o Being curious
- o Learning from success and failure
- o Persisting through challenges

Learning: *Discovering our purpose and potential*

- o Mastering skills
- o Cultivating a love for learning
- o Passionately pursuing interests
- o Applying knowledge
- o Believing in oneself

## **PHILOSOPHY**

VHSL athletics and activities at MHS and SCW are an integral part of the total education process. Participants gain valuable skills that foster positive attitudes, build self-esteem, create positive relations, and develop lifelong skills that will serve as a vehicle to enhance total growth and development. The Middlesex County School Board recognizes the value of extracurricular and co-curricular programs as significant tools that enrich the academic experience. Participation in athletics and student extracurricular and co-curricular activities is a privilege, not a right.

## **PROGRAM OBJECTIVES**

- To encourage maximum participation of students in all activities;
- To encourage students to display good sportsmanship at all times;
- To instill the desire to prepare for success;
- To encourage participants to react positively, both in victory and defeat;
- To encourage participants to learn the values of responsibility, dedication, loyalty, teamwork, desire, humility, confidence another desirable traits of good character and citizenship;
- To encourage participants to attempt to influence younger students in the community positively;
- To assist participants in learning to set and achieve goals and in building self-esteem
- To instill the values of good health and physical fitness.

## **Director of Athletics and Student Activities**

The Director of Athletics and Student Activities is responsible for managing, supervising and coordinating the athletic programs within the school division. This position leads the scheduling and budgeting of athletic programs and equipment. Most importantly, the Director of Athletics and Student Activities leads the implementation of the Core Values of the department, ensuring that adults and students participating in athletic programs work to exemplify the behaviors associated with those Core Values.

**Mr. Matthew Stamm**

Director of Athletics and Student Activities [mstamm@mcps.k12.va.us](mailto:mstamm@mcps.k12.va.us)

## **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

### **Academic Requirements**

Participants must meet the VHSL standards which state that participants must have passed five (5) of their credits during the previous year AND must currently be enrolled in five (5) credits for the fall & winter seasons to be eligible. They must have passed five (5) of their credits AND must currently be enrolled in five (5) credits for the second semester of the winter season and the spring season to be eligible.

### **Other Requirements**

Athletic Participants must have a completed physical dated after May 1 of the current year on file in the Director of Athletics and Student Activities office. The VHSL physical form has five basic parts to it that must be completed BEFORE the athlete can try out or practice for a team. The five parts are: Part I-an eligibility part completed and signed by the athlete; Part II- Medical History filled out by parent/guardian; Part III- Physical Examination completed and dated by the examining physician; Part IV- Acknowledgement of Risk and Insurance Statement completed by the parent/guardian; and Part V- Emergency Permission Form completed and signed by the parent/guardian. Providing false information will result in ineligibility for one year.

Athletic Participants must also complete the Concussion Awareness Protocol, sign and return the required documents, see item XV.

## **Eligibility Rules**

To be eligible to represent MHS/SCW in any VHSL interscholastic activities, the student:

1. must be a regular bona fide student in good standing of the school he represents.
2. must be enrolled in the last four years of high school. (Eighth-grade students may be eligible for junior varsity.)
3. for the first semester, must be currently enrolled in not fewer than five subjects, or their equivalent, offered for credit and which may be used for graduation, And have passed five subjects, or their equivalent, offered for credit and which may be used for graduation the immediately preceding year or the immediately preceding semester for school that certify credits on a semester basis. (Check with your principal for equivalent requirements.)
4. for the second semester, must be currently enrolled in not fewer than five subjects, or their equivalent, offered for credit and which may be used for graduation the immediately preceding semester. (Check with your principal for equivalent requirements.)
5. must sit out all VHSL competition for 365 consecutive calendar days following a school transfer unless the transfer corresponded with a family move. (Check with your principal for exceptions.)
6. must not have reached your nineteenth(HS)/fifteenth(MS) birthday on or before the first day of August of the current school year.
7. must not, after entering the ninth grade for the first time, have been enrolled in or been eligible for enrollment in high school more than eight consecutive semesters.
8. must have submitted to your principal before any kind of participation, including tryouts or practice as a member of any school athletic or cheerleading team, an Athletic Participation/Parental Consent/Physical Examination Form, complete and properly signed, attesting that you have been examined during this school year and found to be physically fit for athletic competition and that your parents consent to your participation.
9. must not be in violation of VHSL Amateur, Awards, All Star or College Team Rules. (Check with your principal for clarification in regard to cheerleading.)

Eligibility to participate in interscholastic athletics is a privilege you earn by meeting not only the above-listed minimum standards, but also all **other standards set by the Middlesex County Public Schools.**

***MCPS students must maintain a minimum grade point average in all classes in order to remain eligible for participation in practices and competitions, as explained in the following section.***

## **MCPS Grade Point Average Requirement**

Middlesex County Public Schools requires that students participating in interscholastic athletics governed by the Virginia High School League (VHSL) maintain both those minimum standards and requirements set forth by the VHSL as well as those outlined in this policy. This policy specifically describes minimum grade point averages (GPA) in order to maintain eligibility for participation in interscholastic athletics governed by the Virginia High School League (VHSL).

Students may be eligible for participation with a semester GPA of 2.0, as is explained in further detail below.

## **GPA Requirements**

Students will be required to meet the 2.0 minimum GPA requirement.

Students must enter the school year with a minimum GPA of 2.0 in order to be eligible for participation.

- Grades will be checked at the end of the first and third 9-week grading periods. Students whose GPA is below 2.0

will be required to attend after- school tutoring sessions throughout the duration of the next quarter grading period, during which time they will be allowed to participate in athletics provided they attend the tutoring sessions.

- Grades will be checked at the end of the second and fourth 9-week grading periods (end of the first and second semesters). Students whose GPA is still below 2.0 will be ineligible for participation during the following semester.

Beginning with the 2020 school year and thereafter, grades will be checked at the same points of the school year described above. The standard minimum GPA requirement at each checkpoint will be 2.0.

Students, both eligible and ineligible, will be monitored, counseled, and given the opportunity to participate in tutoring programs throughout the year. Students who become ineligible for participation are encouraged to continue tutoring services during the semester following the determination of ineligibility.

### **Rising Freshmen**

GPA for rising freshmen will be calculated by the high school guidance department based on the students' academic performance during grade 8. Freshman students whose eligibility is in jeopardy due to low GPA will be counseled and offered tutoring services.

### **Extracurricular Eligibility Committee**

The Extracurricular Eligibility Committee will consist of the High School Principal, Director of Athletics and Student Activities and a member of the Guidance Department. The committee may involve additional members provided those three specified positions are participating.

Students who fail to meet the above-required GPA whose situations involve extenuating circumstances or the student's parents or guardian may request a review by the Extracurricular Eligibility Committee. At the sole discretion of the Extracurricular Eligibility Committee, students may be granted a one-time exemption from the minimum GPA eligibility requirement, to be allowed on one occasion during the student's high school career in Middlesex County. Any such determination – either granting or denying the one-time exemption -- by the Committee is not appealable.

### **ATTENDANCE**

As expressed in the Core Value of Commitment, student attendance is a vital aspect of participation in athletic activities. Failure to comply with the following attendance guidelines will result in disciplinary action by the coach. **If a student is absent from practice or play three times without prior approval from the coach or principal, that player will be dismissed from the team for the remainder of that season.** In such cases, parent notification will take place either by telephone or in writing.

Athletes must be in attendance by 8:15 AM and must be in school for the entire day in order to practice or play that same school day. Only a doctor's note or court appointments will be accepted as a reason for exception to this rule. In extenuating circumstances, special permission may be granted by the principals/athletic director.

All coaches will be notified of any student athletes who receive a morning or afternoon detention.

**Any student who receives ISS or OSS will not be permitted to attend practice/game on the day or days that he/she is suspended. Absences due to ISS or OSS are not excused and will be counted as part of the cumulated three allowable absences from practice or play without prior approval.** This will be the minimum punishment imposed by the school, however, coaches may impose additional consequences. This may include suspension from competition or

dismissal from the team.

Any student who is currently *in season* is not allowed to attend out of season practice at any time that conflicts with any in season team activity, game, or practice. All out of season practices are voluntary and failure to attend practices out of season should not lead to any consequence whatsoever. Playing time for out of season activities remains at the coach's discretion. Permission to attend out of season practices must be approved by the in season coach (if applicable), the out of season coach, and the parent. Out of season opportunities are open to any player regardless of tryout results in a previous season.

Extenuating circumstances should be brought to the attention of the Director of Athletics and Student Activities or school administration. Participants are expected to participate fully in each of their classes on the day of an athletic contest, including physical education classes.

Guidelines for participants regarding their attendance at practice sessions are listed below:

1. Team members shall be required to attend all regularly scheduled practices unless otherwise excused by the coach. Absences due to ISS or OSS are not considered excused.
2. When a player knows, in advance, that he/she will be absent from practice, he/she shall request permission to be absent from the coach. **It is the player's responsibility** to contact the coach face to face or via telephone and notify him/her before the practice or game takes place. Second-hand information from another player will not be accepted.
3. A coach may require a written explanation from teachers or parents/guardians as to why a player has missed all or part of a practice.
4. Attendance at special conditioning sessions, which are not a part of the regular sport's season, shall be viewed as voluntary. A sport's season is defined as that period of time that a team may officially practice according to the VHSL rules.

#### *ACADEMICS vs. ACTIVITIES PARTICIPATION*

Because academic pursuits clearly take precedence over extra-curricular activities (including athletics), students have a responsibility to maintain high academic standards. If a student finds that academic obligations are in conflict with his/her athletic obligations, the student should take appropriate action to develop and maintain quality study habits that lead to quality grades. The coaches will be checking up on the participants' grades on a regular basis during the sport season.

Specifically, this means that students must take their classes seriously and keep communication lines open between parents, teachers and coaches. Students requiring additional study time should make necessary arrangements that do not conflict with regularly scheduled practices and/or contests.

If after-school arrangements are the only means of addressing academic needs, the student **MUST** receive prior permission from the coach to attend after-school classroom obligations.

Students who have been assigned to mandatory after-school tutoring will be excused from practice or play missed because of the tutoring. In such cases, communication between the coach and tutoring proctor will confirm the status of the excused absence.

#### **COMMITMENT TO AN ACTIVITY BY A STUDENT**

The decision to participate in a school sponsored activity is an important one. Deciding to no longer participate in an activity is a serious matter. Participants should not consider dropping out of an activity without first consulting with the coach and explaining his or her intentions.

Changing from one activity to another activity once practice has started is also a serious matter. Changing between



activities is not encouraged and can only occur as a result of the following: a discussion between the participant involved and the coach of the initially chosen team; a discussion between the coach of the team later chosen; written release of the former coach.

## **VHSL ACTIVITIES CODE**

### **PARTICIPANTS AND COACHES ACTIVITIES CODE FOR THE PARTICIPANTS**

#### **The contest demands:**

- Fair play at all times,
- A square deal to opponents by participants and spectators,
- Playing for the joy of playing and for the success of the team,
- Playing hard to the end,
- Keeping one's head and PARTICIPATING in the activity, not taunting,
- Respect for officials and expectations that they will enforce the rules,
- A participant should not quit, cheat, bet or "grandstand."

#### **The school demands:**

- Out-of-school and out-of-town conduct of a positive nature,
- Faithful completion of school work as practical evidence of loyalty to school and team,
- Complete observance of training rules as a duty to school, team and self.
- Students serve as a role model as a representative of the Middlesex County Public Schools
- Treat fellow teammates with dignity and respect

#### **Sportsmanship demands:**

- Treatment of visiting team and officials as guests and the extension of every courtesy to them,
- Giving opponents full credit when they win and learning to correct one's own faults through failures,
- Modesty and consideration when one's team wins,
- A team will not "crow" when the team wins or blame the officials when it loses.

## **VHSL/MCPS ATHLETICS AND ACTIVITIES CODE FOR COACHES**

Coaches are expected to exemplify the Core Values of the MCPS Athletic Program at all times. Coaches should model the behavior and disposition the programs seek to instill within students and should provide exceptional leadership both on and off the field.

#### **The school may expect:**

- Work of the coach to be an integral part of the school system with its educational contribution,
- Mastery of the principles of pedagogy and consequent improvement in teaching as well as coaching,
- Loyalty to superiors in making participants fit into the general school program,
- Insistence upon high scholarship and enforcement of all rules of eligibility. Proper supervision of students to ensure their safety and well-being.

#### **The participant may expect:**

- A genuine and up-to-date knowledge of that which the coach proposes to teach,
- Fair, unprejudiced relationship with all squad members;
- Careful attention to the physical condition of players at the time of each contest,
- Competent and trustworthy officials whose decisions will always be supported.

#### **Sportsmanship includes:**

- Teaching athletes to win by use of legitimate means only,

- Counteracting unfounded rumors of questionable practices by opponents.

## **DISCIPLINE REGULATIONS FOR STUDENTS**

### **General Philosophy**

Discipline should be administered in a supportive, rather than a punitive environment. A balance is sought between (1) teaching that actions have consequences and (2) acting on belief that mistakes and misjudgments are not only inevitable with students, but inescapably human.

A coach must be conscious of negative behavior upon the team or group, individual students and the school. As a result, they may be required to establish certain rules that they distribute. These rules will be reviewed periodically.

Coaches are to develop and administer specific policies with board guidelines of school policy. The school's interest is ensuring equitable treatment of students, not in mandating rigid conformity to specific codes of behavior. It is believed that both parents and students will accept reasonable standards of behavior and disciplinary action if those standards are made clear at the beginning of a student's participation in an activity. Head coaches have the primary responsibility of developing policies specific to their respective sport.

Any policy that is established should recognize levels of seriousness of violations of codes of conduct and to provide for different official responses.

Students are entitled to due process.

### **Levels of Disciplinary Action**

Levels of disciplinary action will be appropriate with the seriousness of the infraction. When enforcing discipline, the coach must be careful to maintain the student's dignity, self-esteem and pride. Disciplinary action to be taken by coaches when infractions of rules occur may include but not limited to a warning, limited restriction, exclusion of participants from an activity or suspension from school.

Parent notification regarding serious or repeated infractions will be included in the action to be taken. Students will be made aware in writing of the possible actions in event of infractions at the beginning of a season.

### **Due Process for Students**

Discipline is a joint responsibility of the school, coach, parent and student. The school must use all possible means to direct students toward proper behavior and attitude.

The process for managing student discipline is as follows:

- Students will be informed by their coach of the infraction committed and the possible consequences of that infraction, and given an opportunity to respond. The coach, Director of Athletics and Student Activities or Principal will notify the parent depending on the seriousness of the infraction.
- If the student wishes to appeal the decision of the coach regarding the infraction, the student will appeal to the Director of Athletics and Student Activities. The Director of Athletics and Student Activities will again allow the student to respond and will either confirm, reduce or reverse the discipline.
- For appeal beyond the Director of Athletics and Student Activities, the student may appeal to the Principal.
- Ultimately, the student may appeal to the Superintendent.

## Student Grievances

In a situation where there has been no apparent infraction or disciplinary action applied but a student wishes to lodge a grievance or present some other issue involving a respective sport, the procedure below is to be followed:

- Direct communication with the Coach.
- Direct communication with the Director of Athletics and Student Activities .
- Direct communication with the Principal.
- Direct communication with the Superintendent.

## HAZING/BULLYING/HARASSING

Hazing/Bullying/Harassing by MCPS students is strictly prohibited. Hazing/Bullying/Harassing occurs when an act is committed against a student or a student is coerced into committing an act that creates a substantial risk of harm to the student or to any third party in order for the student to be initiated into or affiliated with any school group, club, athletics team, activity or organization.

Hazing/Bullying/Harassing includes but is not limited to:

- Any activity involving an unreasonable risk of physical harm, including paddling, beating, whipping, branding, electric shock, sleep deprivation, exposure to weather, placement of harmful substances on the body and participation in physically dangerous activities.
- Any activity involving consumption of alcohol, drugs, tobacco products, any other food, liquid or any other substance that subjects the student to an unreasonable risk of physical harm.
- Any activity involving actions of sexual nature or simulation of actions of a sexual nature.
- Any activity that subjects a student to an extreme and unreasonable level of embarrassment, shame or humiliation or which creates a hostile, abuse or intimidating environment for the student to include social media.
- Any activity involving any violation of federal, state or local law or any violation of MCPS policies or regulations.

## CONCUSSIONS

### What is a concussion?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury, or TBI, caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head that can change the way your brain normally works. Concussions can also occur from a blow to the body that causes the head to move rapidly back and forth. Even a “ding,” “getting your bell rung,” or what seems to be mild bump or blow to the head can be serious. Concussions can occur in *any* sport or recreation activity. So, all coaches, parents, and athletes need to learn concussion signs and symptoms and what to do if a concussion occurs. Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/sports/>

Signs for parents or guardians to observe

You can't see a concussion. Signs and symptoms of concussion can show up right after an injury or may not appear or be noticed until hours or days after the injury. It is important to watch for changes in how your child or teen is acting or feeling, if symptoms are getting worse, or if s/he just “doesn't feel right.” **Most concussions occur without loss of consciousness.** *If your child has experienced a bump or blow to the head during a game or practice, look for any of the following signs and symptoms of a concussion:*

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets an instruction
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent

- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows behavior or personality changes
- Can't recall events after hit or fall

### **Symptoms Reported by an ATHLETE with Concussions**

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light and/or noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Does not "feel right"

Source: [http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/pdf/parents\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/pdf/parents_Eng.pdf)

### **Student Athletic Protection Act**

(Code of Virginia § 22.1-271.5 )

The Student-Athletic Protection Act states that each school division will set forth policies and procedures in managing sport concussions. All parents and their student-athletes must be informed yearly of the school division's policies and guidelines for the management of concussions. Following their review of the standards they must sign a statement acknowledging receipt of the information. *The student-athlete is not permitted to participate in school sports until the signature of receipt is received by the school.*

Additionally, if an athlete is suspected of having a concussion they are to be removed from activity until evaluated by a licensed health care provider (Certified Athletic Trainer, Physician, or Nurse Practitioner are the only qualified health care providers according to the Virginia Department of Education).

What are the Potential Long-Term Outcomes of TBI?

The severity of a TBI may range from "mild," i.e., a brief change in mental status or consciousness, to "severe," i.e., an extended period of unconsciousness or amnesia after the injury. TBI can cause a wide range of functional short- or long-term changes affecting thinking, sensation, language, or emotions.

- **Thinking** (i.e., memory and reasoning);
- **Sensation** (i.e., touch, taste, and smell);
- **Language** (i.e., communication, expression, and understanding);
- **Emotion** (i.e., depression, anxiety, personality changes, aggression, acting out, and social inappropriateness).<sup>1</sup>

TBI can also cause epilepsy and increase the risk for conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, and other brain disorders that become more prevalent with age.<sup>1</sup> About 75% of TBIs that occur each year are concussions or other forms of mild TBI.<sup>2</sup> Repeated mild TBIs occurring over an extended period of time (i.e., months, years) can result in cumulative neurological and cognitive deficits. Repeated mild TBIs occurring within a short period of time (i.e., hours, days, or weeks) can be catastrophic or fatal.<sup>3</sup>

### **General Tips to Help Aid in Recovery:**

- Get lots of rest. Don't rush back to daily activities such as work or school.
- Avoid doing anything that could cause another blow or jolt to the head.
- Ask your health care professional when it's safe to drive a car, ride a bike, or use heavy equipment, because your ability to react may be slower after a brain injury.
- Take only the drugs your health care professional has approved.
- Write things down if you have a hard time remembering.
- You may need help to re-learn skills that were lost. Your health care professional can help arrange for these services.<sup>4</sup>

### **References:**

*National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. Traumatic brain injury: hope through research. Bethesda (MD): National Institutes of Health; 2002 Feb. NIH Publication No.: 02-158.*

### **MCPS Return to Play Protocol**

No member of a school athletic team shall participate in any athletic event or practice the same day he or she is injured and exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors attributable to a concussion; or has been diagnosed with a concussion.

No member of a school athletic team shall return to participate in an athletic event or training on the days after he/she experiences a concussion unless all of the following conditions have been met:

- the student no longer exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion, at rest or with exertion;
- the student is asymptomatic during, or following periods of supervised exercise that is gradually intensifying; and
- the student receives a written medical release from a licensed health care provider

The Middlesex Athletic Department will follow the guidelines set forth by the *Zurich Consensus Statement*. Resources:

- The *Zurich Consensus Statement* (November 2008) return to play guidelines <http://www.sportconcussions.com/html/Zurich%20Statement.pdf>
- The *American Academy of Pediatrics Concussion Guidelines* (August 2010) <http://www.aafp.org/afp/2001/0915/p1007.html> and also check out a more recent report by the AAP at <http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;126/3/597> and <http://www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/aug3010studies.htm>
- Center for Disease Control <http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/sport>

### **Student-Athlete Sudden Cardiac Arrest**

Included below is basic information on sudden cardiac arrest.

Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is a medical emergency that occurs when the heart stops beating suddenly and unexpectedly. Sudden cardiac arrest can be caused by a host of factors including electrical or structural problems in the heart. Many of the causes of cardiac arrest are unknown until the individual begins to experience adverse symptoms.

### **Common Warning Signs**

- Unexplained collapse/fainting is the #1 warning sign of SCA - student-athletes who are unresponsive should be assumed to be in SCA until proven otherwise—don't assume the student-athletes passed out because they are out of shape or it resulted from heat, dehydration, or exhaustion.
- Unexplained gasping, convulsions or tremors - brief seizure-like activity is common in athletes with SCA.
- Unexplained shortness of breath - student-athletes who are temporarily short of breath and do not recover quickly, or always seem out of breath, could be experiencing SCA.

- Heart is racing/pounding/"beating out of their chest" - a student-athlete's heart that is beating fast at the wrong time (like when sitting on the bench), may be a sign of SCA.
- Chest pain/tightness/pressure - student-athletes reporting chest pain, tightness, or pressure should be evaluated.
- Extreme fatigue - student-athletes should be tired after a practice or game, but if they are always more fatigued than others on the team, this could be a sign of SCA.
- Dizziness - student-athletes who repeatedly report feeling dizzy may be experiencing SCA.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Transportation to away contests will be provided by the school system and students are required to ride to and from the contest on the school provided transportation. An athlete may ride home from the contest with his/her parents / guardians only if permission is obtained from the coach and parent/guardian. A student will not be allowed to ride home with another student's parents without a note from the student's parent / guardian stating that he has permission to ride home with that certain set of parents. Coaches will maintain a sign-out sheet for parents/guardians.

### **Overnight Stay Supervision Notification**

Due to the location and/or schedule of some events, it may be necessary for participants to stay overnight. During this time, there will be a clearly defined time of "lights out" when all students will be expected to be in, and stay in, their designated room. Room checks will be made at this time to assure all students are in their designated room. A morning expectation time of awakening will also be given to the students. Between these times, students are expected to remain in their designated room. Students are reminded they are to conduct themselves as leaders and role models of our team, our school, and our community. The location of the supervisor's rooms will be made clear to all students so that they may make contact in the event of an emergency or if other needs arise during the night time hours.

## **PARENT AND SPECTATOR BEHAVIOR GUIDELINES**

Spectators are an essential part of MCPS athletic programs, and good sportsmanship is a goal of MCPS. Inappropriate behavior by fans could result in their being asked to leave the game.

The following are sample guidelines for good sportsmanship:

- Cheers at games should be of a positive, encouraging nature in support of one's team,
- The use of vulgarities is inappropriate,
- Fan behavior which baits and derides their own team or the other team, individual players, coaches or school is inappropriate,
- Officials in games have difficult decisions to make and should be treated with respect whether one agrees or disagrees with their decisions,
- Spectators should be encouraged to use humor, creativity and good taste in support of their own team,
- Signs and/or banners should refer to one's own school and be positive, non-derogatory and non-inflammatory in nature.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

Middlesex High School recognizes and supports its students' and coaches' rights to freedom of speech, expression and association, including the use of social networks. In this context, each student-athlete and coach must remember that participating and competing for Middlesex County Public Schools is a privilege, not a right. The student-athlete and coach represent his or her school, the Middlesex County Public Schools, the Tidewater District, Region A and the VHSL and therefore they are expected to portray themselves, their team and their high school in a positive manner at all times. Any online postings must be consistent with federal and state laws, as well as team, school, school division and the VHSL rules and regulations (including those listed below).

Specifically prohibited behaviors include but are not limited to:

- Sexually explicit, profane, lewd, indecent, illegal or defamatory language/actions.
- Derogatory language regarding school personnel or other students.
- Comments designed to harass or bully students and/or school personnel.
- Nude, sexually-oriented or indecent photos, images or altered pictures.

Any authorized or unauthorized use in school or out of school of computer software, computer networks, telecommunications devices, information technology, and related technologies, which disrupts or interferes with the educational process in any manner is prohibited and may result in removal from the team or activity.

### **Social Media Guidelines for Students**

- Be careful with how much and what kind of identifying information you post on social networking sites. It is unwise to make available information such as full name, full date of birth, social security number, address, phone number, cell phone numbers, class schedules, band account information or details about your daily routine. All of these can facilitate identity theft or stalking. Remember that once it is posted, the information becomes the property of the website.
- Be aware that potential current and future employers and college admissions offices often access information you place on online social networking sites. Realize that any information you post will provide an image of you to prospective employers and/or schools. Protect yourself by maintaining a self-image that you can be proud of years from now.
- Be careful in responding to unsolicited e-mails asking for passwords or PIN numbers. Reputable businesses do not ask for this information online.
- Do not have a false sense of security about your rights to freedom of speech. Understand that freedom of speech is not unlimited. Social networking sites are not a place where you can say or do whatever you want without repercussions.
- Remember that photos once put on the social network site's server become the property of the site. You may delete the photo from your profile, but it still stays in their server. Internet search engines like Google or Yahoo may still find that image long after you have deleted it from your profile. Think long and hard about what type of photo you want to represent you.
- One of the biggest lessons social networking users can learn is that anything you post online enters the public record. High school students should carefully consider their profiles and ask themselves how they would look to a future college admissions officer or potential employer.

**MCPS STUDENT-ATHLETE/PARENT HANDBOOK SIGN-OFF FORM**

I have read and understand that my student-athlete, and I am responsible for upholding the guidelines set forth in this handbook. We understand that sportsmanship and academics are the cornerstones of a successful student-athlete. We agree to abide by these guidelines and rules.

We also acknowledge that we have received information pertaining to the dangers of concussions.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student-Athlete Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student-Athlete Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sport Coach