Southwest Metro League: 6th-7th-8th Grades – Objectives & Rules

Mission Statement
The Southwest Metro League (herein "SWML") was formed to create a unified and agreeable format for teams from its Member Organizations to play football. As such, SWML requires each Member Organization to teach the fundamentals of football and promote good sportsmanship in both practices and games. Member Organizations are expected to adhere to the technical, administrative, and game-play rules detailed herein.

Spirit & Intent
The primary tenant of the league is "Development of all football athletes". While a competitive spirit is expected during game play, it should not override the opportunity for every athlete to experience this great sport. Specific to Game-Play rules, certain in-game situations are not spelled out. In those situations the SWML refers to the National Federation of High School Rules (herein "NFHS"). With that said, this is not high school where an expected level of knowledge and expertise are assumed. Please attempt to simulate game situations keeping in mind the athlete's age and level of experience. Please abide by the primary tenant of the program.

I. Member Organizations
   a. Current Organizations (alphabetically)
      i. Chaska Chanhassen Football Association (CCFA)
         1. 4th – 8th Grades
         2. www.chaskafootball.com
      ii. Eden Prairie Football Association
         1. 4th – 8th Grades
         2. www.edenprairiefootball.com
      iii. New Prague
         1. 5th - 6th Grades
         2. https:/npaschools.ce.eleyo.com/course/3947/summer-2021/5th-6th-grade-padded-football
      iv. Orono Football Association
         1. 4th - 8th Grades
         2. https://www.oronoyouthfootball.org/
      v. Prior Lake Football Association
         1. 4th – 8th Grades
         2. www.playinfo.org/page/show/145923-football
      vi. Waconia Youth Football
         1. 7th – 8th Grades
         2. TBD
   b. Member Organization Qualifications
         1. Members must agree that they will form their rosters in a balanced fashion. No A, B, C teams by skill level within each grade.
         2. Members must agree to all game-play rules in this document and enforce all disciplinary action within their respective organization.

3. Members must be able to host games at locations within their community matching all "Field Requirements" listed herein.
4. Members must agree to provide professional 3rd-party referees and an EMT resource for all hosted games.
5. Members must provide one representative to act as a Board Member at all convenings of the SWML Board (~12 instances/year).
6. Members agree to pay all proportionate fees/costs associated with the upkeep of the SWML to include costs of retention and maintenance of the league website, etc.
    a. Members acknowledge and understand that SWML provides no insurance coverage for liability or other instances of damage.
7. New Member Organizations can be nominated by any existing Member Organization for consideration but are not officially members of the SWML until voted-in by majority of current SWML Board Members.

II. Registration/Eligibility/Rosters

a. Player Registration
    i. Each Member Organization will manage its own player registration process.
    ii. SWML does not require players, coaches, or organizational staff to register individually with the SWML.
b. Player Eligibility
    i. Teams are formed by academic grade level. Therefore, each player must be a student in the grade level for which they are enrolled during the season. Students who are suspended from their school are not eligible to compete.
    ii. Players in a Member Organization must be residents of that city or surrounding area or attend a school in that school district. Exemptions will be given for players who attend a school within a SWML community that does not offer tackle football.
c. Team Balance & Roster Formation
    i. Each Member Organization will strive to create teams with balanced skill from its player pool by draft or similar means (e.g. no All-Star or A, B, C teams).
    ii. The exchange of players between teams is prohibited except for very unusual circumstances and only with advanced approval of the SWML Board. If approved by the SWML Board, the coach of the team borrowing player(s) for a game inform the opposing coach of the roster addition by email or phone call one or more days prior to the game. Every effort should be taken to not put borrowed players in skill positions on offense and linebacker positions on defense.
    iii. Players may, with the approval of the player's Member Organization, play up a grade level. Players are NOT allowed to play DOWN a grade level under any circumstances.
    iv. Official Rosters by team, by grade must be submitted to the SWML board at least one week prior to the first game of the season. The Official Roster must include:
        1. Head Coach Name, Phone # & Email address:

2. Players' Names
3. Players' Weight
4. Players' Striper-Status
5. Players' Jersey #s

v. Any team that has not submitted their roster with all the above information will forfeit each game until the roster is submitted.

d. Player Weight Limitations

i. Weight rules are in place for players' safety. Based on the player's weight, they will be designated as either a "ball-carrying" or "non-ball-carrying" player. "Ball-Carrying" players will be limited in playing time by position. There is no restriction on time spent in a "non-ball-carrying" position.

ii. Players will be weighed by their respective Member Organization at equipment pick-up. This will be the player's official weight and will be identified on the official team roster listed on the SWML website. Any weight recorded prior to July 15th will be considered invalid.

iii. The official weight is the weight of a player in a t-shirt, shorts, and without shoes. The official weight is the weight for the season. Coaches cannot weigh-in their own players. The weigh-in must be done by a person from their Member Organization. Players cannot submit a verbal or written weight in lieu of an on-site weigh-in.

iv. Players designated as "Non-Ball-Carrying" (herein "Striper") must be identified by a single stripe placed horizontally above the ear holes on the helmet (regardless of whether this obscures any helmet logos). Stripes must be a minimum of 3" in length and clearly visible from the sidelines by using a contrasting color of tape compared to the color of the helmet (i.e. dark on light, light on dark). Any Striper who does not have the tape on both sides of their helmet prior to the start of the game will be ineligible to compete in that game.

1. 6th Grade: Up to 120lbs = Ball Carrying; Over 120lbs = Single Stripe
2. 7th Grade: Up to 140lbs = Ball Carrying; Over 140lbs = Single Stripe
3. 8th Grade: Up to 155lbs = Ball Carrying; Over 155lbs = Single Stripe

The weight of the athlete will not be rounded up. For example, if on a digital scale the athlete is 120.8, they will be recorded as 120 pounds

v. Striper Players may line up as any lineman (offensive or defensive), TE, non-running QB, or LB. The Striper CANNOT split out wide at any time and must be no more than one yard from the nearest tackle.

vi. A Striper cannot go in motion at any time.

vii. A Striper Player may advance the ball on offense ONLY by a legal forward pass caught BEYOND the line of scrimmage. On the hook & ladder play a Striper Player CANNOT receive the pitch, however they can catch and pitch to a Ball-Carrying Player.

viii. A Striper Player can be used as a kicker or punter. When punting they are restricted to punting only. They are allowed to move laterally to avoid defensive pressure but may NOT advance the ball by run, pass, hand-off or lateral, etc.

They cannot return a punt at any time during the game. If they catch a short punt, the ball is dead at the spot. However, a Striper Player may advance a fumble or interception. If a Striper Player receives an onside kick, they CAN advance the ball if they are on the front line; however, if they receive the ball behind the front line, the ball is dead at the spot once possession is determined.

ix. Ball-Carrying Players (i.e. No Stripe)
    1. Ball-Carrying Players can line-up in a position to carry or receive the football (RB's, QB's, Wide-Outs, and Tight Ends). They can also play ANY position on defense.

e. Team Size Requirements
    i. The SWML requires the number of players per team adhere to the following:
        1. 8th Grade: Required minimum of 24 players per team, recommended maximum of 30 players per team
        2. 7th Grade: Required minimum of 22 players per team, recommended maximum of 30 players pre team
        3. 6th Grade: Required minimum of 18 players per team, recommended maximum of 24 players per team
        4. All exceptions must be brought before the SWML Board and voted on to be approved prior to the start of the season.

III. Scheduling

a. Practice Schedule
    i. Practices may begin any time after August 1st. Each Member Organization will determine their own starting dates, practice length & quantity per week, etc.

b. Game Schedule
    i. The SWML will produce a schedule of regular season games by grade (to include date, time & location), as well as post-season play-off or bonus game schedule. Both schedules will be available on the SWML website.
        1. Each Member Organization will provide their SWML representative a list of the number of teams per grade by July 15th to aid in the creation of the regular season schedule.
        2. The regular season schedule is considered final at the time of publication. Any changes to the schedule for any reason prior to or after the start of the regular season will need to be managed between the opposing member organizations. Once any changes are finalized, the new time/date/location must be given to the SWML for publication to the SWML website.
    ii. Non-SWML Teams/Games
        1. Any games played against non-SWML organizations prior to, during or after the SWML season (to include scrimmages) are NOT the responsibility of the SWML and will not be counted in the SWML "W-L" records for the season.
    iii. Game Cancellations
        1. The member organization who is hosting (or "home") in conjunction with the field owner (i.e. city, school district, etc.) will determine

whether a game should be cancelled for any reason to include inclement weather or field conditions.

2. The referees have the authority to cancel or delay a game that is in progress at their discretion.
3. Lightning, despite perceived visual distance from the game site, will immediately postpone any game and require the field to be cleared of all players/spectators. Games are to resume no sooner than 30 minutes after the last sight and sound of a thunder and lightning storm.
4. Oher weather (i.e. without lightning to include excessive wind, rain, snow, etc.) may require the cancellation of a game. This decision will be called at the game site by the referees after a discussion with both Head Coaches. Please do not assume a game will be cancelled and not show up…it will result in a forfeit.

c. Game Rescheduling
   i. SWML will only recognize the outcome of games rescheduled for weather cancellations, or a "no-show" by the officiating crew. The SWML will consider the game to be "played" if 3 quarters have been completed prior to a weather cancellation or other referee decision. The score at the time of the cancellation will be considered the final score.
   ii. The SWML will NOT consider a game to be played if there are no paid referees on-site to officiate the game play (i.e. if parents/coaches stand-in as referees, the game will be considered a scrimmage and will not count as a game in the record books.)
   iii. Due to field permit issues and rescheduling of referees, please go to the SWML website for weather cancellations reschedule game information.

IV. Equipment

a. Sideline Equipment
   i. The Member Organization will be responsible for sideline equipment when hosting a game to include the down marker and chains, endzone pylons (or goal line markers). Ground level yardage increment markers are optional (i.e. 10yd, 20yd, 30yd, etc.)

b. Football Size
   i. 6th – Junior or Youth
   ii. 7th – Junior or Youth
   iii. 8th – Youth

c. Game Balls
   i. Each team may use its own football while on offense if it is an official size and properly inflated to the standards of the NFHS If multiple balls are being used in a game, the kicking team must kick off with the opposing team's football.

V. Fields Specifics

a. Field Size
   i. 100 x 53 yds

b. Team Location

i. It is recommended that the team benches be on opposite sides of the field where feasible.

c. Field Inspection/Maintenance
   i. Pre-game field inspection – the home team coach is to do a brief overview of the field and equipment. If anything is considered too unsafe, they must correct or contact the field coordinator prior to the game play.

d. Coaches' Box
   i. 25 yd line to 25 yd line.

VI. Fields: Coaches and Spectators

a. On-Field Coaches
   i. Coaches are not allowed on the field at any time during the game unless during a time-out, between quarters or between halves.

b. Coaches Requirements
   i. Each Member Organization is responsible for providing coaches for its teams. No more than five (5) coaches may be on the sidelines during a game.

c. Spectator Requirements
   i. If bleachers or grandstand arrangements are available at games, parents MUST be seated in the stands regardless of side. If Bleachers are not available, fans may stand/sit on the sidelines but must stay at least 5yds back from the sideline and may not enter the coaches' box for any reason.

VII. Referees

a. Number of Referees
   i. Three (3) referees assigned to each game.

b. Hired By
   i. Referees are hired by the Home Team.

c. Referee Authority
   i. Referees will only communicate with the Head Coach; Head Coach designate or coach on the field to eliminate confusion and other potential issues.
   ii. In a situation where any player, coach or spectator is displaying unsportsmanlike conduct, the referees shall have the right to request that the Head Coach or any coach designee remove the offender(s) from the playing and viewing area and can suspend play until this is done. If a suitable resolution is not resolved in a reasonable amount of time (as determined by the referee), the referee has the right to call a forfeit.
   iii. The Referees will officiate each game in accordance with League rules. If League rules do not specifically address a unique situation, NFHS Rules will apply.
   iv. Referees have final decision-making authority during a game. (Also see "Cancellation").
   v. If an issue arises during a game, the referee has the final say on ANY rule interpretation. PLEASE do not argue the point. We would ask that you refer any questions or issues to your organization's SWML Representative. Please remember that as coaches and adults we are to teach and facilitate, not dictate, and manipulate a game that is intended to be a fun and learning experience for ALL players.

vi. Although we try to instruct the officials in "our rules," they cannot be expected to understand all of the differences between our rules and high school rules. The only way it can work is that we all understand and follow the rules. We are also asking referees to understand the level and ability of the kids – though it is optional, we give them the authority to offer "warm-ups" to teach and make kids aware of potential infractions (i.e. lining up off-sides, holding, etc.).

vii. We ask that the referees try, when possible, to communicate the warning to the Head Coach.

a. Rules "Review"

viii. If during a game, a coach believes a ruling by a referee is not current in accordance with the rules, a coach may call a timeout. At that time, BOTH Head Coaches and the referees shall meet to discuss/review the rule calmly and professionally. It is the responsibility of the coach who called the timeout to present the proper documentation to appeal the ruling. If the ruling is overturned, the timeout shall NOT be charged. If the ruling on the field stands, the timeout WILL be charged to the team who called the timeout. Referees have final decision-making authority during a game.

b. Referee No-Shows

ix. If referees do not show up for your game, the Home Team Head Coach shall notify the SWML immediately after the game. Please do not hold up your game, especially if there is another game scheduled after your game. We want to limit the number of avoidable late starts.

x. Recommended Solutions

1. If there is another game nearby that has 2-3 referees, please contact them, and notify them that you do not have a referee and ask for their assistance
    a. If one professional referee can be borrowed from an adjacent field, both coaches should discuss and mutually agree to each select one responsible adult from each side to assist the professional referee as on-field stand-in referees.
    b. If no professional referee is available, the game can only be continued as a scrimmage and will not count in the SWML records. The SWML recommends that the game instead be rescheduled.

VIII. Rules – Game Play

a. NFHS rules will be followed except as noted below. The NFHS rules apply to all players, coaches, parents, and referees. 8th Grade teams will use NFHS rules (i.e. no restrictions on offensive formations or defensive alignments other than high school rules).
b. Game Length
    i. Teams will play 15-minute running quarters with the stop time rules being used during the last two minutes of each half.
c. Play Clock
    i. The clock will be stopped for injuries and immediately after a score.
    ii. Extra points will not be a run against the game clock.
    iii. Time is stopped until the ensuing kick-off.
    iv. The 25 second clock will be started by the officials for extra points, with Delay of Game receiving the usual 5yd penalty.
    v. The game clock will re-start on the kick-off as in High School Rules.
d. Time Outs
    i. Each team will be allotted three time-outs per half. No carryover.
e. Halftime
    i. 5 minutes (shortened if agreed to by both coaches and by referee due to 1st half running long)
f. Forfeits
    i. If one team elects to forfeit prior to the start of the game, or before the end of the 3rd quarter, the game will be recorded as a loss for the forfeiting team, and the score will be recorded as 10-0 in the "PF" and "PA" columns to assist in the future seeding process for playoffs. If the forfeit occurs anytime during the 4th quarter (i.e. due to injuries, etc.) the actual score as kept by the referee will be used as the final score for the game.
    ii. Declaring a forfeit is accepting a loss for your team, despite your position on the scoreboard. (i.e. a team in the lead in the 4th quarter cannot declare a forfeit to end the game ahead and secure a victory, denying the other team a chance to raise their score.)

g. Overtime
    i. Ties are decided by each team trying to score from the 10yd line.
        1. Each team receives one possession to score, typically up to 4 plays from the 10yrd line, however this could be extended with defensive penalties.
        2. The second team receives one possession to score.
        3. If a team scores, they also try an extra point from the 3 yd line.
        4. If a team loses possession of the ball, they cannot run any further plays. The team with the highest score wins the tiebreaker. If both teams are tied after one overtime, the game ends in a tie.
        5. Playoff games CANNOT end in a tie.
        6. There is no limitation on what players are used on offense or defense (i.e. Playing Time Requirements are no longer in effect).
h. Kickoff
    i. Kickoff will be from the 40yd line.

i. Scoring
    i. Touchdown = 6 points
    ii. Safety = 2 points
    iii. Point After Touchdown (PAT)
        1. A running PAT = 1 point
        2. A ball thrown into the end zone and caught by an eligible receiver = 2 points.
        3. If the ball is thrown to the flat and maintains the rules for a legal forward pass and caught by an RB, even behind the line of scrimmage, and the player runs across the goal line, it is counted as a pass = 2 points.
        4. If a ball is thrown to a WR and lateraled to a RB (as in a hook and ladder play), it would be tabulated as a rushing yardage by high school, college and pros = 1 point.

j. Penalties
    i. Penalties will mirror those used by NFHS unless otherwise noted herein. Specifically all rules & penalties that apply from the time of the snap to the referee's whistle to stop the clock. Listed below are penalties that are either unique to the SWML or that the SWML board wants to emphasize.
        1. Spectator interference: any spectator who enters the field of play, or is within 5yds of the sideline and is slow to clear or refuses to clear:
            a. Penalty = Delay of Game
        2. Striper Ineligible Position: any Striper who lines up in an ineligible position (Ball-Carrying position).
            a. Penalty = Unsportsmanlike Conduct
        3. Striper Ball Advancement: any Striper playing in a QB position who advances the ball past the line of scrimmage.
            a. Penalty = Loss of 10yds and loss of down.
        4. Illegal Tackling: there is absolutely no allowance for tackling of the ball carrier by the helmet/head, facemask, or collar (i.e. "horse collar").
            a. Penalty = Personal Foul
        5. Improper Player Rotation: the use of a player in a ball-carrying position for more than 2 quarters.
            a. Penalty = there is no in-game penalty for a rotation violation, and the referees will not track or enforce rotation rules. If an opposing coach suspects violation of the rotation rule (i.e. excessive time in a ball-carrying position), the coach should ask the Official for a conference with the opposing coach and seek resolution at mid-field. Each Member Organization is responsible for enforcing good rotation practices within its coaching pool.
            b. WARNING: THE SWML board reserves the right to review rotation violations post-game and assign penalties to the

offending team to include player or coach suspensions, and/or forfeiture of the game in question.

k. Conduct
    i. All players, coaches, and spectators are expected to always display good sportsmanship while at a game site to include pre- & post- game interaction. The highlights below lists conduct violations and possible disciplinary action taken by the referees on-site, the Member Organization, or the SWML Board.
        1. Coach Conduct
            a. Coaches are expected to interact with referees, players, and spectators in a respectful and positive manner. Any use of foul language, threats, or physical harm by a coach towards ANYONE can result in ejection from that game (to include leaving the game site entirely) as well as possible suspension from one or more future games or being banned from the league for one or more seasons.
        2. Player Conduct
            a. Players are expected to interact with referees, opposing players, and spectators in a respectful and positive manner. Any serious violation such as fighting, late hits, use of foul language or multiple personal fouls by the same player will result in an immediate ejection from the game as well as suspension for the next scheduled game. Coaches are expected to report a game ejection to the SWML Board within 48hrs. If the ejection is not reported, the player and coach may face additional suspension.
        3. Spectator Conduct
            a. Spectators are encouraged to cheer for their team in a positive and respectful manner from the designated spectator area. Spectators are not allowed to enter the playing field or be within 5yds of any sideline. In addition, spectators are not allowed to distract, instruct, or otherwise speak to the referees. Any violation of the above restrictions may result in an immediate ejection of the spectator by the referee and may include a ban from future games by the SWML board.

IX. Playing Time

a. It is the responsibility of the head coach to ensure playing time minimums are met, while also ensuring there are no violations for using a ball-carrying player in excess of the restrictions.
b. Playing Time Requirements
    i. 1 Qtr. of play is defined as the player lining up on the field for a single play. Regardless of how many plays are completed in that quarter, the player will be marked as having used 1 of their qtrs. of playing time.
    ii. MINMUM: Each player will have a starting position and play on Offense/Defense in at least 2 Qtrs. Quarters played do not have to be consecutive.

iii. MAXIMUM playing time is POSITION-SPECIFIC . This maximum is specific to the player and can be used up in any combination of positions played during the game.
    1. OFFENSE: 2-Quarter Max:
        a. 6th Grade – QB, RB, WB, WR
        b. 7th/8th Grade – QB, RB, WB (no limit on WR)
            i. WR's who have already lined up in a ball-carrying position in 2 prior qtrs. cannot receive a hand-off or pass behind the line of scrimmage and can only touch the ball as a pass reception beyond the line of scrimmage.
            ii. A player that lines up in the backfield and between the tackles is considered to be a back (RB or WB) and not a receiver. If a player motions through the backfield and is between the tackles at the snap, they are considered to be a WB.
    2. OFFENSE: No Max: Unlimited Playing time at the below positions:
        a. 6th Grade = O-Line, Tight-End
        b. 7th/8th Grade = O-Line, Tight-End, Wide Receiver
    3. Quarters in which a player is used do not have to be consecutive.
iv. DEFENSE: NO MAXIUM playing time restrictions are set for Defense. Any player can play on Defense for all four quarters.

X. Rules – Offense

a. Balanced Offense
    i. 6th Grade
        1. One side of the formation can only have at most one more player on that side of the ball than exists on the other side of the ball. QB, Center, and "I" formation backs do not count as they are already centered.
    ii. 7th Grade
        1. One side of the formation can only have at most two players on that side of the ball than exists on the other side of the ball. QB, Center and "I" formation backs do not count as they are already centered.
    iii. 8th Grade
        1. Any legal NFHS offensive formation allowed.
b. Balanced O-Lines
    i. 6th Grade
        1. No unbalanced lines are allowed on offense (i.e. no unbalanced line from end to end…must have a center, and then one Guard, one Tackle, and one End on each side of the Center: "ETGCGTE" must be followed.)
    ii. 7th Grade
        1. No unbalanced lines are allowed on offense (i.e. no unbalanced line from tackle to tackle…must have a center and one guard and one tackle on each side of the Center: "TGCGT" must be followed.)
    iii. 8th Grade

1. Any legal NFHS offensive formation allowed.

c. Legal O-Lines
   i. 6th Grade
      1. Must have 7 in the box – ETGCGTE – double TE, no Split-End's
   ii. 7th Grade & 8th Grade
      1. Must have at least 5 in the box – TGCGT
d. Split Formations
   i. 6th Grade
      1. If the offense is balanced (See Balance Rule) the offense may put 1 player wide. There cannot be a player wide on BOTH sides simultaneously.
   ii. 7th Grade
      1. The offense may put at most 3 players into a wideout formation. This could be "twins" or 2 wideouts on one side of the ball and 1 wideout on the other side of the ball. "Doubles with 4 wideouts" and "Trips" formations with 3 wideouts are NOT allowed.
   iii. 8th Grade
      1. Any legal NFHS offensive formation allowed.
e. No Huddle Rules
   i. 6th Grade & 7th Grade
      1. A no-huddle offense is NOT allowed until the last two minutes of either half.
   ii. 8th Grade
      1. Allowed with no restrictions
f. QB Sneaks
   i. 6th Grade & 7th Grade
      1. This is defined as taking the snap directly from underneath Center and attempting to run behind the Center and/or guard.
         a. There is NO QB sneak with the distance to the first down or goal line is 3yrds or less.
         b. Taking the snap in a shotgun formation and running it DOES NOT constitute a QB Sneak.
         c. The rule is in place because the defense is restricted by the 3yd linebacker rule.
   ii. 8th Grade
      1. QB sneaks are allowed at any time.
g. Shotgun
   i. 6th Grade & 7th Grade
      1. Shotgun formations are allowed. However, if the yardage for a first down/touchdown is less than 3yds and the QB/RB are less than 3yds behind the line of scrimmage when receiving the snap, this constitutes an illegal play if they run behind the center and/or guard. This rule is put in place since the LBs are back 3yds.
   ii. 8th Grade

1. Shotgun formations are allowed.

h. Players in Motion
   i. ALL Grades
      1. Motion players are allowed depending on whether they will violate the balance and wide-out rules.
      2. Striper players cannot go into motion at any time.

XI. Rules – Defense
   a. Legal Defense
      i. 6th Grade
         1. A 4-3 or 6-3 defense is allowed.
      ii. 7th Grade
         1. A 4-3, 4-4, or 6-3 defense is allowed.
      iii. 8th Grade
         1. Any legal NFHS defensive formation is allowed.
   b. Defensive Stances by Position
      i. LB, C, S = 2pt. stance
      ii. DE = 3pt. (6th grade), 2pt. or 3pt. (7th/8th grade)
      iii. DT = 3pt. or 4pt. stance (all grades)
   c. Defensive Line Movement
      i. 6th Grade
         1. Defensive LINEMEN may NOT move after they are set in their stance. The official may allow movement if the player who was originally lined up incorrectly moves to follow the Head Up rule.
         2. Defensive ENDS lined up on Wide-Outs are allowed to move prior to the snap if the player does not violate the neutral zone.
      ii. 7th & 8th Grade
         1. No restrictions on Defensive Line or Ends movement with exception to intrusion on the neutral zone prior to snap.
   d. Defensive Gap Lineup
      i. 6th & 7th Grade
         1. Lineman must line up DIRECTLY in front of the offensive lineman (helmet-to-helmet). They may NOT line up in the gap.
         2. Defensive ends may line up inside the helmet of the furthest outside offensive lineman that is not split out wide.
         3. Defensive ends can be no wider than the outside shoulder of the TE. (i.e. DE's helmet lines up with TE's outside shoulder pad.)
      ii. 8th Grade
         1. Defensive lineman CAN line up in the gaps and can line up outside the TE.
   e. Stunting/Shooting Gaps
      i. ALL Grades
         1. Stunting is allowed. Stunting is defined as a defensive lineman shooting the gap or having two defensive linemen cross as they rush after the snap.

f. LB/CB/S Depth
    i. 6th & 7th Grades
        1. LBs must be 3yds off the LOS. LB's should step off the 3yd distance.
        2. CBs must be 5yds off the LOS.
        3. Safeties must be 8yds off the LOS. The Safeties may limit their 8yd distance to 5yd when the LOS is on or inside the 10yd line. They must remain stationary until the snap of the ball although the linebackers or defensive backs may move laterally o react to a man in motion.
    ii. 8th Grade
        1. Any legal NFHS formation is allowed.
g. Short Yardage (goal line or 1st down attempts)
    i. 6th & 7th Grades
        1. LBs in short yardage situations are NOT allowed to cheat forward of the 3yd position spacing.
    ii. 8th Grade
        1. Follow NFHS rules for Short Yardage.
h. Blitzing
    i. 6th & 7th Grades
        1. No blitzing or forward movement prior to the snap of the ball. Ends and linebackers may blitz/rush in after the snap.
    ii. 8th grade
        1. Allowed with no restrictions.
i. Stacked LBs
    i. 6th & 7th Grades
        1. No stacking of linebackers (i.e. cannot line up directly behind a defensive lineman.)
    ii. 8th Grade
        1. Allowed with no restrictions
j. Tackling
    i. ALL Grades
        1. No tackling by the head/helmet.
        2. No horse collar tackles allowed.

XII. Rules – Special Teams

a. Punting Formations
    i. ALL Grades
        1. It is recommended (not a rule) to use the offensive team on the field as your punting team.
            a. The exception would be your punter and long snapper.
        2. Punt formations must also follow the Wide-Out rules and Balance Rules.
        3. Recommended formation would be to utilize a Shotgun formation with the QB position becoming the punter.
            a. Any player my punt the ball but ball-carrying restrictions do apply at each grade level. A punter is not considered a Skill Position if it is 4th down.

b. A punt hitting a defensive player at the line of scrimmage "neutral zone" is not considered a live ball. The ball is down on contact and turns over to the receiving team.

b. Punt Return Formations
   i. ALL Grades
      1. It is recommended (not a rule) to use the Defensive Team on the field as your punt return team.
      2. No additional restrictions other than meeting defensive formation restrictions. A punt returner is NOT considered a SKILL position.
      3. No limit on how far back the linebackers/safeties can be for punt returns.
         a. Mus have 6 players on the line of scrimmage, in a 6-3 defense or 4 players on a 4-3 defense (for 6th & 7th grades)

c. Kick-Offs
   i. ALL Grades
      1. No special limitations on Kick-off. A kicker or returner is NOT considered a Skill position.
      2. Only Ball Carrying Players may field and advance a kickoff return or on-side kick beyond the front line. If a Striper player gains possession from the front line, they can advance.

d. Rushing the Punter
   i. 6th Grade
      1. Teams are NOT ALLOWED to rush the punter.
      2. The offensive team must announce they are going to punt (no fakes allowed).
      3. They cannot rush the punter or leave the line of scrimmage until the ball is punted.
      4. The punter may take the ball from the center in any manger. Even if the ball is dropped, the punter may pick it up and punt the ball.
      5. The punter must punt the ball between the tackles' positions. Punt coverage cannot take place until the ball is kicked.
   ii. 7th & 8th Grades
      1. Teams may rush the punter. Not necessary to declare a punt before the play.
      2. A fumbled exchange between the long-snapper and punter is considered a LIVE BALL.

XIII. Valid Offensive Formations

a. The formations below are for illustrative purposes as well as a point of reference for any formation which might be disputed by another coach.

b. Ball-Carrying Positions
   i. Quarterback
      1. QBs must be under center or in the "shotgun" formation (a minimum of 3yds behind the center.)
   ii. Wide-Out & Wing Back

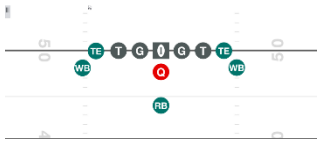
1. Wide-Out is a ball-carrying player that is split outside of the formation and may be on the line or off the line depending on the formation.
2. Wing Back is a back that is behind the line of scrimmage and between the tackles at the snap of the ball. Any handoff (reverse, etc) to a receiver also would make them considered a back instead of receiver

iii. Running Back

1. RBs line-up behind the QB (or next-to in shotgun formations) and are no wider than the offensive tackle position.

c. Backfield Formations

i. Double Wing



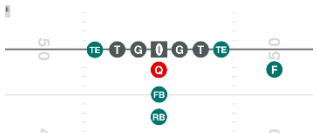
1. 1 WB on the left and 1 WB on the right, a single running back behind or on either side of the QB-Center alignment.
2. A single WB or TE may be split out wide. Motion out of the RB behind the center is allowed to either side of the formation. One of the other two backs (WBs) can go in motion as long as they don't cross the center of the formation and create an unbalanced formation.

ii. Double Wing w/ Shotgun



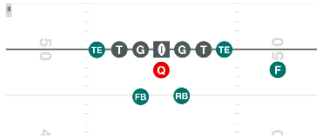
1. 1 WB on the left, and 1 WB on the right. A single RB can be on either the left or right side of the QB.
2. A single TE or WB may be slit out wide. Motion out of the RB behind the center is allowed to either side of the formation. One of the other two backs (WBs) can go in motion, as long as they don't cross the center of the formation and create an unbalanced formation.

iii. "I" Formation



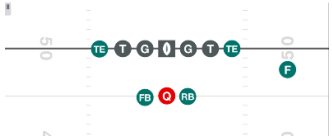
1. FB and HB are directly behind the QB.
2. A single TE or WB may be split out wide.

iv. Split Back Formation



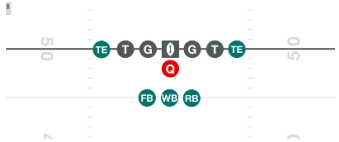
1. 1 RB on the left side of the formation and 1 RB on the right side of the formation.
2. A single TE or WB may be split out wide. If no TE or WB is split wide, then one of the running backs may be split wide or go in motion outside the TE on the same side.

v. Split Back w/ Shotgun



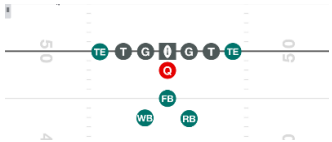
1. Same as the split back formation only the WB is line up 3-4yds behind A single TE or WB maybe split out wide. If no TE or WB is split wide, then one of the RBs may be split wide or go in motion outside the TE on the same side.

vi. Full House



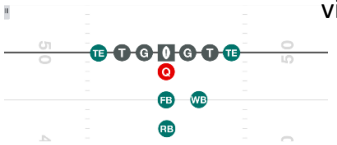
1. 3 RBs in the backfield, no WB. One directly behind the QB, and one on either side of the center RB.
2. A single TE may be split out wide or one of the backs may go in motion. The other backs must go in motion to the same side in which they lined-up to start the play.

vii. Wishbone



1. 1 FB directly behind the Center/QB and 1 RB on each side of the RB, dropped 1yd back.
2. A single TE may be split out wide or one of the backs may go in motion. The back behind the QB can go in motion to either side of the formation. The other backs must go in motion to the same side in which they lined up to start the play.

viii. Power "I"



1. Same as the "I" formation with the WB directly behind the Guard or A TE or RB may be split wide. A RB can be put in motion keeping in mind the Balance Rules.

XIV. Valid Defensive Formations

a. 6-3

i. 6 players on the line of scrimmage: 2 defensive guards, 2 defensive tackles, and 2 defensive ends.
   1. Defensive guards/tackles must be lined up helmet-to-helmet (head-up) with the offensive guards/tackles.
   2. Defensive ends can be lined up on the outside should of the TE (or WB if a WB is on the same side).

ii. 3 LBs: 2 OLBs and 1 MLB
   1. LBs cannot be stacked (lined up behind a lineman).
   2. Place OLBs on the outside shoulder of the defensive end or as far outside as you would like.
   3. OLBs CANNOT move any further inside than the outside shoulder of the DE.
   4. The MLB must be aligned with the Center prior to the start of the play.

iii. Safeties can line up as far wide, inside or bac you would like.
   1. Reminder: They must be at least 8yds from the line of scrimmage.

iv. There are no CB's used in this defensive formation.

b. 4-3

i. 4 players on the line of scrimmage: 2 defensive tackles, and 2 defensive ends.
   1. A defensive tackle must be lined up helmet-to-helmet (head-up) with the offensive guards.
   2. Defensive Ends can be lined up no wider than the outside shoulder of the Tight End.

ii. 3 LBS: 2 OLBS, and 1 MLB.
   1. Linebackers cannot be stacked (lined up behind a lineman).
   2. Place OLBs on either the inside or outside shoulder of the DE.
   3. The MLB must be up aligned with the center prior to the start of the play.

iii. CBs must be lined up at least 5yds from the line of scrimmage.
   1. Must line up no closer than the outside shoulder of the OLB.

iv. Safeties can line-up as far wide, inside or back as you would like.
   1. Reminder: They must be at least 8yds from the line of scrimmage.

c. 4-4 (7th grade only)

i. 4 players pm the line of scrimmage: 2 defensive tackles and 2 DES.
    1. Defensive tackles must be lined up helmet-to-helmet (head up) with the offensive guards.
    2. Defensive Ends can be lined up no wider than the outside shoulder of the Tight End.
ii. 4 LBs: 2 OLBs, and 2 MLBs.
    1. LBS cannot be stacked (i.e. lined up behind a lineman).
    2. Place OLBs on either the inside or outside shoulder of the DE.
iii. CBs must be lined up at least 5 yds from the line of scrimmage.
    1. Must line up no closer than the outside shoulder of the OLB.
iv. Safety (1) can line up as far wide, inside or back as you would like.
    1. Reminder: They must be at least 8yds from the line of scrimmage.

XV. [INSERT "helpful" NFHS rules here, allow 2 pages]

XVI. Common Misconceptions of NFHS Rules

a. This is not the NFL or the NCAA. We model the NFHS rules. There are MANY differences between high school and upper levels of football that many people may not realize or understand. Here are some policy and rule misconceptions that parents and coaches need to be aware of.
    i. Player safety is the primary rule of enforcement.
    ii. There is no such thing as an "uncatchable pass" in high school. If there is contact while the pass is in flight, even if the pass goes out of bounds, the contact warrants a 15yd penalty and automatic 1st down.
    iii. It IS pass interference if any player (offensive or defensive) hinder an opponent's vision without trying to catch, intercept or bat the ball down…even if no contact is made (i.e. no "shielding"). [Rule 7, sec. 5, Art. 10b]
    iv.
    v. Free-Block Zone (4yds either side of the Center and 3yds in front or behind the LOS):
        1. Blocking below the waist IS PERMITTED in the free-blocking zone by offensive lineman who are on the LOS and in the zone at the snap and the contact is in the zone.
        2. Clipping & blocking in the back ARE permitted in the fee-blocking zone by offensive lineman who are on the LOS and in the zone at the snap and is against defensive players who are in the zone at the snap and the contact is in the zone.
        3. The free-blocking zone disintegrates, and the above exceptions are not to continue once the ball has left the zone [Rule 2, Sec 17]
    vi. Neutral Zone.
        1. If a defensive player jumps into the neutral zone, it is an immediate penalty. [Rule 7, sec. 1, Art 6].
    vii. Kicks into the end zone CANNOT be run out. It's a touchback. [Rule 8, Sec. 5, Art3]
    viii. Myth: "The ball isn't dead until the whistle blows". The whistle merely draws everyone's attention to a ball which is already dead.

ix. Mouthguards do NOT have to be attached to the facemask, but they cannot be clear or white-colored [Rule 1, Sec. 5, Art 1c(5c)]

x. Simply grabbing a player by the shoulder pads is NOT a horse-collar. Horse-collar is defined as "grabbing the inside back or side collar of the shoulder pads or jersey of the runner and subsequently pulling that opponent to the ground". [Rule 9, Sec. 4, Art. 3]

	SWML RULES Summary 6 - 8 Grade		
	6th	7th	8th
Field Length	100	100	100
Coach's Position	Sidelines	Sidelines	Sidelines
Legal Offense Line	7 in the box; E, T, G, C, G, T, TE	5 in the box; balanced line	5 in the box
Legal Offense Backs/Ends	Balanced Formation; no overloading one side of offense. One wideout allowed; can be a WB or RB.	Balanced Formation; no overloading one side of offense. Two wideouts allowed on one side only and one on the other side (3 total); wideouts can be WBs or Wide-Outs; If there is a Wide-Out, WB MUST be within 1 yard of T or behind tackle	Any legal formation
Shotgun allowed	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legal Defense Line	4 or 6 head up – DE can be no wider than the outside shoulder of the Tight End	4 or 6 head up - DE can be no wider than the outside shoulder of the Tight End -- SEE VALID DEFENSE TAB with WIDE-OUT	Any formation -- Gap lineup allowed
Legal Defense - Linebackers	3 LB - no stacking -- 3 Yards from the line of scrimmage	3 or 4 LB - no stacking -- 3 Yards from the line of scrimmage	Any formation -- Gap lineup allowed
Legal Defense - Defensive Backs	2 corners – 5 yards from the line of scrimmage 2 safeties - 8 yards from the line of scrimmage	2 corners – 5 yards from the line of scrimmage 2 safeties -- 8 yards from the line of scrimmage	Any formation -- Gap lineup allowed
Legal Defense	6-3, 4-3	6-3, 4-3, 4-4	Any formation
Blitz & Stunt	Allowed; but no pre-snap movement	Allowed; but no pre-snap movement	Allowed
Man in Motion	Yes	Yes	Yes
Refs Call Def Line movement offsides	Yes 6th grade NOTE: If a player is adjusting so they follow the rule -- moving to head up for example -- the ref will not stop the play	No	No
Max penalty	15 yards	15 yards	15 yards
Special Teams	Kick-offs for beginning of each half and following scores. Punts declared; NO rushing punter; play is live after punt.	Kick-offs for beginning of each half and following scores. Punts NOT declared; live play with rush of punter.	Kick-offs for beginning of each half and following scores. Punts NOT declared; live play with rush of punter.

Single Striper Defensive Turnover	May advance turnover	May advance turnover	May advance turnover
Single Striper Offense Lineup	C, G, T, TE, non-running QB only	C, G, T, TE, non-running QB only	C, G, T, TE, non-running QB only
Single Striper Offense Ball Handling	may catch beyond LoS from TE or non-running QB only	may catch beyond LoS from TE or non-running QB only	may catch beyond LoS from TE or non-running QB only
Single Striper Defense Lineup	D-line or LB only	D-line or LB only	D-line or LB only
QB Sneak is NOT allowed when ball is:	within 3 yards of end zone or first down marker -- EXCLUDES Shotgun formation where a QB Sneak / direct snap and run would be legal	within 3 yards of end zone or first down marker -- EXCLUDES Shotgun formation where a QB Sneak / direct snap and run would be legal	QB Sneaks are allowed at any time
Tackling	No tackling by the head/helmet. No Horse Collaring allowed - both constitute a personal foul.	No tackling by the head/helmet. No Horse Collaring allowed - both constitute a personal foul.	No tackling by the head/helmet. No Horse Collaring allowed - both constitute a personal foul.
Playing Time Rules	No more than 2 qtrs in a position eligible to catch or carry the ball: QB, WR, RB, WB	No more than 2 qtrs in a position eligible to catch or carry the ball: QB, RB, WB	No more than 2 qtrs in a position eligible to catch or carry the ball: QB, RB, WB
Overtime	FOLLOW HIGH SCHOOL RULES. Each team receives a possession to score from the 10 yard line; if successful, an extra point attempt is also taken. If game remains tied after 1 OT, game ends in a Tie. Playoff games will be played until a winner is determined. There is no limitation on what players are used on offense or defense during overtime.		
Play Clock	Teams will play 15-minute running quarters with the stop time rules being used during the last two minutes of each half. The clock will also be stopped for injuries and immediately after a score. Extra points will not be run against the game clock. Time is stopped until the ensuing kickoff. The 25 second clock will be started by the officials for extra points, with delay of game receiving the usual 5 yard penalty. The game clock will re-start on the kick-off as in High School rules.		