



2024-25
ATHLETIC
CODE OF CONDUCT
HANDBOOK

UPDATED 6-2024

For Students and Parents

Dear Parents & Student:

Welcome to the North Tonawanda City School District Extracurricular Activities program. This handbook has been prepared to be used as a reference by our students and their parents/guardians in an effort to define responsibilities as they pertain to the rules and regulations, as well as the policies and procedures for participation in our athletic programs. We welcome your interest, participation and support of North Tonawanda athletics.

Bradley Rowles
High School Principal

Joshua Janese
Middle School Principal

Matthew Cook
Director of Athletics and Physical Education

PHILOSOPHY OF ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION

The North Tonawanda community recognizes the importance of the athletic experience in the total development of the student. We view the athletic program as curricular in nature and we feel that through these activities our students develop commendable traits. We support our athletic program, which provides a unique experience where students can develop and refine attributes such as, but not limited to:

- | | | |
|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| *Good Character | *Sportsmanship | *Goal Setting |
| *Commitment | *Fitness | *Respect |
| *Social Skills | *Dedication | *Teamwork |
| *Self-Discipline | *Self Confidence | *Good Citizenship |

The North Tonawanda community also supports the idea that **student participation is a privilege and an honor**, which carries with it inherent responsibilities. Students have every right to express an interest and tryout for our athletic teams, however it is a privilege to be selected as a team member; a privilege that can be taken away at any time. When a student accepts the privilege, he/she must live up to a Code of Conduct beyond that of the general student body, on and off school property and between sport seasons and academic years.

As a prerequisite for participation, students and parents/guardians must sign a statement that commits the student to follow the established rules and requires parents/guardians to do everything in their power to make sure their student abides by the established Athletic Code of Conduct and any additional rules set forth by a coach. A student cannot participate without agreeing to the terms of the contract.

The Athletic Code of Conduct is applicable during the student's career beginning with modified sports and not ending until graduation. Any action deemed to be a serious breach of citizenship over the summer recess can be referred to the Athletic Director or Principal. Any penalty will be administered during the school year.

RULES AND REQUIREMENTS

1. BEFORE YOUR SON/DAUGHTER CAN BE CONSIDERED ELIGIBLE FOR PLACEMENT ON AN ATHLETIC TEAM, THEY MUST FULFILL THE FOLLOWING:

- Code of Conduct Form (in this guide) Must be on file before any student can participate in any athletic sport for the time period listed on the cover of this handbook.
- Academic Eligibility In order to participate in athletics, the following academic requirements must be met:

A. Per New York State rules, a student must be a bona fide pupil of the school which he/she represents. To participate in interscholastic athletic competition at the high school level for a Niagara Frontier League (NFL) member, a student must have passed, or be passing at the league recognized first tryout date of each season, **four (4) credit bearing classes and physical education*** as defined in 207.0 – Subsection K of General NFL By-Laws.

***If student is failing physical education, they will be ineligible for try-outs and practices.**

1) For fall athletic competition, initial eligibility will be based on final grades from the prior school year through the close of summer school classes in August.

2) Winter at the end of 10 week marking period.

3) Spring at the end of 20 week marking period.

B. If a student-athlete does not meet the standard outlined in A. above, instances of extenuating circumstances may be reviewed by the principal. If deemed to be a legitimate extenuating circumstance, the principal (or designee) may present the case to the Athletic Directors for a waiver of the eligibility requirements. A unanimous vote of the Directors will approve the waiver. If the Directors do not approve the request unanimously, the principal may request a waiver by the Executive Committee of the Niagara Frontier League. Their approval by majority vote will enact eligibility.

C. Once a sport season begins (recognized league start date), each school district has the right to review student eligibility for the purpose of reinstating or removing a student-athlete from participating in approved interscholastic athletic competition. These reviews may take the form of 5-week progress reports or 10 week marking period grades throughout a season. If a student-athlete becomes ineligible during the season (at the 5 or 10 week mark) they will be placed on a probationary period. During probation the athlete may participate in practices but **not** games or contest. The student must also attend the Overtime Goals after school program in the high school in order to participate in practices with the intent to become eligible for games or contests. Grades will be rechecked (if athlete meets above requirements) 5 days after initial notification of the ineligibility. If passing at this time (4 plus PE) the student-athlete will be allowed to fully participate. If not passing they must continue the above mentioned probation with grade able to be check on a weekly basis.

D. League member schools participating in competition not governed by the NFL, i.e. Federation football, ice hockey, will adhere to league eligibility standards stated herein for purposes of student eligibility.

E. Eligibility standards for Modified Sports will also follow the above requirements.

- The Niagara Frontier League (NFL) and New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSPHSAA) requires that a participating athlete must be a **bona fide student** at the school he/she intends to compete for and reside within that school's boundaries.

- **Your son/daughter must have a valid athletic approved physical.** Physicals are valid for a 12 consecutive-month period.
- **Update Health History for Sports Participation** If the physical was given more than 30 days before the start of the sport season, the student athlete & parent are required to fill out the Update Health History Form prior to participation.
- **NYS Advanced Athletic Placement (APP) Test (MS only)** Middle school athletes may choose to try out for Junior Varsity or Varsity level teams; provided they pass the NYS APP Test. If a middle school athlete competes at the Varsity or JV level, she or he may not later compete in that same sport at the modified level. Further information about APP is available on the District web site.
- If the age of 19 is reached on or after July 1, an athlete may continue to participate during that school year in all sports.
- If a student turns 19 prior to July 1, they are ineligible to compete in any contact interscholastic athletics. Student can compete in non-contact sports but they will be non-scoring and listed as exhibition only.
- Students are eligible to play a high school sport for 6 consecutive years upon entry into 7th grade, 4 consecutive years after entry into 9th grade.
- **Attendance-** Students are expected to attend all meetings, practices, and games, unless legally excused by the coach and/or school official. Excused absences include the following:

Coach's permission

Family emergency

Administration permission

Legal absence from school (note required)

It is the responsibility of the students to notify their coach in advance if he or she cannot attend meetings, practice, game, etc. Students who are suspended from school (including ISS) on a day of a meeting, game or practice session are not eligible for participation. Students suspended on a Friday shall not be eligible for Saturday activities. **In order for students to participate in meetings, practices or contests, students must attend the entire school day on the day of the activity. If a student athlete has a doctor's appointment during the regular school day a note from the doctor office must be given to the coach to allow them to participate. The Athletic Director or designee may review unusual circumstances if necessary. All students/athletes must attend and participate in P.E. on the day of a practice or game if they are scheduled for P.E. that day. Students with a medical release from Phys Ed cannot participate in practices or games.**

2. STUDENT EXPECTATIONS - Students are expected to follow the rules and policies of the school district and athletic department. It is our expectation that all North Tonawanda students involved in extracurricular activities will refrain from:

- Consumption or possession of alcoholic beverages in any form
- Use or possession of tobacco or tobacco related products (including e-cigarettes)
- Use or possession of illegal drugs
- Use or possession of prescription drugs for anything other than their intended use
- Being in the presence of illegal drugs or alcohol
- Vandalism
- Stealing or being in possession of stolen property
- Sexual harassment
- Hazing
- Violent/Aggressive behavior
- Unsportsmanlike behavior including taunting
- Acts of insubordination

- Endangering the safety of others
- Verbal or physical abuse

Transportation Team or Club members are required to travel to and from the function on the school bus or transportation provided by the school district. Each team member (managers included) must return on district transportation unless otherwise released by a parent/guardian. This release must be in the form of a signed note by a parent/guardian. Our coaches will only release athletes to their parents/guardians for the purpose of transporting them.

3. PROCESS WHEN A VIOLATION IS REPORTED - Investigations of rule violations will be made when reported by North Tonawanda School District Staff, Advisors, Coaches, surrounding school district's staff, and if appropriate, Law Enforcement Officials. Students violating the code of conduct will be subject to the following:

- Contact with the Athletic Director, Building Principal or designee. An investigation will be conducted; witnesses will be interviewed if necessary.
- Schedule Student meeting with appropriate school personnel (Administrator, Athletic Director, Counselor, Coach). Parents will be notified at this time and can schedule a meeting with administration if needed.
- Appropriate disciplinary actions.
- Any violation involving illegal activities will be referred to the appropriate law enforcement agencies.

4. VIOLATIONS - RULES & REGULATIONS - Any student found guilty of rules and regulations violations after proper investigation will be sanctioned accordingly. School District Administration is not bound to the same standards of burden of proof as a court of law.

PARTICIPATION VALUES, STANDARDS & REGULATIONS - CATEGORY 1

Student Behavior

It is the expectation that all students exemplify competence, civility, good citizenship, and good character at all times both in and out of school, as well as in and out of season. This includes, but is not limited to the following examples:

- Demonstrating self-control and respect for others at all times. This includes teammates, coaches, Opponents, and spectators.
- Respecting officials and other game personnel.
- Respecting others possessions and property.
- Accepting responsibility to set a good example for the community.

1. Examples of Category 1 violations include, but are not limited to the following:

- Truancy
- Insubordination
- Ejection from a contest
- Fighting
- Vandalism
- Illegal absence from school or class

2. Consequences for **Category 1** violations will be communicated through individual team rules at the beginning of each season.

3. Any violation of Category 1 rules could result in loss of participation leadership positions.

Category II

Substance Abuse Use

No student may use, possess, sell or distribute alcohol or other substances, nor may use or possess drug paraphernalia, including counterfeit and designer drugs, including synthetic cannabinoids, except drugs as prescribed by a physician. The term “alcohol and/or other substances” shall be constructed throughout this policy to refer to the use of all substances including, but not limited to, tobacco, electronic cigarettes, nicotine delivery services, alcohol, inhalants, marijuana, cocaine, LSD, PCP, amphetamines, heroin, steroids, look-alike drugs, synthetic cannabinoids, and any of those substances commonly referred to as “designer drugs.” The inappropriate use of prescription and over-the-counter drugs shall also be prohibited. Persons exhibiting behavioral, personal or physical characteristics indicative of having consumed alcohol or having used illegal substances or marijuana, will be accompanied to a safe location by an administrator or teacher, while the student’s parent(s) are contacted.

Parties/Gatherings/Other Events

If a student attends a party/gathering where it is evident that marijuana or other illegal substances/drugs are present or being used, or where alcohol is being served to, or consumed by, persons under the age of 21, the students must leave the party /gathering within a reasonable period of time. A reasonable amount of time is defined as 15 minutes. Students are encouraged to contact a coach or administrator to establish their role in connection with the event. If such an event occurs during the summer or off season the students should contact the Athletic Director, Matthew Cook at 716-807-3647. The purpose of the call is to protect students who have made the right choice from future allegations regarding the specific event.

Hazing

Hazing is defined as any activity that recklessly or intentionally endangers the mental health, physical health or safety of a student. Any hazing activity, whether by an individual or a group, shall be presumed to be a forced activity, even if a student willingly participates.

The athletic program does not condone any form of initiation or harassment, known as hazing, as part of any school sponsored activity. No student, coach, volunteer or District employee shall plan, direct, encourage, assist or engage in any hazing activity.

Harassment

Harassment in any form will not be tolerated towards students or staff.

“Harassment” shall mean the creation of a hostile environment by conduct or by verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that has or would have the effect of unreasonable and substantially interfering with a student’s educational performance, opportunities or benefits, or mental, emotional or physical well-being; or conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that reasonably causes or could reasonably be expected to cause a student to fear for his/her safety; such conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse includes but is not limited to conduct verbal threats, intimidation or abuse based upon a person’s actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex. Harassment will be considered but not limited to person-to-person contact, social media or written forms.

Students are encouraged to discuss freely with coaches, teachers, parents or administrators any harassment involving themselves or others.

Consequences

NTCSD adheres to a Four-tiered concept regarding consequences to violations of the athletic code. Three tiers of consequences intend to facilitate the goals as an educational institution to alert and inform youth. In addition, the consequences provide opportunity for students to learn from mistakes and be successful with future choices.

The training rules will be in effect from the beginning of the student-athletes’ interscholastic participation through the student-athletes’ high school graduation. The beginning of the season is defined as the first day of try-outs. This means it is 365 days a year.

- Example 1: a 7th grader first participates in sports in the winter season, the first day of practice that season begins the 365 days a year until graduation for adhering to these training rules.
- Example 2: A sophomore fall season begins interscholastic athletics, the first day of practice being the 365 days a year until graduation for adhering to these training rules.

A violation of these rules will result in the following:

Category II Levels:

- First Offense: The student athlete will be suspended 25% of his/her regular scheduled events as stated at the beginning of the season. (Example: 16 scheduled games – 25% = 4 games.)
- Second Offense: A second violation of these training rules will result in the suspension of the student athlete for 50% of scheduled events.

- Third Offense: A third violation of these rules will result in the suspension from interscholastic athletics of that student for one calendar year.
- Fourth Offense: A fourth violation of these rules will result in permanent suspension from all athletic programs for duration of school career.

The administration and Athletic Director will have the final digression regarding all events.

Self-Referral-1st Offense Only

In recognizing the importance of the values of honesty and integrity, any first-time code violations that are self or family reported prior to District awareness will receive a reduction in penalty of 50%

Notes

- If the duration of the consequence goes beyond the end of the current season, it will carry over into the next season in which the student athlete participates. It will not affect the tryout for the next season.

Team Captain

Any athlete designated by his/her coach as a team captain will lose his/her captaincy for the remainder of the NTCSD school year upon violation of the Athletic Code of Conduct. This takes effect after a first offense of the athletic code.

Appeal Procedure

The student and/or parent/guardian have the right to appeal penalties imposed under the Code to the school Principal and the Director of Physical Education and Athletics. The athlete will remain ineligible until the appeals process is complete. Appeals must be made in writing within three (3) school days of assignment of a penalty for a code violation. The Director will then form a committee and consider the appeal. The committee will consist of the Director, an assistant Principal and a member of the athletic department. The Director will respond with a decision within five (5) school days after receipt of the letter of appeal.

Quitting

If the student athlete chooses to quit during a sport season, then they will be ineligible to participate in the following season unless the athlete has quit due to extenuating circumstances. The student athlete will have an exit interview with the Athletic Director to determine their eligibility for the upcoming season if necessary.