

Grand Rapids Christian Middle School

Athletic Handbook



Superintendent
Principal
Athletic Director

Thomas J. DeJonge
Eric Burgess
Kevin Broene

2036 Chesaning Dr SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506

Table of Contents

1.	GRCS Athletics.....	page 3
2.	GRCMS Athletics.....	page 4
3.	Athletes.....	page 7
4.	Coaches.....	page 9
5.	Parents.....	page 10
6.	Appendix A: GRCMS Sports offerings...	page 12

Grand Rapids Christian Schools Athletics

GRCS Athletics Statement of Purpose

The purpose of interscholastic athletics at the Grand Rapids Christian Schools is to provide students with opportunities for athletic competition that are consistent with the mission of Grand Rapids Christian Schools. That is, *to prepare students to be effective servants of Christ in contemporary society.*

GRCS Athletic Foundations

It is the responsibility of the GRCS Board, administration, staff, and coaches to provide the Christian leadership and training necessary for our athletics program to achieve these essential Foundations:

1. Honor Jesus Christ in all things – this is the most important measure of our success.
2. Christian character defines who we are – in and out of school and the athletic arena. God-honoring behavior, good sportsmanship, and adherence to the Athletic Code are required.
3. Good grades and school citizenship lead the way – successful athletes are first successful students.
4. Selfless attitudes permeate the team – what is best for the team always comes first.
5. We seek to win in accordance with the rules – competing at the highest possible level is the goal while showing proper respect for opponents.
6. We are all in this together – student-athletes, coaches, parents, fans and administrators.
7. Commitment to the team is important – it takes no talent to show up on time and work hard.
8. Athletes and coaches support other athletes and teams in order to build effective teams – we all share Eagle pride.
9. Athletes work hard and improve skills in and out of season and behave appropriately – the commitment does not end when the season ends.
10. Positive attitudes will influence outcomes – play with passion, encourage those around you, cheer with enthusiasm.

GR Christian Middle School Athletics

The Middle School Athletic Director and the High School Athletic Director administer the interscholastic athletic program in accordance with the Principal.

GRCMS Athletics Statement of Purpose

The purpose of middle school athletics at Grand Rapids Christian is to provide students with opportunities for athletic competition, understanding that being a part of an athletic team is a privilege, not a right.

We aim to fulfill this purpose in the following practices:

- 1) Providing the opportunity to participate in a variety of sports.
- 2) Developing proper techniques and skills that are needed to play these sports correctly.
- 3) Developing the Christian attitudes, behaviors, and practices that are necessary to be a teammate, classmate, family member, and person that honors God.

Sports offered at GRCMS

We participate in Grand Rapids Catholic Elementary Athletic Conference (GRACEAC) for the sports of baseball, basketball, soccer, softball, track & field, and volleyball. We also offer sideline cheer, golf (fee), cross country, wrestling, competitive cheer (fee), tennis (fee), and swimming.

Football and lacrosse are available to students through the GRCS Recreation program (www.grcs.org/youthsports) and their director Stacey Boender (sboender@grcs.org)

To see a list of all sports opportunities available at GRCMS, and more information about GRACEAC, please see **Appendix A on page 13** or visit www.grcs.org and go to the middle school page and select athletics.

Schedules

Game schedules are determined by GRACEAC and given to GRCMS to distribute. This sometimes means that we have a variety of schedule changes at the last minute due to the league making a change out of our control. This is the nature of the league, and for the most part, this works quite well.

Practice schedules are set up by the Athletic Director and take into consideration the practice guidelines (page 5) and game schedules from GRACEAC. The practice scheduled are communicated to families by the coach, not the school office or the athletic director.

Based on facility usage changes in the GRCS system, all practice and game schedules are subject to change.

Attendance Policy

In order to participate in any extracurricular practice or event, students must be in attendance at school for the entire day of the practice or event. Exceptions would include a doctor's appointment, wedding, or funeral. Absences must be communicated to office staff and coaches.

Coaching Appointments

Coaching appointments are the responsibility of the Athletic Director. Head coaches will make recommendations regarding assistant coaches with the final decision resting with the Athletic Director. Appointments are for a one-year period with evaluation at the conclusion of each season. Following each season, the athletic director will do an evaluation of the head coaches.

Practice guidelines

There is a deadline for sign ups for each season. If someone chooses to sign up late, there is a chance they will not be allowed to join a team. By signing up for a team, you are agreeing to participate in all practices, games, and team activities. Absences from these events could result in reduced playing time, and in some cases, dismissal from the team. In order to best attempt to avoid these situations, a note, email, or phone call explaining the reason for absence must be issued to the coach as soon as you know of the conflict.

Practices & Games – 5th/6th grade

- 2-3 times a week
- Practice times will vary; practice sessions can run anytime between 3:00 PM and 8:00 PM
- Practice sites will vary; practice schedules will indicate sites
- Athletes will have transportation for the immediate after school practice time slots only
- Parents must pick children up at the practice site

Practices & Games – 7th/8th grade

- 3-4 times a week
- Practice times will vary; practice sessions can run anytime between 3:00 PM and 8:00 PM
- Practice sites will vary; practice schedules will indicate sites
- Athletes will have transportation for the immediate after school practice time slots only
- Parents must pick children up at the practice site

Cuts and playing up or down a level

We honor a “no cuts” policy in 5th, 6th, and 7th grade. We also try our best to create teams of equal ability at those three grade levels. This will never be a perfect split, as many factors are taken into consideration – carpool requests, music/dance lessons, other sports team practices, and more. The number one goal is to get teams split as equally as possible.

To be consistent with the transitional nature of middle school athletics and in the interest of students learning and growing at their developmental level, in 8th grade there are tryouts and one “A” team will be formed and as many “B” teams as numbers will support.

At times we combine grade levels together, in order to form a team so that kids can participate. Sometimes we combine grades and sometimes we combine schools, to form a team. This is done with cooperation and coordination of the Athletic Director(s) and the coaches.

As a general rule, GRCMS does not support moving students out of their current grade level of competition for competitive purposes. If there is a reason that does not have to do with competitive purposes, this request can be discussed with the Athletic Director and the Principal.

Sunday Policy

Grand Rapids Christian Schools does not sponsor curricular or extra-curricular competitions or allow teams or school-sponsored groups to participate in Sunday competitions or practices. Grand Rapids Christian athletic facilities are not used on Sundays, unless determined appropriate or necessary. Sunday events and practices are not to interfere with a family's Sunday observance and students may not be required to participate.

Inclement Weather

On days when school is cancelled due to weather, all games and practices will be canceled. We will do our best to reschedule games that are missed. If there is rain, snow, or thunder in the forecast we will do our best to get information out by 2:00 PM that day if possible.

Sports Specialization

The question of whether a student athlete should play multiple sports or specialize in one sport is an important one for students and their parents to consider. Some student athletes may have hopes of playing at the collegiate level one day, while others are participating simply for the joy of playing and being part of a team.

We do not suggest that there is one right answer for every student or situation. [Research \(Vancouver Sun, April 1, 2018\) shows us](#) that there are significant drawbacks to sports specialization such as but not limited to overuse injury and a loss of desire to participate in athletics over time.

There is a great deal to be gained from participating in multiple sports. Different sports challenge athletes in different ways, and the skills developed through the training methods used in one sport will often help the athlete in another sport. Together, each sport works to build a better overall athlete. The athlete's social, emotional, and mental well-being also benefits from the variety of teammates, coaches, and competitive situations provided by multiple sports.

Undue Influence

Grand Rapids Christian High School adheres to the MHSAA policy regarding the recruitment of athletes and undue influence. No person directly or indirectly associated with the school can offer any special privileges to students because of athletic ability. Academic and athletic scholarships are not available from, nor provided by Grand Rapids Christian.

Athletes

PRIVILEGE

Being on an athletic team is a privilege, not a right. Academic and behavioral requirements must be fulfilled and obeyed in order to receive the privilege of playing sports.

Expectations

By being a participant in a sport at GRCMS, athletes are accepting the expectations for academic performance and behavior listed on page 8.

In addition, students are expected to perform to the best of their ability on tests, quizzes, and homework. They are also expected to behave according to the behavioral responsibilities outlined in the GRCMS handbook. Students are expected to fulfill their commitment to all team responsibilities throughout a season.

Uniforms and Equipment

Uniforms and equipment provided by GRCMS must be returned to the coach at the end of the season. Some personal items may need to be purchased or provided by a family for a sport (socks, undershirts, etc). Players are held financially responsible for any lost, stolen, or damaged GRCMS issued uniform or equipment. The athletic department is not responsible for lost or stolen personal items.

Practices

Members of a team are expected to be at every scheduled practice unless absent from school or previously arranged with the coach. For more detail see page 3 of the handbook “Practice Guidelines.”

Physicals

GRCMS does not require athletic physicals for participation in athletics.

Playing Time

Some GRACEAC sports have guidelines for how much athletes must play during a contest. As a general rule we are in favor of participation for students. If athletes are showing up to practices, doing their best, and listening to coaches, we encourage all our coaches to play athletes more than the minimum required playing time for their sport whenever possible. This does not guarantee equal playing time for any player, on any team.

However, in the spirit of preparing students for life, we must remember that equal playing time is not a requirement of being on a team. Thus at any grade level it is not uncommon for some players to receive more playing time than other players. It is okay for there to be playing time inequalities, and it is at the discretion of the coach.

Academic Eligibility Policy - GRCMS Athletics

The Principal and the teaching staff will determine academic ineligibility and reinstatement. The Athletic Director will help with communication to parents. The goal is to give students an opportunity to correct their academic issues before taking something away. *All steps below will be enforced on a Monday through Saturday of a given week.*

Inform student: If a student athlete is performing below expectation in one or more classes, the teaching team will inform the student on Wednesday that they have to complete specific requirements by Friday. If they don't complete those requirements, s/he will go on to **Step 1: Probation** starting the upcoming Monday.

Step one: Probation. Student must complete the above requirements and not add any additional missed assignments to that list by last day of school week. If they meet requirements they will be off **Step 1: Probation** and back to regular status. If the student does not meet the requirements or adds an assignment(s) to the list, s/he proceeds to **Step 2: Ineligibility.**

Step two: Ineligibility. The student athlete will miss one full week of competition and must meet the teachers' standards within that week. During this time the athlete is expected to participate in the practices and attend the game(s) (not in uniform). If the student completes the requirements, they will move back down to **Step 1: Probation** on Monday of the next week. If the student has not met the standards, s/he proceeds to **Step 3: Dismissal from team.**

Step three: Dismissed from team. If a student reaches step three they are to be removed from the team. If a student reaches **Step 2: Ineligibility** two times in the same season, the athlete will be dismissed from the team for the remainder of the season.

****IMPORTANT:** If a student reaches **step two** in the process more than one time in a given season, they will be immediately removed from the team to focus on school work.

Behavioral Eligibility Policy - GRCMS Athletics

If a student receives behavioral discipline in school, the Principal and/or the Student Life Coordinator will work in conjunction with the Athletic Director, to fulfill the following procedures:

Detention: Depending on the offense, a student could be withheld from a practice or game.

In-School Suspension: This could result in the removal of the athlete from the team completely for one week. The athlete may not attend practices or games during the suspension.

Out-of-School Suspension: This could result in automatic dismissal from the team for the rest of the season. If the student is not in-season during their suspension, he or she could be subject to penalties in the next season if administrators believe it to be necessary.

****Should a player display behavior inappropriate to the guidelines listed in this handbook, or the student handbook, it is up to the discretion of the building administrators to decide if there will be suspension from play. Forms of discipline could include, but are not limited to:**

- Personal behavioral contracts for individual athletes or teams
- Immediate removal of an individual from a team
- Removal of a team from a season schedule.

Coaches

Characteristics

1. The coach is a spiritual mentor and a Christian role model for the athletes they coach, helping the students in their Christian walk by helping them to develop and use their God-given gifts.
2. The coach is able to relate to kids, enjoys being around and communicating with middle school students, and is willing to invest in their lives— in and out of the athletic arena.
3. The coach has a passion for and a love of the sport they coach.
4. The coach will focus on skill development over the strategy to win, and will highlight the benefits of hard work and improvement over results.
5. The coach has the knowledge and ability to teach the technical skills required and the teamwork involved to create an atmosphere to develop the team to play at the highest possible level.
6. The coach conducts him or herself in a professional manner and fosters healthy relationships with athletes, parents and officials. As a highly visible representative of the school and the community, the coach must accept a special role in demonstrating positive and responsible leadership.

EXPECTATIONS

- **Faith Formation:** Coach is a spiritual mentor. Faith formation can take a variety of shapes, but it is a coach's responsibility to engage the team in weekly faith formation activities and conversations.
- **Athletic Code:** Our staff and coaches are held accountable to ensure that every student athlete understands and abides by the Athletic Code of Grand Rapids Christian Middle School. We consistently and fairly enforce the disciplines of the School's Athletic Code.
- **Parent Communication:** All coaches are required to send weekly communication through email to parents of players on their team.
- **Parent Meeting:** Coaches are encouraged to hold an informational meeting for the parents at the beginning of the season to address scheduling, expectations, conduct, discipline, and any other areas of interest that the coach deems necessary.
- **Evaluation:** The Athletic Director, following each season, will do evaluation of the head coaches.
- **Team Selection and Tryouts:** Coaches will work together and with the Athletic Director to form teams according to the guidelines on page 5 of the handbook.
- **Equipment and Uniforms:** The coaching staff will collect any school-issued equipment and uniforms in a timely manner following the completion of the season. Coaches need to hold athletes accountable to return items in good condition. Payment for the season's work will be issued after all uniforms, equipment, med kits, keys, and season summaries are collected and returned. Good stewardship of equipment is essential to our programs.
- **Score Reporting:** All coaches must report scores to the GRACEAC and to the Athletic Director

Parents

Parents are an important part of the athletic program at Grand Rapids Christian Middle School. The support and encouragement given to coaches and athletes is highly valued. Parents, as well as coaches and athletes, represent the school to the community.

Please remember that athletics are here for kids to have fun. Winning is part of the fun, but studies show that the majority of kids just want to participate (True Sport Report, 2015). Some schools may take winning more seriously and bend the spirit of the rules in order to win. We will not do that. Please help us support this philosophy of middle school athletics.

Expectations

1. Partner with our coaches, our other families, and the athletic director to develop a positive environment, in line with the mission of GRCS, focusing on what is best for kids.
2. Be encouraging. Your attitude is contagious. Please encourage the team, the coach, the officials, and the school at practices and games.
3. Encourage your athlete to speak directly with the coach if there is a problem. Empower and coach your son/daughter to bring up challenges they face with their coach directly prior to the adult stepping in to the conversation.
4. Around the dinner table, keep your conversations about the coach and teammates positive.
5. Behave with conduct in accordance to our school mission and athletic Philosophy (see pages 3-4).
6. Positively represent our school in accordance with the undue influence guidelines (see page 6).

**If a parent is in violation of any of the expectations above, they could be removed from observing athletic contests at GRCMS.

Communicating with Coach

It is appropriate to contact the coach regarding issues of safety, clarifying details of the schedule, team functions, and with encouragement. Parents should expect a weekly email from their coach and are welcome to respond to the coach about the information in those emails.

Conflict Resolution

There is a policy regarding parent-coach communication developed and adopted by our school board. If there is an issue a parent wants to discuss with a coach, **please respect a 24-hour time frame before initiating the adopted policy**.

In resolving conflicts with coaches, the following steps of communication should be followed. The next step should occur only if the conflict is not resolved. **Please do not skip steps.** By skipping steps we are robbing our children the opportunity to develop skills they need as an adult. Skipping steps hampers their ability to learn effective conflict resolution skills and minimizes their ability to learn how to have hard conversations in an appropriate manner.

Step one. Coach your child on how to approach and have the conversation with Coach

Step two. Parent & Player have a meeting with Coach

Step three. Parent & Player have meeting with the Coach & Athletic Director

Step four. Parent & Player have meeting with the Principal, Coach & Athletic Director

Athletic Boosters

Athletic boosters generally attempt to raise funds to impact the athletic experience of students for things outside the athletic budget. The Middle School does not have Athletic Boosters. The PTO provides concessions at home events in our gymnasium. Proceeds from the concession stand go to providing equipment that will directly impact student experiences in middle school athletics.

In lieu of having athletic boosters, the middle school does work with people who are interested in donating money for the athletic program. Some examples of items that donors have helped us purchase on behalf of students are an indoor batting cage, uniforms, game equipment (basketballs, soccer balls, volleyballs, catcher's gear), stone dust for baseball fields, re-grading baseball diamonds, and soccer goals.

If you see a need and are interested in financially supporting GRCMS athletics, please contact the Athletic Director, Kevin Broene (kbroene@grcs.org) to discuss your ideas, and your financial support.

Transportation

GRCMS is not able to provide transportation to any athletic contests.

GRCMS is able to provide transportation to practices occurring immediately after school at our district's facilities (Evergreen & GRC Elementary school).

Appendix A

Sports Offered at GRCMS

Athletic League - GRACEAC

Grand Rapids Christian Middle School is a member school of the Grand Rapids Area Catholic Elementary Athletic Conference. As a member school it is the responsibility of the school administration and coaches to adhere to the [policies and procedures published annually on the GRACEAC website. \(www.graceac.com\)](http://www.graceac.com)

Sports Offered (5th-8th grade)

FALL:

Boys & Girls Cross Country (Club – Fee)

Football

Sideline Cheer

Boys & Girls Golf (Club - Fee)

Boys Soccer

Girls Volleyball

WINTER:

Boys & Girls Basketball

Competitive Cheer (Fee)

Wrestling

SPRING:

Baseball

Boys & Girls Lacrosse

Softball

Boys & Girls Swimming

Boys & Girls Tennis (Club - Fee)

Boys & Girls Track and Field

*All information for **Cross Country** is through Coach Tom Peterson (tjpeterson7@gmail.com)

***All information for **Football** and **Lacrosse** is through Stacey Boender (sboender@grcs.org) and www.grcs.org/NetCommunity/YouthSports*