

**SHADY SIDE ACADEMY MIDDLE SCHOOL**  
**EXCEPTIONAL PROFICIENCY EXEMPTION REQUEST**  
**2023 - 2024**



Shady Side Academy Middle School has an athletic and activities program that is unique to many local Independent Schools. With a minimum requirement of at least one athletic season, students have opportunities to participate in interscholastic competitions, non-competitive activities, academic competitions, and theater performances with great success. The Middle School also recognizes that some of our students are actively and uniquely talented in a variety of activities outside of school. Some students show an exceptional proficiency in a particular activity through previous years of training and they want to continue to pursue that passion eagerly during their Middle School years. **During the school week**, these outside activities may require a large amount of additional practice time outside of the normal school day and we want to recognize and encourage that passion.

Form I and Form II students at the Middle School can submit a written request for an exemption for up to two (2) seasons in the school year (Fall, Winter, or Spring) to the committee made up of the Middle School Athletic Coordinator, the Head of Middle School and the Middle School Director of Studies. As we feel that it is important for sixth-graders to take part in all aspects of the SSA life in their first year, Exceptional Exemptions are typically not advised in the first year but if you have any questions, please contact the Athletic Coordinator. The committee is looking for specific details as outlined below:

*In the letter, the student should indicate which term(s) you are applying for an exemption. In addition, please tell us in detail about your passion for this activity: how many years have you been involved in the activity? How much time do you dedicate to this activity --how many days a week do you practice and for how long? What is a typical practice like for you? Are there accomplishments that you are particularly proud of? What are some short-term goals as well as long-term goals that you have as it relates to this activity? How will this exemption opportunity continue to help you meet these goals? Feel free to include upcoming competitions or performances that you will be involved in during the season of your exemption. **In order to complete the application process, you also need to include a letter from your coach, including a brief coaching biography and providing a description of the type of training that they do with your child. Plus, the expectations they have for your child as part of the outside team.***

The letter of application needs to be written by the student. It needs to be signed by both the student and a parent. The letter from the coach can be sent in separately or with the student's letter and it can be emailed to the Athletic Director- both letters need to be submitted before it will be considered. At the end of the term, the student will also provide a short follow-up paragraph that summarizes what they have accomplished during that term and turned in to the Athletic Director at the end of each season.

Individual requests are to be submitted approximately 2 weeks before the season and will be reviewed as they are received. Students and families will be notified of the committee's decision in a timely manner.

Upon approval, the student will be provided study hall time at the Middle School during the athletic period (2:20 – 3:35 pm) every afternoon of the term selected. This study hall time is to allow the student the opportunity to work on his or her homework in a supervised setting at school to allow them the personal time for an afternoon/evening practice, upcoming performance, or weekend competition.

Please note again that the Exemption is for those students who are “exceptionally proficient” in their activity and that requires a significant amount of time outside of school **during weeknights** to maintain their level of training. If you have any questions about the Exemption policy, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. David Vadnais, the Middle School Athletic Director. ([dvadnais@shadysideacademy.org](mailto:dvadnais@shadysideacademy.org)).

**What the Exceptional Proficiency Exemption policy IS for:**

- **Those students with significant practice time (6-8 hours or more) outside of school, from Monday through Friday and that possibly carries over into the weekend**
- **Students who are at a high level of proficiency within their sport – for example, a gymnast who participates in Level 8 (out of 10 levels) or a student who is at a high level in fencing who practices 5 – 6 days a week for 2 – 3 hours at a time.**

**What the Exceptional Proficiency Exemption policy is NOT for:**

- **To provide the opportunity for personal training sessions outside of the main activity**
- **To start an activity for the first time or re-start an activity after a break from participation**
- **To allow for study hall time during the week to get work done in order to account for a heavy weekend of activity for a particular sport**
- **To participate in an activity outside of school because there is a waitlist for the sport. We will help to guide the student into trying something new!**
- **To participate in an activity outside of school because the SSA options do not interest the student. Again, we can help to guide the student into trying something new!**