

## Eligibility Petition for an Exceptional Athlete

### PHILOSOPHY

The Fargo Public School District is committed to meeting the needs of all students. The District believes that every student should be given an opportunity to participate in their chosen activity for as many years as possible in both practice sessions and competition with their peers. In acknowledging this belief, occasionally, a young athlete may be so skilled that their needs are better met by participating at the highest level (junior varsity or varsity) of competition. While it is important to acknowledge the skills of a student, it is also important to carefully consider the ramifications of promoting a student. This policy only supports promotion of a student to the highest level of competition (junior varsity or varsity).

In making a recommendation for promotion of an athlete, there are many variables that should be considered including: chronological, physical, and emotional maturity. This policy presents a procedure that considers the needs of the young athlete while not unnecessarily displacing high school athletes. This process should not be initiated to enhance the quality of the team, but rather to meet the needs of a special student.

The scope of this policy is for students in grades 7-8 who participate in high school activities that are also offered at the middle school level or by another organization in the community. Therefore, this policy pertains to students participating in baseball, softball, basketball, football, hockey, soccer, track & field, volleyball, and wrestling. While the District acknowledges that students in other activities may be promoted to higher levels due to one-on-one competition or time trials, coaches should still consider the criteria listed below before promoting the athlete.

While many athletes are very skilled, seldom are they at the level for advancement to be considered. In making this recommendation, one must keep in mind the importance of keeping students in their peer group. We remind all individuals involved in the assessment that the young athlete may appear very strong within their chronological level of competition but may not perform well when they advance to the highest level.

### CRITERIA

In considering a student for promotion, several criteria should be weighed. This list is not meant to be exhaustive, but represents the intent of the exceptional athlete policy. The following criteria should be met: Physical maturity, physical fitness, emotional maturity, citizenship, scholarship, and degree of skill.

### PROCEDURE

The process for completing the petition is important. The welfare of the student is the first concern. Therefore, it is necessary for all involved to be sure that this process is strictly followed to prevent unnecessary emotional stress on the student.

The process should be initiated by the head coach. **The head coach must first contact the high school building activities coordinator, before contacting the student, parent, any other coach, teacher, or administrator.** Once the building activities coordinator is notified, they will be responsible for overseeing that the procedure outlined below is followed.

PETITION PROCESS

**Step 1:** The high school building activities coordinator will contact the middle school coach, middle school activity coordinator, and counselor to determine the level of skill of the athlete and whether the petitioning process should be initiated. Date contact made: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Student \_\_\_\_\_ Grade of Student \_\_\_\_\_ Building \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 2:** The high school building activities coordinator will contact the parent(s)/guardian(s) to inform them of the recommendation for the promotion of their son/daughter and to obtain permission to begin the petitioning process. Date contact made: \_\_\_\_\_ Parental Permission: \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

**Step 3:** The high school building coordinator will contact the middle school activity coordinator, coach, counselor, high school principal, and high school coach to determine if the athlete meets all of the criteria listed above and make a recommendation to continue or end the process.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Middle School Principal      Approve    Disapprove      Middle School Activity Coordinator      Approve    Disapprove

\_\_\_\_\_  
Middle School Coach      Approve    Disapprove      Middle School Counselor      Approve    Disapprove

\_\_\_\_\_  
High School Principal      Approve    Disapprove      High School Activity Coordinator      Approve    Disapprove

\_\_\_\_\_  
High School Coach      Approve    Disapprove

**Step 4:** If all parties agree the District Activities Director may approve the petition

\_\_\_\_\_  
District Activities Director      Approve    Disapprove

NOTE: If the athlete is not able to successfully compete at this level, the student will be able to be placed in the middle school program.

APPEAL

If at any time the petition is signed as not approved, an appeal may be made to the Superintendent or designee.

Revised 7/2013  
Revised 7/2018  
Revised 7/2022

**EXCEPTIONAL ATHLETE PETITION**

**QUESTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED DURING INTERVIEW**

Questions from the counselor to both the parent and athlete:

1. How does the athlete feel about leaving the relationships with their peers?
2. How does the athlete feel they will adjust to being with older students?
3. Are you able to get to the high school practices and all transportation needs?
4. How do your parents feel about you competing on the JV/V level?
5. Do you want to compete on the high school level?
6. Do you understand the additional pressures and expectations that accompany playing at the upper level?

Questions to coaches:

1. Is there a mentor or support for the younger athlete if they are to compete at the upper level?
2. Will there be substantial playing time for the petitioned athlete?
3. What is your assessment of the athlete's playing ability?
4. Do you believe this individual is truly exceptional? If so, is this the best position for this athlete?