



Pascack Valley High School  
Department of Athletics

# **Parent and Athlete Handbook**

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## **Introduction**

Dear Parent,

Athletics at Pascack Valley is an outgrowth of the educational process. It is a place where students with athletic skills can enhance them. This letter will outline some of our philosophies and goals of the athletic program. Hopefully this will help you gain a better understanding of how a competitive interscholastic program is conducted and what comprises our expectations. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call 201-358-7060 x 24035 or email me at [jspafford@pascack.org](mailto:jspafford@pascack.org)

Joseph Spafford  
Director of Athletics  
8/2023

## **PVRHSD Statement Of Non-Discrimination**

Pascack Valley High School prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities based on race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact the Office of Special Education.

## **PVRHSD Equity Vision Statement**

The Pascack Valley Regional High School District fosters a culture of inclusivity where students are empowered to be their whole, authentic selves. Multiple expressions of identity (e.g. race, nationality, religion, language, social class, ability, sexual orientation, and gender identity) are considered assets for learning and enhance the richness of the educational experience for everyone.

## **Athletic Department Mission Statement and Philosophy**

Education-based interscholastic athletics can be an integral part of a student's experience here at Pascack Valley High School and should be an essential component of the overall educational process. Participation in athletics develops the alert, responsible, well-informed, and well-adjusted individual, which should serve as a vital component of the overall learning experience for our students.

We, at Pascack Valley, will win with pride and grace and lose with dignity and sportsmanship. Participation and winning should be a byproduct of doing things "With Valley Pride." rather than the belief that it is important to win at all costs. Doing things in this manner gives student-athletes the opportunity to become the best version of themselves, through hard work and dedication.

Traditionally, interscholastic sports were essential for those students who had average to superior athletic skills, however, no student shall be denied the opportunity to participate in any program at Pascack Valley

Coaches are educators first and should be enthusiastic, energetic, and well-prepared for each day. They should strive to make each of our athletes reach their fullest potential by establishing standards of conduct and sportsmanship that are beyond reproach in their relationships with members of their teams and opponents. Coaches serve as role models for the young student-athletes they lead and will conduct themselves as such each day.

The Pascack Valley athletic programs should cultivate and nourish attributes, such as but not limited to, loyalty, respect, unselfishness, courtesy, and sportsmanship. Our student-athletes also act as role models, both on and off the athletic fields, for our Valley community and will conduct themselves as such. The athletic program, overall, should accomplish the greatest amount of good for the greatest number of students in an equitable and inclusive manner.

Every student in the school, whether through active participation or spectator interest should benefit from our sports programs. Our opponents should be selected based upon compatibility in size, basic philosophy, competitiveness, and region.

Those students who participate in athletics are entitled to a positive experience through coaching, gameplay, and relationships with their fellow athletes. Student-athletes who participate in our athletic programs are entitled to the best protective equipment available, the best facilities possible, adequate insurance coverage, proper medical care, and excellence in coaching.

The Pascack Valley athletics program requires the cooperation, commitment, and support of the Board of Education, administration, coaches, parents, students, and our Valley community.

Finally, and most importantly, we will strive to be the best we can be, and always display our “Valley Pride.”

## **Basic Thoughts, Rules and Regulations**

1. In each program, a coach and/or coaches are hired to be responsible for that program. Part of this responsibility is team selection. Criteria for selection are established by the head coach with input from their assistants. This may be a highly subjective process. Team selection, practices, and decisions regarding game situations and playing time are the responsibility of the coaching staff.
2. The Pascack Valley High School athletic program is highly competitive. Please understand that when your child signs up for a team, there is a very real possibility they may not be selected if a team reduction is necessary, or they may not be placed where you or they think they should; i.e., JV or Varsity. Coaches try to do the very best they can in keeping the most talented athletes, filling positions for play, and placing the athlete on the proper team. Our coaches are under a good deal of pressure to assemble the most competitive team possible. Any one of us might select different athletes for our teams. The school believes it is the coach's responsibility and right to select the team with whom they will work the entire season.
3. The select team or club team syndrome: Each coach looks for something different in their players. Participation on a select or club team does not guarantee any player a spot on another select or club team or on any high school team either. While players can gain valuable experience playing outside the school athletic program, neither parents nor students should count on this type of participation to guarantee a spot on a high school team.
4. Playing time is something that is earned during practice. A coach must have confidence that a player they put into a game can function at that level of competition. This means the player must have demonstrated athletic competence, an understanding of the game plan, and the required level of conditioning necessary to perform. It is the coaches right to make these decisions. Our program structure (Freshman, JV, and Varsity) allows for growth of the student, and the opportunity to demonstrate that they have earned the privilege to play. Starting positions and playing time are not guaranteed to seniors or anyone else. This is also up to the coaches' discretion. Each team member is valuable to the team's overall progress. Some members may play a great deal, while others may not. Each athlete should have personal improvement as one of their goals.
5. Inappropriate or unbecoming behavior by a parent/guardian either at an event or on social media will be dealt with by the Administration and repercussions may include, but are not limited to, removal from the present event and/or all future events.
6. Communication with coaches should be limited. All schedule changes and logistical issues should be sent via email only. Any issues with your son/daughter should go through the proper channels which are outlined.

## Levels of Participation

**Freshman Sports** - The purpose of the freshman level is to:

- Develop and refine basic skills, learn the rules as they pertain to interscholastic sports
- Transition athletes from recreation level sports to interscholastic level sports
- Provide playing time to all participants at the coach's discretion

The Freshman team will consist of 9th graders who have demonstrated intellectual development, proper attitude, physical and sport specific skills which indicate a potential to someday perform at the varsity level. The number of players selected for each team may vary from sport to sport.

**Junior Varsity (JV) Sports** - The purpose of the junior varsity level is to:

- Further develop the skills of the athlete
- Increase the intensity of competition
- Prepare the athlete for the varsity level
- Place more emphasis on winning, but not to the extent of the varsity level
- Provide playing time to all participants at the coach's discretion

The Junior Varsity team will consist of primarily sophomores and possibly a few juniors and/or freshmen that have demonstrated the ability to contribute at the JV level. The JV players must exhibit intellectual development, proper attitude, physical and sport specific skills indicative of a varsity performer. In rare circumstances, a junior who shows the potential to be a varsity starter or a key contributor as a senior or who is a part time varsity player may play JV if the varsity is particularly strong at his/her position. The number of players selected for each team may vary from sport to sport.

**Varsity Sports** - The purpose of the varsity level is to:

- Develop skills and physical conditioning of the athlete to his or her fullest potential
- Allow the talented athlete the chance to excel
- Provide athletes with the opportunities to set goals, strive to achieve them, and serve as role models for younger athletes
- Program goals include winning, team building skills, and enjoyment of the activity
- Coaches will notify students during the pre-season whom they feel may see limited playing time.

The Varsity team will normally consist of juniors and seniors, but freshmen and sophomores who have demonstrated the ability to be starters or key contributors may also be members of the team. The Varsity player must show the mental development, proper attitude, physical and sport specific skills to be starters or essential contributors to the success of the team. The number of players selected for each team varies from sport to sport.

Note: Regardless of the level, every player must demonstrate the skills needed to be a member of the athletic program for which he/she is trying out. No player is guaranteed a position in the present year simply because he or she was a part of the program the previous year.

## **Expectations And Commitment Of Student Athletes**

Student athletes are expected to adhere to all school policies. In addition, student athletes are to:

1. Maximize their academic performance by attending class every day, by being attentive in class, and by doing homework assignments conscientiously.
2. Conduct themselves in a manner that reflects positively on their family, their team, their school, and themselves.
3. Adhere to the school Alcohol and Drug Policy.
4. Make a commitment to your sport by attending all contests, practices, team meetings, and other team related activities. This includes vacation periods as well as weekends.
5. Commit to your in-season school sport. Athletes are not to miss contests, practices, team meetings, or other team related activities due to conflicts with non-school or out-of-season sporting activities. Participating in these activities risks injury and jeopardizes the in-season school sport. If a player cannot commit to this policy, he/she should not participate in the school sport.
6. Avoid scheduling activities that conflict with contests, practices, meetings, and other team related activities during the season. All student/athletes are strongly encouraged to have their families make an attempt to change vacation plans made to a particular season. If this cannot be done, the student/athlete will sit one game for each game missed during vacation. A one-week Summer No-Contact Period is required by the conferences.
7. Notify coaches as much in advance as possible of absences required for attendance at religious services or ceremonies. These will be considered excused absences.
8. Comply with additional rules that are team specific and are reflected in the sport specific handbook. Disciplinary action could include suspension or removal from the team.

Athletes who have concerns or complaints should sit down with the Head Coach of the sport to discuss the issue. If there remains a concern, students and parents should follow up with a meeting with the Head Coach and Director of Athletics. Playing time is not an issue to be discussed with the Director of Athletics.



## **Eligibility**

### Wellness

Any student who wishes may try out for any Pascack Valley High School athletic team. The student must provide the Health Information form, which is to be completed and signed by their family physician. All other State and Health Registration forms can be completed in the FamilyID electronic registration available on the Pascack Valley Athletics website. Coaches will share this information with students at pre-season meetings.

### NJSIAA

- A student must reside in the Pascack Valley District designated area.
- A student must be enrolled at Pascack Valley High School.
- A student must be in good academic standing.

### Age

A student cannot participate in interscholastic athletics if he/she has reached the age of 19 prior to September 1st of the current school year.

## **The Big North Conference**

Pascack Valley High School is a charter member of the Big North Conference. The BNC was established in 2009 by the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association, NJSIAA. In the 2010-2011 school year, Pascack Valley High School became a CHARTER member of the "Big North Conference". The Big North comprises 42 schools - all located in Bergen and Passaic counties. The Big North will contain schools of varying size i.e., Group I, II, III and IV - with Group IV schools having the largest enrollment. Private and parochial schools will also be part of the Big North providing that they are members of the NJSIAA as well.

Groups are determined by the enrollment of students in grades 9, 10, 11 for each of the member schools. Pascack Valley High School is presently classified as a Group II or III school by the NJSIAA. Pascack Valley High School competes in the North 1 Section 2 of the state.

The Big North Conference will organize all 42 members into different divisions based on enrollment and geography. Schools may compete in different divisions throughout the year. The number of schools that sponsor a particular sport will determine the number of divisions. A divisional champion will be declared based on a team record within divisional play. Updated information concerning the Big North will be provided to you throughout the next few months.

These are the schools in the National Division of the Big North Conference:

Pascack Valley  
Bergenfield  
Northern Valley Regional at Demarest  
Northern Valley Regional at Old Tappan  
Teaneck  
Tenafly

Pascack Valley is also a member of several sport-specific Leagues/Conferences, including:

Football - North Jersey Super Football Conference (NJSFC)  
Gymnastics - North Jersey Gymnastics League  
Boys Lacrosse - New Jersey Interscholastic Lacrosse League (NJILL)  
Girls Lacrosse - New Jersey Interscholastic Girls Lacrosse League (NJIGLL)

# Sportsmanship

Sportsmanship, the quality of fair play, is of the utmost importance and is the highest priority for our athletic program.

The NJSIAA and The Big North Conference Spectator Code of Behavior for athletic events will be posted at all athletic venues.

Spectators have an important role in the success of an athletic program. If the program is going to be successful, spectators must display good sportsmanship, courteous treatment of visitors and officials and absolute fairness under all conditions. It is important that spectators allow the players to play, the coaches to coach and the officials to officiate at all times. All spectators must follow the Big North Conference Spectator Code of Behavior for all athletic contests. Please review the Big North Conference Code of Behavior with your son/daughter.

## Big North Code Of Behavior For Athletic Events

Be a Positive Role Model Fans, Coaches and Players are expected

- To honor and obey all rules and regulations of the NJSIAA and the Big North Conference
- Enthusiastically encourage your own team.
- Refrain from negative remarks, booing, demeaning chants, gestures, etc.
- Treat the opponent, the officials, and other fans with respect and courtesy. Their safety and comfort should never be endangered.
- Accept all decisions made by the officials.
- Remain in the stands while play is in progress.
- Follow state regulations that prohibit noisemakers, signs, and banners

Any person obviously and intentionally violating the letter or spirit of the code will be subject to ejection from the contest and may not be allowed to attend further athletic events.

Players

- Good sportsmanship is the mark of a good player
- Do not swear or fight.
- Do nothing which will bring discredit to your school
- Win graciously; lose with class and dignity
- Accept official's judgement without question
- Give the best for your team and your school
- Avoid any reference to color, creed or nationality of your opponents
- All team cheering should be positive with no intimidating or demeaning chants, gestures, etc.
- All players must follow the NJSIAA and BNC Code of behavior for Athletic Contests

## Spectators

Spectators have an important role in the success of an athletic program. If the program is going to be successful, spectators must encourage good sportsmanship, courteous treatment of visitors, and absolute fairness under all conditions. It is important that spectators allow the athletes to play the game, the coaches to coach and the officials to officiate. All spectators must follow the NJSIAA and BNC Code of Behavior for Athletic Events.

If any of the above points are not followed, removal from the activity will be sought by the security personnel present.

## Contest Disqualification

An athlete/spectator who displays unsportsmanlike flagrant misconduct, physical or verbal, will be disqualified from the next two regularly scheduled games/meets, apart from football, which will carry a one game disqualification as per the NJSIAA.

**Disqualification/ejection is a judgment call by the official, the decision is final, and may not be appealed.**

A disqualified player/spectator may not be present at any contest in that sport during the period of disqualification (not to be present in the locker room, on the bus, on the sidelines, or in the bleachers/stands before, during or after the game).

Any player/spectator disqualified a second time during a 365-day period from the first disqualification will have the penalty doubled. On the third offense, the player/spectator will be suspended indefinitely and must apply in writing to the NJSIAA, through the office of his/her principal for reinstatement.

## Admission Prices To Athletic Contests

At times spectators are charged an admission fee at home football, basketball and wrestling games/matches as well as for various tournaments that Pascack Valley High School may host. This practice also occurs when we compete at away sites. Non-tournament admission is usually \$5.00/adults, \$2.00/students and \$2.00/Senior citizens.

## Parent Rules To Follow

1. Cheer positively for your child and for our team.
2. Do not yell, disparage the officials.
3. Do not yell, disparage the coaches.
4. Do not yell, disparage athletes.
5. Stay off the field, court, diamond, track at all times, unless you were called onto the playing surface area by the coach, athletic trainer or director of athletics. Failure to adhere to this can lead to dismissal from the game and/or suspension from further contests.

## **Parent-Coach Communication**

Both parenting and coaching are extremely difficult vocations. By establishing an understanding of each position, we are better able to accept the actions of the other and provide greater benefits to children. As parents, when your child becomes involved in our athletic programs, you have a right to understand what expectations are placed on your child. This begins with clear communication from the coach of your child's program.

Prior to the start of each season, the coach will host an introductory meeting for all students interested in trying out for the team. The date and time of the meeting will be announced and/or communicated via email. Specific items relative to the sport i.e., rules, policies, try-out period, practice and game schedules are reviewed and discussed at this time.

By design, athletic participation is filled with great challenges and great rewards. Parents, your role in your child's overall athletic experience is paramount. By encouraging your child's full commitment, by supporting coaches and official's decisions and by instilling the principles of sportsmanship, you will prove invaluable to your child's athletic experience. Winning is not the most important thing but preparing to win is. Many of life's important lessons, such as discipline, commitment, teamwork, and perseverance can be derived through participation in a well-designed athletic program.

The communication between the coach and the parent is essential to having an effective athletic program. The following coach-parent communication guidelines have been designed to foster appropriate lines of communication between the parent and the coach.

Communications you should expect from your child's coach:

1. Their Team Philosophy
2. Expectations the coach has for your child as well as all the players on the team
3. Location and times of all practices and contests
4. Team requirements: in and out of season
5. Procedure to follow if your child is injured during the season
6. Consequences for breaking team rules

Communication our Coaches should expect from our parents:

1. All concerns should be expressed directly to the coach VIA EMAIL ONLY.
2. Notification of any schedule conflicts well in advance.
3. Any emergency involving the athlete.
4. Texts to coaches are NOT acceptable forms of communication.

Your child will experience some of the most rewarding moments of their high school lives when they become involved in the athletic program; however, it is important to understand that there may also be times when things do not go the way you or your child would like. At these times discussion with the coach is encouraged.

### Appropriate Concerns to Discuss with Coaches

1. The treatment of your child mentally and physically.
2. Ways to help your child improve.
3. Concerns about your child's behavior.

It is very difficult to accept your child's lack of playing time. Coaches are trained professionals. They make judgment decisions based on what they believe to be best for the team as a whole. As noted, certain issues can and should be discussed with your child's coach. Other issues, such as those on the following page must be left to the discretion of the coach.

### Issues Not Appropriate to Discuss with Coaches

1. Playing time
2. Team Strategy
3. Play calling
4. Other student athletes

There are situations that may require a conference between the coach and the parent. These are to be encouraged. It is important that both parties involved have a clear understanding of the other's position. When these conferences are necessary, the following procedures should be followed to help promote a resolution to the issue of concern.

1. Email the coach to set up an appointment.
2. If the coach cannot be reached, call or email Mr. Joseph Spafford, Director of Athletics, 201-358-7060 x 24035, [jspafford@pascack.org](mailto:jspafford@pascack.org). A meeting will be scheduled at a mutually convenient time.
3. Please DO NOT attempt to confront a coach directly before or after a contest or practice. These can be emotional times for both the parent and the coach. Meetings of this nature rarely result in resolution and a 24-hour rule is strongly recommended.

What can a Parent do if the meeting with the Coach did not provide a satisfactory resolution?

1. Call and set up an appointment with the Director of Athletic to discuss the situation. Three questions will be asked prior to a meeting being set up.
  - a. Did you speak with your son/daughter about the issue?
  - b. Did your son/daughter speak to the coach directly about the issue?
  - c. Did you meet with the coach including, your son/daughter, and speak about the issue directly?
2. A meeting will be set up with the coach, parent, student-athlete and Director of Athletics to continue the conversation and draw on a reasonable solution.
3. If an amenable solution is not achieved, a meeting with the parent, Director of Athletics and High School Principal will be set up and further discussion will ensue.
4. If an amenable solution is not achieved a meeting with the parent, Director of Athletics and Superintendent will be set up and further discussion will ensue.

5. If an amenable solution is not achieved the issue may rise to the level of the Board of Education. At this time written documentation will be needed and all parties involved will be asked for input.

## **How To Establish Rapport With Your Athletic Child**

Here are some golden rules:

1. Make sure your child knows win or lose, scared or heroic, that you love them, appreciate their efforts and are not disappointed in them.
2. Try your best to be completely honest about your child's athletic capability, competitive attitude, sportsmanship, and actual skill level.
3. Be helpful but don't coach on the way to the track, diamond, or court, on the way back at breakfast, and so on.
4. Teach them to enjoy the thrill of competition, trying, working, improving their skills, and attitudes, taking the physical bumps and coming back for more. Don't say winning doesn't count, because it does. Instead, help them develop the feel for competing, trying hard and having fun.
5. Try not to relive your athletic life through your child in a way that creates pressure. Remember, you fumbled too, you lost as well as won, were frightened, backed off at times, and were not always heroic. Don't pressure them because of your pride.
6. Don't compete with the coach. The young athlete often comes home and chatters on about coach says this, coach says that. This, I realize, is often hard to take, especially for a father or a mother who has had some sports experience.
7. Don't compare the skill, courage, or attitudes of your child with that of other members of the squad or team, at least not in front of them. And if your child shows a tendency to resent the treatment they get from the coach, or the approval other team members get, be careful to talk over the facts quietly and try to provide fair and honest counsel. If you play the role of the overly protective parent who is blinded to the relative merits of your youngster and their actual status as an athlete and individual, you will merely perpetuate the problem. Your youngster could become a problem athlete.
8. You should get to know the coach so that you can be assured that his or her philosophy, attitudes, ethics, and knowledge are such that you are happy to expose your child to them. The coach has a tremendous potential influence.
9. Always remember that children tend to exaggerate both when praised and when criticized. Temper your reactions to the tales of woe or heroics they bring home. Don't cut your youngster down if you feel they are exaggerating - just look at the situation and gradually try to develop an even level.

10. Make a point of understanding courage, and the fact that it is relative. There are different kinds of courage. Some of us can climb mountains but are frightened to get into a fight; others can fight without fear but turn to jelly if a bee approaches. Everyone is frightened in certain areas-nobody escapes fear and that is just as well since it often helps us avoid disaster. Explain to your youngster that courage does not mean an absence of fear but rather means doing something despite fear or discomfort.