



# ATHLETIC HANDBOOK

## Students and Parents

### 2024 - 2025

*"Success isn't given. It's earned on the track, on the field, in the gym.  
with blood, sweat, and the occasional tear!" ~ Unknown*

# Introduction

The purpose of this handbook is to coordinate the responsibilities and expectations for interscholastic athletics in Catawba County Schools ([CCS Board Policy 3.4500](#)). All five traditional Catawba County High Schools are members of the North Carolina High School Athletic Association (NCHSAA) [www.nchsaa.org](http://www.nchsaa.org), whose mission is to provide governance and leadership for interscholastic athletic programs that support and enrich the educational experience of students. CCS abides by the minimum standards set forth by this organization. Please note these are minimal standards and member schools may enforce stricter standards.

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## 24-Hour Rule

Catawba County Schools applies the "24-Hour Rule" to all athletic circumstances. If a situation occurs where the student/parent and the coach develop a conflict, then the "meeting" to discuss this situation should not happen until at least the next day. At no time should the parent approach a coach after practice or a contest to discuss concerns or issues. A meeting should be scheduled to professionally and calmly discuss the circumstances in a private setting away from other parents, athletes and spectators. The Athletic Director and the Principal may be invited to the meeting if necessary. All decisions about an athlete being removed from a team or the athlete wanting to quit the team should not occur until the "24-Hour Rule" has been observed. The "24-Hour Rule" applies to coaches, athletes and parents.

## Accidental Insurance

Students are required to have insurance coverage in order to participate in athletics. Parents that need to purchase insurance or elect for additional insurance for their student may choose from the options indicated on the [Enrollment Form \(Spanish Version\)](#). See the [Enrollment Instructions](#) for details.

## Athletic Offerings

The [NCHSAA Sports Calendar](#) denotes the start dates, dead periods, and playoff schedules for the following sports offered in Catawba County Schools:

### High School

<i>Fall Sports</i>	<i>Winter Sports</i>	<i>Spring Sports</i>
Cheerleading Cross Country (Women / Men) Football Golf (Women) Soccer (Men) Tennis (Women) Volleyball	Basketball (Women / Men) Cheerleading Swimming (Women / Men) Wrestling	Baseball Golf (Men) Lacrosse (SSHS Only) Soccer (Women) Softball Tennis (Men) Track (Women / Men)

*\*Note - schools may offer both Varsity and JV depending on student participation*

### Middle School

<i>Fall Sports</i>	<i>Winter Sports</i>	<i>Spring Sports</i>
Cheerleading Cross Country (Women / Men) Football Soccer (Men) Volleyball	Basketball (Women / Men) Cheerleading Wrestling	Baseball Soccer (Women) Softball

## Cheerleading

Cheerleading falls under the NCHSAA jurisdiction in two areas — eligibility and health and safety guidelines. Eligibility of cheerleaders must be certified in the same manner as other interscholastic

athletes. The NCHSAA has approved the National Federation of State High School Associations Spirit Rules for all cheerleading activities. The Head Cheerleading Coach must obtain the American Association of Cheerleading Coaches Spirit Safety Certification per the NCHSAA. Catawba County Schools require all cheerleading coaches to be certified.

The selection of cheerleaders will be made by the cheerleader coach/advisor or by a committee of school staff personnel approved by the principal per [Administrative Procedure 3.4500](#).

The philosophy of cheerleading is to serve as a support group for the different interscholastic athletic teams within their school. Cheerleaders should always strive to improve student morale, boost team spirit, and help a school achieve the most worthwhile objective in its interscholastic program. It is for this reason school cheerleading squads may only represent their school in the two events sponsored by the NCI-ISAA. These events are reserved for Varsity cheerleaders only. In the event the varsity cheerleaders, or some members from the team, are unable to participate; JV cheerleaders may be called up to take their place in these two events. If the teams participate outside of these two events they will not be allowed to represent their schools by using the school name, transportation, or uniforms.

## **Conflict Resolution**

Athletic involvement can be highly emotional and issues can arise. It is very important that these issues be addressed as soon as possible, and as directly as possible, so that they can be resolved promptly. As a general rule, the student-athlete should initiate a meeting with the coach if there is a concern. If this recommended route is not successful, parents should ask the coach either over the phone, via email or in person if an appointment could be made to discuss the issue. If the meeting with the coach is not successful, parents may reach out to the athletic director.

Please note, athletic directors and coaches will NOT discuss the following with parents and/or community members:

- Playing Time
- Another Student-Athlete
- Scheme/Strategy

## **Concussion Protocol**

The [Gfeller-Waller Concussion Awareness Act](#) was drafted and implemented to protect the safety of student-athletes in North Carolina and was signed into law on June 16, 2011. There are three major areas of focus in the law and these include: education, emergency action and postconcussion protocol implementation, and clearance/return to play or practice following concussion.

[Concussion Awareness Resources / Pre-Season Forms / In-Season Forms](#)

## **Criminal Charges and Juvenile Petitions**

Any student who is participating in school sponsored interscholastic activities, athletic clubs, extracurricular activities or student organizations shall inform his/her coach or appropriate supervisor or school official that he/she has been charged with a criminal offense as soon as is practicable but in no event later than the student's next participation in any athletic event, extracurricular activity, athletic club or student organization, including but not limited to practices, meetings, rehearsals, games and competitions. Failure to do so may result in further disciplinary action of the student.

In the event a student who is participating in school sponsored interscholastic activities, athletic clubs, extracurricular activities or student organizations is charged with a criminal offense, misdemeanor or felony, other than a minor traffic offense, the student shall be suspended from participation in any such school sponsored interscholastic activities, athletic clubs, extracurricular activities or student organizations until further review by the principal, athletic director or supervisor of the student's activity. Per NCHSAA, students convicted of a crime classified as a felony under North Carolina or federal law; or is adjudicated delinquent for an offense that would be a felony if committed by an adult, are not eligible to participate in the NCHSAA sports program.

## **Drug and Alcohol Procedures for Athletes**

Student athletes who are disciplined by the school or charged by law enforcement for drug/alcohol infractions will be suspended from event participation on a scale basis. This suspension will apply to the current and/or next participating athletic season. The athlete will be allowed to practice (except during the school suspension time period) but will not dress for the designated number of games.

- 1<sup>st</sup> Violation: 20% of regular scheduled games including tournaments and state play-offs.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Violation: One hundred eighty days (180 calendar days) from the date of the 2<sup>nd</sup> violation.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Violation: One Calendar Year (365 calendar days) from the date of the 3<sup>rd</sup> violation

Additional punishment may be applied at any of the above steps by the school. The school is defined as the Principal, Athletic Director or the Coach.

## **Eligibility Requirements**

***High school students wishing to participate in athletics in Catawba County Schools must:***

- Be properly enrolled at the time you participate, must be enrolled no later than the 15th day of the present semester; and must be in regular attendance at that school.
- Pass at least 70 percent of the courses taken in the preceding semester and be on track to advance to the next grade level or graduate within the next calendar year, and have attended 85 percent of the preceding semester in order to be eligible for the upcoming semester [allowed 11 absences during fall semester and 13 absences during spring semester].
- Not have exceeded eight consecutive semesters of attendance or have participated more than four seasons in any sport since first entering grade 9.
- Not have graduated from high school.
- Not become 19 years of age before August 31 of the current school year.
- Live with their parents or legal custodian within the school administrative unit (exceptions must be approved by Catawba County Schools and/or the NCHSAA). A student is eligible if he/she has attended school within that unit the previous two semesters (if eligible in all other respects).
- Not falsify any official eligibility information such as residency/address.
- Meet all other eligibility requirements set forth by the [NCHSAA Handbook Section 1.2](#).

***Middle school students wishing to participate in athletics in Catawba County Schools must:***

- Be in the 7th or 8th grade.
- Pass at least 70 percent of the courses taken in the preceding semester, and have attended at least 85 percent of the total number of instructional days in the PSU during the previous

semester [allowed 11 absences during fall semester and 13 absences during spring semester]. This does not pertain to 6th grade students entering fall semester 7th grade year.

- Not become 15 years of age before August 31 of that school year.
- Meet all other criteria set by NC Department of Public Instruction and the Catawba Valley Middle School Athletic Conference found in the [CVMSAC Handbook - Athletic Eligibility](#).

Students wishing to participate in athletics the day of a game:

- Must be in attendance for half the school day (the principal has the authority to declare the athlete eligible if extenuating circumstances caused the missed time at school).
- Must not be placed in In-School Suspension for more than one period (block). Students are not allowed to participate in any athletic contest on the day that the ISS is served. The student can participate in practice on the day that they served ISS for their discipline infraction.
- Must not be in Out-of-School Suspension.. Students are not allowed to be at ANY school sponsored events during the suspension.

Note: Students that do not self report gameday school unexcused absences and/or suspensions, and compete in the same day contest will be subject to game suspension(s). Coaches that ignore the county's attendance policy will also be subject to game suspension(s) and/or dismissal.

**Homeschool students** wishing to participate in athletics in Catawba County Schools must:

- Be enrolled in homeschool the past two semesters or 365 days.
- Be enrolled and participate in a class schedule that is at least one half of the school's instructional day. High school students must be enrolled in a minimum of two courses per semester, and middle school students must be enrolled in their core subject areas (English, Math, Science, and Social Studies). Classes can be taken through Online Catawba.
- Maintain continuous enrollment in the school, once deemed eligible.
- Meet all other requirements such as age, promotion standards, physical examinations, etc.

Note: Students taking all their classes through Online Catawba are only eligible to participate in the feeder school in which they are domiciled.

Note: Students that quit a team before the season is completed may NOT try out, workout or be a part of any other athletic team until the team they quit has completely finished their season.

## **Heat Illness Prevention for Athletic Activities**

All athletes participating in off-season skill development must have a valid PPE on file. All athletes should begin each workout adequately hydrated. CCS Coaches and Athletic Trainers must follow the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) Index Activity Guidelines, even during summer workouts. Coaches may schedule workouts for the early morning and/or late evening hours to avoid the midday heat.

## **Good Sportsmanship**

Student-athletes, coaches, and parents should conduct themselves respectfully and courteously. Disrespectful behavior in the playing area, sidelines, and stands can result in an ejection. Profanity directed at players or officials is grounds for removal. The NCHSAA has empowered officials to step up their enforcement surrounding bad behavior and language.

## **Inclement Weather**

Changes/Cancellations of practice or games will be communicated by the coaches and/or athletic director. The following will be followed for inclement weather:

- If students leave school early due to inclement weather, no games or practices will be allowed.
- If school is closed due to inclement weather, no games or practices are allowed. An exception may be granted by the Superintendent whenever extreme or unusual circumstances arise.
- If a teacher workday is scheduled due to inclement weather, then the decision on practices and games will be made by the Superintendent. If the exception is granted by the Superintendent, then practices and/or games cannot occur until after the regularly scheduled school time.
- If students come on a delay due to inclement weather, then practices and/or games can occur that afternoon/evening. The Principal and Athletic Director may need to adjust practice and game times to assure student safety in case weather conditions worsen later in the evening.

## **NCAA Guide for The College-Bound Student-Athlete**

College-bound student-athletes enrolling full time at an NCAA Division I college or university are encouraged to view the [NCAA Guide](#) for academic requirement details.

## **Personal Use of Athletic Equipment**

Students wishing to use their personal athletic equipment (ie football helmet) instead of the school issued equipment must submit this [Release Form](#) to the Athletic Director.

## **Practices**

There will not be any athletic practices during the regular school day. This means no individual or team practice may begin until after the last regularly scheduled instructional period. No authorized practice, contest or workout may occur during the work day for teachers during the ten-month calendar. If the school calendar has annual leave days built into the calendar, then coaches can practice anytime during those days. There shall be no Sunday practice in any sport. This includes the assembling of athletic squads, full teams or selected individuals, for purposes of viewing films, chalk talks or other materials pertaining to coaching of the team.

Team practices in any sport (except football spring practice) are prohibited after the sports season ends until the first day following the final student day of the school year. Eighth graders are not permitted to participate in open facility or skill development sessions on high school campuses until the last student school day of the school year. During the summer, coaches for all sports are free to work with individual or multiple players from their school or their feeder schools except during dead periods set by the NCHSAA. Once practice for the fall sports season begins, restrictions set by NCI-ISAA must be followed.

Summer or off season workouts cannot be viewed as a tryout or be used to determine who makes an athletic team. High school athletic meetings, practices and contests takes precedence over all outside activities including but not limited to AAU, Travel Ball, Cheerleading Clubs, etc..

## **Pre-Participation Physical Evaluation (PPE)**

In order to be eligible for practice or participation in interscholastic athletic contests, a player must receive a medical examination once every 395 days (new NCHSAA beginning January 1, 2016) by a physician licensed to practice medicine, nurse practitioner or physician assistant and be cleared to play.

The athlete cannot practice before having this on file with the school. This form needs to be filed with the athletic trainer and/or athletic director. Please see the instructions for completing the NCHSAA Pre-Participation Physical Evaluation (PPE) for student athletes - [English](#) / [Spanish](#).

## **Pre-Season Parent Meetings**

Each school will hold parent meetings at the beginning of the season. Open communication can help avoid issues that may arise later in the season. It is highly recommended that both student-athletes and their parents attend to learn about team communication, goals, philosophy, expectations, rules and consequences of violations.

## **Required Athletic Forms ([Printable Packet](#))**

All student athletes must complete the following paperwork in order to participate in athletics:

- [CCS Student-Athlete/Parent Pledge](#)
- [CCS Athletic Participation and Consent Form](#) ([Spanish](#))
- [NCHSAA Student-Athlete & Parent Concussion Information and Statement Forms](#) ([Spanish](#))
- [NCHSAA Student-Athlete Pre Participation Physical Evaluation \(PPE\)](#) ([Spanish](#))
- [NCHSAA Eligibility, Consent to Participate, and Release Forms](#) ([Spanish](#))

## **Social Media Guidelines**

Catawba County Schools recognizes and supports its coaches and student-athletes' rights to freedom of speech, expression, and association, including the use of online social networks; however, it is important to remember everything that is posted on any social media site is public information for all to see. At all times, CCS coaches and student athletes should represent the school and school system in a professional manner, and never post anything that could be considered negative toward their team or school. It is prohibited to post comments such as:

- Derogatory or defamatory language;
- Comments that create a serious danger to the safety of another person or that constitute a credible threat of serious physical or emotional injury to another person;
- Comments or photos that describe or depict unlawful assault, abuse, hazing, harassment, or discrimination; selling, possessing, or using controlled substances; or any other illegal or prohibited conduct.

Social media tools and networks are encouraged to be utilized to market/brand athletic teams/schools and provide a positive experience for school communities. Coaches should never send private messages to individual team members. Employees are prohibited from communicating with students through any form of non-approved Catawba County Schools monitored program. Coaches are encouraged to use Student/Parent Square as the main source of communication.

## **Transfer Policy**

After initial entry into the ninth grade, and absent a bona fide move as defined by section 1.2.10 of the NCHSAA Handbook, a student transferring from a school within the Catawba County Schools administrative unit to another school within the Catawba County Schools OR a student that is transferring into the Catawba County Schools administrative unit from another administrative unit must sit out 365 days for athletic participation. The student athlete becomes ineligible to participate on the day they enroll in the receiving school. They remain ineligible for 365 days or until a waiver is approved

by the NCHSAA for students transferring into the Catawba County Schools administrative unit or a hardship waiver is approved by Catawba County Schools for transferring students within the Catawba County Schools administrative unit.

*Transfer Procedures for high school students from LEA to LEA*

- Both the incoming and outgoing schools must complete the [NCHSAA Transfer Agreement Form](#)
- If both schools cannot agree then the [NCHSAA Request for Waiver Form](#) may be submitted

*Transfer Procedures for high school students from CCS to CCS*

- The transferring student must obtain a signed transfer from the Assistant Superintendent of Operations of Catawba County Schools and enroll in the receiving school;
- The transferring student should obtain and complete the [CCS Transfer Waiver Request Form](#) and turn in all required documentation to the Catawba County Schools' Athletic Director within 10 days of the enrollment date at the receiving school (Note - no student can apply for a transfer hardship waiver before enrolling in the receiving school);
- The Catawba County Schools' Athletic Director will set up a waiver committee hearing, and the transferring student bears the burden of establishing by clear and convincing evidence that the transfer was not done for athletic purposes. The decision of this waiver committee will be the final ruling for athletic participation.
- Regardless of the outcome of the Transfer Waiver Request, the receiving school must always ensure that the student is eligible in all other NCHSAA requirements. Any approved Waiver Request will still be subject to the "same sport during the same sport season" NCHSAA rule.

Once a waiver request is granted, the student is eligible for his/her entire athletic career as long as they meet the other eligibility requirements set by the NCHSAA. If a waiver request is granted, ANY subsequent transfer of the student (including back to the original school) will be subject to the Transfer Rule and will be ineligible for 365 days.

Please note, any individual who coaches at an NCHSAA member school, head or assistant, paid or non-paid, faculty or non-faculty, parent volunteer, etc., as well as any other persons formally or informally associated with a school's athletic program shall not subject a student athlete to undue influence to induce or cause them to transfer from one school to another for athletic purposes ([NCHSAA Handbook Section 1.5](#)).

*Transfer Procedures for middle school students*

Minus a bona fide move, any athlete that has tried out or is currently on a middle school athletic team is not eligible to participate on another middle school team until that sports season is over. The student will become eligible the next sports season as long as they meet all other criteria set by NC Department of Public Instruction and the Catawba Valley Middle School Athletic Conference found in the [CVMSAC Handbook - Athletic Eligibility](#). Students are limited to one school change per school year unless a hardship is granted by the superintendent's office.