

**SAULT AREA PUBLIC  
SCHOOLS**

**HANDBOOK  
FOR  
STUDENT-ATHLETES  
2024-2025**



## SAULT AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS HANDBOOK FOR STUDENT- ATHLETES

### INTRODUCTION

The Sault Area Public Schools believe in the educational value of interscholastic athletics and support a full program of athletic opportunities for all students. This handbook is designed to give the athlete and parents a clear understanding of the rules and regulations regarding athletic participation.

In the Sault Area Public Schools, athletes are **students first** and **athletes second**. A student who elects to participate in athletics must understand that schoolwork and academics come first. Beyond the classroom, students have chosen to make a commitment to an athletic team. That decision involves self-discipline, sacrifice, and dedication, while never losing sight of the fact that sports should be fun and contribute to the physical, emotional, and social development of the athlete.

At all levels in the program, athletes are expected to demonstrate good sportsmanship in word, action, and attitude. Athletics are an extension of the curriculum and are designed to promote positive sportsmanship, good health, teamwork, commitment, dedication, loyalty to the school and team, and develop a camaraderie that athletes will remember the rest of their lives.

### MISSION STATEMENT

We, the athletic staff of Sault Area Public Schools, are committed to providing quality education, via the students' participation in interscholastic athletics. Therefore, our mission is to work with our students, their parents and community members to create an environment in which all students will demonstrate, both on and off the playing field, the following characteristics:

- A commitment to a healthy lifestyle
- A commitment to the concepts of good sportsmanship, teamwork, and educational athletics
- The ability to think critically and solve problems
- Civic responsibility
- The ability to be a self-directed and life-long learner
- Skill in developing and maintaining wellness, self-esteem and self-worth



## **ATHLETIC PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY**

The interscholastic athletic program will be conducted in accordance with existing Board of Education policies, rules and regulations, the Sault Area High School Student Handbook, and this Athletic Handbook. While the Board of Education takes great pride in supporting winning programs, it does not condone “winning at all costs.” The athletic program will be conducted in such a way as to justify it as an educational activity.

The Sault Area Public Schools believes that a dynamic program in student athletics is vital to the educational and personal development of the student. The athletic program will be directed so that the welfare of all student-athletes is the primary concern. The major objective of the program is to provide wholesome opportunities for student-athletes to develop favorable habits and positive attitudes with regard to the ideals of educational athletics. These opportunities will contribute to the physical, mental, social and emotional development of the students.

Participation in school-sponsored athletic programs is a PRIVILEGE, not a right, which carries with it responsibilities to the school, the student body, to the community and the participants themselves. Athletics function as an integral part of the total curriculum. They offer opportunities to serve the school, assist in the development of fellowship, goodwill, self-realization, and they encourage learning the qualities of good sportsmanship.

Lessons in sportsmanship, teamwork, competition and how to win and lose gracefully are an integral part of the athletic program. The athletic program will always conform to the general objectives of the school and will be consistent with the policies of the district. At no time will the athletic program supersede the total educational curriculum in emphasis.

As a member of the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA), Sault Area Public Schools will follow the regulations set forth for interscholastic athletics by these organizations.

**The policies outlined in this handbook are for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade – 12<sup>th</sup> grade athletic programs. All policies are in effect from the student’s first day of organized team practice to the last day of organized team competition, regardless of the season he/she participates in, for their entire high school career.**

## **SAULT AREA SCHOOLS ATHLETIC PROGRAM**

### **Freshmen**

1. Goal: Increase skill development. Coaches are looking for potential and the emphasis will center on skill development and skill repair.
2. Each team member will play in most games provided the coach’s criteria for



3. attendance, effort, and attitude are met. How often an athlete plays and the position they play is a decision made by athletic and school staff.
4. More defined team concepts will be stressed.

## Junior Varsity

1. Goal: Prepare athletes for the next level. Transition period between emphasis on participation and emphasis on winning.
2. Most athletes will play in most games. Skill, practice, attitude, and sportsmanship will determine playing time and starting positions. How often an athlete plays and the position they play is a decision made by athletic and school staff (coaches, athletic director).
3. Further development of basic fundamentals and skill level of each participant.

## Varsity

1. Goal: Although the emphasis is on winning, it will never be at the expense of the rules, sportsmanship, health, or safety of athletes.
2. Skill, practice, attitude, and sportsmanship determine playing time and starting positions. Not all athletes will play in every contest, but attempts will be made to play athletes whenever possible. How often an athlete plays and the position they play is a decision made by athletic and school staff.
3. Athletes will consistently work to the maximum limits of their athletic abilities.

## ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY

### HIGH SCHOOL

A student must have achieved a cumulative grade point average of at least 1.5 **or** a grade point average of at least 1.5 in the previous semester. In addition, the student must be passing all classes during the semester in which he/she competes. Eligibility for current classes will be determined weekly through the use of a weekly progress report. Progress reports are submitted by teachers each Monday at 3 pm. On Tuesday, a student will be informed by administration if he or she is failing one or more classes. The chart below outlines the process for academic eligibility.

WEEK	PRACTICE	PLAY
Week One	Yes	Yes
Week Two	Yes	No
Week Three	No	No
Week Four	A student is eligible to participate when he/she is passing all classes	

**A student's athletic weekly eligibility runs from Tuesday to Tuesday.** Incoming freshmen are immediately eligible. Grade point requirements for freshmen begin in the second semester. All students must have weekly progress reports and pass all classes as noted above.



Coaches are allowed to set higher academic standards for individual teams. These standards will be presented at team meetings prior to the start of the season.

Athletes with extenuating circumstances will be handled on a case-by-case basis. A committee consisting of the parent, appropriate teacher, the Athletic Director, and the Principal will meet to discuss the situation to determine eligibility.

## ATTENDANCE AT PRACTICE/GAMES

Student-athletes are expected to be in attendance at all practices, scrimmages, team meetings, and contests (unless suspended or expelled or otherwise excused absent from school). Student-athletes must be in attendance in school for the full day in order to compete that day. The Athletic Director may make an exception in the case of a family emergency, funeral, medical appointment, or other legitimate reason approved by the Athletic Director.

Appropriate discipline including loss of playing time and dismissal from the team will be used without prejudice or favoritism by the coach and/or Athletic Director if the student is habitually late or absent. Student-athletes should provide advance notice to coaches if they will be late or absent for medical reasons, family situations, vacations, driver's education classes, or other legitimate reasons.

All student athletes need to attend school the day after an athletic competition beginning with first hour, regardless of the time they arrive home from an athletic event, unless the student-athlete is excusably absent as described in Board Policy 5200.

## AWARDS

School awards include participation certificates and varsity letters. Each program has its own requirements for earning a letter that will be explained by each varsity coach. Athletes must complete the entire sports season to be eligible for team or school awards.

Per MHSAA guidelines, student-athletes may accept a symbolic or merchandise award, such as a trophy, medal, or plaque, valued at \$40 or less for participation in athletics. Banquets, luncheons, dinners, trips, and fees are permitted. Awards for athletic participation in the form of cash, merchandise certificates, or any other negotiable document are **not** permitted.



## BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS

As noted, student-athletes are students first and are expected to conduct themselves properly in the classroom. Student-athletes who violate any Board Policies, the student code of conduct, or other behavioral expectations may face disciplinary action by the coach, Athletic Director, or building principal, such as loss of playing time or dismissal or suspension from the team. Student-athletes may also be subject to school disciplinary action. As a reminder, participation in athletics is a PRIVILEGE, not a right.

## COACH/ADMINISTRATIVE OBLIGATIONS

**Coach.** Any coach who suspends an athlete from participating in practices or contests will immediately submit written notification to the Athletic Director. The Athletic Director will review the situation, and if necessary, convene a meeting of the parties involved to review the situation.

**Athletic Director.** The Athletic Director is responsible for implementing all penalties outlined in the Handbook and for providing suspended athletes the opportunity for due process as outlined below.

**Building Principal.** The building principal is responsible for the athletic program in his/her building. Accordingly, he/she (or designee) will be advised of all athletic department activity and will act as a decision maker if a student or their parent has an issue with athletic discipline issued to a student.

## COMMUNICATION WITH COACHES

We are proud of the educational and athletic opportunities available to our students and have committed ourselves to providing programs that all students and athletes can be part of while attending school. If there are situations that require communication with a member of the coaching staff, they are always willing to meet to discuss any concerns. Please note that the following process has proven to be most successful in the resolution of any potential problems.

1. The student-athlete speaks with the coach.
2. If necessary, the parent(s) meets with the coach. (This meeting should be held in private, away from the emotion of a practice or game).
3. If necessary, meet with the head varsity coach of the sport.
4. If necessary, meet with the Athletic Director.

Further meetings could involve the Principal, Superintendent or Board of Education. Those involved should call to arrange a meeting that will be held at the earliest possible time. All complaints/concerns should be handled at the lowest level. However, the next level authority is always willing to meet if previous meetings have not resolved the situation.



## DRUG/ALCOHOL POLICY

Athletics and the use of these harmful substances are not compatible. Sault Area Public Schools and its Athletic Department are concerned about the health and safety of our students. Athletes have an obligation to themselves, their team, and their school. As a member of an athletic team, they represent their families, community, and Sault Area Public Schools. Because we care, the use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs will not be tolerated.

It is recognized by medical professionals, health educators, and coaches that athletes perform best when they follow solid training rules that include restrictions on tobacco, alcohol, and drugs. Medical evidence is clear: tobacco, alcohol, and drugs produce harmful effects on human beings. Michigan law specifically prohibits use or possession of these materials by students.

**Students must refrain from the use of products that contain nicotine or tobacco or e-cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs steroids and controlled substances, look-alikes, or mood-altering substances.** Therefore, a student-athlete shall not at any time during the school year:

1. Use or possess products that contain nicotine or tobacco, including e-cigarettes, vape/vaping paraphernalia, electronic nicotine delivery systems, and similar devices.
2. Use or possess alcohol or a beverage containing alcohol.
3. Use or possess any controlled substance or look-alike, or any performance enhancing substances and drugs (e.g., anabolic steroids). Note: (A drug specifically prescribed for the student-athlete by a physician for his/her own personal use is not a violation.)
4. Inappropriately use an over the counter or prescription drug.

The Athletic Department does not condone nor recommend the use of training supplements by student-athletes. Our recommendation is a healthy lifestyle that includes proper nutrition, proper sleep patterns and a commitment to physical conditioning.

The following procedures will be implemented for violations of the Athletic Department's drug/alcohol/tobacco policy.

### **First Violation:**

If the violation is the use or possession of a product containing tobacco or nicotine, the punishment will be a one game suspension from football and a two-game suspension for all other sports. The student will also be required to complete a tobacco cessation program.

If the violation is the consumption or possession of alcohol or drugs, the athletic suspension will be assigned as follows:



Football	3 games
Soccer	5 games
Volleyball	5 games
Cross Country	4 games
Wrestling	4 games
Basketball	5 games
Swimming	5 games
Hockey	6 games
Bowling	6 games
Track	5 games
Baseball	6 games
Softball	6 games
Golf	4 games

**Second Violation:**

If the violation is the use or possession of a product containing tobacco or nicotine, the punishment will be the number of games as specified above.

If the violation is the consumption or possession of alcohol or drugs, the athletic suspension will be 365 days from the date of violation.

**Third Violation:**

If the violation is the use or possession of a product containing tobacco or nicotine, the punishment will be 365 days from the date of violation. Any further violation regarding tobacco will result in permanent loss of athletic eligibility.

If the violation is the consumption or possession of alcohol or drugs, the student will permanently lose their athletic eligibility. In the case of alcohol or drug possession or use, in order for the student to participate in interscholastic athletics in future sports seasons, the student must attend the appropriate drug or alcohol education program provided by the Sault Health Adolescent Care Center (SHACC) and successfully complete the program.

**Reinstatement:**

Meeting required between parents, athlete, and Athletic Director prior to athlete returning for practice, scrimmage, or game. In the case of alcohol or drug use or possession, evidence of the required assessment must be given at or prior to this meeting.





**NOTE:** Athletic suspensions levied at the end of a season extend to the next athletic sport season in which the athlete participates, regardless of the nature of the suspension or the time of year (e.g. a suspension at the end of the spring season carries over to the fall season of the next year). Drug/alcohol suspensions carry over throughout the student-athlete's high school career, i.e. when an offense is punished, the next incident, regardless of the time span in between, will result in the next level penalty.

Because every circumstance is different, Sault Area Public Schools reserves the right to impose longer suspensions or additional discipline. The Superintendent's decision on these matters is final.

## **DRUG TESTING**

Each student participating in one or more interscholastic athletic program must sign an enrollment application by which they agree to participate in a reasonable suspicion drug-testing program administered by Sault Area Public Schools, during the term of the athletic program in which the student will be participating. For more information, see Board Policy 2431.

## **DUAL PARTICIPATION DURING THE SAME SEASON**

*IN SOME CASES, ATHLETES MAY COMPETE IN TWO SCHOOL-SPONSORED SPORTS DURING THE SAME SEASON WITH APPROVAL FROM THE PARENTS, BOTH COACHES INVOLVED, THE ATHLETIC DIRECTOR, AND THE BUILDING PRINCIPAL.*

Student-athletes and their parents must remember the extreme commitment that this decision involves and must exercise extreme caution prior to requesting permission for the athlete to pursue dual participation. The athlete must declare a primary sport and a secondary sport. On game day, the primary sport will take precedence. The athlete and the coaches involved will coordinate attendance at practices, scrimmages, and contests. Per MHSAA guidelines, no student athlete may compete in more than one sport competition per day. If a dual sport athlete violates the conditions outlined in the Handbook, any disciplinary action will affect participation in both sports.

## **ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION OF FEMALE STUDENTS**

A female student will be permitted to compete for a position in all interscholastic athletic activities. If Sault Area High School does not have a girl's team in an interscholastic athletic activity, a female student shall be permitted to compete for a position on any other team for that activity.

## **DUE PROCESS**

If a suspended student-athlete wishes to appeal any suspension, the Athletic Director must receive written notification within 48 hours of the suspension. Upon receipt of written notification, the Athletic Director will convene an ad-hoc committee, which will review the situation. The committee will consist of the Athletic Director, the coach involved, at least two faculty members (one of whom will be a coach) and the Principal (or his/her designee). The committee will convene at the earliest possible time and will make a decision within 24 hours of its meeting. Further appeals by the suspended

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student-athlete may be made in accordance with district policy. The student cannot participate during the appeal process. The Superintendent's decision on any appeal will be final.

## **ELIGIBILITY**

The Sault Area Middle and High Schools are members of the Michigan High School Athletic Association and accordingly follow the MHSAA's guidelines for student eligibility. All rules for participation in interscholastic athletics are set forth in the MHSAA Handbook. (The MHSAA allows exceptions to some eligibility requirements; please confer with the Athletic Director if you have a question regarding eligibility). Listed below are a few of the major components of the MHSAA eligibility guidelines.

### **HIGH SCHOOL**

Students must be enrolled in the High School not later than the fourth Friday after Labor Day (1st semester) or the fourth Friday of February (2nd semester).

- A student must have passed at least 66% of a full credit load in the previous semester and must be currently passing at least 66% of a full credit load.
- A student enrolled in grades 9-12 who transfers to Sault Area High School from another high school is ineligible to participate in interscholastic athletics for one full semester at Sault Area High School. The MHSAA has listed many exceptions to this rule; contact the Athletic Director for clarification. Please note that students attending Sault High School under the Schools of Choice option are not immediately eligible to participate.

## **EQUIPMENT**

All equipment, uniforms, etc. given to student-athletes must be returned at the conclusion of the season in good condition. Student-athletes will be financially responsible for items returned in poor condition or not returned at all. Athletes will not be allowed to participate in any other sport until obligations from previous sports are resolved.

## **GAME DAY ATTIRE**

Student-athletes are required to wear appropriate attire to school on days when games or other athletic contests are scheduled. Student-athletes must dress professionally, in attire such as slacks or a skirt and a collared shirt/blouse or sweater. Blue jeans, t-shirts, hats, saggy pants, clothes that advertise tobacco or alcohol products or otherwise depict the "grunge" look are not appropriate and will not be tolerated.

## **HAZING/BULLYING**

Sault Area Public Schools does not tolerate hazing or bullying in any form. Hazing is coercing another to perform an act of initiation into a group or organization that causes mental, emotional, or physical harm. Bullying is written, physical, verbal, and psychological abuse, including gestures, comments, threats, or actions to a student, which cause bodily harm, reasonable fear for personal safety, or personal degradation.



Reported cases will be investigated to the fullest and substantiated cases will result in appropriate disciplinary actions, up to and including permanent loss of athletic eligibility.

## INFRACTIONS

The Sault Area Schools Athletic Department supports the constitutionally protected right that individuals are innocent until proven guilty. However, in cases involving student-athletes, these situations detract from the image of the team and the program and contribute to a loss of focus by other members of the team. Therefore, an individual involved in an infraction that is not covered under other policies in this handbook may be suspended from participation until the situation is resolved.

## INJURIES

All injuries and illnesses must be reported to the coach immediately. Student-athletes will need **written** clearance from a physician to resume practice and competition after an injury or illness requiring medical attention.

## MEDICAL INSURANCE

Medical insurance is not required to compete in interscholastic athletics, but due to the inherent risks associated with athletics, the district strongly recommends that student-athletes have coverage.

## NCAA AND THE COLLEGE-BOUND STUDENT-ATHLETE

The National Collegiate Athletic Association Clearinghouse has strict academic criteria that must be satisfied if student-athletes desire to participate in collegiate athletics. If a student wishes to attend college and participate in athletics, the counselor must be advised so that the proper courses may be scheduled.

## OTHER SITUATIONS

Student-athletes who commit infractions not covered in the Handbook that detract from the mission or philosophy of the athletic department face possible disciplinary action. The Athletic Director will investigate each case and if warranted, will convene an ad-hoc committee (as provided for in Due Process), which will determine appropriate disciplinary action. The Superintendent will have ultimate **authority to** issue disciplinary action against a student-athlete or decide an appeal of discipline issued by the ad-hoc committee.

## OVERLAPPING SEASONS

When sports season overlaps, athletes will not be expected to train or practice for the new sport until the first season has ended. Athletes will not be penalized for beginning the second sport late, but will not be allowed to compete until the coach is certain the athlete is properly prepared.



## **PARENTAL CONSENT**

A student-athlete must have the expressed, written consent of the parent(s) or guardian(s) to participate in the athletic program. A consent form is included with the handbook. All consent forms will be kept on file in the athletic office.

## **PHYSICALS**

A student-athlete may not tryout, practice or compete until a physician certifies that he/she is physically able to compete. The exam must have been given after April 15<sup>th</sup> of the previous school year. An MHSAA physical form is required. Any student found to have a health condition which may be life-threatening to self or others will not be allowed to participate in athletics until the situation has been analyzed by a medical review panel that has determined the conditions under which the student may participate.

## **CONCUSSIONS**

Before allowing a student-athlete to participate in any athletic activity, Sault Area Public Schools will annually:

1. provide the MHSAA or state-approved educational materials on concussion awareness to each student-athlete and to the student-athlete's parent/guardian; and
2. obtain a statement signed by each student-athlete and respective parent/guardian acknowledging receipt of the MHSAA or state-approved concussion awareness educational materials.

## **BASELINE CONCUSSION TESTING**

Any student athlete participating on a Sault Area High School sponsored athletic team is mandated to undergo Baseline Concussion Testing. These tests are offered through the S.H.A.C.C. and are free of charge to all student athletes.

## **RETURN TO PLAY ACCESS**

An athlete suspected of sustaining a concussion during an athletic activity must immediately be removed from physical participation in that activity. The athlete is not allowed to return to any physical activity until he/she has been evaluated by an appropriate health professional and receives written clearance from that health professional authorizing return to physical activity.

## **PROMOTION TO HIGHER LEVEL TEAMS**

From time to time, underclassmen may be moved to higher-level teams, (e.g. freshman to JV or JV to varsity) for all or part of a regular or post-season. Moving up to play with a higher-level team is a serious decision and should be given a great deal of thought by the athlete and his/her parents. Coaches will discuss possible moves with the parents, the athlete, and the Athletic Director prior to any changing of teams. The philosophy of the athletic department with regard to moving up is that changing teams will occur only if it



is in the best interest of the athlete. No athlete will move up without receiving considerable playing time at the next level. If necessary, athletes will be reassigned to their original teams.

## QUITTING A SPORT/REMOVAL FROM A SPORT

Any athlete who quits a sport may not compete in another sport during that same season without the approval of both the Athletic Director and the coach of the team the player wishes to join. No permission will be granted if the sport season is more than 20% complete. Any athlete who is suspended from one team may not compete for another team during that sport season.

## REPORTING OF VIOLATIONS

**Alleged violations.** Shall be reported in writing (signed and dated) to the Athletic Director or Principal. The Athletic Director may convene an ad-hoc committee (as provided for under Due Process) to investigate the allegations. The person reporting the violation may be directed to discuss the situation with the Athletic Director and/or other parties as determined by the Athletic Director.

## SAFETY

The safety of all team members is of utmost importance. Student-athletes are required to report all faulty equipment and safety hazards to coaches immediately.

## SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS

Student-athletes who are suspended or expelled from school **may not** practice or compete during the time the suspension or expulsion is in effect. Further, if a student is suspended or expelled from school, the student may be subject to a suspension from participation in athletics or other disciplinary action by the Athletic Department.

## SPORTSMANSHIP

Student-athletes represent their school, their community, and their family, and good sportsmanship is expected at all times. Poor behavior before, during, or after practices and competitions **will not be tolerated**. The coaching staff and/or Athletic Director will employ appropriate disciplinary measures including loss of playing time, suspension, and/or dismissal from the team when violations occur. Level and length of disciplinary measures will be determined by the severity of the infraction.

## SUMMER SCHOOL

Attendance at summer school does not have any effect on a student's grade point average. Therefore, if a student is not academically eligible (with regard to the grade

point average requirements) prior to attending summer school, he/she will not be eligible for athletics in the next semester regardless of academic performance at summer school. Successful completion of summer school classes does count towards the number of classes a student must pass to remain eligible. Therefore, if a student passes required summer school classes, he/she may be eligible to compete as a result. Please see the



Athletic Director for clarification on individual situations.

### **TRAVEL**

Student-athletes must ride the bus with the team to and from all scrimmages, practices, and competitions. Exceptions to this policy **may** be made for sufficient reason if prior arrangement is made in writing through the office of the Athletic Director. Coaches may waive the policy only for valid emergency reasons that arise at a time when the Athletic Director is not available and will only release an athlete to his/her parent/guardian.

## NOTES