



Rangers

Vail Mountain School's Athletics Philosophy

Athletics are a vital expression of Vail Mountain School's mission. The realm of athletics serves as a distinct learning environment where **character** is tested and forged, **knowledge** is sought through the disciplined mastery of strategy and skill, and **community** is built within the shared bonds of a team. The VMS approach is defined by a continuum of growth, recognizing that the resilience, strength, discipline and camaraderie discovered in athletics are as essential as the insights gained in our academic spaces. As students progress from Grade 6 to Grade 12, our expectations evolve, guiding athletes from the enthusiasm of initial participation toward the disciplined pursuit of competitive excellence and principled leadership. Vail Mountain School aims to give every student the opportunity to thrive as multi-sport athletes to develop skills on the field and on the court, and allow students to have multiple experiences in training, development and competence.

Grades 6–8: Building the Foundation

In the Middle School years, our primary focus is for all athletes to have time in the game, encouraging all students to serve and learn as athletes. We believe that every student benefits from the shared experience of multiple sports. At this stage, **seeking knowledge** of the game centers on the fundamentals: listening to instruction, learning the rules, and practicing with intent—understanding what it means to **build community** through the commitment to a team.

The values emphasized in these early years are foundational. Students begin to develop an awareness of others, realizing that their individual actions impact the group. Leadership in these early years is defined by "showing up for each other" and learning that reliability is the first step of sportsmanship. We actively cultivate an environment where students feel safe to try, fail, and learn what it means to be part of something larger than themselves. From 6th - 8th grade, students gain technical skills through practice and observation, viewing competitions as opportunities for growth and joyful discovery.

Junior Varsity: Developing Resilience and Commitment

As student-athletes transition into Upper School, the philosophy shifts toward a deeper cultivation of personal skills, encouraging all students to continue to participate in athletics no matter their skill level. The focus moves to gaining **knowledge** of complex strategy, skill progression, and the sustained effort required to execute that strategy.

During these formative high school years, we emphasize commitment and resilience to the team, holding high standards for internal practices and outward facing competition. We challenge

athletes to maintain their dedication even when outcomes are difficult, teaching them that the quality of their effort is a true indicator of their growth. The concept of athletic **community** solidifies from active perseverance and support of others; students learn that true commitment requires facing adversity in order to find team unity and to further develop leadership skills.

Sportsmanship matures into a consistent display of integrity, reflecting the strength of their **character** regardless of the score.

Varsity: Achieving Excellence and Leadership

VMS Varsity Student-Athletes exemplify maturity by integrating principles of athletic performance into their daily lives, valuing their role as a leader, and demonstrating moral courage. Athletic **knowledge** and competition transforms into a pursuit of demonstrated tactical and technical skills and competitive excellence at the varsity level. Playing time and positions are earned through a proven commitment to the program, integrity of **character** on and off the field, and high-level performance in practice and in competition.

We expect our varsity athletes to serve as the tone-setters and culture carriers for the entire **community**. By modeling integrity and serving as team leaders who elevate those around them, our athletes embody the highest standards of sportsmanship. As they play the game, they prove to our competitors that we embrace our school's core values, fulfilling our vision to **educate and elevate humans for good**.

The Outcome

Ultimately, a VMS graduate leaves our athletic program with more than just physical agility and knowledge of sport. They leave with the personal courage to face challenges and the leadership skills to guide others with integrity, prepared to make a positive impact on the world.