

STAPLES HIGH SCHOOL

AN EDUCATION-BASED ATHLETIC PROGRAM

STUDENT-ATHLETE & FAMILY HANDBOOK



2026-2027

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Introductory Letter From Principal Stafford Thomas, Jr.

As a Staples High School student-athlete, and being a former student-athlete myself, let me start off by commending you on the hard work and dedication you have shown and will continue to show throughout the 2026-2027 school year. The school and entire Westport community look up to you not just because of your success and prowess on the playing fields but also because of your numerous other abilities displayed everywhere you go. They are in awe of your ability to balance the challenging academic standards which Staples continues to upgrade each and every year with the countless hours of preparation and practice that accompany your sport. These attributes coupled with how you treat and interact with your fellow students and teachers make you a role model that others will be watching throughout the school year.

As the principal, I am excited to see up close and in living color all of the wonderful descriptions of you that I have heard about prior to taking the helm. I look forward to seeing you in action on the playing fields, in your classrooms and around the community and most of all, making Staples the shining example for others to follow. It is a great responsibility indeed, but you are rooted in a wonderfully strong position of power and we all know how that quote ends. You have the ability to do it as well as the discipline necessary to demonstrate the character of a champion in each and every interaction you engage in and in all of the endeavors you choose to pursue.

I sincerely wish you the best for a successful year both academically and athletically. I believe in you and your being up to the challenge of continuing the proud tradition of being a Staples High School student-athlete.

Sincerely,

Go Wreckers!

Stafford W. Thomas, Jr. JD Principal

Mission Statement: The Staples High School community inspires learning, fosters integrity and nurtures empathy.

Introductory Letter From Athletic Director VJ Sarullo

Student-Athletes and Families:

Welcome to Staples High School Athletics! Our athletic program has a history of tradition and excellence and we look to continue to build upon our strong foundation this school year. Our goal is to be the best athletic program in the community, classroom and competition. When you wear the “Block S”, you will be representing your family, community and school. While we want all of our student-athletes and teams to achieve at a high level, we must remember that our competitors are student-athletes and that success in the classroom must be the priority.

We are proud to be able to offer forty-three sports for our student-athletes over the course of our three sports seasons, many of which offer competition at sub-varsity and varsity levels. Our student-athlete participation rates are some of the best in the state, which helps build the family atmosphere that we all strive for. We are members of the National Federation of High Schools, the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference and the Fairfield County Interscholastic Athletic Conference, which is considered the most competitive conference in Connecticut.

This handbook will provide an overview of our rules and expectations. Please take the time as a family to become familiar with the items contained herein. As we move forward, please know that I am always available to help answer any questions or to address any concerns that you may have.

I look forward to working with you in your time at Staples High School and I cannot wait to see everyone at our contests in 2026-2027. GO WRECKERS!

Sincerely,

VJ Sarullo
Athletic Director

Westport Public Schools Administration

Superintendent: Thomas Scarice

Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning: Anna Mahon
Assistant Superintendent of HR and General Administration: John Bayers
Assistant Superintendent of Pupil Personnel Services: Michael Rizzo
Chief Financial Officer: Elio Longo

Staples High School Administration

Principal: Stafford Thomas, Jr.

Assistant Principals:
Christine Cincotta, Grade 9
Patrick Micinilio, Grade 10
Micah Lawrence, Grade 11
James Farnen, Grade 12
Rosemarie Ampha, Special Education

Director of School Counseling: William Plunkett

Staples High School Athletic Department

VJ Sarullo
Athletic Director
203-341-1263
vsarullo@westportps.org

Michelle Garrity
Athletic Department Assistant
203-341-1260
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Sam Romano
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Instagram: @stapleswreckers_ad

Westport Schools Affirm Non-Discriminatory Practices in Employment And In Educational Opportunity

In compliance with Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, THE WESTPORT SCHOOLS shall exclude no person from participation in, denied benefits of, or be otherwise discriminated against in employment or in educational opportunity on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, disability, past or present history of mental disorder, mental retardation, race, color, creed, religion, national origin, ancestry, age or marital status.

Complaint procedures

File complaint with principal; copy to coordinator (see below)
If not satisfied, you may appeal to the Assistant Superintendent
Next level is appeal to Superintendent
Next level is to Board of Education

Title VI & Title 504

Coordinator

Michael Rizzo
Asst. Superintendent
PPS
Westport Town School
Offices
110 Myrtle Ave Room
302
Westport, CT 06880
203-341-1253

Title VII & IX Coordinator

John Bayers
Asst. Superintendent of HR
& General Administration
Westport Town School Offices
110 Myrtle Ave Room 302
Westport, CT 06880
203-341-1004

Sport Offerings

Fall:

*Cheerleading
Boys Cross Country
Girls Cross Country
Field Hockey
Football
Boys Golf
Boys Soccer
Girls Soccer
Girls Swimming & Diving
Girls Volleyball
Unified Sports
Boys Water Polo*

Winter:

*Boys Basketball
Girls Basketball
Cheerleading
Fencing
Gymnastics
Boys Ice Hockey
Girls Ice Hockey
Boys Indoor Track
Girls Indoor Track
Boys Skiing
Girls Skiing
Boys Squash
Girls Squash
Boys Swimming & Diving
Unified Sports
Wrestling*

Spring:

*Baseball
Girls Golf
Boys Lacrosse
Girls Lacrosse
Boys Outdoor Track
Girls Outdoor Track
Boys Rugby
Girls Rugby
Sailing
Softball
Boys Tennis
Girls Tennis
Unified Sports
Boys Volleyball
Girls Water Polo*

Philosophy Of Athletics

Purpose

The purpose of the athletic program is to stimulate students to develop mutual interests, promote motivations and improve their physical skills. It is one of the many Staples programs which offer the individual the opportunity to develop interests and grow through their participation and competition in a group activity. Athletic contests involve considerable time for practices and games, strenuous physical effort, and student travel. Each sport is a specialized form of learning experience, and as such, entails numerous responsibilities. Students who try out for any sport should be aware of these responsibilities and be willing to assume them.

Value

Taking part in athletics is one of the most important parts of our educational system. There is no other course in our schools today which can offer all the following benefits:

- 1. Competition**
- 2. Physical well-being**
- 3. The release of physical energy**
- 4. Recognition**
- 5. Understanding**
- 6. Emotional Control**
- 7. Discipline**

8. Perseverance

9. Thinking under pressure

10. Loyalty

Code of Conduct For Student-Athletes

Introduction

It is a privilege and honor to represent our school and community while participating on a Staples High School athletic team. It is the student-athletes responsibility to conform to those rules and regulations necessary to participate successfully and to follow the "Code of Conduct."

A firm and fair policy of enforcement is needed to uphold the regulations and standards of the athletic department. It is our belief that high standards of conduct and citizenship are essential in maintaining a sound program of athletics.

Code

1. Student-Athletes shall conform to the school, FCIAC and CIAC eligibility rules, including all medical and academic requirements.
2. Student-Athletes shall conform to the behavioral norms of the school and act in a responsible manner with regards to the rules and regulations established in the Staples Student Handbook and Code of Conduct. Consequences will be exercised when needed.
3. Student-Athletes shall conform to the behavioral norms of society in general and to the specific laws established by local, state, and federal governments.
4. Student-Athletes shall attend, and not be tardy, for all practices and competitions held both during regular school sessions and during school vacations. Exceptions shall be subject to the approval of the head coach.
5. Student-Athletes shall, at all times, conduct themselves in a manner exhibiting sound moral character and exemplify good sportsmanship.
6. Student-Athletes shall be held responsible and accountable for all equipment associated with the functioning of the team, i.e. uniforms, equipment, etc.
7. Student-Athletes shall always conduct themselves with an attitude that is positively stated, exhibits pride and is representative of the Staples community in general.
8. Student-Athletes shall abstain from using drugs (including anabolic steroids, performance enhancing substances), alcohol, and tobacco, which are deemed harmful to one's health, athletic performance, and general well being. A "zero tolerance" policy is upheld.

In-Season Violations and Consequences

- Student-Athletes failing to conform to meet the requirements of the contents of this Code of Conduct shall face disciplinary action. If a student-athlete becomes involved in the community so as to bring adverse publicity to the athletic program, or if the student-athlete is engaged in conduct that may be considered harmful to themselves, the team or school, that student-athlete may be suspended from their sport.
- Any alcohol, tobacco or drug violation is handled in the following manner:
 - ❖ If the student-athlete admits to the violation in an initial meeting with a coach or school representative, the student-athlete is suspended from the team for a period of seven calendar days from the initial meeting.
 - ❖ If the student-athlete does not admit to the violation in the initial meeting, and it is subsequently shown or admitted that a violation did occur, the student-athlete is

suspended from the team for a period of fourteen calendar days from the time that a violation was determined.

- ❖ Should a second violation occur, the student-athlete is suspended from the team for the remainder of the season. After a second offense, to become eligible to participate in another program, the student-athlete must show evidence to the Principal and Athletic Director of having participated in a school approved substance abuse counseling program.
- During the suspension, the student-athlete must attend all practices and games but is not allowed to participate in team activities and may not be in uniform. The student-athlete is permitted to participate in conditioning activities as directed by the head coach.

The Code of Conduct rules are in effect during a student-athlete's season of play beginning with the first day of practice/tryouts. This is a twenty four hour rule and applies both on and off school property.

Self-Referral by Student-Athletes

Student-athletes may take advantage of a self-referral procedure to seek information, guidance, counseling and assessment in regard to student-athlete use of alcohol, tobacco and drugs.

Voluntary referrals do not carry punitive consequences.

- a. Referral is allowed one time in a student's four-year high school athletic career.
- b. Only the student-athlete or a member of the immediate family can make a referral.
- c. The referral cannot be used by student-athletes as a method to avoid consequences once a code of conduct rule is violated and a student-athlete has been identified as having violated one of the code of conduct rules.
- d. Referral must be made to a coach, athletic administrator, school counselor or substance abuse support personnel.

Performance Enhancing Drugs

The CIAC has enacted a policy concerning use of performance enhancing drugs. Any student-athlete who has been determined to have used, in or out of season, androgenic/anabolic steroids or other performance enhancing substances shall be declared ineligible for 180 school days on each occurrence. The 180 school day period of ineligibility commences on the day the CIAC Board of Control makes such determination

Hazing Policy

Hazing is defined as reckless or intentional acts by a team member that endangers the mental or physical health of another individual on a team whether the behavior is part of an initiation into a team, or not, shall be prohibited. Any hazing activity shall be presumed to be a forced activity, even if the student willingly participates in such activity.

“Endanger the mental health” shall include any activity except those activities authorized by law, which would subject the individual to extreme mental stress, such as prolonged sleep deprivation, forced prolonged exclusion from social contact, forced conduct which could result in extreme embarrassment, or any other forced activity which could adversely affect the mental health or dignity of the individual.

“Endanger the physical health” shall include, but is not limited to, any brutality of a physical nature, such as whipping, beating, exposure to the elements, forced consumption of food, alcoholic beverage, drug or controlled dangerous substance; or any other forced activity which would adversely affect the physical health or safety of the individual. Upon receipt of a

complaint or a report of hazing, the school district shall undertake an investigation. If a hazing violation is deemed to have occurred, appropriate disciplinary proceedings will occur. These could include suspension, expulsion, and as well as criminal prosecution. Disciplinary consequences will be sufficiently severe to deter violations and to appropriately discipline prohibited behavior. This policy applies to all situations, whether on or off campus.

Requirements for Participation

Medical and Registration

In order to participate in any sport at Staples, it is necessary for each student to have:

1. A current (within thirteen months) Medical Examination form (HAR -3) on file with the school nurse.
2. Through the online registration process, families and student-athletes will sign all required forms.

Medical Examination Forms can be obtained from the athletic office and points around the school. The medical forms and online registration must be completed before an athlete can participate in any sport.

Students must be in school for at least four hours or they may not participate/perform in any activity that is considered extracurricular. Extracurricular activities are any activity that takes place outside of the classroom for the purpose of enrichment, entertainment, or sports. Examples of such activities may include but are not limited to: athletic events in-school field trips, out of school field trips, performances (plays, concerts, radio show talent/variety shows etc) and school sponsored evening events.

If a student-athlete is enrolled in physical education, they are required to participate in class, if they are planning on participating in athletics that same day. If they sit out of PE class, they are not allowed to participate in athletics that day.

Academic and Eligibility Requirements

It is necessary for the student to meet the academic and eligibility requirements as set forth by Staples High School. and the CIAC. More information about C.I.A.C. eligibility can be found at: https://ciac.fpsports.org/resources/Resources/Students_Parents/Eligibility%20Rules.pdf

Important Links

Westport Public Schools & Staples High School

[Westport Public Schools Website](#)

[Staples High School Student-Athlete and Family Handbook](#)

[Staples High School Emergency Action Plan](#)

[Westport Board of Education Policies and Regulations](#)

Staples High School Athletics Resources

[FinalForms \(Athletic Registration\)](#)

Affiliated Organizations

[National Federation of High Schools \(NFHS\) Website](#)

[NFHS Mission and Purpose](#)

[Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference \(CIAC\) Website](#)

[CIAC Education-Based Athletics Information](#)

[CIAC Handbook](#)

[CIAC Mission and Purpose](#)

[CIAC Eligibility Rules](#)

[CIAC Medical Handbook](#)

[Fairfield County Interscholastic Athletic Conference \(FCIAC\) Website](#)

[Connecticut High School Coaches Association \(CHSCA\) Website](#)

State of Connecticut

[Concussion Information](#)

[Sudden Cardiac Arrest Information](#)

[Heat Awareness Information](#)

[Mental Health Information](#)

Program Related Events and Activities

All activities associated with a Staples High School athletic program are considered official school events. This includes events held off campus as well as those occurring before, during, or after the CIAC-designated sport season. Examples of such activities include, but are not limited to, conditioning sessions, fundraising events, team pasta dinners, and end-of-season banquets.

Transitioning A Club to Varsity Sport Status

When a request is made to add a new varsity sport at Staples High School, the following process will be followed:

- Club Establishment
 - Students must first submit a request to establish a club through the Assistant Principal's office
- Sustained Club Operation and Available Competition
 - Once officially recognized, the club must operate successfully for a minimum of three consecutive school years. During this time, the club should demonstrate consistent student interest, participation and organizational stability
 - Where applicable, the club must demonstrate that a sufficient number of Connecticut high schools sponsor and actively participate in the activity, thereby

providing meaningful opportunities for regular-season competition and potential postseason participation.

- Request For Varsity Status
 - At the beginning of the fourth year, students may submit a formal request to the Athletic Director to be considered for varsity sport status. This request must be submitted by September 15 to be considered for implementation in the following school year. This deadline ensures adequate time for administrative review and planning.
- Approval and Implementation
 - If the club is deemed viable and is approved through the necessary administrative processes, it may transition to varsity sport status no earlier than the fifth year
- Initial Financial Responsibility
 - During the first year as a varsity sport, all associated costs will be the responsibility of the participating families. The athletic department will plan to begin including the sport in its budget starting in year six.

Please note that various factors - such as facility availability, funding, opponent availability, legal review and overall program alignment - may impact the timeline or feasibility of a transition to varsity status. The Athletic Director will maintain open and ongoing communication with both students and families throughout the process.

Athletic Department Communication

The Staples High School Athletic Department strives to continuously improve in all areas of our operation. One specific area that is of most importance is our effective communication with families. Whether it is communicating through our social media accounts, website, e-mails, etc., our goal is to get all athletic information out to everyone efficiently and effectively. With that said, we are asking for your help to ensure that we have an outstanding two-way communication system. During the course of our three sports seasons, there are often times that parents have questions or concerns regarding various aspects of our program. Unfortunately, parents are oftentimes reluctant to bring items forward to either the coaches or myself for a variety of reasons. In order for us to deal with issues in the best possible manner, please bring forward questions and concerns as soon as they arise. It is always most productive when we are able to deal with issues immediately rather than days, weeks or months down the road. Our coaches and staff are committed to ensuring that everyone in our athletic program has a rewarding experience, and we need your assistance in that endeavor.

While our expectation is that all of our interscholastic athletic programs will run smoothly, we understand that there are times that student-athletes and/or their families may have questions or concerns. Both parenting and coaching are extremely difficult vocations. By understanding each other and working together, we can truly make Staples High School the best athletic program in the state.

Below, please find information that you may find helpful in regards to communicating questions and concerns with the athletic department. Also, please remember that we enjoy hearing about the positives as well!

Communication your Student-Athlete Should Expect From the Coach

1. Overall philosophy
2. Expectations the coach has for your student-athlete and for the team as a whole
3. Locations and times of all practices and contests
4. Team requirements, including all fees, special equipment and off-season programming
5. Procedure should your student-athlete be injured
6. Discipline that can result in the denial of the student-athletes participation
7. Specific team rules

Communication Coaches Expect from Parents

1. Questions or issues addressed directly to the coach as soon as they arise
2. Notification of any schedule conflicts well in advance

As your student-athlete becomes involved in the Staples High School Athletic Program, they will experience some of the most rewarding moments of their lives. Please understand that there also may be times when things do not go the way that they wish. At these times, please encourage your student-athlete to communicate with the coach first. By doing so, you are fostering social-emotional growth, as well as the ability for them to resolve their own issues.

Parent-Coach Communication

Generally, at any time, a parent may discuss the following with a coach:

1. Mental and physical treatment of the student-athlete
2. Ways in which the student-athlete can improve both academically and athletically
3. General concerns about the student-athletes behavior

While the above are certainly important topics that should be discussed both openly and professionally, the following list must be left up to the discretion of the coaching staff. Please remember that all of our coaches are professionals who have gone through thorough interview processes, annual professional development courses and more. Our coaches are charged to make judgments based on what they believe to be best for all student-athletes involved. Certain issues can and should be discussed with the coach, as mentioned above. Other issues, including the following, must be left to the discretion of the coach:

1. Playing time
2. Tryout procedure/Selection of team members
3. Team strategy/Play calling

4. Performance of other student-athletes
5. Selection of captains
6. Selection of award recipients

It is also important that the established “chain of communication” is followed. General issues that can occur should be handled in the following order:

1. Student-athlete and coach
2. Parent and coach
3. Student-athlete and athletic director
4. Parent and athletic director
5. Parent and building administration
6. Parent and assistant superintendent of teaching and learning
7. Parent and superintendent

****We ask that parents not approach coaches before, during or after practices and games. Please contact the coach or athletic department the next day via phone or e-mail to have a discussion or to set up a meeting.*

****We also ask that parents provide their name and contact information when contacting a coach or the athletic director. Issues that may arise are always handled in a much more efficient and effective manner when direct communication can be made with families.*

ParentSquare

Westport Public Schools has implemented a communication policy that prohibits staff members from communicating with student-athletes via text message using personal devices, including cell phones. To ensure communication remains appropriate, secure, and consistent with district expectations, ParentSquare will serve as the approved platform for all coach-to-student-athlete messaging. It is important to note that, under no circumstances, may coaches and student-athletes engage in text message communication with one another using personal devices. All such communication must occur through district-approved channels.

Parent Meeting

Each team will conduct an all-encompassing parent meeting for all parents whose children will be participating in the athletic program for that year. It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to attend that meeting and to receive information regarding the student-athlete's participation in the program.

Procedures for Athletic Injuries and Insurance

- **Reporting of Injuries:** Any injury sustained while participating in a Staples High School athletic practice, competition, or team activity must be reported immediately to both the coach and the certified athletic trainer. Injuries that occur outside of participation in an approved Staples High School athletic program activity should be evaluated and managed by the appropriate medical professional. Such injuries are not the responsibility of the Staples High School athletic training staff.
- **Emergency Medical Situations:** In the event of a traumatic injury requiring immediate medical attention, the coach will follow established emergency response procedures. These procedures may include contacting emergency medical services (EMS), notifying the parent(s)/guardian(s), contacting the certified athletic trainer and ensuring that the student's emergency medical information accompanies them to the medical facility.
- **Evaluation of Non-Emergency Injuries:** For non-emergency injuries, student-athletes should report to the certified athletic trainer for evaluation. The athletic trainer will assess the injury, provide appropriate care, determine participation status, and make referrals to outside medical providers when necessary.
- **Injury Documentation and Secondary Insurance:** Following the evaluation of a reported athletic injury, the athletic trainer will complete the appropriate injury documentation and, upon request, provide information regarding the district's secondary insurance coverage. Please note that not all injuries qualify for secondary insurance benefits. Families intending to utilize the district's secondary insurance program should contact the Athletic Training Office at (203) 341-1264 as soon as possible, following the injury.
- **Medical Treatment and Return-to-Play Clearance:** Any visit to a physician, physical therapist, chiropractor, or other licensed healthcare provider for treatment of a sport-related injury must be reported to both the coach and the certified athletic trainer if it has not already been documented. Prior to returning to participation, the student-athlete must provide written medical clearance from the treating healthcare provider. To ensure continuity of care, return-to-play clearance should be issued by the original treating provider or another provider with equivalent credentials and scope of practice. Student-athletes will not be permitted to resume participation without appropriate written clearance.
- **Timely Reporting and Insurance Eligibility:** Failure to report an athletic injury in a timely manner may affect eligibility for benefits under the district's secondary insurance plan. If a qualifying injury is not reported promptly to the appropriate school personnel, coverage through the secondary insurance program may be denied.
- **Return to Competition Following Injury or Illness:** As a matter of school policy, a student-athlete returning from an injury or illness must complete at least one full practice session prior to participating in an interscholastic contest, unless otherwise approved by the certified athletic trainer and athletic administration.

NCAA Information

- NCAA initial eligibility standards for Division I, II and III can be viewed here: http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/eligibility_center/Student_Resources/IE_Brochure.pdf