



FALL RIVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

MIDDLE SCHOOL ATHLETICS PROGRAM

COACHES HANDBOOK

2026–2027

INTRODUCTION

The Athletic Department is an important part of the education experience in Fall River Middle Schools. Playing sports helps students build leadership skills, learn teamwork, and practice fairness and respect. Athletics also teach self-discipline, responsibility, and pride in your school and community.

IMPORTANT FOCUS AREAS

Academic Toughness

School comes first. Athletes must be in school, on time, and passing their classes. Coaches should support athletes who need extra help.

Mental Toughness

Stress the importance of focusing on what you can control. Do not let things like referees, fans, or weather affect your attitude.

Positive Team Environment

Create a safe space where athletes feel comfortable speaking up.

Physical Toughness

Athletes should be prepared for competition. Emphasize conditioning, strength training, proper nutrition, hydration, and sleep. Incorporate strength & conditioning into your practice plan.

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ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT STRUCTURE

- **Principal** – Oversees all school activities

The Principal, as administrative leader of the school, is the head of all activities in the school, including athletics. Responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the athletic program is delegated by the principal to the Athletic Director.

- **Athletic Director** – Manages sports programs and supports coaches

The Athletic Director reports to and assists the Principal in the supervision of coaches and others involved in the athletic program. The Athletic Director will provide leadership among the various sports and to facilitate programs that provide student athletes worthwhile learning experiences.

CHAIN OF COMMAND

Follow this order when addressing concerns:

Student/Parent → Assistant Coach → Head Coach → Athletic Director → Principal

OFFICIALS

No member of the coaching staff should ever contact or give out the contact information of any official. Any complaints should be made to the athletic director and they will relay the message. Officials should also not be contacting coaches with issues. Violation of this rule could lead to a suspension or termination of the coach. Please keep in mind that at the middle school level, we combine MIAA officials with student officials from our ref reps program.

COACH EXPECTATIONS

- Attend all practices, games, and meetings
- Communicate any absences to the Athletic Director before the day you are missing
- Be a positive role model at all times
- Use appropriate language
- Keep professional boundaries with students
- Use school-approved communication tools (not personal phones)
- Take one shift on the gate/door. 100% of this money purchases equipment for this program

REQUIRED COACHES CERTIFICATIONS

- ✓ All coaches must be CPR/First Aid/AED certified prior to the beginning of the season.
- ✓ All coaches must complete the Concussion Course prior to the beginning of the season.
- ✓ All coaches must register on Arbiter Registration

COACHES' EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS

Your employment at Fall River Middle Schools is on an “at will” basis. For example: for a fall sport employee it would run approximately mid-September to the conclusion of the season in November. Contracts are strictly on a season-to-season basis and may be terminated at any time (including during the season) if you are found to be in violation of the standards set forth in this handbook.

Coaching contracts are tendered for one year at a time for both certified staff (full and part-time teachers) and coaches (individuals from outside the school community). Any individual who is not already employed by FRPS (including those hired by a third party) must complete all part time employee paperwork before coaching. This paperwork must be turned into HR prior to the season. A coach will be evaluated on their job performance at the conclusion of the season.

COACHING EXPECTATIONS

The expectation is that all coaches attend *every game, practice*, pre-season coaches meeting and pre-season parent meetings. If a coach cannot attend, the Athletic Director should be notified. Any absence by any coach should be communicated to the athletic director.

It is the expectation that all coaches attend sign-ups, tryouts, practices and games/meets.

A coach who is a teacher in the district must be present in school in order to coach the team that day. If a teacher calls in sick, they are not allowed to coach that day. If a personal day or a school business day is taken, coaching that day will be allowed. Coaches on any extended (i.e. parental leave) are not eligible to coach

STUDENT/COACH COMMUNICATION

Require that your student-athletes call you “coach,” Mr. Mrs., or Miss. Always keep a professional distance between yourself and your athletes.

Coaches should not be using their personal cell phone to communicate with players/parents. Please use Parent/Student Square

RESPECTFUL BEHAVIOR - APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE

Please carefully consider the language you use when speaking to or in the vicinity of any of our students, parents, and members of the community. Remember that this is an educational institution first and foremost and that you are now part of our faculty. We are asking all coaches to help set a higher standard for our athletic programs by not allowing student-athletes to use profanity, vulgar language, or disrespectful communication during practices, games, travel, or team activities.

As coaches and leaders, we play an important role in shaping the culture of our teams. The language athletes use reflects the values of our program, our school, and our community. We want to build an environment based on respect, accountability, sportsmanship, and pride.

Changing culture starts with consistent expectations. We ask every coach to address inappropriate language immediately and reinforce positive communication at all times. By working together, we can create a culture that represents our programs in a positive and respectful way.

POSTING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

A coach should never post anything negative or controversial about their team on any social media outlet. We expect our players not to do this and we need to set the example. Think before you post anything.

MEDIA

During an interview use the simple rule – think before you speak. Parents and the community will read the articles and make passing judgments’ on you and your team based on your comments. *Use Common Sense.*

LIABILITY - ALWAYS DOCUMENT

It is imperative that you document any conversation, incident, or key event (such as an injury or team meeting) that you have with your players or parents within your team that you feel will protect you from being questioned in the future.

SAFETY PROCEDURES/PROTOCOLS

There are inherent dangers in all sports. Coaches must alert student-athletes of potential injuries even though certain risks are consented to by students and parents. Coaches must inform the Athletic Director of faulty equipment and unsafe conditions in the practice or playing area immediately upon their discovery. *Do not place any athlete at risk.*

Report any suspicious activities immediately. As a coach you have a unique relationship with many students, much more than a classroom teacher. Because of this you might be able to spot suspicious behavior earlier than others. If an athlete seems troubled, report this to the Athletic Director/Principal immediately.

Coaches should always be aware and in close proximity of their teams before and after practice. Please respect all equipment, uniforms, and all playing facilities. Do your part in taking pride in keeping our community clean. Be sure that all equipment is cleaned and neatly stored in its proper place after use. *The coach should always be the last to leave the gym, or field.*

Please make sure athletes are cleaning their area before walking away. Supervision, Responsibility and Accountability.

AVOID BEING ALONE WITH AN ATHLETE

It is important that we avoid finding ourselves in a closed room with just one athlete. While there may be times this may be unavoidable, such as talking about something that should be done in private, it is in your interest to not put yourself in the position of being alone. Always keep a door open to protect yourself and the athlete. *Ask another coach to be present during the conversation – Protect your athletes and yourself.*

COACHES MAY NOT TRANSPORT ATHLETES

Parents/guardians will provide transportation for their students. Coaches may not provide personal transportation at any time without documented consent from a parent/guardian.

DO NOT TAKE ATHLETES TO YOUR RESIDENCE

Do not take any athletes to your residence, nor should you visit an athlete's residence. The appropriate exception is when there is a team function at a residence, and the entire team is present as well as parents. Use common sense.

FIELD TRIPS

Any coach interested in organizing a team field trip or requesting overnight must meet with the Athletic Director to discuss the proposed trip. The Athletic Director will then take the proposal to the Principal for approval. The request will be sent to the Superintendent and the School Committee for final approval. At no time should a coach organize a field trip without the consent and approval of the Athletic Director, Principal, Superintendent and the School Committee.

GAMES/SCRIMMAGES OUT OF STATE

Any game or scrimmage scheduled out of state must be approved by the school committee. The school committee meets once a month so the request would have to come early enough to get it approved.

IMPORTANT RULES

- Do not contact game officials—report concerns to the Athletic Director
- Do not post negative or inappropriate content on social media
- Think carefully when speaking to media or the public
- Record game results before leaving - do not take score sheets with you

SAFETY AND RESPONSIBILITY

- Always supervise athletes
- Report injuries, unsafe conditions, or concerns immediately
- Never be alone with a student in a closed space
- Do not give athletes rides or bring them to your home
- Keep facilities clean and organized

ATHLETE HANDBOOK/HAZING POLICY

Hazing is strictly prohibited.

Coaches must review the handbook and the hazing policy with athletes at the start of each season.

Any hazing must be reported to the Athletic Director/Principal immediately.

SUPERVISION

The locker room, practice and game facilities must be supervised at all times when your student-athletes are present. No student-athlete should be in the locker room or on the practice or game field/court without a coach being present. Protect Yourself. (#1 reason for lawsuits is failure to properly supervise)

Students are always required to wear proper attire. Shirts and sneakers are a must. Students should always have proper footwear on at all practices/games.

TEAM MANAGEMENT

TRYOUTS & CUTS

- Be honest and respectful
- Encourage students to improve or try another sport
- Keep a manageable amount of athletes

PRACTICES & GAMES

- Practice at least twice a week
- Games are usually on Saturdays
- Get permission in writing for any off-campus activities

TRANSPORTATION

Students provide their own transportation unless otherwise arranged

PROTOCOL FOR BUS RIDES: *IF APPLICABLE*

When there are two or more coaches on a bus, there must be at least one coach in the front of the bus and one in the middle or back of the bus. Coaches are responsible for frequently

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checking the actions and behavior of the student/athletes during all bus rides. Expectations should be set by all coaches before any trip is made. A single coach should sit in the front of the bus but also monitor the actions and behavior of the students frequently. The bus should be cleaned and windows should be put back up at the end of the trip.

STUDENT-ATHLETE EXPECTATIONS

- Show respect in school and the community
- Attend practices and games on time
- Follow team rules
- Poor behavior may lead to suspension or removal

STUDENT ATHLETE BEHAVIOR

Student-athletes assume the obligation and responsibility to appear in public, engaging in behavior that reflects positively to their school, team, and community. Disruptive and disrespectful behavior in or out of school may result in suspension or dismissal from the team.

MISSING OR UNEXCUSED TARDINESS TO PRACTICES OR GAMES

Coaches should clearly establish rules for attending and missing practices. Violation of these rules may result in loss of playing time, suspension or dismissal from the team.

TERMINATING STUDENT ATHLETE FROM THE TEAM

A student-athlete may be cut from a team; due to lack of ability, non-adherence to team rules and regulations, and by mutual consent of coach and player. Any athlete who quits a sport without approval of the coach and athletic director will be suspended from participating in any athletic program until the following sport season.

If a coach and student-athlete mutually consent to the release from the team he/she is eligible to participate in the same season within another sport with the approval of the Athletic Director.

*****WE NEED UPDATED ROSTERS WHEN A STUDENT IS REMOVED FROM THE TEAM*****

ATHLETE & PARENT CONCERNS

Please contact the Athletic Director immediately if any problems or conflicts arise. It is the Head Coaches responsibility to inform the Athletic Director of any issues or conflicts from players or parents.

UNIFORM COLLECTION

It is very important that you keep accurate records of uniforms. Please take the time to check off an item when the student/athlete returns their stuff. It is expected that the coaches do everything they can to get the uniforms back from the student/athlete. Best practice is to

collect all the stuff on the last day, this is usually a game. If you wait until after that, many student/athletes do not attend the meeting. This is especially true with 8th graders.

COACHES AGREEMENT

I have read and understand the Fall River Schools Coaches Handbook and agree to abide by all policies, procedures, and expectations outlined within it. I understand my responsibility to uphold the standards of professionalism, sportsmanship, and student-athlete safety while representing Fall River Schools. By signing below, I acknowledge my commitment to supporting the mission and values of the athletic program.

I, _____ (print full name) have read the **Coaches Handbook** and agree to abide by the contents therein.

Coaches Signature: _____ Date: _____
