

2026-2027

Grace Academy

Athletic Handbook



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Philosophy

Virtue formation is among the most important goals of a classical Christian education, whether in the classroom or on the athletic field. Sport can and should recruit the mind, body, and soul of the athlete into an experience that shapes their beliefs, behaviors, and affections. With wise stewardship and the setting of clear boundaries, athletic programming can and should be offered in a way that does not compromise the academic priority of the school but rather supplements and enhances a student's experience.

A Tradition of Virtue Formation

The aim of a liberal arts education is to train the affections and loves of students, such that they delight in what is true, good, and beautiful. Every facet of the educational process is directed at this goal, whether a student is eating lunch with their classmates, working out a challenging proof in geometry, or struggling to understand how to correct their jump shot. If all of this is done well the student will love what they ought to love and hate what they ought to hate. In short, they will have grown in virtue.

The Greek word *areté* is a helpful term to holistically describe what an ideal athletic program will accomplish. Firstly, *areté* encompasses both technical and moral excellence. Thus, a student-athlete will grow in skill and strength in each sport that he competes: batting averages will improve, unforced errors will decrease, and the student-athlete will steadily become stronger and faster than he was the year prior. Not only will he become technically more proficient, but he will grow in moral excellence as well: the 7 virtues will guide and direct his interactions with teammates and competitors alike. The student-athlete will play hard and fight for his team, but he will treat his competitors with due respect, neither gloating over a victory nor intentionally transgressing the rules of the game in order to gain an edge. He will not give up when defeat seems imminent, and he will encourage his teammates to fight to the end.

At the end of each season our student-athlete will evaluate her experience with *areté* as her guide. A season that ended with growth in technical proficiency and moral excellence is a successful season, regardless of wins and losses. Such a view will be habituated in her in each season of play, as her coaches will be clear examples of excellence in both thought and deed.

A Theology of an Integrated Self

God has made us in His image as an integrated self, possessing mind, body, and soul (Genesis 1:27). Whether we are seated in a classroom or sprinting down a court, our beliefs, behaviors, and affections are actively motivating and shaping one another. Both the student who presses on through a challenging subject and the athlete who perseveres through the painful last strides of a race, are acting in accord with a love rooted in an understanding of what is good. The behavior of their body is motivated by the affections of their soul. These affections are, in turn, informed by the convictions of their mind. He strives to understand a complex scientific idea because he loves the depth to which it illustrates the majesty of God. She makes the painful shift into the next gear because she loves the

satisfaction of stewarding all her strength unto the glory of God. Ultimately, it is an unrivaled love of God that motivates our obedience to Him. This is why *the* commandments of God are not summarized by a synthesis of behaviors but rather by two complementary affections - love of God and love of neighbor (Mark 12:30-31). It is "out of the abundance of the heart" that "the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34). What we love motivates all that we say and do. An athlete's behavior on the field will be determined by the love he already possessed on the sideline, love rooted in an understanding of all that is true, good, and beautiful about the game.

The loves of the student-athlete are rightly ordered through a contemplation of the very character and ways of God. Her meditation upon all that is true, noble, right, and pure shapes and guards her heart (Philippians 4:4-9). The very peace of mind that she experiences while in the throws of competition is occurring in a brain whose neurochemistry has literally been shaped by repeated practices of meditation. The disciplines of her mind enable her to discipline her body into moments of optimal performance. Her behavior is determined by both what she loves and what she spends her time thinking about. For this reason, the apostle Paul's call for us to sacrificially serve one another begins with an admonition to transform our loves through the "renewing of our mind" (Romans 12:2). As we move and live and have our being, whether it be on an athletic field or in a classroom, our behavior is motivated by well-ordered affections rooted in a well-disciplined mind. Sport can be nothing less than a recruitment of an athlete's mind, body, and soul,

Sport as a Means of Virtue Formation

There was a movement early in the 20th Century that posited the idea that sport in-and-of-itself shaped men and women into virtuous individuals, almost as if participation in athletic pursuits necessarily resulted in morally excellent people. Time and experience has proven that such is *not* the case, nor can it be the case with anything human beings are involved in; however, sport can and *should*, be a means of virtue formation in our students at Grace Academy.

There are three primary ways in which we hope a student will be shaped. The first is that she will grow in attentiveness and resilience as she learns how to best compete in her chosen sport. This includes being a diligent student of the sport and managing the pain of intense physical exertion as well as the frustration of mistakes or when she and her teammates are simply outplayed by a competitor. Our hope is that the experience of growing in mental acuity and resilience will result in the ability to respond well to challenging moments in the classroom or when completing assignments that stretch her understanding. The second is that she will become accustomed to making sacrifices for the greater good of her teammates. A few examples of the sacrifices a student may give are digging deep and enduring pain, readily running plays that limit individual scoring potential for the sake of a better overall offensive strategy, or giving up playing time when a teammate is performing at a higher level. Finally, just as we hope our students will become life-long learners, we want our student-athletes to learn to steward the health of their bodies well. Taking proper time to rest, to be purposeful and wise in their dietary choices, and to continue to pursue athletic interests well into adulthood are practices that we hope will be a norm for our graduates.

Protecting the Integrity of Our Mission

Athletic programming requires wise stewardship and the setting of boundaries in order to retain the integrity of the school's academic mission. Whether it be time, money, land, or personnel, our resources will always be limited to some degree. Because we are primarily an academic institution, spending on academics must be prioritized over spending on athletics. This priority cannot always strictly be measured through the proportionate distribution of dollars. Instead, our academic priority is more often expressed through the ordering of our decisions, the allocation of our time, and the requirements of our students.

Athletic programming will remain secondary and supplementary to academics. While all students will graduate having met rigorous standards of academic excellence, not all students will have enjoyed the same athletic experience. Yet those students who do participate in a sport will undoubtedly find their learning experience enhanced. We offer extracurricular experiences to our students, sports included, because they actively and positively shape character. Sport can form virtue in ways that are similar to but irreplaceably different from what is experienced in a classroom.

However, we must admit that without limits, athletic participation can compromise an academic experience. A healthy love for sport can evolve into a kind of idolatry that causes students to neglect the academic priority of the school. The more immediate and temporal rewards of victory can tempt a student into sacrificing the long term health of his body. Disproportionate and unbounded time spent in physical training can habituate a student into an intemperance that infiltrates other domains of his life. Compromises of these kinds threaten to betray our tradition, dis-integrate the learning experience, and encourage vices that can only be avoided if boundaries are clearly and deliberately set.

Grace Academy is committed to faithfully stewarding and shepherding our athletic programming because we are committed to forming virtue in our students. This aim is both rooted in the liberal arts tradition and grounded in the theology of an integrated self.

Participation Objectives and Guidelines

At Grace Academy, athletics are used as a proving ground for living a Christian life in community with others. While athletes explore the true, good, and beautiful in the classroom, we are using the long term pursuit of championships with teammates as a testing ground to work out the practical implications of those lessons in life. We do that through casting a long term community (team) vision and goal of the team pursuit of varsity championships. We introduce this community goal beginning in the fifth and sixth grades and build toward it in each level. Importantly, the goals of sub varsity teams do not focus on winning. They focus on building the necessary skills which will be required in order to win at the Varsity level which is the temporal goal of the overall athletics program toward which we want all of our athletes, 5th-12th grade, to strive.

We offer athletics at Grace Academy in four levels in the fifth through twelfth grades: (1) Grammar/Elementary (5th & 6th Grades); (2) Logic/Junior High (7th & 8th Grades), (3) Rhetoric Junior Varsity and (4) Rhetoric Varsity. Each set of teams has a specific objective and purpose.

At Grace Academy, we treat each sport as a program which is overseen by our head varsity coach. As program leaders, our varsity coaches will have input into the selection of other program volunteer coaches, establish the program goals (Christian leadership, athletic, character and team) with the Athletic Director, and implement the training and spiritual regimen required to meet the goals. They will provide our Elementary, Junior High and Junior Varsity coaches the drills, plays, plans and devotions needed to prepare our athletes to work toward their long term program goals.

1. Grammar/Elementary (5th & 6th Grade)

The purpose of Elementary athletics is to introduce the sport, including the “grammar” of a sport, to a wide array of aspiring athletes. We expect our volunteer coaches to introduce the sport and work on the basic individual and team drills provided by our varsity coach. Elementary athletics will allow each student the opportunity to participate and grow in sportsmanship and Christian character. Each athlete will be allowed to reasonably participate in every game/match with nearly equal time contingent on his or her attitude and participation in practice. In post-season tournaments, each player will play, but coaches will be given discretion as to playing time. Coaches serve as role models for living a Christ-centered life which will, in part, be reflected in their love and support of their team and players.

2. Junior High (7th & 8th grade)

The objectives of junior high athletics are to reinforce basic skills, to start to develop advanced athletic skill and Christian character at an increased competitive level, and to begin developing the team skills needed for varsity competition. Junior high athletics are more competitive and exist to prepare younger players for varsity play. At this level, each athlete will play and have the opportunity to experience a more intense, organized level of play focused on team play and the further development of the individual skills introduced in grammar athletics. Each athlete will be allowed playing time, although not necessarily as equal as the elementary level. The amount

will be determined by the players' skill, age, and attitude as viewed by the coach. In post-season tournaments, each player will play, but coaches will be given discretion as to playing time. Coaches serve as role models for living a Christ-centered life which will, in part, be reflected in their love and support of their team and players.

3. Junior Varsity

The objective of the junior varsity level is to provide athletes who do not meet the varsity team requirements an avenue to further develop their skills and compete. Our Junior Varsity teams will have the same character, behavioral and sportsmanship expectations as the Varsity team, but will continue to develop their individual and team athletic skills. Like the varsity team, junior varsity competition will be focused on team goals, but with a more focused effort on building the skills required to be successful at the varsity level. Like the varsity team, athletes will exhibit impeccable sportsmanship while working toward the required level of athletic excellence. Playing time will be entirely at the discretion of the coach and in support of team goals. Coaches will communicate with players about their roles, coaches' expectations, and general playing time expectations. In most cases, the Junior Varsity team will practice with the Varsity team and will often work as the scout team for the Varsity. Athletes are encouraged to discuss concerns directly with coaches who are expected to provide feedback to the player including ways to improve their performance. Coaches serve as role models for living a Christ-centered life which will, in part, be reflected in their love and support of their team and players.

4. Varsity

The objective of the varsity level is to exhibit Christ-centered selflessness demonstrated as impeccable sportsmanship and excellence while working selflessly as a team toward a common, end of season team goal which is typically a state championship. Varsity athletics is more competitive and advanced. At this level the athlete will be scrutinized more thoroughly in his character, ability, attitudes and skills. The most qualified athletes will be allowed on the varsity team. Playing time will be entirely at the discretion of the coach in their efforts to support the team's long term team objective. Coaches will communicate with players about their roles, coaches' expectations, and general playing time expectations. Athletes are encouraged to discuss concerns directly with coaches who are expected to provide feedback to the player including ways to improve their performance. Coaches serve as role models for living a Christ-centered life which will, in part, be reflected in their love and support of their team and players.

Team Selection and Evaluations

Elementary

At Grace we will prioritize grade level athletic chemistry and relationships in 5th-6th grade athletics. We will also minimize the academic impact of athletics. As a result, when we need to sort teams due to a large number of sign ups we will:

- 1) Use grade level as the primary sorting mechanism in our 5th-6th grade athletics, which will streamline any missed class periods and build cohesion among grade level peers.

- 2) If there is a need to balance the teams across grades, the athletic staff will do their best to group athletes based on the relative developmental needs and skill levels of the athletes.

Junior High

Junior High athletics athletes are beginning their preparation for Rhetoric athletics. We will retain the flexibility to group teams by ability so that players have a better opportunity to develop at their level of pace/commitment. For example, this would allow a player new to a sport in 8th to participate with students who are grouped in their ability range. The determination on team grouping will be led by the Athletic Director and Varsity coach for that sport along with the 7th and 8th grade coaches. In all cases, we will include a wide array of coaches in the skill evaluation process.

Junior Varsity, Varsity and Playing Up

At Grace Academy we are working toward varsity, team championships. In support of that we will determine teaming placement using the following criteria to support that collective goal.

JV and Varsity - The selection will be based on the results of an objective skills assessment try out process combined with the varsity coaches' assessment of the needs of the varsity team.

Playing Up: Players will not move up simply on account of the athlete's skill. There must be a clear and compelling need for that player on the receiving team to justify the move.

- a) JH Player moving to JV or Varsity: The move must support a compelling need of our varsity or JV teams to compete and develop players to compete at a high level. This may lead to a scenario where an 8th grade player is required to "play up" in order to field a team where league rules allow the practice or where we do not have enough players in a particular position to run effective practices or game rotations.
- b) The Athletic Director and coach must determine in consultation with, and agreement from, the athlete's parents that the move is in the best interest of both the team and the athlete.
- c) This will not occur simply because the 8th grader is a better athlete than the Rhetoric athletes. This practice should be minimized to the degree possible.
- d) 5th-8th grade: The Athletic Director may move athletes between grade level teams to balance the team sizes or meet the needs of our conferences.

Requirements to Participate in Athletics

Academic Requirements

Varsity athletes are ineligible if they have one or more failing grades (below 60) at the end of any grading period, or if they have below a 70 in two or more courses. Fine Arts or other elective coursework are treated the same as all other classes.

Athletes who do not meet that standard will not participate in games for three weeks following the Friday of the week the grading period ends. They will regain their eligibility if they are

passing all classes after the three-week period and have no more than one course average below the grade of 70.

In addition, Grace Academy policy states that any athlete who fails a quarter or semester in any class is ineligible for three weeks from the last day of the quarter or semester. The athlete regains eligibility if he is passing all classes after the three-week period.

In both situations above, the student is allowed to practice with the team. However, the student athlete must prioritize their academic efforts to regain eligibility and may be excused from practices without athletic recourse in order to invest more time in their coursework.

Any school week with holidays counts as a full week in regaining eligibility.

Participation and School Attendance

A student who is absent from school for more than one-half day, may not participate in extracurricular competition that day. They may participate in practice. Any student leaving for a scheduled medical appointment and returning within a reasonable time will be eligible for practices or games. Pre-approved college visits will be treated as a school activity for this purpose.

Athletic Physicals

Athletes between 7th and 12th grades must have a documented physical exam on file with the school that is no more than 24 months old when participating in the sport.

Rules and Regulations for Extra-Curricular Activities

All applicable policies and guidelines established by the Grace Academy administration apply to students participating in extracurricular programs at Grace Academy.

In addition, conference rules and regulations will also be followed. All coaches are expected to become familiar with these rules and regulations.

Multi-Sport Athletes

Athletes may participate in up to two sports simultaneously with approval of the Upper School Principal and Athletic Director. Athletes will prioritize team practices in sports that require team play in practice and competition over practices for individual skill sports (ex. track, golf, and tennis) while investing the time necessary to compete in the individual skill sport. Competitions will always take priority over practice. Both coaches need to approve an athlete's dual participation plan which must include appropriate time set aside for homework.

In all cases, athletes must communicate their participation plan to all of their coaches each week and will remain responsible for all academic deliverables as their highest priority. Any negative impact on academic performance will result in a removal from participation in at least one sport beginning with the sport that will have the least impact on their team.

Overlapping Seasons

In cases where seasons overlap for different sports (fall to winter or winter to spring) the current (already in season) sport will take precedence over the new (just beginning season) sport when there is a conflict, unless the athlete is released from that sport by their head coach.

Parent and Spectator Expectations and Agreement

Our parents and fans are a vital part of the success of Grace Academy athletics and we encourage vigorous, positive participation by our fans. We do believe cheering should be cheerful, active, and loud but never negative or demeaning. (Ephesians 4:29)

Parent involvement is critical to maintain Grace Academy Athletics. Every parent should be ready to volunteer throughout the season as a coach, team parent, clock/scoreboard operator, ride for a teammate, or worker in the concession stand when their children are not playing, etc. Athletic competition and practice cannot occur without this participation.

Our emphasis on sportsmanship and character amongst our student athletes and student body begins with the example set by our parents and include the following:

Spectators should NEVER approach a scorer or official before, during, or after a sporting event. They should never grumble about, ridicule, or shout criticism toward officials and referees. Referees are an important part of a game and provide both a fair playing field and, occasionally, a potential obstacle for our athletes and coaches to overcome. Our coaches, fans and athletes must respect their authority at all times by refraining from complaints and grumbling. Fans who violate this rule will be given a warning and then asked to leave the competition if the complaints resume.

Derogatory cheers, taunting (or any kind of derisive singling out of opponents), arguing, or disputing directed at any participant (players, coaches, officials, and fellow fans) will not be tolerated and will be considered grounds for removal from Grace Academy sporting events.

During a game, the team bench is for coaches, players, and officials only. Do not approach the bench area during a game (including halftime).

We have several conference & sport specific rules that fans must adhere to including:

- 1) Volleyball: Fans may not make noises when an athlete begins their serve.
- 2) Basketball: Fans may not make noises when an opponent is beginning a free throw.
- 3) Gym noise: Noise makers are prohibited in gyms. Specifically, air horns, bullhorns, bells and other noise makers are not permitted. Also, fans cannot make noises by pounding on the bleachers with hardened physical objects such as sticks and canes.

At Grace Academy we want to gradually teach our children that they are capable outside of the direct supervision of their parents. While parents will always be allowed to watch practices, as students get older, parents should provide more space to their children. As a practice, we discourage parents from regularly watching Rhetoric practices. We also encourage parents of 7th-8th graders to allow space for the team to work together without direct parent observation and involvement whenever possible.

Finally, we are using athletics as a proving ground to build resilient, Christian men and women. We expect our athletes to be presented with and to overcome difficult challenges during the course of their participation. Examples include: physically demanding practices and games, referees making bad calls at critical moments, opponents trash talking and not responding in kind, limited playing time, teammates with different personality types and many other challenges. In nearly every case, parents should encourage their athletes to overcome the obstacle rather than focus on removing the obstacle. Difficult physical and personal challenges are important features of a good athletic program not flaws.

Pets: To protect our community, pets are not allowed inside Grace Gym. In accordance with conference policy, pets are also prohibited from any public competitions including those inside Grace Gym, on Grace Field or at any other location unless there is a documented health need.

Athletic Credit

Grace Academy requires one athletic credit as part of the general requirements for graduation. That credit is equivalent to participating in two 0.5 credit athletic seasons or an equivalent amount of training outside of Grace. The purpose of the athletic requirement is for students to train their bodies and to learn about athletic activities in order to promote healthy lifestyle and physical fitness. This credit is generally earned through two seasons' participation in a varsity or JV sport. However, it also can be earned through non-school athletic activities that meet the following requirements:

1. The athletic activity must be supervised by a trained coach or instructor.
2. The athletic activity must regularly take place in consistent intervals of the course of a calendar year. It must average at least two 1 hour workouts per week for 15 weeks to achieve athletic credit.
3. The activity must be approved by the Athletic Director. Such activities may include, but are not limited to, the following: club sports, dance, gymnastics, martial arts, aerobic training, personal fitness training.

Students will submit a "Request for Athletic Waiver" to the Athletic Director for approval. Once approved, the waiver will be stored with their permanent academic record.

Athletics Schedules and Gym Prioritization

Principles:

In determining athletic time investments we must balance the need to meet athletic team goals set out in our philosophy statement against our society's trend toward idolatry in athletics. Athletics should be a part of a balanced life that includes families with the space to worship and lead in their churches and athletes who are successful in the classroom. We strive to model a vision of a good life to our students.

In all cases, academics at Grace Academy must be a priority and respected by our coaching staff, particularly when a student is struggling in a subject. At the same time, Grace Academy

expects that time commitment to athletics will increase with age as we teach our young men and women to manage their commitments. As we do this, we must be ready for a young person to make the wrong decision and then guide them back into balance as they reorient their loves and commitments.

Not all varsity sports will require the same time investment, allowing students who have less time available places where they can participate. Although all of our sports are oriented toward team accomplishments, our team focused sports (football, volleyball, basketball and baseball) require much more work with teammates and generally require more practice time.

General Time expectations:

All Sports:

- 1) We will not have athletics on Sunday. If there is an extreme case where it is required, both the Athletic Director and Head of School must approve the activity which will be optional.
- 2) Only varsity and junior varsity teams will have activities on a school holiday. In those cases, the activity will be treated as voluntary for the Rhetoric student.
- 3) 5th-8th grade athletes will not have scheduled athletic activities on Wednesday evenings. We will allow Varsity and Junior Varsity practices by exception for teams who have multiple games in a week or during fall sport weeks in August prior to the school start. In those cases, practices will complete by 5:00. Exceptions must come from the Athletic Director and Head of School.
- 4) We will avoid Saturday games and practices for 5th-8th grade unless there is an exigent circumstance that necessitates it such as a conference tournament/showcase or overwhelming support from parents to move a practice to Saturday due to conflicts during the week.

5th and 6th grade time expectations:

Practices will be restricted to 1 hour in length and up to three days per week. Once games begin, the goal will be to have one game per week and one practice per week. Coaches may (but are not required to) schedule a practice during weeks with two games and may request to add a second practice to a week with one game, but the goal should be half of the weeks with two events and half with three.

7th and 8th grade time expectations:

7th and 8th grade athletes will have practices 75 to 90 minutes and participate three to four times per week. In most sports, we will begin with four events per week and then move to three times per week as games begin. The goal is to have at least half of the weeks with three events and half with four events.

Rhetoric (Varsity and Junior Varsity) time expectations

Rhetoric sports will practice 90-120 minutes and participate up to 5 days per week. Wednesday practices will be avoided with Athletic Director and Head of School directed exceptions for sports with multiple games per week (ex. Volleyball, Basketball and Baseball). Additionally,

football may practice on Wednesdays before the start of school subject to the time restrictions described above. Teams may go over the 5 day limit on weeks with an Athletic Director and Head of School approved tournament or special Saturday event such as a showcase.

When appropriate for their sport, coaches can use last period study hall time for games or practice. For the 2025-2026 school year, that period begins at 2:35 on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Out of season open gym:

Coaches may host optional, out of season open gyms/fields that align to conference rules regarding out of season practices with the following limitations.

- 1) They will be optional and focused on individual skill development
- 2) Athletes playing in another sport may not participate. For example a football player should not participate in off season basketball open gyms during football season without the explicit agreement of both coaches and the Athletic Director.
- 3) No open gym will exceed 75 minutes during school or 90 minutes during the summer.
- 4) They cannot occur more than three times per week. They cannot occur on Wednesday or Sunday.
- 5) Participation must align to our Child Protection Policy.

Gym Prioritization:

Priority of gym use will be provided by seniority beginning with Varsity and Junior Varsity teams.

- 1) Rhetoric games
- 2) Efficiency of use (ie, if a team or coach is available in a slot, but the more senior team or coaches are not, then the available team will have priority)
- 3) Rhetoric practices
- 4) 7th-8th grade games
- 5) 5th-6th grade games
- 6) 7th-8th practices
- 7) 5th-6th practices

In all cases, the Athletic Director can make prioritization exceptions to maximize gym efficiency or better use of school funds.

Conference Alignment and Opponent Selection

It is important that our competition supports the overall strategic goals of our athletic department by providing rigorous but attainable athletic goals for our teams. While opponent selection should favor like-minded schools, it is not restricted to private, classical, nor Christian opponents. Coaches and the AD should, however, look to minimize travel time whenever possible.

Every two years, the Athletic Director will evaluate our conference alignments and provide a conference alignment recommendation to the Head of School for the next two year period. Any

conference alignment that impacts other school competitions such as Fine Arts will also be reviewed with the Head of Upper School and leaders of our Fine Arts programs.

Coaching Authority, Selection and Expectations

Coaches Authority

The coach's authority to lead their team, as they deem appropriate, is in keeping with the philosophies and policies of Grace Academy. The head coach is charged with conducting practices, determining the team roster, defining player expectations, implementing team rules, deciding student-athletes' playing time, and taking disciplinary actions whenever necessary. Student-athletes are expected to completely and respectfully abide by the leadership and authority of the head coach and their assistants. Disciplinary measures may include but are not limited to increased exercise, suspension from a game, or expulsion from the team. Grievances with disciplinary measures or similar issues should be taken directly to that coach first.

Wisdom is advised in choosing what issues a parent should take to the coach. Please keep in mind that most parents believe that their child should be getting more playing time and that expectation is often not possible or realistic when dealing with a group of athletes. Therefore, while we want open communication between parents and coaches in all things, parent opinions about game strategy, substitutions, and playing time should remain private, and uninvited questions about such coaching discretion decisions should be considered off limits. Grace Academy coaches will be asked to *not* engage in "defending" strategy and playing time decisions.

When approaching a coach, parents should do so in a respectful way and in a manner consistent with Galatians 6:1-3. If the matter is not resolved, then the athletic director should be contacted.

Volunteer Assistant Coaches

When volunteers offer to assist, the head coach is required to attain approval first from the Athletic Director. All assistant coaches must meet the same legal requirements as a head coach. With said approval, the head coach becomes responsible for proper sport specific training of the assistant as necessary.

Parent Coaches/Assistants/Volunteers

Volunteer coaches or assistant coaches who are also parents of team members are expected to maintain a professional detachment from the parent/child relationship while "on duty". In other words, they act as a "parent" only after leaving the game, practice field, or court for the confines of their home.

Injury Prevention and Response

Proper Warmups:

All athletic activities will begin with a sport appropriate warm up activity. The Athletic Director will either provide or approve coach directed warmup activities.

Coach Education:

All varsity and junior varsity coaches will complete conference training requirements for injury prevention including a course on concussion prevention and sudden cardiac arrest response.

Injury response:

In the event of a major injury which could threaten the “life or limb” of a player, a coach must immediately call “911.” All injured athletes will get evaluated by the highest trained medical professional on site. In all cases, a coach will notify parents and the Athletic Director of any injury. All coaches will honor the direction of parents and their consulting family physician regarding an athlete’s return to play.

Injury Related Unconsciousness in Athletics

Any Grace Academy athlete who has been diagnosed with a concussion, who becomes unconscious (“blacks out”) for any length of time, or shows any visible signs of concussion-like symptoms, is ineligible to continue practice or re-enter the game for the remainder of that practice or event, and remains ineligible until cleared by a doctor for return to competition. Any athlete who suffers any significant blow to the head should be held out of the practice or game in which they are participating. The coach or AD will notify parents in this instance.

Insurance:

Grace Academy recommends that each family check with their insurance provider for adequate coverage in the event of sport related injury, especially for collision sports such as football, basketball and soccer. Many insurance companies provide supplemental coverage for athletics.

Athletic Uniforms

Practice Apparel

All sports, with the exceptions below, will be required to wear our current athletic T-shirt, which is provided after payment of athletic fees.

Varsity sports may alter the above practice uniform regulation under the following conditions:

The coach must receive approval of the administration through the athletic director. This should only occur in order to encourage team unity and spirit. This is a privilege given to varsity athletes only.

Appropriate footwear is required. Students may not practice barefoot, in socks or in dress shoes.

Mouth guards: Grace Academy strongly recommends mouth guards for all athletes involved in practices or games in collision sports: football, soccer and basketball. Mouth guards are required for football.

Grace Academy *game uniforms* may NOT be worn for P.E., practices, or any other non-game occasion. All tags must remain on uniforms.

The following varsity sports have special circumstances, which require different uniform requirements:

Cross Country and Track

All 7-12 grade athletes will wear uniform track shorts. Some meets require athletes to be dressed the same.

Golf

Collared shirts and golf course appropriate shorts will be worn at all practices. No cargo or denim shorts allowed. No shorts with frayed ends. Soft spikes or athletic shoes are required. Hats must be golf appropriate.

Tennis

Female tennis players will be allowed to practice in their own tennis outfits (skirts rather than athletic shorts) on these conditions:

1. The outfit must have a skirt length coming to the athlete's fingertips.
2. Tops must fully cover the back and shoulders (no "spaghetti straps" or "racer backs"

Volleyball

Varsity volleyball players will be allowed to wear spandex shorts with a minimum 5" inseam. These shorts must be covered before and after leaving the volleyball court during practice or games. Any athlete not comfortable with spandex shorts may wear a uniform short to cover the spandex. Athletes may also wear full length leggings instead of spandex shorts.

Game Uniforms

Dispersal: Coaches may not distribute game uniforms until all fees and forms have been collected and approval has been given from the athletic department. Uniforms will be dispersed to the students before their first game. **Grace Academy athletic uniforms should be worn for games only!**

The goal of the uniform is unity. With that in mind, we expect our athletes to dress in such a way as to promote unity over individuality.

Return: Uniforms must be returned in a timely manner. Any student who has not returned their uniform will have their report cards held until they are turned in or they pay for the missing uniform.

Care: In washing uniforms at home, please adhere to the instructions printed on the uniform. **Game uniforms should not be placed in a dryer.** Finally, ***do not remove any tag*** on a Grace Academy uniform.

Jewelry is not permitted in any form in game events. Females need to be careful about when you get your ears pierced: you do not want to do this during your sports season because the earrings will have to come out for games.

Game Day Apparel

Any game day apparel not consistent with school uniform must be approved by administration.

Discipline

Discipline Policies

All policies for student behavior adopted by the Grace Academy Head of School apply to extra-curricular events.

When discipline is necessary, the coach may administer any of the following options (not limited to these options):

1. Additional physical training,
2. Suspension from part or all of practice(s),
3. Suspension from one or more events,
4. Suspension from the team, with approval of the athletic director.

Parents will be notified beforehand of all major disciplinary actions that warrants a suspension from practices or team events..

Any participation fees charged would not be refunded in the event a player is suspended from the team.

Ejections

Any ejection from a game or match by an official will result in a minimum of a one full week suspension from athletic events that must include at least one competition in football, track, golf, soccer and tennis and two competitions for basketball, baseball and volleyball. A second ejection will result in a suspension for the rest of the season. This applies to coaches, students, and parents.

Practice Attendance

Repeated absence from team practices may be cause for removal from the team.

Coaches may use their discretion in allowing practice to be missed for other situations when the student asks for permission in advance. Playing time in these types of situations is totally up to the coach's discretion.

Child Supervision at Athletic Events

Non athlete children are to be supervised at all times at athletic events by parents or their delegates. Parents are responsible for the supervision of their children who may not roam free across the gym or campus unsupervised during a practice or game. Coaches are responsible only for the athletes on their roster.

Letter Jackets

Letter jackets at Grace Academy are a privilege and a reward given to Rhetoric School students signifying their leadership and achievements in the school. Grace Academy students are at all times ambassadors and representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ, their families and their school, and the letter jacket is a visible reminder of this responsibility. A letter jacket may be purchased by the family of a student who has "lettered" and is generally presented to the student by the parents and Head of School, or his designated representative, in a short ceremony during chapel. Letters may be earned in both academics and athletics under the following guidelines:

Academics:

Academic expectations are sufficiently rigorous at Grace Academy that students in the School of Rhetoric may earn a jacket after successfully completing at least one year's enrollment at Grace Academy in grades 9 – 12. "Successful completion" means: (a.) the student has met attendance requirements as outlined in the parent/student handbook; (b.) the student has earned a final passing grade in all courses in which he/she is enrolled and (c.) the student has maintained a minimum GPA of 2.5. An academic letter jacket may be presented in the fall semester following successful completion of the student's first year in the school of Rhetoric.

Athletics:

Students in the School of Rhetoric (grades 9 – 12) may earn a jacket with membership on a varsity sports team. To earn a letter in athletics, the student must play in at least one **game at the varsity level**. An athletic letter jacket may be presented the fall semester following the completion of the student's first complete varsity season.

Extra Curricular Competition:

Students may earn a jacket with membership in a competitive, varsity (ie Rhetoric level) academic team such as Mock Trial, Debate Team, One Act Play or Choral competition. In order to earn the letter, the student must have participated in the majority of practices and in at least one competition.

Other general guidelines:

- A student must have completed at least one year at Grace Academy before being awarded a

letter jacket.

- Students must be in good academic standing at Grace Academy at the time of ordering and receiving a letter jacket, that is, a student must be passing all classes in which he/she is enrolled.
- At the discretion of the coach with agreement from the athletic director, an athletic letter jacket may be awarded to a student who is unable to complete his/her varsity season due to injury or other extenuating circumstances.
- Jackets must be ordered from a vendor selected by Grace Academy.

Child Protection Policy and Team Communication

Justification

Athletic organizations are the primary targets of abusers in our society and Christian youth ministries follow closely behind. We sit at the intersection of the two most vulnerable types of institutions. As a result, we must always look at student engagement policies through the lens of a predator, not the lens of a great, well meaning, Christian mentor and coach. The administration has reviewed multiple policies from other schools and associations and adapted them to our program at Grace Academy. Importantly, while these are unique policies to Grace Academy, they follow very closely to standard practices adopted by schools and ministries across the country.

Penalties:

These policies are a condition of coaching at Grace Academy. Inability to abide by them will result in a termination of coaching responsibilities. If you feel an exception is warranted, please reach out to the Athletic Director prior to any violation.

Principles driving the policy:

- 1) Coaches (volunteer and paid) are held to the same interaction standards as any other Grace Academy teacher or administrator. The policy includes all interaction with Grace students when in or out of season. Once a student graduates from Grace Academy, interactions are no longer governed by this policy.
- 2) Coaches should limit the “familiarity” between themselves and Grace Academy students. Our students should treat their coaches with the respect of an educator, not as a friendly mentor. As educators, we have a different role than our churches and youth groups.
- 3) All interactions with a Grace Academy student should be planned, visible to other adults and interruptible.
- 4) As a practice, Coaches should not have one on one or small group interactions with Grace Academy students off campus outside of scheduled practices and meetings without another adult present.
- 5) Exception for Emergencies. This exception applies to all abuse prevention policies when the life or physical health of another person is in danger. Adults will document the emergency situation once it is resolved and report it to the Athletic Director.

Specific Policies:

1. A coach **may never text or call** a Grace athlete or student or a group of athletes or students. Similarly, athletes should not contact coaches by phone or text. In fact, our students should not have a coach's cell phone number. Instead, coaches should:
 - a. Use GroupMe (or Grace directed alternative) to update the team (including parents) or for athletes to update coaches. If a coach sends a private message on a platform (ex: groupme, gamechanger or HUDL), he must copy a parent.
 - b. Coaches may also use their HUDL or Gamechanger account to communicate with athletes as long as it is visible to the other coaches and the Athletic Director. Parents must be able to opt into and access the communication.
 - c. Coaches may set up a separate GroupMe with their captains and the Athletic Director (as long as there are multiple captains) for specific leadership engagement. Parents must have the ability to opt into the communication.
 - d. Coaches may send emails to individual students, but must copy a parent and the Athletic Director. Varsity coaches must use their Grace Academy email for these interactions.
2. A coach should have the phone numbers of parents in case they need to get ahold of them for urgent scheduling or emergency situations.
3. Coaches cannot follow, search for, or interact directly with a student on social media. A coach who is working with an athlete for college recruitment may advise the athlete on the specific platform that may be required in that process, but they may not follow them directly.
4. Grace Academy coaches will be referred to as "*Coach LastName*" (or Mr/Mrs/Dr if preferred by the coach). They will not be referred to as "*Coach FirstName*" or just *FirstName*.
5. Practice Size: A coach may never host a practice or training session with less than three athletes (or two coaches and one athlete) in order to ensure they are never alone with a single athlete as it would break the rule of remaining "observable and interruptible" at all times if one stepped out of the training space (restroom, water break, changing, etc).
6. Meeting with individual students:
 - a. A coach may not meet individually with a Grace Academy student off campus, even in a public place.
 - b. Coaches may meet 1x1 on campus in an open room with the door completely open or outside in an area clearly visible to others (ex. picnic tables). The meeting must be visible to other adults and interruptible.
 - c. The parents and Athletic Director must be informed of the meeting including time, location and purpose.
 - d. If a student stays for an unscheduled discussion with the coach after a scheduled team meeting, the discussion must be observable and interruptible by other adults on campus.
7. Group meetings or meals:
 - a. Are allowed if the entire team is invited and at least two athletes are always present

- i. Can be on campus (analogous to a class or practice)
 - ii. Must be approved by the Athletic Director and planned including informing parents
 - iii. Can be in a public place.
 - iv. Parents must be allowed access if requested.
 - v. Can be at a coaches' home in this case if at least one other coach or parent is present (ie. team party, film at coach's house, etc)
- b. Group meetings smaller than the entire team are not allowed unless for a particular purpose. They cannot include training opportunities exclusive to a small group. The meeting must be tied to a team outcome and held on an infrequent basis (no more than 2-3 per season).
 - i. Ex 1: Meeting with seniors or captains before a season for planning
 - ii. Ex 2: Meeting with seniors after their final season
 - iii. Ex 3: Meet with captains for a mid season assessment
- c. These engagements must:
 - i. Be approved by the Athletic Director (location, date, time and purpose) ahead of time
 - ii. Include parents and the Athletic Director in the invitation to the athletes
 - iii. Serve a particular team purpose (final senior meal, working on shirt design, planning a season with captains, etc)
 - iv. They must include at least two athletes and can be held in a public place.
 - v. If they are in a home, they must include at least two coaches or a coach and a parent
 - vi. As with all meetings, they must be observable and interruptible by another adult.
 - vii. If the Athletic Director has a similar meal or meeting with a group of students, he must gain approval from the Head of School and follow the same limits outlined above.
- 8. Any off campus team travel must involve approved competitions. Overnight stays around a competition will be treated in the same manner as a school approved overnight field trip with the same supervision expectations.
- 9. Extra training opportunities - These may be conducted under the following conditions:
 - a. Approved by the Athletic Director and within the scope of our training limits.
 - b. It must be scheduled ahead of time with the Athletic Director (at least 1 week)
 - c. The entire team must be invited even if they are not all either expected or able to attend.
 - d. It must include three athletes as a minimum so that there is no circumstance when a coach would be alone with an athlete.
 - e. It must be in a public place. Parents must be allowed to observe if requested.
 - f. If it occurs at Grace Academy, the Athletic Director or a delegate from the Administration will be responsible for providing scheduled gym access. The gym doors cannot be locked.