

POUGHKEEPSIE ATHLETICS COACHES HANDBOOK



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INTRODUCTION

The Athletic Coach's Handbook has been prepared as a reference guide which highlights coaching responsibilities, basic policies, and procedures. It serves as a basis for periodic reevaluation of the interscholastic athletic program. It also provides, in writing, a statement of basic policies and procedures for reference when desirable. For a more comprehensive study of your responsibilities as a coach, please become familiar with the rules and regulations in the following publications:

1. The Poughkeepsie City School District BOE policies
2. The Poughkeepsie Athletic Departments Website
3. The Poughkeepsie City School District student-athlete athletic handbook
4. NFHS or NCAA rules books that govern your sport
5. NYSPHSAA handbook
6. Section I Standards
7. Modification of any rules set forth by the NYSPHSAA and Section I
8. The Districts concussion protocol

PHILOSOPHY

The Poughkeepsie City School District recognizes a commitment to serve its student athletes and the school district. Its primary responsibility is to provide an opportunity for student-athletes to develop their academic and athletic potential fully. Through practice, training and competition, the department strives to instill in each student-athlete:

- Good sportsmanship and personal integrity
- Loyalty to the group and the ability to function with others as a team · Develop an appreciation for education, perseverance, problem-solving, and community
- Pride in accomplishments gained through fair and honest competition

A strong athletic program generates pride and enthusiasm in students, alumni, and the school district's community. The service provided by a robust athletic program benefits all stakeholders, and its success is not measured by wins and losses.

MISSION STATEMENT

Supporting and promoting the student-athlete and their teams through trust, mutual respect, and mindfulness will result in graduating student-athletes striving for excellence and competing with integrity.

VISION STATEMENT

To be a support to the student-athlete in excelling in academics and athletics.

14 LEGAL DUTIES of a COACH

Several obligations or duties have been identified as absolute requirements for coaches and athletic administrators. These standards have evolved because of various case law proceedings and legal judgments against individuals and school districts. It is important that all coaches, including assistants and volunteers, know and understand the following duties. This summary is not all-inclusive but is generally accepted as the “Legal Duties of Coaches” by the NFHS (National Federation of High Schools) and NIAAA (National Interscholastic Athletic Administrator Association).

1. **Duty to Plan** – A coach must demonstrate awareness of the maturity, physical development and readiness of athletes with appropriate plans for instruction, conditioning, and supervision.
2. **Duty to Supervise** – A coach must be physically present, provide competent instruction, structure practices that are appropriate for the age and maturity of players, prevent foreseeable injuries and respond to injury or trauma in an approved manner. This duty requires supervisors to make sure facilities are locked and that students are denied access when a competent staff member cannot be physically present to supervise. This duty may also require coaches to control reckless player behaviors. Supervision responsibility also pertains to athletic administrators who are expected to be able to supervise coaches competently.
3. **Duty to Assess Athletes Readiness for Practice and Competition** – Athletics administrators and coaches are required to assess the health and physical or maturational readiness skills and physical condition of athletes. A progression of skill development and conditioning improvement should be apparent from practice plans. Athletes must be medically screened in accordance with state association regulations before participating in practice or competition.
4. **Duty to Maintain Safe Playing Conditions** – Coaches are considered trained professionals who possess a higher level of knowledge and skill that permits them to identify foreseeable causes of injury inherent in defective indoor and outdoor facilities or hazardous environments.
5. **Duty to Provide Safe Equipment** – Courts have held athletic supervisors and coaches are responsible to improve unsafe environments, repair, or remove defective equipment or disallow athlete access.
6. **Duty to Instruct Properly** – Athletic practices must be characterized by instruction that accounts for a logical sequence of fundamentals that lead to an enhanced progression of player knowledge, skill, and capability.
7. **Duty to Match Athletes** – Athletes should be matched with consideration for maturity, skill, age, size, and speed. To the degree possible, mismatches should be avoided in all categories.
8. **Duty to Condition Properly** – Practices must account for a progression of cardiovascular and musculoskeletal conditioning regimens that prepare athletes sequentially for more challenging practices and competitive activities.

9. **Duty to Warn** – Coaches are required to warn parents and athletes of unsafe practices specific to a sport and the potential for injury or death. This warning should be issued in writing and both athletes and parents should be required to provide written certification of their comprehension.

10. **Duty to Ensure Athletes are Covered by Injury Insurance** – Athletics administrators and coaches encourage each parent to purchase Student Accident Insurance as suggested by the school district.

11. **Duty to Provide Emergency Care** – Coaches are expected to be able to administer standard emergency care (first aid, CPR) in response to a range of traumatic injuries. The athletic trainer is available at most home events and practices.

12. **Duty to Design a Proper Emergency Response Plan** – The Athletic Director, coaches, & athletic trainer must design plans to ensure an expedited response by EMS and an effective transition to the care and supervision of emergency medical personnel. Plans are posted at most athletic facilities.

13. **Duty to Provide Proper Transportation** – Follow the procedure set-forth in the student-athlete handbook.

14. **Duty to Select, Train, and Supervise Coaches** – The Athletic Director has a responsibility to ensure that appropriate skill and knowledge levels exist among members of the coaching staff to ensure appropriate levels of safety and well-being among athletes.

CODE of ETHICS

The function of a coach is to properly educate students through participation in interscholastic competition. The interscholastic athletic program is designed to enhance academic achievement and should never interfere with opportunities for academic success. Athletes should be treated as though they are members of the coach's families, and their welfare must be always of primary concern.

In recognition of this, the following guidelines for coaches have been adopted by the National Federation of Interscholastic Coaches Association Board of Directors. The coach must be aware that he or she has a tremendous influence, either good or bad, in the education of the student athlete and, thus, shall never place the value of winning over the value of instilling the highest desirable ideals of character.

The coach must constantly uphold the honor and dignity of the profession. In all personal contact with the student athlete, athletic directors, school administrators, the state high school athletic association, the media, and the public, the coach shall set an example of the highest ethical and moral conduct.

The coach shall take an active role in the prevention of drug, alcohol and tobacco abuse and under no circumstances should condone their use.

The coach shall promote the entire interscholastic program of the school and direct his or her program in harmony with the total school program.

The coach shall be thoroughly acquainted with the contest rules and is responsible for their interpretation to team members. The spirit and letter of rules should be regarded as absolute values.

The coach shall not try to seek an advantage by circumventing the spirit or letter of the rules.

Coaches shall actively enhance sportsmanship among spectators and by working closely with cheerleaders, the pep club sponsor, booster clubs, and administrators.

Contest officials shall have the respect and support of the coach. The coach shall not indulge in conduct which will incite players or spectators against opponents or officials.

Public criticism of officials or players is unethical. Before and after contests, rival coaches should meet and exchange friendly greetings to set the correct tone for the event.

A coach shall not exert pressure on faculty members to give student athletes special consideration.

It is unethical for coaches to scout opponents by any means other than those adopted by NYSPHSAA & Section I.

MEDIA PROTOCOLS

The Poughkeepsie Athletic Department works in cooperation with news and other media outlets. In order to ensure we are focused on our mission of educating and empowering every student, along with our focus on safety and security, athletic protocols are in place to guide media inquiries.

Coaches who are contacted by the media are to refer media requests and inquiries for athletic events are to be directed to the Director of Athletics.

All requests will be forwarded to the Superintendent of Schools, and the Director of Public Relations for final approval.

Media on District property:

- Prior approval from the Director of Athletics must be obtained before any media, including reporters, photographers or videographers, are allowed on district property.
- All visitors, including the media, are required to check in at the school's main office and present photo identification. All visitors are required to wear visitor badges at all times while on district property.

Student and coaches' privacy:

- Student and staff photographs, videos, and interviews may only be conducted with the permission and at the discretion of the Poughkeepsie City School District and the Athletic Department.
- The Family and Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is observed at all times in terms of which information can or cannot be shared about students.

Interviews after a game or competition:

- Coaches and players may speak to the media after a game or competition. · Comments should be directed towards the game or competition and their team. · No comments will be directed to the opposition, spectators, and officials. · All comments will be positive in nature.

STUDENT-ATHLETE DISCIPLINE

DISCIPLINE VS. PUNISHMENT

While a positive approach to coaching discourages punishment, maintaining discipline is a must for all athletic teams. Great coaches know the difference between discipline and punishment.

Discipline includes:

1. Setting limits on behavior.
2. Making rules simple, few and consistent.
3. Being a role model for appropriate behavior.
4. Ignoring annoying behaviors that do not cause real problems.

With discipline, your student-athletes will:

1. Know what is expected.
2. Control and change their own behavior.
3. Become responsible for their own actions.
4. Learn a lesson that will positively affect their future behaviors.
5. Increase feelings of self-worth and self-confidence.

Using a positive approach to coaching with its emphasis on discipline will help you develop in your student-athletes the character traits that we want to see developed. Experts, (including lawyers) discourage the use of physical activities (i.e., running laps or push-ups) to punish athletes.

Punishment techniques include:

1. Yelling
2. Lecturing
3. Sarcasm
4. Threats

Unintended Results of Punishment could:

1. Emphasize athletes' failures.
2. Lead to resentment and frustration.
3. Destroy self-esteem and self-confidence.
4. That athletes are not taught to become responsible for their own behaviors.

****Individual coaches may establish additional rules for their respective teams. It is the responsibility of the coach to clearly inform team members and parents/guardians of these rules. The coach will administer penalties for violation of these established team rules.

Team Dismissal:

A coach may suspend a student-athlete from the team but may not permanently remove them. Under educational law, a student-athlete is entitled to due process.

DUE PROCESS
(EDUCATION LAW & ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT PROCEDURE)

In the event of a reported action requiring discipline of an athlete, the following procedures must be followed:

- The Coach/Athletic Director/Principal shall conduct a reasonable investigation of the circumstances, including interviews, of the accuser, accused, eyewitnesses, and other key parties. As part of the investigation, the coach must contact the parents/guardians to determine if they have knowledge of or information concerning the reported violation.
- Upon completing the investigation and determining appropriate sanctions, the coach shall inform the student-athlete and parents/guardians of the alleged violation and the disciplinary action to be taken.
- The Athletic Director will communicate the allegation and discipline with the school Principal.
- Within two days of the communication with the Athletic Director, the student-athlete has the right to appeal the decision to the Athletic Director. All appeals must be presented in writing to the Athletic Director.
- Within five days of the submitted appeal, the Athletic Director shall conduct an appropriate review and rule on the appeal.
- The coach has the right, after notifying the Athletic Director, Principal, and parents/guardians, to immediately suspend a student-athlete who violates rules, regulations, the school's code of conduct, the athletic department's handbook, and/or any other sanctioning documents that fall within the scope of the Poughkeepsie City School District, Section I, and the NYSPHSAA.

VIOLATION REPORTS

Reports of alleged student-athlete violations of the student-athlete handbook must be personally witnessed and submitted in writing to the school administration and Athletic Director within three school days of the breach in question. Violation reports will be accepted from any coaching staff member, faculty/staff member, or a reliable adult.

TEAM SELECTION PROTOCOLS

A. Responsibility

1. Choosing the members of any of our athletic teams is the sole responsibility of the coaches of those teams and programs.
2. The student-athlete's membership on any team is always subject to proper behavior and the following of specified team guidelines.
3. Sub varsity level coaches shall follow the protocols as established by the head coach in that program when selecting team members.
4. Prior to try-outs, the coach shall provide the following information to all candidates for the team:
 - a. Extent of the try-out period
 - b. Criteria used to select team (i.e., rubric)
 - c. Practice commitment if they make the team
5. Every student-athlete has an equal opportunity to try out. Team membership is not predetermined.
6. Must have a rubric or reasoning for choosing the members of the team.

B. Procedure

1. When it is necessary to reduce the number of participants during tryouts, the following guidelines shall be met:
 - a. Have completed a minimum number of practices
 - b. Be allowed, when possible, to compete in a scrimmage situation
 - c. Be informed by the coach of the cut and the reason for it in person
2. Cut lists will not be posted.
3. Coaches should take the opportunity to discuss alternative possibilities for participation in the sport.
4. If a coach foresees difficulties arising because of team selections, he/she should discuss the situation with the Athletic Director prior to the final selection.

PRE-SEASON RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Discuss with the equipment manager the needs for your teams
2. Develop all your tryout criteria
3. Promote the start of your season and recruit student-athletes (do not recruit athletes that have made a commitment to a team in the same season)
4. All certifications and licenses are up to date
5. Work with students to aid them in clearance paperwork
6. Attend coaches pre-season meetings both in house and sectional/league.

ROSTERS

Rosters must be submitted to the athletic office within 48 hours of the selection of the team.

STUDENT-ATHLETE ATTENDANCE

Student-athlete attendance must be recorded prior to the start of practice or a game on FINAL FORMS. This will make the student-athletes responsible for their own actions and alert parents their child is not at practice.

POST SEASON RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Collect all equipment and uniforms and submit them to the equipment manager
2. Submit the names of any student-athlete that has earned an award (all-league, all section, etc.)
3. Complete the end of the year program evaluation
4. Sign your evaluation
5. Make an appointment to closeout the season and sign your timecard

EXPECTATIONS & PROTOCOLS for COACHES

- Submit all paperwork to the athletic department and/or Section and State in a timely manner.
- Stay up to date on your professional certifications – Concussion certificate, First Aid, CPR, AED, etc.
- Promote the health and safety of all student-athletes at all times. This includes such items as recording attendance and maintaining accurate records for emergencies.
- Educate and familiarize yourself with Poughkeepsie BOE policies, Section I, and State rules and regulations.
- Keep open and constant communication with the Athletic Director and other members of the athletic department.
- Stay up to date on your specific sport or discipline by attending workshops and other professional development opportunities.
- Be a model of appropriate time management, language, sportsmanship, and behavior and demand this of all team personnel.
- Respect and dignify each student-athlete as an individual.
- Establish time demands that acknowledge the primary importance of each student-athlete's academic and family responsibilities. Communicate these demands in a timely manner.
- Promote among athletes and coaches a solid sense of team membership.
- Assist, whenever appropriate and mutually convenient, with the post high school planning for individual student-athletes as it relates to athletics.
- Work with school personnel, when appropriate, to advocate for the best interest of the student-athletes.
- Encourage student-athletes to experience middle/high school in a well-rounded manner. Foster their interests to pursue other options in addition to your specific sport. Speaking in a derogatory fashion about other sports or activities is unprofessional and unacceptable.
- Understand the prioritization that all in-season sports take full precedence over any voluntary workouts for clubs that are out of season.

I have received a copy of the Poughkeepsie City School District athletic coaches' handbook and I will follow all procedures, protocols, and policies set forth by the Poughkeepsie City School District, NFHS, NYSPHSAA, Section I and any other governing organization or documents pertaining to the Poughkeepsie City School District and the Poughkeepsie Athletic Department.

Coaches Signature: _____ Date: _____