

Rochester School

Extra-Curricular Activity

Handbook

2009 – 2010

This handbook has been created to cover the extra-curricular activities (but not limited to) soccer, cross-country running, basketball, baseball, softball, drama activities, music activities, academic clubs, and is a work in progress.

Rochester School Extra-Curricular Activity Handbook

Purpose

This handbook is designed to serve as a policy and information manual with regard to the operations of the extra-curricular activities at Rochester School. It will delineate the roles and responsibilities of administration, coaches, activity advisors, students, parents, and community members in contributing to a competitive, positive extra-curricular activity program at the school. The handbook will also provide an overview of how the programs run.

Philosophy

The Rochester School's basic philosophy is that extra-curricular activities play an essential role in the overall school program. Extra-Curricular Activities thus represent very important, complex educational experiences, enhancing lessons learned in the regular classroom. Social, emotional, physical, and moral developments are particularly important factors deriving from the programs. While striving to achieve excellence in terms of individual and group success is a key goal, cooperation and participation are equally significant objectives.

Rochester students will be welcomed on all of our extra-curricular activities, no student will be "cut" or denied the opportunity to participate. Prior mastery of skills or physical attributes is not pre-requisite. (Students may be ruled ineligible to participate due to other considerations, however, such as academic performance.)

Overview

Rochester School strongly believes that academics come before extra-curricular activities.

Every student's primary responsibility is in the classroom – extra-curricular activities do NOT come first. This is frequently a difficult distinction for adolescents to make, and all adults in the school community need to be vigilant in emphasizing this reality. It is a priority of the Rochester School to ensure that any student requiring additional help/time to complete schoolwork is excused from extra-curricular activities in order to fulfill academic responsibilities.

Students have the legal right to their education. Although we believe that extra-curricular activities are an important aspect to that education, participation is a privilege, not a right.

In addition, it is essential that all students understand that they represent our school AND our community when they agree to participate in Rochester School extra-curricular activities. Responsible citizenship is **required** of all Rochester students.

Interscholastic Athletics Overview

With regard to athletics, the Vermont Principals' Association (VPA) governs interscholastic athletic competition as well as other school-sponsored activities in the state of Vermont, regulating everything from when the season runs and how many games can be played to equipment requirements. According to the school's student enrollment, the VPA has classified Rochester High School as a Division IV school for tournament play. 8th graders are allowed to play varsity sports if the school has fewer than 50 students per gender in grades 9 – 12, as per VPA guidelines. Much more information can be found at the VPA website, <http://www.vpaonline.org>

Rochester offers the following organized athletic programs:

- Fall: Boys and Girls Soccer (both Varsity and Middle School) and Cross Country Running.

- Winter: Boys and Girls Basketball (Varsity; Junior Varsity; Middle School [Grades 7 & 8]; Elementary [Grades 5 & 6]; and Skill-Building [Grades 2-4]).
- Spring: Golf, Baseball, and Softball (Varsity and Middle School – Middle School baseball is offered on a year-to-year basis, according to interest).

NOTE: Little League and Babe Ruth baseball/softball teams are community-based programs run by Tri-Town Youth Sports. They are NOT affiliated with Rochester School.

At the high school level, Rochester is a member of the Central Vermont League (CVL). Officials for games are assigned by either a regional or state supervisor, depending upon the sport.

Goals and Beliefs for Rochester Teams and Students

Rochester School believes that participation on interscholastic teams is an invaluable experience for every student. Thus, students are encouraged to be active participants each season, and hopefully develop healthy habits that will last throughout their lifetimes.

Athletes and teams should make it their goal to compete to the utmost of their ability in every game or race. However, player development is also an important consideration to address, posing coaches with the challenge of how to balance individuals' playing time with the ultimate quest of trying to win games by fielding the most competitive team possible.

As a result, the athletic department believes that, at the varsity level, coaches should try to arrange for each team member to participate in every game or race, with the understanding that this may be impossible due to the circumstances of competition. The principle guiding playing time for athletes at the varsity level should be that players should participate in situations in which they can succeed, and help the team succeed. Coaches are NOT expected to grant Seniors preferential treatment in regards to playing time and starting positions, with the exception of "Senior Day/Night" (the last regular-season home game for each team).

Moreover, the athletic department believes that while winning is important, player development and participation are the overriding concerns at the lower levels. Thus, coaches should manage their teams with the expectation that ALL players participate in every game or race at the junior varsity, middle school, and elementary levels.

Exceptions to these policies are permitted to give coaches and administration some discretion in handling factors such as disciplinary actions, absences from pre-game practices; injury rehabilitation; etc.

Extra-Curricular Activity Student - Participants

Basic Student Pre-Requisites for Extra-Curricular Activities

1. Academic. The following requirements apply to all students in grades 7-12 who participate in interscholastic athletics. Students must meet all the requirements to be eligible to participate in athletics.
 - A student must carry a full load of courses.
 - All students are eligible to participate in activities for the start of the fall season regardless of the previous year's grades.
 - For the rest of the academic year, eligibility is determined the day that report cards are distributed to students. A student may fail ONE course and still remain eligible if he/she maintains a 70 average overall for the marking period (i.e., "the trimester" or most recently-completed 12-week grading period). Any student with a grade of "incomplete" for a course is ineligible to participate until that grade is finalized.
 - If you are placed on out-of-school suspension, you are not permitted to attend or participate in school activities or athletic events until your suspension has been cleared following a successful conference involving you, your parents, and the Principal.

- On the day of the activity, you are required to be in school and attend all of your scheduled classes, including lunch period, TA periods, etc. If you need to be absent for all or part of the day, you need to obtain prior written approval from the school Principal to do so. If the dance or activity is scheduled for a weekend or other non-school day, you must have attended school and all of your classes the last school day before the event in order to be eligible to attend or participate. If you miss school or classes because of a suspension, you will be considered absent, and the requirements above will be applicable.
- A student-athlete rendered ineligible due to academic performance may regain his / her eligibility half-way through the next marking period by earning passing grades in ALL of their classes.

Here is the process ~

Academic Eligibility

Grades will be published at the mid-point and end of each marking period. Academic eligibility will be determined on the day grades are mailed home. Students who find themselves ineligible as a result of published grades may apply for Academic Probation status. The application contract may be submitted to the high school office within three school days from the date of published grades. The probation period shall last for two weeks from the date of the signed (by the Principal) contract. The intent of this contract is to assist motivated students toward academic excellence and restore their participation in extra curricular activities. The contract will state the student's intent and agreement to abide by the conditions of academic probation. Participation in after school Academic Success Club (aka Homework Club) will be a mandatory part of the contract. Academic probation is available only ONCE after each set of grades are posted. During a period of ineligibility, a student will not take part in practices, meetings, games, performances, etc.

When report card grades are published (between sports seasons or other extra curricular activities) and a student is academically ineligible, the student may take the initiative to apply for academic probation status within three school days from the date of published grades. The student may request that a progress report be generated at the end of the two weeks in order to determine eligibility for participation in the upcoming extra curricular activity.

Academic make-up work

Students are expected to see teachers before an event to get assignments and make up academic work as soon as possible. This may include (academic) after school sessions. Participants, Coaches/Advisors should understand that practice/rehearsal/contests/performances is not an acceptable excuse for failing to complete make-up work or for failing to attend after-school help sessions.

Homework Club/Academic Success Club

~ Is available for any student in middle or high school who wishes to receive extra help in an academic subject.

~ Is mandated for students who are determined to be academically ineligible to remain as a member of an extra curricular activity, for the duration of academic probation.

~ Is available three days a week after school, location(s) to be announced.

2. Practices / Attendance. Student-athletes are expected to attend each practice and game. Frequent absences may result in the student-athlete being suspended or dropped from the team.
 - Student-athletes will not be permitted to practice or play on the day of an unexcused absence or tardiness to school. Student-athletes and their families should consult the Principal regarding excused / unexcused absences, and give advance notice whenever possible.
 - Missing practice immediately before a game, whether excused or unexcused absences, may impact the student-athlete's playing time – this is a coach's decision and NOT an overall policy.
 - In-school disciplinary actions may also impact a student-athlete's eligibility on a day-to-day basis.
 - Student participation in an Extra-Curricular Activity is not an acceptable excuse for being tardy or absent from school the next day.
 - High school athletes must attend TEN practices before participating in interscholastic competition.
3. Training Rules. Training rules are explained in this handbook. The athletic eligibility form, which must be signed by both the student-athlete and the parent/guardian, acknowledges the student-athlete's responsibility to know the rules and follow them. "Not knowing" is not an excuse. Additional rules may be imposed by the coach. These rules will be in writing and presented to both the team and the Athletic Director.
4. Health & Safety.
 - Student-athletes must provide proof of private or public health insurance before he/she will be allowed to participate in practices or games. (VPA Rule)
 - High school athletes must have had a physical examination within the last year providing a medical professional's approval to participate in sports. A record of this exam must be furnished to the Athletic Director. Middle school athletes are encouraged to have physical exams yearly as well.
 - All athletes must have emergency medical information on file with the Athletic Director, who will provide copies to coaches.
 - Student-athletes playing soccer or basketball are required to wear mouth guards during games, and are encouraged to wear them during practices. Coaches may require players to wear mouth guards in practice. (VPA Rule)
5. Equipment: Some activities will require students to furnish basic equipment in order to participate. Any prospective participant unable to provide these items on their own should see their activity advisor, who will assist in making arrangements to address the situation.
6. On/Off campus student misconduct – Any report of student misconduct that is in violation of school policy will be investigated by the school administration and/or designated persons. The investigating parties will utilize other resources such as (but not limited to) law enforcement, citizens, school personnel, personnel from other schools (when applicable) and students.
 - The misconduct must draw a connection between the student, the incident, and the atmosphere or operation of the school.
 - In the event that a student's conduct is in violation of school policy the student will be subject to all current consequences. These consequences include those specific to violations of the *Alcohol, Tobacco, and Chemical Abuse, Bullying and Harassment policies*.

Those students participating in extracurricular activities who are in violation of the On/Off Campus misconduct policy are subject to the following consequences as per incident(s):

First violation: Consequences of Board Policy and two-week suspension from activity participation.

Second violation: Consequences of Board Policy and removal from activity participation for the duration of the particular activity or season.

Safety of Student Participants

- The VPA requires that all athletes wear mouth guards during soccer and basketball games, and encourages individuals to use them at practices. Officials / umpires / referees will enforce this policy. Mouth guards are available from the athletic director for a small fee.
- Athletes are forbidden from wearing jewelry in interscholastic athletic competitions.
- It is good common sense for student-athletes to drink lots of fluids, eat well, and get plenty of rest. Parents / guardians, coaches, and teachers need to work as a team to help young athletes balance their busy lives in a healthy manner.
- All major injuries must to be reported to the Athletic Director. Parents / caregivers should be notified immediately if at all possible.
- Parents/Caregivers must be notified if the student is taken to the hospital. A chaperone will accompany the student if at all possible.
- Any student receiving a doctor's care for an injury during the activity must be cleared by the physician before returning to participate.
- The coach MUST provide athletes with hydration breaks during both games and practices.

Water MUST be available, although players are encouraged to provide their own sports drinks as well.

Commitment to Extra-Curricular Activity

Student-athletes and their families need to be aware that EVERY Extra-Curricular Activity at Rochester School may schedule some practices and /or games during school vacation periods. Students and their families should try to accommodate these schedules as much as possible. Contact the director in charge of the activity with questions regarding future planning.

VPA mandates place the following limitations on varsity sports scheduling:

- **Fall Sports:** Practices may begin in August. Soccer teams may play a maximum of 14 games. State Championships for soccer are on a Saturday in November.
- **Winter Sports:** Practices may begin in November. Basketball teams may play a maximum of 20 games. Championships are in March. *Note that girls' tournament may be over February vacation!*
- **Spring Sports:** practice begins in March. Baseball/softball teams may play a maximum of 16 games. Finals scheduled for early June.

Rochester School recognizes that many opportunities are available to students to participate in other, non-school sports activities (drama or musical productions, AAU teams; recreational and competitive skiing; off-season soccer and baseball programs, etc.). **While Rochester student-athletes are encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities, it is the policy of the school that school activities must come first.**

A student missing ANY group activity to participate in a non-school activity may forfeit participation or be asked to withdraw from the activity – this is the decision of the adult in charge of the activity.

Uniforms

Participants will be issued team uniforms by the supervising adult. **Uniforms are property of Rochester School – the student must recognize that he/she is borrowing these garments.** Uniforms are FOR PERFORMANCE OR COMPETITION ONLY – they are NOT to be worn casually at other times. It is the student's responsibility to keep the uniform clean, and return it to the appropriate adult **within a week of the activity's conclusion.**

Students failing to return their uniforms will be levied a replacement fee. Only when that fee is paid will the individual be eligible to receive a uniform in the future.

Travel

All students will be transported by bus to AND FROM all games. The Rochester School expectation is that **students are to come and go with the group unless PRIOR arrangements have been made between parents/guardians and the adult in charge.** Students will not be allowed to ride home with other student drivers, girlfriends/boyfriends that are not enrolled in our school, other parents, or anyone else besides their own parents/caregivers without a note provided to the Principal at least 24 hours prior to the trip.

The following rules apply to group travel:

1. Students and adults will dress appropriately. Changing on the bus is NOT allowed. Changing for an activity is also not an acceptable excuse for missing class.
2. Adults in charge are responsible for proper team bus conduct.

Varsity Letters, Awards, and Athlete Recognition

- There will be an “Athletic Awards” night at the conclusion of each sports season to honor our student-athletes for their efforts and accomplishments. Students and parents/guardians should make every possible effort to attend. Each coach will speak about their team’s season, and bring each individual player to the stage. These events are pot-luck dinners, held in the gymnasium – family and the public are invited to attend. Dinner is at 6:00, with awards to follow around 7:00.

The hierarchy of awards that has evolved over the years at Rochester School is as follows:

- 1) Student-athletes successfully completing their first season of competition at the Varsity level will be honored with a Rochester letter.
- 2) Student-athletes will also receive a commemorative sports pin for their sport(s).
- 3) Student-athletes will be awarded “their numbers” (commemorating their year of graduation) upon earning a second varsity letter, and whatever necessary sports pin(s).
- 4) Student-athletes receive a “bar” for each subsequent letter in a sport after earning their pin.
- 5) Upon earning three letters in one sport, or six letters overall, the student-athlete is eligible for a varsity jacket. The athletic department pays the first \$100 towards the jacket. If the student-athlete wants the “regular” jacket, it’s all paid for – if the individual would prefer the popular “leather sleeved” jacket, that cost is approximately \$50. * See the Athletic Director for more details *
- 6) Student-athletes are also eligible for “all-league” honors, which are awarded at this ceremony. These “CVL” all-star winners receive a special star pin, and a certificate.
- 7) Team captains receive captain’s pins.

Summer / “Off-Season” Athletics

Rochester student-athletes are NOT required to participate in any activities related to a school sport during the off-season or summertime.

It should be noted that a widely-held coaching ideal states “great athletes are made in the off-season.” The athletic department encourages Rochester students to be active in their sports’ off-seasons, and will help make arrangements for individuals to join summer league teams, attend camps or clinics, etc. Please contact coaches or the Athletic Director for more information.

Misconduct Rules

VPA Misconduct Rules:

- A) Any severe misconduct (i.e. red card in soccer, etc.) resulting in ejection from an event requires that the athlete be suspended, by the VPA, for the next contest. The player will also be required to meet with the Athletic Director, Principal, and coach for possible further disciplinary action.
- B) A player making physical contact with an official will be suspended from playing for a period of one calendar year. (VPA Rule)

Local Misconduct Rules:

- A) In the event of other incidents of misconduct (yellow cards, technical fouls, taunting, obscene gestures, post-game or practice incidents, etc.) the athlete will meet with the coach, and may be referred to the AD and/or Principal for disciplinary action.

BULLYING/HARASSMENT/HAZING

The Rochester School is an “Anti-Bullying” Zone, and any bullying behavior will not be tolerated.

“Bullying” means any overt act or combination of acts directed against a student by another student or group of students and which is repeated over time; is intended to ridicule, humiliate, or intimidate the student; and occurs during the school day on school property, on a school bus, or at a school-sponsored activity.

Unlawful harassment means verbal or physical conduct based on a student’s race, religion, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, or disability and which has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with a student’s educational performance or creating an intimidating hostile, or offensive environment.

If you feel there is a problem, please report the difficulty to Counselor Mr. Chris Nevin or Guidance Counselor Mrs. Betty Hughes, who shall investigate the verbal or written complaints within 24 hours and recommend further action within ten days. There shall be no retaliation permitted of those who report incident(s).

Threats and Threatening Behavior

Harassment and/or making threats of any kind are not acceptable behavior. Threatening behaviors, including, but not limited to verbal and physical threats, will be taken very seriously. If verbal or physical threats against others are made, the threats will be promptly reported to parents of the student making the threats and to the police, and the student will be subject to firm disciplinary actions.

Hazing

Hazing is any act, whether committed by one or many persons, on or off school grounds, against a student in connection with pledging, being initiated into, affiliating with, holding office in, or maintaining membership in any organization which is affiliated with the educational institution, and which is intended to have the effect of, or should reasonably be expected to have the effect of, endangering the mental or physical health of the student, or, which, as more broadly defined for the purposes of school board policies but not for the purposes of imposing civil penalties, is intended to have the effect of, or should reasonably be expected to have the effect of humiliating, intimidating, or demeaning the student.

Hazing is forbidden of all Rochester School students. It is a violation of school rules to engage in hazing; solicit, direct, aid, or attempt to aid or abet another person engaged in hazing; knowingly fail to take reasonable measures to prevent hazing. It is not a defense that the person against whom the hazing was directed consented to or acquiesced in the hazing activity. Penalties for hazing include, but are not limited to, suspension from school, suspension from the school activity, disbanding of the activity, civil fine, criminal penalties.

Incidents should be reported to one of the following persons: Principal, Guidance Director, or Mental Health Counselor. In addition to, or as an alternative to filing a harassment complaint pursuant to this policy, a person may file a harassment complaint with the Vermont Human Rights Commission or the Office for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education at the addresses noted in the procedures accompanying this policy.

Confidentiality: The privacy of a complaining student, the individual(s) against whom the complaint is filed, and the witnesses will be respected as much as possible, consistent with the legal obligations to investigate, to take appropriate action, and to comply with any discovery or disclosure obligations.

Adult Facilitator's/Coach's Responsibility to Parents/Caregivers:

Adult facilitators/Coaches need to provide positive yet honest feedback to parents, and keep them informed of any changes in practice/rehearsal and game/performance schedules. In the event of cancellations, it is the coach's responsibility to contact households regarding the situation.

Adult facilitators/Coaches MUST inform parents/caregivers of ANY instances of injury or fatigue that are observed during practices/rehearsals or games/performances.

Coaches MAY ask parents/caregivers NOT to attend practices (i.e. "closed" practices).

Coaches and Practices

1. Practice sessions for JV and Varsity teams should not exceed two hours. Middle school practice sessions are limited to 1_ hours.
2. No unsupervised practices are allowed. If proper supervision is not possible, practice will be canceled. "Captains' practices" are a violation of VPA regulations.
3. Sunday practices are permitted only if cleared in advance by the Athletic Director, in preparation for a Monday competition. Any Sunday practice must be held in the p.m. hours, and be OPTIONAL for the student-athletes. No player will be penalized for missing Sunday practice.
4. When school is closed due to weather, all athletics will be canceled. The only exceptions will be made with special permission of the Athletic Director and the Principal.
5. Whenever possible, junior high and elementary school practices will be held immediately after school.
6. Basketball practice times will be determined by gym availability. The AD will prepare a schedule each month. The coach is responsible for distributing this schedule to players and parents.

VPA State Tournament Participation

It is the policy of Rochester School that each team will apply for tournament play if the head coach of that team and the Athletic Director agree to do so, based on that team's performance during the season. In the event that the coach and Athletic Director disagree, the Principal will render the final decision.