

Rochester School
Athletic Department
Handbook

Student – Athlete/Family Version

2007 – 2008

Rochester School Athletic Department Handbook **Student – Athlete / Family Version**

Purpose

This handbook is designed to serve as a policy and information manual in regards to the operations of the athletic department at Rochester School. It will delineate the roles and responsibilities of administration; coaches; athletes; parents; and community members in contributing to a competitive, positive athletic program at the school. The handbook will also provide an overview of how the sports program runs.

Philosophy

The Rochester athletic department's basic philosophy is that sports play an essential role in the overall school program. Interscholastic sports 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 athletic program. While striving to achieve excellence in terms of individual and team success is a key goal, sportsmanship and participation are equally significant objectives.

Interscholastic Athletics Overview

The Vermont Principals' Association (VPA) governs interscholastic athletic competition 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 Junior High School).
- Winter: Boys and Girls Basketball (Varsity; Junior Varsity; Junior High School [Grades 7 & 8]; Elementary [Grades 5 & 6]; and Developmental [Grades 2-4]).
- Spring: Baseball and Softball (Varsity and Junior High School – Junior High 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), along with ten other schools: Blue Mt.; Cabot; Chelsea; Concord; Craftsbury; Rivendell; the Sharon Academy; South Royalton; Thetford; Twinfield; and Whitcomb of Bethel. Officials for games are assigned by either a regional or state supervisor, depending upon the sport.

Goals and Beliefs for Rochester Teams and Athletes

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.

Rochester students will be welcomed on all of our teams, no student will be "cut" or denied the opportunity to play a sport. Prior mastery of athletic skills or physical attributes are not pre-requisites.

(Students may be ruled ineligible to play due to other considerations, however, such as academic performance.)

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 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 always 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, junior high, 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.

Student - Athletes

Overview

The term "student-athletes" is key: Rochester School strongly believes that our athletes are students first.

Every athlete's primary responsibility is in the classroom – sports 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 athletic department to ensure that any student-athlete requiring additional help / time to complete schoolwork is excused from practices or even games in order to fulfill academic responsibilities.

Students have the legal right to their education. Although we believe that athletics is an important aspect to that education, participation in interscholastic team sports is a privilege, not a right. Students must "take care of business" in the classroom in order to play sports at Rochester.

In addition, it is essential that all student-athletes understand that they represent our school AND our community when they agree to put on the Rochester uniform. Sportsmanship is **required** of all Rochester athletes, they must treat the coaches, officials, and other players with respect.

Basic Student Pre-Requisites for Interscholastic Eligibility

1. Academic. The following requirements apply to all students in grades 5-12 who participate in interscholastic athletics. Students must meet all the requirements to be eligible to participate in athletics.
 - A student-athlete must carry a full load of courses.
 - All students are eligible to participate in athletics 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 quarter" or most

recently-completed 9-week grading period). Any student-athlete with a grade of “incomplete” for a course is ineligible to play or practice until that grade is finalized.

- 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. It is the student-athlete’s responsibility to contact the Athletic Director for the appropriate form, and check in with teachers for progress grades. Here is the process:
 - ◆ Step # 1 – Student is ineligible after report card is issued.
 - ◆ Step # 2 – TEN days before the progress reports are issued, student / athletes may begin practicing in order to be eligible under VPA rules to compete (10 practice requirement). At this stage the student must go around to teachers and have them sign off on the Eligibility form. The student / athlete must be passing all classes to start practicing.
 - ◆ Step # 3 – When Progress Reports are issued, if the student / athlete is still passing all classes, he or she is eligible to start playing in games.
 - ◆ Step # 4 – At next Report Card, the student / athlete is held to the normal standard of no more than one failing grade and an average of 70.
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.
 - Athletic competition 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 should be in writing and presented to both the team and the Athletic Director.
- A player who is determined by the Principal to have been in possession of alcoholic beverages, smoke or smokeless tobacco products, or illegal drugs; or to have been using such items will be banned from participating in interscholastic activities during that sport’s season in which the rule was broken. This rule applies to behavior both on and off school property, as reported to the Principal by law enforcement officials, teachers, or coaches. The player may also be subject to further action under the school’s disciplinary policy.
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. Junior high 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 sports will require student-athletes to furnish basic equipment (glove or mitt in baseball, shin guards in soccer, etc.) in order to participate. Any prospective player unable to provide these items on their own should see the AD or the coach, who will make arrangements to address the situation.

Safety of Student-Athletes

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 be reported to the Athletic Director. Parents / caregivers should be notified immediately if at all possible.

Parents/Caregivers must be notified if the athlete is taken to the hospital. A member of the coaching staff will accompany the athlete, if at all possible.

Any athlete receiving a doctor's care for an injury must be cleared by the physician before returning to practice.

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 Team

Student-athletes and their families need to be aware that EVERY varsity sport at Rochester schedules some practices and /or games during school vacation periods. Soccer and cross-country begin in mid-August before school starts; basketball continues during Christmas and February vacations; and baseball / softball regularly play during April vacation. Athletes and their families should try to accommodate these schedules as much as possible. Contact the Athletic Director with questions regarding future planning.

VPA mandates place the following limitations on varsity sports scheduling:

- **Fall Sports:** Practices may begin on Monday August 14. Soccer teams may play a maximum of 14 games. State Championships for soccer are on Saturday November 4.
- **Winter Sports:** Practices may begin on Monday November 13. Basketball teams may play a maximum of 20 games. Championships for girls are on March 3; for boys on March 10. *Note that girls' tournament is over February vacation! *
- **Spring Sports:** Baseball pitchers & catchers may begin practice on Monday March 12; full squad practices may begin on Monday March 19. Baseball / softball teams may play a maximum of 16 games. Finals scheduled for June 8 and 9.

The Athletic Department at Rochester School recognizes that many opportunities are available to student-athletes to participate in other, non-school sports activities (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 Athletic Department that school team sports must come first.

Student-athletes participating in any additional non-school sport activity must inform his / her coach of the situation. In the event of conflicts, it must be understood that the school sport should take priority. Any student – athlete missing ANY team activity to participate in a non-school sport may forfeit playing time or be asked to leave the team – this is the coach’s decision, to be made in consultation with the A.D.

Uniforms

Players will be issued team uniforms by the coach or athletic director. **Uniforms are property of Rochester School – the student – athlete must recognize that he / she is borrowing these garments.** Uniforms are FOR GAME COMPETITION ONLY – they are NOT to be worn casually at other times. It is the student – athlete’s responsibility to keep the uniform clean, and return it to the coach or athletic director within a week of the season’s conclusion.

Student – athletes 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 team unless PRIOR arrangements have been made between parents / guardians and the coach / or Athletic Director.** Athletes 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 team travel:

1. All members of the team will dress appropriately. In the spring and fall players should be dressed in their uniforms BEFORE boarding the bus. Changing on the bus is NOT allowed. Changing for a game is also not an acceptable excuse for missing class.
2. Coaches are responsible for proper team bus conduct. They are also responsible to check the visiting team locker room before they board the bus. Any vandalism must be reported to the host school and the Athletic Director.
3. Players will sit with their team and coach(es) when sharing a bus for a road trip.
4. All cleats will be removed from the players’ feet before boarding the bus.
5. Only team members and their coaches may ride the bus. Spectators are not permitted on the bus unless granted prior permission by the coach or bus driver.
6. The coach(es) and the bus driver have the authority to decide whether the teams will stop to eat on the way home from a game.
7. Players need to arrange for transportation home from school after a game.

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 dates of these Awards nights for 2006 – 2007 are:

- Fall Athletic Awards: Thursday November 9.

- Winter Athletic Awards: Thursday March 15.
- Spring Athletic Awards: Thursday June 14.

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 passed on (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.

Yet 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.

Hazing

Rochester School students may not engage in hazing. It is a violation of school rules to engage in hazing; solicit, direct, aid, or attempt to aid or abet another student 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; and / or criminal penalties.

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.

Coach's Relationship to Students

Coaches are expected to provide the greatest possible leadership in their programs, projecting enthusiasm, sincerity, and knowledge of their sport. Coaches are required to implement the general training rules established by the school, and may develop additional rules as deemed necessary. These rules, however, are not to conflict with the department policies, and must be shared with the Athletic Director prior to implementation.

Coaches must be fair and encouraging to each and every student-athlete on the team. Coaches should aim to develop each individual's skills as fully as possible, while recognizing the overall role of athletics as part of the entire school program. Sports should be a learning experience.

Coach's Responsibility to Parents/Caregivers:

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

Coaches **MUST** inform parents/caregivers of ANY instances of injury or fatigue that are observed during practices or games.

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

Coaches and Practices

1. Practice sessions for JV and Varsity teams should not exceed two hours. Junior high 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. A copy will be posted on the bulletin board outside the girls' locker room.

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.