HANDBOOK FOR ATHLETES AND PARENTS

Chatham High School

2026-2027

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I. INTRODUCTION

Athletics at Chatham High School is an integral part of the educational process. It is where students can enhance their athletic skills and develop their character. This handbook will outline some of our philosophies and goals of the athletic program. Hopefully, this will help you gain a better understanding of how a competitive interscholastic program is conducted and what comprises our expectations. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call or contact the Athletic Office.

II. PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

Interscholastic athletics are not an end in themselves; but rather, an integral part of the overall educational process, which seeks to develop responsible, well-informed, and well-adjusted citizens. By their very nature, interscholastic sports are essential for students who possess a skill set, interest, and desire to participate in athletics at a competitive level. A superior interscholastic athletic program should cultivate and nourish such attributes as loyalty, unselfishness, respect, and an understanding of true sportsmanship.

III. COMMUNICATION

One of the pillars of sound athletic programs is the development and communication with and between all parties involved. While the Athletic Director must lead the communication of the overall purpose and function of the athletic program within the context of the greater educational system, coach, parent, and player communication is equally important.

Communication Expected from Coach to Student-Athlete

1. Goals and expectations for the team.
2. Schedule for all team athletic events, including time and location, as appropriate.
3. Team rules and guidelines.
4. Ongoing feedback to the individual student-athlete regarding role on the team and ways to improve.

Communication Expected from Student-Athlete to Coach

1. Student-Athletes are encouraged to speak with their coaches at the appropriate time to discuss any questions or concerns they may have.

As your child becomes involved in the athletic program at Chatham High School, they will experience some of the most rewarding moments of their high school experience. It is important that they and you understand that there also may be times when things do not go the way you or your child wish. At these times discussion between the player and coach is encouraged.

Communication Expected from Coach to Parent
1. Any injury to or illness of an individual player.
2. Outline of team goals, expectations, and procedures provided in the pre-season meeting.
3. Reiteration of proper student conduct, including adherence to the district's policies on harassment, intimidation, and bullying.
4. Ongoing communication regarding scheduling of events, unforeseen adjustments as a result of inclement weather, etc.

SDOC Regulation Regarding Parent Conduct and Communication: Parent Code of Conduct

IV. SCHEDULES

The schedules for all athletic program competitions will be posted online on the Athletic page of the school website: Chatham Athletic Schedules

Changes to the Schedule

Changes to the time or location of an athletic event (i.e. contest or practice) are common as a result of inclement weather, poor field conditions, or other unanticipated circumstances. These changes sometimes occur at the very end of the school day. The athletic department will update the online sports schedule and coaches will utilize the school district email or messaging system to communicate changes in schedule to players in as timely a manner as possible. Parents may subscribe to notifications and updates regarding changes to athletic events on the Chatham High School Athletic Website.

Practice Schedule

Coaches will send out emails updating athletes and parents of weekly upcoming practices, games, and days off. Sundays are a scheduled day off for our athletes unless approved by the athletic office. Exceptions are granted on request by the head coach if necessary. If approved, the athlete will have the day off before or after.

V. ATHLETE CONDUCT

Players are expected to honor and obey all rules and regulations of the NJSIAA and the NJAC. When an athlete is at any competition they are expected to represent themselves and the School District of the Chathams in a respectful and appropriate manner.

BULLYING, HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION WILL NOT BE TOLERATED:

"Harassment, intimidation, or bullying" means any gesture, any written, verbal or physical act, or any electronic communication, as defined in N.J.S.A. 18A:37-14, whether it be a single incident or a series of incidents that:

- Is reasonably perceived as being motivated by either any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or a mental, physical or sensory disability; or

- By any other distinguishing characteristic; and that
- Takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function, on a school bus, or off school grounds, as provided for in N.J.S.A. 18A:37-15.3, that substantially disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the school or the rights of other pupils; and that
- A reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, that the act(s) will have the effect of physically or emotionally harming a pupil or damaging the pupil's property or placing a pupil in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm to his/her person or damage to his/her property; or
- Has the effect of insulting or demeaning any pupil or group of pupils; or
- Creates a hostile educational environment for the pupil by interfering with a pupil's education or by severely or pervasively causing physical or emotional harm to the pupil.

"Electronic communication" means a communication transmitted by means of an electronic device, including, but not limited to, a telephone, cellular phone, computer or tablet.

The district administration shall investigate any allegation of harassment, intimidation, or bullying in accordance with 18A:37-15.3 and Board Policy. Further, the district shall investigate any allegation of hazing as a potential criminal act and in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding with law enforcement.

VI. PARENT/FAN CONDUCT

Expectations for Parent Conduct

It is the parents' role to support their children. Parents should demonstrate good sportsmanship at all times and should contact a coach about a concern only in the manner outlined above. Parents are prohibited from being in the team locker room, on the team bus, near the team bench area, or in any other area where contact with a coach is possible during the playing of the athletic event.

It can be very difficult to accept your child not playing as much or where you may hope. The coaches at Chatham are professionals. They make judgments based on what they believe to be best for all students involved and for the good of the team. We also recognize that athletics is a competitive environment in which playing time is earned by performance not only in games, but also in practice. There is a difference between recreation/club/travel level athletics and interscholastic varsity sports. Game situations may not allow all players to participate in every game.

Abide by the 24-hour rule before contacting a school administrator. Following a competition please wait 24 hours before emailing or calling a coach/administrator.

Failure to comply with any aspect of the Parent Code of Conduct may result in the parent's exclusion from future contests or practices.

Expectations for Fan Conduct

Fans, coaches and players are expected to honor and obey all rules and regulations of the NJSIAA and the NJAC. They are expected to treat the opponent, the officials and other fans with respect and courtesy; their safety and comfort should never be endangered. Fans, coaches and players are expected to make good sportsmanship a priority at all times.

Noisemakers at indoor events and signs or banners with negative messages will NOT be permitted. Violators of the above rules will NOT be tolerated and will be subject to ejection.

Cheer enthusiastically for your teams. Let your cheers be positive and encouraging.
Accept the decision of officials. They are working to ensure the game is played fairly. Shouting disagreements or booing calls are not endorsed.
Respect your opponents. Taunting, finger pointing, or yelling offensive comments at players or coaches on opposing teams will not be tolerated and will result in ejection.
Perspective: It is a game involving high school athletes attempting to do their best; always keep that in mind.
Enjoy the efforts of all the athletes.

VII. ELIGIBILITY

Rosters are required to be filled out by the head coach of each sport and turned in to the Athletic Director before the first scheduled contest is played.

Players must be present in school before 10:20 AM to be permitted to practice or take part in a contest that particular day. Exceptions are permissible if the Principal and Athletic Director approve a written request. Coaches should also be notified.

Athletes continue to maintain the requirements for approved academic standing prior to and during the season.

In accordance with Board policy 6145.4, students rostered on an athletic team are subject to a $200.00 fee which must be satisfied in order for the student to be eligible for participation. Please follow this link to the policy.

VIII. MEDICAL CLEARANCE

No athlete is permitted to practice with a school athletic team unless he/she has been given full clearance by the Chatham High School Nurse's Office. No exception shall be made to this rule.

IX. TRANSPORTATION

All athletes must have their parents sign the transportation waiver in the Genesis Portal prior to the season.

All athletes are required to travel with the team on school provided transportation to all away games/matches/meets. Athletes may ride home from the contest with a parent/guardian if they have submitted this request to the coach in writing the day before the game.

Bus discipline is important not only for team control but for safety. All athletes will remain seated during the trip. Yelling from bus windows is not permitted. Check for general bus cleanliness and removal of all equipment and belongings after the trip.

Team managers and statisticians are to travel to and from scrimmages/contests on the team bus without exception.
Food is not permitted on school buses unless all procedures and protocols outlined in Board Policy 5141.20 have been followed.

X. TRYOUTS/ROSTER MANAGEMENT

Chatham High School, the School District of the Chathams, and the Board of Education believe that participation in athletic activities has the potential to positively impact a student's school experience. At the same time, the Board of Education recognizes that it is not possible for every student to participate in each team she or he would like, due to the number of slots available on a given team, the obligation of the district to provide sufficient supervision during practice and competitive events, financial limitations associated with the provision of transportation or supplies, and other factors. Therefore, the Athletic Director shall consult with the coaches of each interscholastic athletic team, at the outset of each season, to determine the appropriate number of players to accommodate in the program for that season. Each coach shall be responsible for communicating performance expectations and other stated criteria for inclusion on a team to students and their parents at the start of each season. All pertinent information shall be disseminated in writing to parents/participants.

Choosing the members of the various athletic teams is the responsibility of the coach. Before tryouts begin, coaches will provide team information to all candidates of the team at a pre-season meeting. Such information shall include:

a. Length of tryout period – **minimum of 3 days** for all participants.
b. Objectives used to select the members of the team.
c. Criteria involved in team selection.
d. Distribution of practice and competition schedule. The coach will explain the commitment necessary to join the team.
e. Clear notifications that tryouts are based on performance during the selection period. Tryouts are not based on summer participation or coaching camps the athletes participated in previous to selections.

Sub-varsity coaches will follow the criteria for selection that has been established for the particular sport. Head coaches will be involved in these selections to aid the coaches in the sub-varsity levels.

If a coach does not need to make squad reductions they will still have to delineate between varsity, JV, and freshman teams.

The high school athletic department is sensitive to the needs of the athletes during the tryout period. It is the school's desire to see that as many student athletes as possible are involved in the

program during the athletic season. The athletic department strives to maximize the options available for student athletes in the athletic arena as participants or supporters of the program.

Feedback

Any student who does not secure a roster spot shall receive feedback regarding the reasons for their failure to secure a roster spot on an individual basis.

Roster Placement/Playing Time/Cuts

The Chatham High School athletic program is highly competitive. Please understand that when your child signs up for a team, there is a very real possibility they may not be selected if a squad reduction is necessary, or they may not be placed where you or they think they should; i.e. JV or Varsity. Coaches try to do the very best they can in keeping the most talented athletes, filling positions for play, and placing the athlete on the proper team. It is the coach's responsibility, based on their training, expertise, and judgment, to establish the team roster.

"Select" or "club" teams have become common in contemporary athletics. Participation on a "select or club team" does not guarantee any player a spot on a high school interscholastic roster. While players can gain valuable experience playing outside the school athletic program, neither parents nor students should count on this type of participation to "guarantee" a spot on a high school team. Students may not try out for more than one interscholastic sport per season. Students may join Intramural or Unified sports if they do not secure a roster spot on an interscholastic team.

Playing time is earned during practice. A coach must have confidence that a player they put into a game can function at that level of competition. This means the player must have demonstrated athletic competence, an understanding of the "game plan", and the required level of conditioning necessary to perform. It is the coach's responsibility to make these decisions. Our program structure (Freshmen, JV, and Varsity) allows for growth of the student, and the opportunity to demonstrate that they have earned the privilege to play. Each athlete should have personal improvement as one of their goals.

Playing the first three years in a program--freshman, sophomore, and junior years–does not automatically guarantee an athlete a roster spot on the varsity team senior year. At the conclusion of an athlete's junior-year season, the head coach will conduct an exit interview if that athlete was not a member of the varsity roster. The purpose of the exit interview will be to inform them of their varsity position status senior year and areas they will need to improve upon between seasons if there is a concern that they may not make the roster in their final year. This open communication and the accompanying recommendations will be recorded and shared with the athlete.

As a member of a team, one can learn many valuable lessons, regardless of time spent in actual competition. Among them are the following: citizenship, sportsmanship, appreciation of others' abilities, teamwork, responsibility, commitment, loyalty, placing team above oneself, learning to accept instruction and criticism, respect for others, winning and losing with dignity, self-control, and being responsible for one's own actions. Our hope is that our student athletes embrace the

life-lessons learned on the playing field to enhance their own lives and grow into model citizens within our community and beyond.

XI. GYM EXEMPTIONS

Physical Education Exemption Purpose & Philosophy

The NJDOE established "Option 2," allowing students to pursue alternative courses that meet or exceed the requirements of the courses they would otherwise take in school. Chatham High School permits students who are engaged in district provided athletic programs to replace the PE portion of Health and Physical Education through participation in an athletic program.

CHS athletic programs adhere to the content, standards and requirements of a physical education class. In addition, the coaches of these teams are SDOC employees. These individuals are supervised and required to meet the expectations outlined by our coaches' handbook and directives from the CHS administration

Therefore, any sophomore, junior, or senior student who is an active member on a Chatham High School athletic team may apply to opt out of the CHS physical education portion of class during the season of participation. No student may have more than 2 study halls (including the PE study hall) in a semester.

Application Process and Program Requirements

In order to be eligible for a PE exemption, the student-athletes must submit a signed Google Form to the athletic office by the due date, and there will be NO EXCEPTIONS. Once approved, the study hall will remain in effect through the end of the season.

Once a Physical Education Alternate Athletic Activity request has been granted, student engagement with the team is monitored to ensure the student is meeting the minimum requirements to maintain a PE exemption.

- Students must attend a minimum of 3 practices and/or games each week to maintain the exemption. If less than 3 are met, the exemption will be removed.
- Students are required to attend all health classes during the period of their exemption
- No student will be exempt from Driver's Education or Health.
- A student must be earning a passing grade in Physical Education at the time of exemption in order to be eligible for the remainder of the season.
- Athletes are to return to PE the following Monday after the season concludes.

XII. VARSITY LETTER POLICY

Playing on a varsity team at Chatham High School is an accolade and honor that can be directly attributed to the hard work, dedication, and continued effort to improve by our athletes beginning their freshman year. This continues on through senior year in all sports, no matter the season.

To earn a Varsity Letter in a following sport, one of the following criteria must be met:

1. Been named a varsity athlete by the Head Coach of the program at the start of the season
2. If not #1, then he/she has participated in at least half of the contests during the regular season at the Varsity Level for the following sports: ***Football, Cross Country, Cheerleading, Sailing, Wrestling, Bowling, Track, and Golf***
3. If not #1, then he/she has played in or been on the bench for at least 50% of all Varsity competitions: ***Field Hockey, Soccer, Volleyball, Tennis, Basketball, Hockey, Softball, Baseball, and Lacrosse***

To earn a Varsity Letter in a following sport the following criteria must be met:

Swimming: To qualify for a Varsity letter in Swimming, an athlete is required to also:

- ➢ Swim in at least 50% of the regular Varsity season meets (Barring injury)
- ➢ Have a qualifying time and/or participate in the County Championship (Barring injury)
- ➢ Participate in the State Tournament (Barring injury)

Fencing: To qualify for a Varsity letter in Fencing, an athlete is required to also:

- ➢ Fence in at least 50% of the regular Varsity season matches (Barring injury)

Seniors who have been with the program four years and make the team would automatically receive a Varsity letter as a Senior.

Varsity letters are not awarded for:

1. Being called up for a County or State tournament game.
2. Spending more than half the season on the Freshman or JV level teams

Varsity Letter Awards:

1st year varsity award - Certificate & chenille letter/pin
2nd year varsity award - Certificate and service bar
3rd year varsity award - Certificate and service bar
4th year varsity award - Certificate, service bar, and Chatham Blanket

XIII. N.C.A.A. INITIAL-ELIGIBILITY/CLEARINGHOUSE

Any student-athlete who is considering playing intercollegiate athletics at the Division I or II level must complete a NCAA Initial-Eligibility form. This form and other pertinent information can be found online in the eligibility section at ncaa.org. This initial-eligibility certification pertains only to whether or not they meet the NCAA requirements for participation in Division I or II athletics, with no bearing on their admission to the particular institution. For more information to assist our students click here