

Ponder Lions Student and Parent Athletic Handbook



2025 – 2026

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OBJECTIVES OF ATHLETICS AT PONDER HIGH SCHOOL

Before any program can operate effectively and efficiently, a philosophy should be set down to provide a preview of the ultimate ends to be achieved and the guidelines within which to accomplish its progress. The major objective of the Ponder Athletic Program is to provide activities and opportunities for students to develop from their experiences, favorable habits and attitudes, which will help them succeed in life.

The athletic program, headed by the Athletic Director, should be in conformity with the general objectives and policies of the district. The program should function as a part of the overall curriculum and should constantly strive for development of a well-rounded individual capable of taking his or her place in society.

PURPOSE OF THE ATHLETIC PROGRAM

To provide opportunities that will allow the program to serve as a laboratory where students may cope with problems and handle situations similar to those encountered under conditions prevailing in the modern world. The laboratory should provide adequate and natural opportunities for:

1. Physical, mental and emotional growth and development.
2. Acquisition and development of special skills in activities of the student's choice.
3. Team play, with development of such commitments as loyalty, fair play and cooperation that are desirable social traits.
4. Directed leadership and supervision that stresses self-discipline, self-motivation, excellence and the ideals of good sportsmanship that take winning and losing in stride and with dignity.
5. Provisions for worthy use of leisure time in later life either as a participant or as a spectator.
6. Participation by the most skilled that will enable these individuals to ascertain possibilities for future pursuits.
7. To improve the image of the school and athletic department.
8. To strive for playing excellence that produces winning teams.
9. To ensure growth and development in all programs.

Athletics in our society provides one of the finest ways in which our youth can mature into responsible men and women. This being true, the athletic program can assume its rightful place in a total school program and make its vital contributions to the development of our youth.

UIL guidelines

All Ponder athletes must have on file each year: (Available in Rank One)

- Physical every year before suiting out at all in off season or in season (this isn't available in Rank One; must have paper copy)
- Acknowledgement of rules
- Medical History form
- Concussion Release Form
- Steroid form
- Athletic Handbook Acknowledgement form
- Emergency Medical Release

New Students

New students to Ponder ISD must also have the following:

- 9 – 12 Eligibility Questionnaire
- 9 – 12 Previous Athletic Participation Form

Absentees

All athletes must notify coach when absent from school or practice either by email or phone call)

Grades

- UIL guidelines – Athletes must receive passing grades in all subjects.
- **Second failure** in the same school year may be subject to dismissal from an athletic program or sport based on discretion of the coach.

Grooming guidelines

Athletes dress for traveling to games will be determined by each coach. Athletes should be dressed in a manner that positively reflects on Ponder Athletics

- Grooming guidelines – students will not participate in contests or travel to contests if they are in violation of ANY of the district's grooming guidelines.
 1. Hair –school Policy or coach of each sport may enforce a stricter level
 2. Boys – no ear rings
 3. Tattoo's must be covered

Transportation

- Athletes will ride to contest and back with team.
- Special circumstances students may be released to parents with a note.
- Athletes are to ride to and from contest sitting quietly and may visit with teammates, according to the coach's rules.
- All vehicles must be left clean

Facilities

Opponents Facilities

- Sit with team
- Go to the dressing room when instructed by your coach.
- Leave all lockers, equipment and opponents' apparel alone.
- Leave the locker room or dugout clean.

Ponder Facilities

- Keep locker rooms clean
- Weight room put up all weights after use
- Keep all equipment picked up
- Report any damage
- Keep all items locked in locker room
- Any valuables give to coach if you can't lock it up
- Avoid bringing valuables if at all possible

Multi-Events

Athlete participates in more than one activity; student must make it clear to all conflicting programs well in advance as to how they will handle conflicting situations.

Multi-Sport Athletes

A student athlete must complete the full season and any post-season games before trying out for the next season. **All multi-sport athletes will have an opportunity to tryout for a team in a subsequent season, even if the season has started.**

In addition, an athlete cannot leave a team during the season to join another team; they must wait until that team has completed its regular season. This policy will take effect when 20 percent of the season has been completed. That includes being dismissed from a team for any reason. Exceptions to any of this will be handled by the head coaches and the athletic director.

Discipline Procedures

- If a student-athlete violates any Ponder ISD discipline policy, that student-athlete will FIRST be subject to whatever consequences the campus has for that violation, and then once they have completed the campus consequences, they will have consequences with that sport's coach BEFORE participating in any athletic activity. If it happens at the end of one season and the beginning of another season, the student-athlete must still complete all consequences BEFORE trying out for the next sport. Any days of ISS or DAEP must be completely made up as missed practices before the student may participate in an athletic contest. Days may ONLY be made up one at a time.
- Any illegal activity (vaping, tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, other drugs, possession of any of the above at school, or theft, to name a few) will be punished severely by the athletic department. None of our student-athletes are old enough to possess or partake of any of the above substances legally, and those substances are illegal to possess on a school campus regardless.
- In a school year:
 - First Offense: in addition to consequences outlined in the Student Code of Conduct and campus consequences, the student-athlete will be suspended from team contests for one calendar week, and must make up all workouts missed for time missed during school punishment. On the first offense, the athlete may attend practices during the suspension, and make up missed practices during the suspension, but they may not participate in any contest until the calendar week suspension has been served. If they fail to show for practices during the suspension, those practices must also be made up before the athlete can participate, regardless of whether the athlete has completed the calendar week of suspension or not.
 - Second Offense: in addition to consequences outlined in the Student Code of Conduct and campus consequences, the student-athlete will be suspended from all team contests for two calendar weeks, and must make up all workouts missed for time missed during school punishment. On the second offense, the athlete may attend practices during the SECOND week of the suspension, and they may make up as much of the missed practices as they can during that second week, but they may not participate until ALL practices have been made up AND the two calendar weeks have passed.
 - Third Offense: in addition to consequences outlined in the Student Code of Conduct and campus consequences, the student-athlete will be suspended from the athletic program until the next August.
 - If, at the beginning of the next school year, the student has not had anymore violations of this policy, the student, parents, and coach will meet and the student could be possibly reinstated to the athletic program. If they are reinstated, they would escalate to the Third Offense immediately if there were any more violations.

Please note that these are minimum consequences that all coaches must adhere to, but that individual coaches may have more severe consequences for their individual programs.

Dismissal from Athletic Program

It is a privilege and not a right to be a part of an athletic team. Each coach of each sport is able to decide if a student-athlete first of all has the talent to be on a team under the coach's supervision, and secondly, that the student-athlete is conducting himself/herself in a manner that represents the team and Ponder Athletics in a positive manner. Coaches will work with students to help them, but sometimes problems occur. A student may be dismissed from a team or the Ponder Athletic program for:

- Conduct detrimental to the team.
- Violations of Drug, Alcohol, Tobacco, Inhalants, and Vaping Policy.
- Continuous Problems with Grades.
- Violations of the Student Code of Conduct.
- Coach's decision with athletic director approval.
- Any athlete that is removed or quits a team may request a meeting with the athletic director.

Parent / Coach Relationship

Parents and coaches are important stakeholders in the athletic program. By establishing an understanding between coaches and parents, both are better able to accept the actions of the other and provide a more positive experience for everyone. Parents have the right to know and understand the expectations placed on them and their children. Coaches should be notified by parents if parents have a concern, and these concerns should be discussed with the coach at the appropriate time and place.

What parents should expect from their child's coach:

-A Pre-season meeting with parents of all players at a time that is convenient to the majority of the parents in which the coach should explain:

- Coaching philosophy.
- Expectations the coach has for your son or daughter, as well as other players on the team.
- Locations and times of practices and contests.

- Team requirements, i.e., fees, special equipment needed, school and team rules, off season expectations.
- Procedures that will be followed if your child becomes injured during participation.

-A phone call or email any and every time your athlete has some time of problem that requires disciplinary action.

-Calendar postings on the team's and district's athletic websites for scheduled games and anytime scheduled games are changed.

-Some type of communication tool where parents and students can be notified quickly in the case of last-minute changes WITHOUT using individual or group text messages.

Communication coaches expect from parents:

- A phone call or email requesting an appointment if a parent would like to visit with a coach.
- A visit with the coach first before going to other administrator's, including the athletic director.
- Concerns regarding their son or daughter expressed directly to the coach at the appropriate time and place.
- Specific concerns in regard to the coach's philosophy and/or expectations for their son/daughter.
- Notification of any schedule conflicts in writing and well in advance.

As your child becomes involved in interscholastic athletics, they will experience some of the most rewarding moments of their lives. Being a part of a program is a privilege, but the right to be on the field or court does not exist. It is the coach and his/her staff's sole responsibility to determine the players that should be on the field or court. It's important to understand there may be times when things do not go the way you or your child wishes. These are the times discussion with the coach is encouraged, but parents must understand that the coach can ONLY discuss your child and your child's behavior, skills, etc. with you.

Appropriate concerns to discuss with coach:

- The mental and physical treatment of your child.
- Specific concerns regarding your child's health.
- What your child needs to do to improve.
- Concerns about your child's behavior.

It is very difficult to accept that your child is not playing as much as you may hope. Coaches make decisions based on what they believe is in best interests of all students

participating. It is important to remember that this is your child's journey, not yours as a parent, and it is an important life-skill to empower them to ask questions of the coach and take responsibility for their journey. As you can see from the list above, certain things can and should be discussed with your child's coach. Other things, such as those listed next, must be left to the discretion of the coach.

Issues Not appropriate for discussion with your coach:

- How much playing time each athlete is getting.
- Team strategy.
- Play calling.
- Any situation that deals with other student athletes.

There are situations that may require a conference between the coach and parent. These are not discouraged, as it is important for each party to have a clear understanding of the other's position. When these conferences are necessary, the following procedure is suggested to help promote resolution to the issue.

If a parent has a concern to discuss with the coach, the following procedure should be followed:

- Call the coach to set up an appointment.
- If the coach cannot be reached, call the athletic director and ask him or her to set up a meeting with the coach for you.
- Think about what you expect to accomplish as a result of the meeting.
- Stick to discussing the facts, as you understand them.
- Do not confront the coach before, during or after a practice or contest. These can be emotional times for both the parent and coach. Meetings of this nature do not promote resolution of the situation, but often escalate it.

What should a parent do if the meeting with the coach didn't provide satisfactory resolution?

- Call the athletic director to set up a meeting with the athletic director and the coach.
- Make sure that you have FIRST met with the coach before calling the athletic director.
- Together we will decide the next steps to attempt to reach satisfactory resolution for the student-athlete, the coach, and the parents.

BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS OF SPECTATORS

Remember that you are at the contest to support and yell for your team, and to enjoy the skill and competition not to intimidate or ridicule the other team, it's fans, or the game officials.

Remember that school athletics are a learning experience for students and that mistakes are sometimes made. Praise student-athletes in their attempt to improve themselves as students, as athletes, and as people, just as you would praise a student's academic work.

A ticket is a privilege to observe the contest, not a license to verbally assault others or be generally obnoxious.

Learn the rules of the game, so that you may understand and appreciate why certain situations take place.

Show respect for the opposing players, coaches, spectators and support groups.

Respect the integrity and judgment of game officials. Understand that they are doing their best to help promote the student-athlete, and admire their willingness to participate in full view of the public.

Recognize and show appreciation for an outstanding play by either team.

Refrain from the use of any controlled substances (alcohol, drugs, etc.) before, during, and after the game on or near the site of the event.

Use only cheers that support and uplift the teams involved.

Be a positive role model at events through your own actions and by censuring those around you whose behavior is unbecoming.

Parents and spectators should be aware that the school can (and should) remove them from the premises and can prohibit them from attending future contests due to undesirable behaviors.

Game officials can ask that the school administrators have unruly fans removed from a contest facility.

There is no such thing as a "right" to attend interscholastic athletics. Interscholastic athletics are considered a "privilege" and the spectator who avails themselves of it is expected to conduct himself or herself accordingly.

Keep in mind that you are a guest of the school, and that while winning is certainly an admirable goal, it is hollow if it comes at the expense of morals, ethics, and just plain common sense.

The school is responsible for the behavior of their spectators. The school district can be punished for actions of patrons in violation of UIL standards and rules.

Ponder High School

Lettering Policy – Varsity

Baseball	Participate in 50 % of all games played.
Basketball	Participate in 50 % of all games played.
Cross Country	Participate in 50 % of meets to include district meet.
Football	Participate in 50 % of all games played.
Golf	Participate in 50 % of golf meets to include district meet.
Tennis	Participate in 50 % of Tennis meets to include district meet.
Track	Participate in 50 % of meets to include the district meet.
Softball	Participate in 50 % of all games played.
Volleyball	Participate in 50 % of all games played.
Power Lifting	Must place in top 5 at all invitational meets or qualify for Regional Meet.
Cheerleaders	Follow all policies set forth by the sponsor and complete the year in good standing.
Manager	Must complete one season on the varsity level.
All UIL Literary and Academic: Score points at the district meet.	

Band/Choir Participate in UIL competition. Make a 1st or 2nd division rating on a class 1 solo at solo/ensemble.

Any person dismissed from a team for any reason (quitting included) will not be awarded a letter in that sport or activity.

The coach or sponsor may deny lettering an athlete, which must be in a written explanation.

With approval of the coach, a player can letter without meeting the above criteria with written explanation.

All first-time lettermen will receive letter jacket

UIL: letter Jacket \$70.00 per jacket Award \$15.00 per patch
May Receive both Jacket & award in the same year.

Acknowledgment Form

My child and I have received a copy of the Ponder Student and Parent Athletic Handbook (and the coach's guidelines for his or her sport). I understand that the handbook contains information that my child and I may need during the school year and that will be held accountable for their behavior and will be subject to the disciplinary consequences outlined in both handbook and coach's guidelines.

Student name _____

Grade____ Student signature_____ Date_____

Parent name(s) _____

Parent signature_____ Date_____

Parent home # _____ work # _____

Parent E-mail _____

Athletic Student Handbook can be accessed from the Athletic Director's webpage on www.ponderisd.net