



Wheeler Middle School

Athletic Handbook

2026-2027

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ATHLETIC PROGRAM PURPOSE, PHILOSOPHY, & GOALS

WHEELER MIDDLE SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Wheeler High School/Middle School, in partnership with families and community, is to provide students with the education that will best help them to live a life of accomplishment and satisfaction in a complex and changing world.

ATHLETIC PROGRAM PURPOSE & PHILOSOPHY

Information in this handbook is provided for the safety and well-being of student-athletes, and is developed with the best interest of the student in mind. Student-athletes, parents, and coaches are responsible for knowing the contents of this handbook and for following the guidelines. Failure to comply with these rules and procedures may result in a suspension of participation in Wheeler Athletics. Participation in sports is an extracurricular activity, and it is both a complement and supplement to our educational course of study and is a privilege, not a right, to be a part of our athletic program.

The athletic department strives to develop each student-athlete holistically through participation in athletics. The goal of the athletic program is to help cultivate each of the following areas:

Athletic development - student-athletes will be instructed in the following areas: sport-specific skills, strength and conditioning, sport strategies, and health/nutrition.

Academic achievement - student-athletes will prioritize academic studies and commitments and will learn to balance the demands of academics and athletics.

Leadership/Citizenship - student-athletes will learn to work together, communicate, prioritize a common goal, respect others, value community, and resolve conflicts and they will be expected to practice Wheeler's social/civic expectations - respect, responsibility, and resiliency, every time they step into an athletic contest.

Sportsmanship - student-athletes will learn the importance of being honest, humble, and fair during competition and also the ability to regulate their emotions in difficult situations.

Middle School Participation Philosophy - at the middle school level, the goal of the program is to offer after school opportunities for students to explore and develop their extracurricular interests. Playing time in games will be approximately even, although factors such as behavior or attendance can impact playing time.

ATHLETIC PROGRAM GOALS

The Wheeler Athletic Program is committed to supporting the mission of Wheeler High School and also to the academic and athletic success and development of the student-athletes. Athletics at Wheeler are an extension of the educational experience, and the athletic department is committed to the following standards:

- The athletic department will work hard to give students multiple opportunities to engage in a wide variety of sports offerings.
- The athletic department will evaluate athletic, academic, and personal progress regularly. Success will not only be defined by wins and losses, but by the overall success and growth of the programs, coaches, and student-athletes.
- The athletic program will foster important individual qualities through quality relationships with the athletic director, coaches, trainers, and teammates.
- The athletic program will encourage and cultivate leadership, social skills, and sportsmanship

ATHLETIC PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS

STUDENT-ATHLETE EXPECTATIONS

Wheeler student-athletes are expected to show the following characteristics & attributes:

- Fair play and sportsmanship
- Self control and discipline
- Respect for teammates, coaches, officials, and opponents
- Honesty and integrity
- Commitment to your team
- Wheeler Social/Civic Expectations: Respect, Responsibility, Resilience
- Attend all practices and they will generally take place from the first day of the season to the conclusion of the season. Days off are at the discretion of the coaches/athletic director.
- Follow all rules and regulations in the Wheeler Middle School Athletic Handbook as well as the Wheeler Student Handbook

PARENT/FAMILY MEMBER EXPECTATIONS

Parents and family members can be a great support system for student-athletes and teams. Wheeler parents are expected to abide by the following:

- Understand the big picture of the purpose of athletics - it is a vital part of the educational experience and can greatly impact student-athletes in a positive way. Athletics are a great way to build social, emotional, and physical skills.
- Attend the pre-season athletics parent meeting and read the Athletic Handbook
- Show respect to coaches, players, opponents, officials, fans, and school staff members
- Support your child and the team
- Avoid speaking negatively or complaining about your child's team or coach in public
- Appreciate the educational opportunity that your child is receiving in our athletic program
- Abide by all policies, procedures, and rules of the athletic program
- Express questions or concerns in a civil and courteous manner and follow the athletic chain of command
- Help your student-athlete be committed to the team by scheduling vacations and other commitments outside of the playing season.

IT IS THE EXPECTATION OF THE WHEELER ATHLETIC PROGRAM THAT ALL SPECTATORS WILL BE RESPECTFUL AND SHOW SPORTSMANSHIP AT ALL TIMES OR THEY WILL BE ASKED TO LEAVE THE GAME/CONTEST/FACILITY.

ATHLETIC PROGRAM SPORTS & OFFERINGS

WHEELER MIDDLE SCHOOL SPORTS

FALL	WINTER	SPRING
Girls Cross Country Boys Cross Country Girls Soccer Boys Soccer	Girls Basketball Boys Basketball Cheer	Softball Baseball Outdoor Track

ATHLETIC CHAIN OF COMMAND

We greatly value the player/coach relationship and believe that it is critical to the development of each student-athlete, therefore, all communication regarding a player's position/role/playing time on a team will be a discussion with the coaching staff and the player. The expectation is that all coaches have an open door policy as it relates to communication with players. Athletes are strongly encouraged to speak to their coach when they have a question or concern. Practicing this skill of self-advocating is a valuable life skill that we want all student-athletes to develop.

If there is a concern that is not related to a player's position/role/playing time, there is a proper athletic chain of command to follow:

1. Meeting with the Coach at an appropriate and predetermined time (parents with player)
 - a. NOT immediately prior to, or following, a game
 - b. NOT during a practice
 - c. NOT during a time when other players/parents are present
2. Meeting with the Athletic Director (parents, player, and coach if appropriate)
3. Meeting with Assistant Principal and Principal

ATHLETIC CONTACT INFORMATION

Wheeler High School		860-535-0377
Athletic Director - Bernadette Macca	maccab@nostoschools.org	860-535-2107
School Nurse - Jess Kessler	kesslerj@nostoschools.org	860-535-2102

REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION

Physicals

All students are welcome to try out for any middle school athletic team, or volunteer to be a team manager, if needed; as long as the proper paperwork has been submitted.

No one may participate in practices or games until a physical has been completed and the proper form turned in to the nurse's office. The appropriate forms are available from the school nurse's office.

Prior to the first practice, each candidate must register online using ArbiterSports (formerly FamilyID).

- a. Sign off acknowledgement that he/she understands that participation in the athletic program may create risk of injury normally associated with vigorous physical activity.
- b. Provide emergency medical information for all student athletes; this information will be carried by each coach to all practices and athletic contests.

Wheeler Online Team Sport Registration

1. Students and their parents/guardians must register for a team through Wheeler's online ArbiterSports registration.
2. Parents and students must read and sign that they understand all the rules and regulations written in the Wheeler Middle School Athletic Handbook.
3. Parents and students must also read and sign that they have an understanding of the Concussion Information and Consent form as well as the Cardiac Arrest Student Information and Parent Consent Form.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The following eligibility requirements must be met and maintained to be eligible to play on Wheeler Middle School teams for students in grades 6-8, and these guidelines closely align with the CIAC high school eligibility rules but do not fully follow them:

1. Middle school students need to maintain passing grades in order to remain eligible and compete on their teams.
2. Grades will be checked at the middle and end of each quarter, and if a student is failing any classes, he/she will be given a probationary period of two weeks to bring up their grades so that they are passing. During this probationary period, the student will be able to practice with their team but not compete in games. After the two week probation period, grades will be checked weekly. At this point, grades will be checked for students on probation at the start of each week. If at any time a student on probation has any Fs at this check in, they will be automatically removed from the team for the remainder of the season.

ATHLETE CHECKLIST FOR PRE-SEASON AND POST-SEASON

Pre-Season

- Completed Sports Physical form submitted to the school nurse. Physicals must be updated annually and NO BRIDGE NOTES ARE ACCEPTED so know your child's physical expiration date.
- Complete Registration in the Final Forms Platform

Post-Season

- Cleaned uniform, or cash value, returned to Coach after final competition
- Complete the season evaluation form sent by the athletic department
- Attend post-season banquet and enjoy the rewards of participation

AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Fall and spring practices will begin right after dismissal (2:25), and winter practices will rotate between the following two time slots: 2:30-4 and 3:30-5. Students in grades 7 and 8 will report to a supervised academic study hall from dismissal (2:25pm) until the start of practices. Students may arrange to get extra help from a teacher during this time. Students are not allowed to loiter or conjugate without supervision. Students in 6th grade will immediately come to Wheeler following their dismissal for their practices in the fall and spring.

INJURIES

In spite of supervision and proper instruction, and protective equipment there are some risks associated with practicing and competing in athletics. The student-athlete can help to minimize the extent of injuries and enhance recovery by adhering to the following:

1. Take care of yourself. The proper amount of rest and a good diet will help prevent injuries.
2. All injuries must be reported to the coach who will then complete an injury report, which is turned into the school nurse.
3. A player's physical condition and health takes priority when there is a choice between physical injury and further participation in an athletic contest.
4. If the injury requires an examination by a physician, the student-athlete may not return to practice or competition without written permission from the physician. The coach must record the physician's permission, and the Athletic Director must record the verification of return.

EQUIPMENT

Uniforms are to be worn for athletic contests only. Students are not to wear pieces of their uniform to school unless given special permission by the coach.

Equipment and uniforms must be handed in to the coach at the end of each season so an accurate inventory can be turned in to the Athletic Director. A financial list will be submitted to the main office for the purpose of collecting missing equipment or the full price of replacement.

INCIDENT REPORTS

Parents/Guardians will be notified by the coach as soon as possible (always within 24 hours) of any incident involving their son or daughter. Injuries will be reported to parents immediately or as soon as possible, and disciplinary matters will be reported within 24 hours.

TRANSPORTATION

1. Students must ride to and from practices and athletic contests on the team bus. It is also the responsibility of each coach to ride the bus to and from all away games and practices. The safety of the passengers on a bus trip is of primary importance, and all student-athletes will adhere to the following rules while on a bus trip:
 - a. Student athletes are responsible for following all rules of the bus driver. (Bus conduct rules apply)
 - b. All passengers must use only the front door while loading and unloading.
 - c. When the bus is in motion, all passengers must be seated.
 - d. Hands, arms, etc. must remain in the bus at all times.
 - e. Objects are not to be thrown from the bus.
 - f. The team is responsible for the condition of the bus after a trip. The bus is to be as clean as it was at the beginning of the trip
2. For away games, parents/guardians may bring and/or pick up their child if necessary but we

strongly encourage our student athletes to ride the bus with their team whenever possible, and parents must send an email to their child's coach 24 hours prior to the game/contest.

3. Other transportation issues will be handled on an individual basis.

WHEELER MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL SCHOOL ATHLETIC POLICIES

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Students connected with a team will not smoke/vape, drink alcoholic beverages, or use illegal substances. If students are caught vaping nicotine, the following procedures will take place:

First Offense: Two (2) days of in-school suspension with an educational component on the dangers of vaping. Students can not participate in any extracurricular events during the suspension period. Following the suspension period, students will not be allowed to compete in games/contests for two additional days. Coaches, with the approval of the Athletic Director, may impose additional team consequences upon their return from the suspension.

Second Offense: Four (4) days of in-school suspension Student can not participate in any extracurricular events during the four day suspension period. At this point, the administration will schedule a meeting with parents/guardians to discuss a plan for resources and support for the student. Students committing a second offense will be removed from any sport or extracurricular activity in season for the rest of that activity. If this offense falls between two seasons or activities they will not be permitted to participate in the next season or activity.

Third Offense: Five (5) days of in-school suspension Student can not participate in any extracurricular events during the five day suspension period. At this point, the administration will schedule a meeting with parents/guardians to discuss a plan for resources and support for the student. Students committing a third offense will not be allowed to participate in any extracurricular activities for the remainder of the school year.

IF A STUDENT IS CAUGHT VAPING THC Products or consuming alcohol or in possession of alcohol or drugs on school grounds, it will be treated as possession of alcohol or narcotics, which is an automatic ten (10) day suspension, a combination of in and out of school to be determined by the administration. If a student is involved in an extracurricular activity they will be automatically removed from that activity for the remainder of it. If a second offense with THC/alcohol occurs, the student will be removed from all extracurricular activities for the remainder of the school year. **Any student vaping a THC product or in possession of alcohol on school grounds will also result in the notification of the state police. The police will handle all matters at this point.**

Images - An identifiable image, photo, or video which implicates a student to have been in possession of alcohol or an illegal substance, or portrays actual use, **may be considered** as one piece of evidence to confirm a violation of the Substance Abuse section of the Athletic Handbook. It is known that the images can be altered, not accurately portray a complete picture of events, and further, that establishing a timeframe of when the image originated can be difficult to determine. Because of this reality, caution and discretion must be used when images are considered evidence. However, students must also understand how images can be used to implicate them in breaking the code of conduct and take every precaution not to place themselves in such a situation. Any incident involving images will be investigated and handled by the athletic director and administrators on a case by case basis.

HAZING/BULLYING STATEMENT

1. Definition: Hazing is defined as "any activity that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers a

person's physical or emotional health for the purpose of initiation or membership in or affiliation with any organization, regardless of the person's willingness to participate."

2. Hazing in any form is not tolerated at Wheeler High School. Consequences may include suspension or expulsion from the team, as well as other consequences in accordance with regular school policy as determined by the athletic director and administrators.

3. Board Policy #5131.911 defines bullying as any overt acts by a student or group of students directed against another student with the intent to ridicule, harass, humiliate, or intimidate the other student while on school grounds, on a school bus, or at a school-sponsored activity, which acts are committed more than once against any student during the school year. Overt acts which occur off-campus (and not at a school sponsored activity) may also constitute bullying if it is determined that they have a direct and negative impact on a student's academic performance or safety in school.

ATTENDANCE

1. **School Attendance:** A student must be in school for at least half of the school day in order to be eligible for practice or participation in a game on any given full or half-day. Extenuating circumstances will be reviewed by the school administration including medical appointments, funerals, and license tests. If a student attends less than half a school day, he/she will not be permitted at the next practice. A student may not play in a game if they attended less than two blocks of school (or half of a school day). If activities fall on a weekend, the student must attend half of the school day on the Friday before. The coaching staff should check with the Athletic Director's office or the main office concerning a student's attendance, as soon as possible, after the close of school.

2. **Team Attendance:** A student athlete must participate in ten (10) practice days prior to a game to be eligible for athletic contests. Scrimmages are considered practice, but games are not included. Academically ineligible students may participate in practices but not games while they are deemed ineligible.

3. **Students will attend all practices and games,** as well as team meetings unless excused for appropriate reasons.

4. **If school is closed** for inclement weather or other emergency, there will be no practices or games.

5. **Mental Health Wellness Days:** Mental Health Wellness Days are considered a school day during which a student attends to their emotional and psychological well-being in lieu of attending school. **If a student takes a mental health day, they may not participate in any after school-sponsored and/or evening events on the day they took the mental health day.**

SUSPENSION

Student-athletes are expected to treat other members of the school community with proper respect and to take pride in maintaining the quality of the facilities and equipment available to them.

1. **School Suspension:** A student on out-of-school or in-school suspension cannot attend practices, games, or ride the team bus. A student will have no official contact with the team during the suspension period. If a student-athlete is suspended from school prior to a school vacation and the suspension continues after the vacation, he/she will not be allowed to participate for the duration of the suspension that includes the vacation period. If a student is on in-school suspension, they will be excluded from playing in any athletic contest on that day.

2. **Athletic Suspension:** An "athletic suspension" shall be defined as removal from further participation in a particular athletic program for a period of time not to exceed the duration of the playing season as stated in Board Policy #5114.2 (a). An "Emergency" shall be defined as a situation under which the continued presence of the student in the playing arena or school imposes such a danger to persons or property or such a disruption to the activity involved that a hearing may be delayed until a time as soon after the exclusion of such student as possible.

Because participation in interscholastic athletic programs is a special privilege distinct from basic academics, a student may be subjected to an athletic suspension for violation of any of the following standards of conduct as well as for violations of standards cited under Board Policy #5114 and #5114.2.

- a. Academic requirements –
 - a. Middle school students need to maintain passing grades in order to remain eligible and compete on their teams.
 - b. Grades will be checked on a bi-weekly basis, and if a student is failing any classes, he/she will be given a probationary period of two weeks to bring up their grades so that they are passing. During this period the student will be able to practice with their team but not compete in games.
- b. Substance Abuse – Students who have violated the Wheeler Substance Abuse Policy will be suspended from athletics for either a temporary period or the entire season. To determine if a violation has occurred a full and complete investigation will be conducted by the administration.
- d. Student Behavior – All athletes shall conduct themselves as good school and community citizens. Unsatisfactory behavior may result in complete or partial suspension from the team. Student athletes involved in any criminal activity will immediately be suspended from that team for the entire season.
- e. Team Conduct – All team members must show respect to their opponents, officials, coaches and spectators. A failure to follow the team conduct policy may result in complete or partial suspension from the team.

3. Procedure for Athletic Suspension:

The administration shall have the authority to invoke an athletic suspension for a period up to the duration of the playing season for one or more of the reasons stated in Board Policy #5114 or #5114.2. The administration shall have the authority to immediately suspend any athlete when an “Emergency” exists as that term is defined above. Those students suspended in accordance with the Substance Abuse policy may be required to undertake a substance abuse prevention and intervention educational program.

- a. Except in the case of an “Emergency” as defined above, a student shall be given the opportunity to meet with the administration and to deny the stated charges prior to the effectuation of any period of athletic suspension. If, at such a meeting the student denies the stated charges, he/she may at that time present his/her version of the incidents(s) upon which the proposed athletic suspension is based. The administration shall then determine whether or not the athletic suspension is warranted. In determining the length of the athletic suspension, unless the suspension is for substance abuse, the administration may receive and consider evidence of past academic or disciplinary problems which have led to removal from a classroom, in- school suspension, athletic suspension or expulsion.
- b. In the case of suspension, the administration shall notify the Superintendent of Schools within twenty-four of the suspension as to the name of the student who has been suspended and the reason therefore.
- d. All rules and regulations regarding the athletic policies are under the jurisdiction of the Athletic Director and administration. If a student-athlete or parent makes a rules appeal, a meeting will be scheduled with the Principal and Athletic Director to discuss all issues.

4. Suspension from Team:

An athletic director may discipline any athlete whom he/she considers disruptive or harmful to team welfare or morale, who is a poor school representative or who caused vandalism while under the coach's direct supervision. This suspension can occur only after the coach notifies the Athletic Director immediately, when the situation occurs and together, with administration, the incident will be investigated to determine the end consequence to the student athlete if warranted.