



Wheeler High School

Athletic Handbook

2026-2027

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ATHLETIC PROGRAM PURPOSE, PHILOSOPHY, & GOALS

WHEELER HIGH 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.

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. 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. Practices most likely will be held during school vacations.
- Follow all C.I.A.C rules and regulations
- Follow all rules and regulations in 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 HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

FALL	WINTER	SPRING
Girls Cross Country Boys Cross Country Girls Soccer Boys Soccer Volleyball Football (co-op Griswold) Girls Swim (co-op Fitch)	Girls Basketball Boys Basketball Cheer Indoor Track Gymnastics (co-op Stonington) Wrestling (co-op Griswold) Boys Hockey (co-op) Girls Hockey (co-op) Boys Swim (co-op Fitch)	Softball Baseball Girls Lacrosse Golf Outdoor Track Boys Lacrosse (co-op St. Bernard) Girls Tennis (co-op St. Bernard) Boys Tennis (co-op St. Bernard)

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 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.

- a. Acknowledgement that he/she understands that participation in the athletic program may create risk of injury normally associated with vigorous physical activity.
- b. 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 High 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

These requirements meet the eligibility requirements established by the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference and pertain to grades 9-12:

1. The student must have been in membership in a secondary school for at least twelve weeks prior to the time of participation.
2. The student shall not have reached his/her twentieth (20th) birthday. A student-athlete will not be allowed to start a season or compete during a season in which his/her twentieth (20) birthday falls.
3. The student must not have been in grades 10, 11, and 12 for more than a total of six semesters (half years).
4. The student must have earned at least four credits in the year immediately preceding the one in which he/she is competing, and must be carrying five credits in the year in which he/she is competing.
5. Eligibility for the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th quarters is based upon the previous quarter's grades.
6. Students who fail more than one one-credit course on the quarterly report cards will automatically be considered ineligible until the next quarter.
7. The student must not be using his/her athletic skills for financial gain.
8. The eligibility of transfer students will be determined on a case-by-case basis following provisions of the C.I.A.C. transfer rule.

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 Online Team Sport Registration (Family ID)

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

EARNING A VARSITY LETTER

In order to be eligible to earn a varsity letter, student-athletes must play in a minimum of one-half of the varsity contests or meet the sport specific requirement which is determined by the head coach and approved by the athletic director. Students removed from a team for disciplinary reasons, will not earn their varsity level in that sport.

AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

All practices will start promptly after school. For those practices that are scheduled later in the afternoon, or early evening, students must make appropriate plans to leave school and then return for practice. Students are not allowed to loiter or conjugate without supervision.

Students may:

- a. Go home and return for practice
- b. Arrange to stay after school with a teacher for extra help
- c. Walk to the Wheeler Library to do homework

INJURIES

Injuries may occur in any athletic contest and should be expected. The student-athlete can help to minimize the extent of injuries and enhance recovery by adhering to the following:

1. Come to the first practice physically prepared. Preseason strength and flexibility conditioning is extremely important in preventing injuries. Coaches will provide student athletes with programs that will best prepare them for the season.
2. Take care of yourself. The proper amount of rest and a good diet will help prevent injuries.
3. All injuries must be reported to the coach who will then complete an injury report, which is turned into the school nurse.
4. A player's physical condition and health takes priority when there is a choice between physical injury and further participation in an athletic contest.
5. 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. Students may only drive to an away contest with prior approval from the athletic director and administration. 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.
 4. Students are allowed to drive alone and may not drive anyone else to the following areas for practice or matches without the permission of the school administration.
 - a. Stonington Country Club (Golf)
 - b. St. Bernard's High School (Boys Lacrosse/Tennis)
 - c. Griswold High School (Football & Wrestling)
 - d. Fitch (Swimming)
 - e. Hockey rinks

SUMMER/OUT OF SEASON ACTIVITIES

The CIAC passed a new regulation in the summer of 2024 that allows for coaches to coach their teams/athletes out of season and in the summer according to the following guidelines:

- a. May begin the Monday following the designated spring state championship weekend and concludes no later than the second Saturday in August
- b. Coaching is restricted to no more than 2 days per week per sport.
- c. Each day may not exceed 2 total hours of practice time per day OR the amount of time needed to complete an official single game/contest
- d. The summer activities cannot be mandatory for the student-athletes

CO-OPERATIVE TEAMS - CIAC RULES

When a CIAC member school does not have a sufficient number of participants to offer a sports program they may merge with any number of other CIAC member schools who also do not have a sufficient number of participants PROVIDED no one school is above the maximum determined limit required to field a team OR if the total number of participants from all the schools involved is more than double the maximum determined limit to field a team.

This chart shows the maximum determined limit for each sport. A school should NOT APPLY for a co-op team if their current projected numbers are over the limit:

FALL SPORTS	9-12	10-12	WINTER SPORTS	9-12	10-12	SPRING SPORTS	9-12	10-12
Cross Country	5	4	Basketball	8	6	Baseball	14	10
Field Hockey	16	11	Gymnastics	3	2	Golf	4	3
Football	32	25	Ice Hockey	15	10	Lacrosse	16	11
Soccer	16	11	B Swim	14	10	Outdoor Track	14	10
G Swim	14	10	Indoor Track	10	7	Softball	14	10
Volleyball	10	7	Wrestling	13	9	Tennis	7	5
						B Volleyball	10	7

1. Co-op teams must agree to a no-cut policy.
2. Co-op teams may not be formed for financial reasons.
3. Approval of a co-op team can be for one or two years and is renewable if the numbers do not exceed the maximum determined limit.
4. A school whose numbers exceed the maximum determined limit will be placed in a phase out for either one or two years. Should the numbers drop during the phase out period the schools are eligible to re-apply to restore their co-op status.
5. Schools who have completed the phase out period and are still over the maximum determined limit but wish to remain together for another year can apply for "opt-out" status and will remove themselves from the CIAC state tournament. This must be supported by every opponent on the schedule.

WHEELER CO-OP POLICIES

1. The host institution for the co-op assumes the responsibility for the following:
 - a. Hiring and evaluating the coaching staff
 - b. Securing and paying for officials for all home contests
 - c. Providing transportation to and from all away contests (unless communicated to athletes and families)
 - d. Providing uniforms and necessary equipment to all athletes
 - e. Providing a facility for both practices and home contests
 - f. Host a post-season celebration and distribute awards and participation certificates
2. Wheeler will provide transportation to practices each day if the total number of athletes is greater than four.

WHEELER HIGH SCHOOL SCHOOL ATHLETIC POLICIES

ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES/VAPING/ALCOHOL

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 (two out of four blocks or four out of eight blocks) 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 these required two blocks, 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. 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. Physical Education Classes: If a student is excused for physical or medical reasons from physical education, the student cannot participate in sports for the same length of time.
3. Team Attendance: PER CIAC, 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.
4. Students will attend all practices and games, as well as team meetings unless excused for appropriate reasons.
5. Players are not allowed to participate in athletic contests or practices during the season without a coach. In accordance with CIAC policy, so-called "Captain's Practices" are in no way sanctioned, encouraged, or condoned.
6. If school is closed for inclement weather or other emergency, there will be no practices or games.
7. 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. Once the student completes the school suspension, the student will not be allowed to participate in games for the same number of days they were suspended from school but may participate in practice.
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. All CIAC eligibility rules will be strictly adhered to and enforced during the season.
- b. Academic requirements – Students must have earned at least four credits (or passed at least four courses) in the year immediately preceding the one in which he/she is competing Eligibility for the 2nd, 3rd, and/ or 4th quarter(s) is based upon the previous quarter's grades. Students must pass a minimum of four (4) units and students that fail more than one course will automatically be considered ineligible.
- c. 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:

The 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 consequence to the student athlete if warranted.