



2024-2025
Athletic Handbook

Aberdeen Christian School

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Introduction

The purpose of the Activities Handbook is to standardize structure, implement vision, and establish boundaries for the operation of athletics under the umbrella of the Aberdeen Christian School (ACS).

The challenge is for the athletics to meet, as effectively as possible, the needs and interests of all its students. These programs are designed to enrich the educational experience and total development of each student.

1. Athletic teams are formed at various levels that are officially sanctioned by the SDHSAA. These include girls' and boys' cross country, girls' tennis (coop with Roncalli) girls' volleyball, boys football (coop with Roncalli), girls' and boys' basketball, girls and boys' track/field, boys' golf, and girls' golf (coop with Roncalli).

Through organized practices and interscholastic competition, each team will offer participants the opportunity to develop physical, social, and mental skills as outlined by the specific athletic objectives of each team. An equally important goal is to see each student grow in their faith as a result of being a part of the faith-based athletic programs here at ACS. Each team has a regularly scheduled season featuring competition against other schools, which culminates with the opportunity to participate in District and State competitions. These contests are highly competitive and allow students the opportunity to grow in their level of skill and development.

Philosophy/Objective

Our philosophy of athletics stems directly from our philosophy of education. The prime objective of this philosophy is to help students become conformed to the image of Jesus Christ and to "develop the spiritual part of each athlete so that the Holy Spirit is in control and directing his/her mind and body." (*Romans 8:29, 1 Thessalonians 5:23*)

The vision that drives all our activities is "to train the next generation of spiritually alive servant leaders who will be known for their integrity and steadfastness of faith." We also want our students to become a unifying influence in the community as they reflect the love, character, and person of Christ.

The Athletic Departments strive to be consistent with the mission of ACS by providing Christ-centered athletic instruction which helps students strive for excellence in all they do. In addition, we work to teach students to become responsible citizens who embrace a distinctly Christian worldview (i.e. equipping students to glorify God).

Athletics provide tremendous opportunities to teach, learn and reinforce critical educational objectives, like those used in academic subjects (math, science, social studies, etc.). Athletics can uniquely focus on critical objectives such as the following:

1. Identify and accept your role in building and sustaining a highly successful team. This is characterized by sustained hard work, deep caring and support for all team members, humility in actions, and sincere respect for other people (e.g. opponents, fans and officials during athletic contests).
2. Learn how to successfully handle, and overcome, adversity. Develop a mindset of not blaming others for these times but being able to focus on ways to overcome them in the future. Another aspect of this is to create an intense drive to persistently battle when things look bleak.
3. Continually work on how to deal with, and maintain, hard earned success in a humble and respectful manner.

An Athletic program that clearly reflects the above objectives can be used as a tremendous recruitment tool to draw other potential students to ACS and retain current students already at ACS. Students can, and should, be used as a means to reach the spiritually lost and to benefit the community around us. (*Proverbs 4:10-13, 11:30, 22:6*). Also, if we can develop and sustain a strong, and obvious, culture that clearly reflects all the above, we can consider that each team has learned how to truly win and will naturally find tremendous success by any definition. This will then clearly demonstrate that ACS is truly committed to building victorious teams that “run so as to win the prize.” (*1 Corinthians 9:24*).

Additionally, educational objectives of any consequence improve human relations. When the outcome of participation in an activity is known, the performance can be understood and evaluated, with needed corrections made. Considering Athletics in the light of these criteria, the following principles are also recognized:

1. Participation in sports provides experiences through which pupils learn social values. Athletics serve to teach students to act favorably in large groups. Knowledge of the game, interpretation of rules, courtesy, school morale, respect for property and many other values are stressed as desirable social outcomes.
2. Athletic activities are conducted and regulated as other enterprises in society. The program operates within the rules of the game. Few activities like these offer the opportunity for parents, students and other citizens of the community to mingle together with a common bond.
3. Athletic competition provides situations requiring skilled performance, respect for opponents, and acceptance of results determined by officials, and playing the game according to rules. Experiences related to planning, organizing, adjusting, and completion of task occur continually and are immediate in effect.

Eligibility/Attendance/Behavior Standard

Students are required to attend at least a 1/2 day of school on the day of a competition to be eligible to compete that day. Students are also required to be in school the morning after a competition.

ACS has four quarters throughout the year, each approximately 9 weeks in length. Grade checks are completed every two weeks, at midterm, and at the end of the quarter. Grade, behavior, and attendance expectations must be met at each grade check period for an athlete to be eligible to compete. Students who are ineligible will remain ineligible until the next grade check.

1. Any student in grades 6-12 with a failing grade in any subject will be ineligible to participate in athletic activities.
2. Students who become academically ineligible can participate in practices but not in competitions. Students may attend home games/performance but will not be allowed to travel until eligibility is reinstated.
3. In order to be reinstated to a team, a player must show evidence of improvement. This means meeting the above stated academic standards at the next grade check in the subjects which resulted in he/she becoming ineligible.
- 4.

The Athletic Director and administration also reserve the right to enforce “behavioral ineligibility” based on other disciplinary situations. For example, a student who is placed on either an In-School Suspension (ISS) or an Out-of-School Suspension (OSS) will not be able to practice, or play in contests/performance, until the suspension is over.

All athletes must have the following forms completed and on file in the school office before participating in the first practice of the season:

1. Current SDHSAA Physical Examination Form
 - a. All students participating in athletics must have a record of a current physical on file in the school office. Copies of the physicals will be given to each coach in case of an injury or medical emergency. All athletes must be examined by a certified physician and have a copy

of the doctor's permission for them to participate turned in to ACS. Physical examinations are good for a period of three years.

2. Current SDHSAA Interim Pre-Participation Health History Form
 - a. These forms are required each year
3. Student Participation Permission Form
4. Emergency Medical Authorization Form
5. Proof of Health/Accident Insurance

Additionally, under the rules of the South Dakota High School Activities Association, athletics are NOT ELIGIBLE if they have:

1. Reached their 20th birthday
2. Attended more than 4 first and 4 second semesters in grades 9-12
3. Not passed 20 hours per week of high school work in the previous semester
4. Not enrolled in or attended a minimum of 20 hours of class per week
5. Graduated from a 4-year high school or an equivalent institution
6. Not enrolled by the 16th day of the current semester
7. Been absent for 10 consecutive school days if not caused by illness or emergency
8. Transferred without open enrolled completed or a parental resident change
9. Not provided all physical, history, or permission slips to the school
10. Ever participated in an athletic contest under an assumed name
11. Ever violated their amateur status
12. Competed as an individual or member of another team during their regular high school season

Under the rules of eligibility for interscholastic competition set forth by the SDHSAA, no athlete can accept any gift or award that has a value of more the \$75.

Homeschool Students

1. ACS is open to homeschool or private school students that would like to participate in our sports programs.
 - a. Students enrolled in other ADHSAA member schools must have a waiver in place with the SDHSAA to participate in activities at ACS or another member school.
 - b. All requirements are the same as for part-time and full-time students.
 - c. There is an activity participation fee of \$100 per student/per sport (every year). Athletes will not be eligible to participate in competitions or practices until the fee has been paid.
2. Upon a homeschooled athlete entering the 9th grade, ACS will need:
 - a. A certificate of exemption copy
 - b. The Open Enrollment Form 1A paperwork
 - i. This form can be found by going to the SDHSAA website and clicking the RORMS tab-Athletics tab-Open Enrollment
 - ii. Fill out sections I, II, III and then sign
 - iii. In the sections which ask for "High School Previously Attended," please put Aberdeen School District 6-1 if you received your homeschool certificate of exemption through the Aberdeen school district.
 - iv. If you received yours from Warner (for example) you would need to Warner School District.
 - v. The school which you are "transferring" to is Aberdeen Christian.

Athletic Team Structure

Participation in athletics at ACS is open to every student but is conditional upon meeting the criteria of academics, character, and athletic skill necessary to compete. While all teams are expected to play hard in the true spirit of competition, there is a different focus at each level of play:

1. **Middle School Teams (Grades 6-8)**. The student athlete is provided a learning experience and the opportunity for basic individual skill development. Team concepts of participation are introduced. The athletic philosophy of ACS at this level is three-fold:
 - a. First, to offer a program in which interested students can try-out and work toward improving their athletic skills
 - b. Second, to provide a setting which encourages team members to use their skill in competition with others; and
 - c. Third, to prepare the athletes to compete at the next level by implementing disciplined foundational instruction.
2. **Junior Varsity Teams (Grades 9 -12)**. The student focus is on improving in skill development while learning team concepts that are more complex. Practices will be organized so that each squad member is an active participant during practices and develops in skill and understanding of team strategies and physical conditioning. All team members will experience learning opportunities in self-discipline, emotional control, and sportsmanship.
3. **Varsity Teams (Grades 9 – 12)**. The athletic philosophy of ACS at the High School level is two-fold:
 - a. First, to offer a program in which interested students can try-out and work toward improving their skills; and
 - b. Secondly, to provide a setting which encourages team members to use their skills in competition with others. The athlete is advanced in skill and physical development. Emphasis is placed upon individual and team potential. The athlete’s playing time is determined by how it will best serve the team.

The SD Athletic Association rules allow 7th and 8th graders to compete on the varsity and junior varsity levels at the discretion of the coach and school administration. **However, at ACS, middle school and high school are considered separate programs in both volleyball and basketball. If there is a need to move a middle school student up to the JV or Varsity team (warranted by lack of numbers) the coach must have it approved by the Athletic Director, Principal, and Head Administrator, prior to approaching the athlete or parents.**

The head coach is responsible for developing ALL participating students based on specific criteria in two categories—personal growth in Christian character (i.e. meeting the ACS mission objectives), and enhancement of individual athletic skills. Frequent communication on how these criteria are being met will enable each student to clearly understand what they need to focus on in order to improve. The coaching staff is also responsible for evaluating and communicating each student’s evolving role on the team.

It must also be understood that NO student is entitled to a position, role, or participation level, based on past team involvement or the academic grade they are in. For example, this means there are no guarantees regarding playing time, on either the junior varsity or varsity teams. The head coach is the sole judge on who should start, and how much playing time each player should receive, based on their personal and athletic development.

Conduct

1. **Students:**
Students must show the proper respect for authority. A strong, capable opponent will bring out the best in us and show us our areas of weakness. Officials and opponents must be treated with the same respect and dignity that we want to receive. Humility is the mark of greatness (*Proverbs 11.2, 12.1*). Expect that some calls will not go our way. These situations can become defining moments for

our character development. We must stay cool and focus on the bigger picture, not letting circumstances distract us from our ultimate goal (*1 Corinthians 9:25*). Participants in athletic programs must die to self, giving up individual rights to gain team victories (*Philippians 2:5-8*).

Athletes must demonstrate sportsmanship and an attitude of cooperation with coaches and teammates. An athlete who has a grievance with the coach, or another player should attempt to resolve the problem with that individual first, in private, in accordance with Biblical principle. Matters of disagreement and dispute should be kept confidential between the individuals involved. If the situation remains unresolved, the Athletic Director will be informed.

2. Parents/Family Members:

Parents and family members must also demonstrate the proper respect for authority to provide a model for their students. For example, we ask that parents NOT yell at referees, students, or coaches during a competition. By yelling at these individuals, it appears we are looking for someone to blame for something gone wrong. Instead, focus on encouraging the students to overcome the situation, move forward, and focus on doing well.

3. Coaches:

Coaches are employees of ACS. Therefore, all school policy and standards of student behavior set forth by the administration will be carried out by the coaches at practices, games, and on road trips. Disciplinary actions for misconduct will be applied. Serious offenses will be brought to the attention of the administration.

4. Athletes and coaches at ACS are to be exemplary in their display of sportsmanship during games and practices.

- a. Team members must congratulate opponents after a game with a customary handshake and kind word.
- b. Physical and/or verbal abuse aimed at an opponent, official, coach or teammate will result in immediate discipline by the coach, and possibly, the administration.
- c. Taunting and/or inappropriate language directed toward an opponent or teammate is not "part of the game" and is inconsistent with the mission of ACS.
- d. An athlete ejected from a contest is automatically suspended for the next game but may sit on the bench. All ejections are to be reported to the Athletic Director no later than the day after the ejection takes place.

Clothing/Equipment/Facilities

1. Appropriate apparel, as outlined in the Student Handbook, should be worn for all road trips, before and after games. Dress code policy applies unless teams go to contests in uniform.
2. Uniforms are the property of ACS. The school and Boost Club provide the funds for purchasing uniforms. The coach has the responsibility for distributing and collecting uniforms.
 - a. Athletes are responsible for the care of the uniform and should follow the manufacturer's instructions for cleaning after each use.
 - b. An athlete who loses a uniform must pay the replacement cost for that uniform.
 - c. Uniforms which show more than normal wear must be replaced and paid for by the student.
 - d. Uniforms are not to be altered or tailored by the athlete.
 - e. Athletes are to wear the complete uniform provided by the school at games and games only.
 - f. Uniforms will not be worn to school, practice, or used for other recreational activities.
 - g. Athletes are to be in complete uniform for the team picture, which are taken each season.
 - h. All uniforms are to be cleaned, returned to the coach, and accounted for within one week of the final competition of the season.
3. All equipment used by athletic teams at ACS is the property of the school.
 - a. At the beginning of each season, the coach will be given an inventory of the equipment checked out to him/her.
 - b. The care of the equipment is the responsibility of the coach.
 - c. After each practice and game, a careful check will be made to ensure all equipment is accounted for.

- d. No equipment will be checked out to students for personal or home use.
 - e. At the end of the season, all equipment will be returned within one week of the final competition.
4. Extreme care and caution should be taken in the use of facilities.
- a. Coaches will enlist the help of athletes to ensure that every field and court is left in the condition in which it was found.
 - b. All cups, bottles, and other trash must be picked up.
 - c. Any student defacing or destroying property will be disciplined according to school policy.
 - d. Activities by teams should be limited to the area specifically designated for the team's use. All other areas are off limits.

Scheduling/Transportation

1. No contest under the auspices of SDHSAA can be staged on Sunday.
2. All school-sponsored practices will end by 6:00 pm on Wednesday evenings.
3. In the event any scheduled athletic event must be canceled or postponed, the athletic office will inform the news media in the community as soon as possible.
4. Transportation:
 - a. Transportation to all home games is the responsibility of the parents/students.
 - b. ACS arranges transportation via parents and coaches for teams to all out-of-town games.
 - c. Students must travel with the team. There are two exceptions upon notification of the coach:
 - i. A student may ride home with his/her parents after the game once the coach is notified.
 - ii. A student may return with another parent provided verbal or written permission has been granted by his/her parents and given to the coach before the team leaves for the competition.
 - iii. Parents may NOT give permission for a player to ride with another student.
 - d. The coach will monitor:
 - i. The music played during the trip to a competition.
 - ii. Seat belt usage, if available, to ensure they are always used by students.
 - iii. That drivers do not exceed the speed limit by more than 5 miles per hour.

Coach Communication with Teachers & Staff

Student Athletes are responsible to their teachers, first and foremost. Coaches are asked to support the academics of the school as the student's highest priority. If student athletes are going to be gone for an event, it is their responsibility to communicate with their teachers ahead of time, and complete assignments ahead of time, if possible.

Coaches are also expected to communicate with teachers, by sending event dates at least 1-2 weeks ahead of time, along with rosters of students who will be attending each event. This will allow teachers time to plan accordingly. The Administrative Assistant in the front office is able and willing to forward messages from coaches to teachers.

Coach Communication with Students (and vice versa)

There is a required expectation that each coach will provide recurring feedback/mentoring to his/her players. Feedback will be accomplished at each coach's discretion and will be monitored each season by the athletic director.

If a student has questions or concerns regarding this feedback, or any other aspect of the team, we ask that they talk to the coach first before there is any parental involvement. Learning how to be their own advocate is a critical life skill that needs to be developed. If there is still confusion or concern after this discussion is completed, then the student may bring his/her parents into a future discussion with the coach.

Appropriate Concerns to Discuss with Coaches/Athletic Director

1. How your child is treated – Physically/Mentally
2. Concerns about your child's behavior
3. What does my child have to do to better his or her-self and the team?
4. What role does my child play on this team and why?
5. What can we, as parents, do to help our child fulfill his/her expectations?

Off-limit topics when it comes to parent and coach discussions

1. Coaching Strategies – the coaches decide how the team will play.
2. Other Athletes – it's unprofessional to discuss other students' talents.
3. Playing time

If parents have questions/concerns in these areas, the Athletic Director is their contact point. If you feel there is a need to have an outlet to discuss these topics, please contact the Athletic Director, NOT the coach. The AD will approach the coach with concerns regarding these areas, that he/she deems necessary and appropriate. Concerns regarding boys' basketball that would typically go to the AD, shall go to Administrator.

Parents are asked to practice the 24 Hour Rule which states: Parents and coaches both need to take at least 24 hours to "cool down" before discussing anything after a game. When parents feel their concerns have not been adequately addressed, a face-to-face meeting with the athletic director and administration may be requested.

Social Media

Coaches must not socialize with student athletes and/or their families on social media. However, a digital announcement board or app, where all students and parents are included, is useful and acceptable.

Athletic teams will NOT have their own social media pages. All social media activity will be conducted through the ACS Facebook page. Care must be taken to avoid including pictures of students whose parents have indicated they do not want social media exposure for their children. The Administration, or designees, following ACS Board policies, will determine the appropriateness of any Facebook update.

Students making/posting inappropriate comments about, or pictures of, any ACS student or staff on their personal social media accounts may be subject to discipline that affects that student's participation on a team.

Family Volunteers for Team Support

Each family that has a student on a team is expected to support at least four (4) home contests/games during the season. This could include things such as selling tickets, working in the concession stand, driving school buses (CDL required)/vans to away games, etc. Signing up will be conducted on Sign-Up Genius.

For volleyball and basketball home games, regardless of location, team parents will be put on a rotation to help with cleanup after games. This does not count as one of the 4 support games mentioned above.