

A SUMMARY OF ATHLETIC POLICY AT ROCKPORT HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL
Initial approval: 7/6/94 Rockport School Committee
Revised 5/30/07

Philosophy of Athletics

Competing in interscholastic athletics is a privilege afforded those individuals with the requisite skills, character, and desire. Winning is important, but the high-powered win-at-all-cost mind set does not exist here. However, we do feel it is extremely important that our student-athletes have the opportunity to win in order that they may see the tangible results of their hard work. Making commitments and sacrifices to attain goals is basic to any type of competition. Winning is a much desired by-product and is reflective of the effort put forth. Thus the basic thrust of the program is to provide our student-athletes with the opportunity to achieve overall growth as they compete, learn and strive to win.

We believe that the athletic program is an extension of the educational process in the Rockport Public Schools. It should not be considered only in terms of the inherent physical value typically associated with sport. Aside from the promotion of physical, social, emotional growth, and appreciation for the diversity (very much our responsibility as a public school system), there clearly exists a link between achievement in the classroom and on the athletic fields. Our coaches consistently reinforce to their teams ideals critical to good study habits and academic achievement through discipline, goal setting and the establishment of high standards. Through competition in interscholastic athletics, our students have the unique opportunity to represent themselves, their school and their community. For them, the opportunities we provide will help build the basic foundation upon which a positive value system will be created. These athletic experiences will, in all probability, have a profound effect upon the direction of a student's life.

I. ELIGIBILITY: As a MIAA member school, Rockport High School will adhere to all policies of that organization, as well as those of the Cape Ann League and RHS. There are a few situations whereby RHS policy will supercede the MIAA. In order to be eligible to participate in practices, scrimmages, matches and/or games, you must be in conformity with the following requirements:

A. ACADEMIC STANDING: Note: This is your number one priority. Students experiencing difficulty in class will always, with proper notification, be excused for extra help, make-ups, etc.

You must maintain passing marks in at least four major subjects. Incomplete grades may not be counted toward eligibility.

a. Students who are academically ineligible will be permitted to practice with a team when and if a mid-term report issued meets the standard defined above. Reinstatement may come at the earliest when report cards for the next term are issued. Academic suspension will not jeopardize any Rockport awards, including varsity letters. However, Cape Ann League awards will be presented at the discretion of the CAL coaches.

B. PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS/MEDICAL CLEARANCE:

Prior to participation in any practice, scrimmage, or game, you must have a **current (within the last 13 months)** physical examination by a qualified medical practitioner and a legal copy of such medical review must be in the hands of the RHS Athletic Department. *Students who meet this criteria at the start of the season will remain eligible for that season.* A student in violation shall be suspended for the number of contests in which he/she participated without a proper physical.

C. PARTICIPATION PAPERWORK:

1. Prior to participation in any practice, scrimmage, or game, you must submit to the RHS Athletic Department a signed Student Participation Form. This Form represents signed acknowledgement of your understanding of all relevant policies and agreement to adhere to those policies, Insurance information(all athletes must have a valid, in-force family or individual insurance policy in order to participate), a parental consent to participate, and finally the Authorization for Treatment agreement.

D. Any ATHLETIC USER FEES, if approved by the School Committee, must be paid in full prior to participation in any practice or game. User fee waiver request forms for families that qualify may be obtained in the Superintendent's office.

E. ATTENDANCE

1. A student must attend school and be on time **or be present no later than 7:45** the day of a game or practice in order to participate, unless he/she has unusual circumstances acknowledged by the Principal or Athletic Director. **Any tardiness must be accompanied by a valid note signed by a parent to be considered for the principal's review. NOTE: Students must be in school and on time on the day following an evening event or activity or their on-going participation in that activity may be denied.**
2. All hockey players - if you attend an early morning practice, you **MUST** report to school that day. Failure to do so will result in non-participation on the following day (game or practice).
3. A student with a legitimate dismissal note from his/her parents may participate on that particular day. However, the student may not participate if dismissed for illness. A legitimate dismissal example would be a professional appointment or event approved in advance by the Principal. A student who has him/herself dismissed for an unacceptable reason shall be ineligible to participate on that particular day.
4. Students who have been suspended from school/classes will not be permitted to participate in any games or practices for the duration of the suspension. This policy includes both in and out of school suspensions. All suspensions are in effect from 7:35am on the first day of the suspension until 7:35am on the day the student is reinstated.
5. If a questionable pattern of tardiness and/or early dismissal by a student is observed, the Principal will notify the student and his/her parents that games or practices may be suspended in the future.
6. Students absent on the last day of school before a weekend or vacation day game *may be required* to submit written clearance from a physician before competing on that particular day. An exception would be a school cancellation prior to the weekend or vacation game.
7. Students who have repeated, prolonged visits to the Nurse's Office may jeopardize their playing status on that particular day.

F. OTHER RHS, MIAA, CAL POLICIES AND REGULATIONS:

45. Loyalty to the High School Team: Bona Fide Team Members

A bona fide member of the school team is a student who is consistently present for, and actively participates on, all high school team sessions (e.g. practices, tryouts, competitions). Bona fide members of a school team are precluded from missing a high school practice or competition in order to participate in a non-school athletic activity/event in any other sport recognized by the MIAA. Any student who violates this standard is ineligible for the next two contests or two weeks (whichever is greater) immediately upon confirmation of the violation. See Rule 96 for additional tournament restriction.

TAUNTING

1. Taunting includes any actions or comments by coaches, players, or spectators which are intended to bait, anger, embarrass, ridicule or demean others, whether or not the deeds or words are vulgar or racist. Included in conduct that berates, needles, intimidates or threatens based on race, gender, ethnic origin or background, and conduct that attacks religious beliefs, size, economic status, speech, family, special needs or personal matters.

Examples of taunting include but are not limited to: "trash talk", defined as verbal communication of a personal nature directed by a competitor to an opponent by ridiculing his/her skills, efforts, sexual orientation, or lack of success, which is likely to provoke an altercation or physical response; and physical intimidation outside the spirit of the game, including "in the face" confrontation by one player to another and standing over/straddling a tackled or fallen player.
2. In all sports, officials are to consider taunting a flagrant unsportsmanlike foul that disqualifies the offending bench personnel or contestant from that contest/day of competition. In addition, the offender shall be subject to existing MIAA Expulsion rules. A warning shall be given to both teams by game officials prior to the contest.
3. At all MIAA contest sites and tournament venues, appropriate management may give spectators one warning for taunting. Thereafter, spectators who taunt players, coaches, game officials, or other spectators are subject to ejection.

COMMENT: All MIAA endorsed rulebooks give officials/umpires/judges authority to penalize what is generally considered taunting. The purpose of the MIAA's action is to be more specific in the definition, more emphatic in the penalty of disqualification, and more uniform in the application of the definition and the enforcement from sport to sport.

1. CONDUCT ON AND/OR OFF THE FIELD:

a. In General. School policy is effect at all times -you are expected to always display proper school citizenship and behavior. Athletes are expected to show appropriate behavior on and off the fields,courts, and rinks, including in the locker rooms and buses. Horseplay will not be tolerated. Individual coaches have the flexibility, with Principal and AD, to remove athletes from the team for continuous displays of misconduct or to suspend for an appropriate time period for conduct or acts detrimental to the team, school, or program. Fighting among team players and/or spectators before, during, or after games(either in an offensive or defensive posture) may result in team suspensions and possible school suspensions. Although coaches are responsible for team members from the beginning of practice until dismissal from practice, it is virtually impossible to be with every student every single moment. Athletes are informed of and must comply with sportsmanship, behavioral, and hazing initiatives.

b. Theft/Damage: An athlete will be suspended for the season for stealing and will be held financially responsible for deliberate damage to RHS or an opponent's school property.

c. Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drugs: The use, possession or sale of any type of drug (which includes smoking or chewing tobacco and alcohol) will result in the following in any academic year:

62. Student (and Coach) Eligibility: Chemical Health/Alcohol/Drugs/Tobacco

62.1 The chemical health rule has been extended to be inclusive of the period from the first allowable day of fall practice through the end of the academic year or athletic competition of the year, whichever is greater. A student shall not, regardless of the quantity, use, consume, possess, buy/sell, or give away any beverage containing alcohol; any tobacco product; marijuana; steroids; or any controlled substance. This policy includes products such as "NA or near beer". It is not a violation for a student to be in possession of a legally defined drug specifically prescribed for the student's own use by his/her doctor. This rule represents only a minimum standard upon which schools may develop more stringent requirements.

This MIAA statewide minimum standard is not intended to render "guilt by association", e.g. many student athletes might be present at a party where only a few violate this standard.

If a student in violation of this rule is unable to participate in interscholastic sports due to injury or academics, the penalty will not take effect until that student is able to participate again.

Minimum PENALTIES:

First violation: When the Principal confirms, following an opportunity for the student to be heard, that a violation occurred, the student shall lose eligibility for the next consecutive interscholastic contests totaling 25% of all interscholastic contests in that sport. No exception is permitted for a student who becomes a participant in a treatment program. It is recommended that the student be allowed to remain at practice for the purpose of rehabilitation. All decimal part of an event will be truncated i.e. All fractional part of an event will be dropped when calculating the 25% of the season.

Second and subsequent violations: When the Principal confirms, following an opportunity for the student to be heard, that a violation occurred, the student shall lose eligibility for the next consecutive interscholastic contests totaling 60% of all interscholastic contests in that sport. All decimal part of an event will be truncated i.e. All fractional part of an event will be dropped when calculating the 60% of the season.

If after the second or subsequent violations the student of his/her own violation becomes a participant in an approved chemical dependency program or treatment program, the student may be certified for reinstatement in MIAA activities after a minimum of 40% of events. The director or a counselor of a chemical dependency treatment center must issue such certification. All decimal part of an event will be truncated i.e. All fractional part of an event will be dropped when calculating the 40% of the season.

Penalties shall be cumulative each academic year. If the penalty period is not completed during the season of violation, the penalty shall carry over to the student's next season of actual participation, which may affect the eligibility status of the student during the next academic year.

1st Offense	
# of Events / Season	# of Events / Penalty
1-7	1
8-11	2
12-15	3
16-19	4
20 or over	5
2nd Offense	
# of Events / Season	# of Events / Penalty
1-3	1
4	2
5-6	3
7-8	4
9	5
10-11	6
12-13	7
14	8
15-16	9
17-18	10
19	11
20 or over	12
2nd Offense w/Dependency Program	
# of Events / Season	# of Events / Penalty
1-4	1
5-7	2
8-9	3
10-12	4
13-14	5
15-17	6
18-19	7
20 or over	8

Under Cape Ann League rules, an athlete who serves a chemical health violation suspension during a season is not eligible for All League or All Star status for that season.

If a student-athlete was *present* in a situation that involved the use or distribution of drugs or alcohol and school authorities have reasonable belief that the athlete supported, condoned or was passively complicit in the use or distribution of drugs or alcohol, the actions listed above would be invoked for that student-athlete.

A student-athlete's presence in any circumstance which would reflect poorly on the reputation of Rockport athletes and athletic program may result in the suspension of the athlete from a number of games to be determined by the Athletic Director and the Principal.

Following an initial (preliminary) review with the students involved (and the team if necessary), the coach, teacher, or advisor will report his/her finding to the Athletic Director who will convey them to the Principal. If the circumstances merit further action, the Athletic Director together with the principal will attempt to confirm the use of alcohol/drugs by conducting interviews. At the earliest possible time, parents will be notified of the alleged incident and investigation. To establish the soundest possible decision and in the interest of fairness, students will be questioned to the extent that they can provide first hand factual information.

Throughout all interviews, students will be treated sensitively and openly. In all cases, no administrative action will be taken until parents have been notified and given the opportunity to conference with the Principal and any other school officials involved.

Final administrative action will depend on a preponderance of evidence as weighed by the school personnel involved. All questions and appeals will be directed to the Principal who will have the final disposition in all cases.

In cases where the student - athlete is in the company of other minors who are in possession of or are using alcohol or drugs, and there is a question as to the extent of the student-athlete's involvement, a proper review and investigation by the coaching, athletic, and administrative staffs will take place as outlined in this policy above. If an infraction has become a police matter, the school, in order to insure fairness, will review with the police department the circumstances surrounding the incident. The student(s) involved, depending upon the findings and reasonable conclusions of the Coach, Athletic Director, and Principal, may be disciplined with up to the full suspension. In the case of a Captain, any involvement with alcohol or drugs to any degree in season, out of season, or in the summer will result in the forfeiture of the Captaincy in addition to any discipline as defined above.

2. **CONDUCT ON THE FIELD:** Athletes ejected from a game for fighting or unsportsmanlike behavior will be ineligible to play in the next two league contests, per MIAA policy. If the behavior is repeated, he or she will be ineligible for one calendar year.

3. **ATTENDANCE IN SPORT:** Membership on a team requires a commitment to be at all practices and games whenever possible. There are circumstances and instances, however, when this may not be possible due to family, religious, medical or other school-related commitments. The values of commitment, self-discipline, time management and sacrifice are essential to a team member. Some have said that the true value of athletics comes not from the contest, but in the preparation for it.

The coaches and staff of Rockport High School realize how important the time spent with family is for our students. But, due to scheduling commitments, many of our teams must practice and/or play during scheduled school vacations and/or holidays. The primary reasons for this include scheduling needs, and conditioning/training principles. Each season is limited to a certain period of weeks, and it becomes necessary to compete and practice over vacations in order to safely complete schedules. The weather has a major effect on schedules, particularly in the spring, and using vacation weeks helps to prevent weeks consisting of four or five makeup games. It is important to note that student-athletes must regularly train and practice in order for a team to progress. When students take a week off, they lose valuable conditioning and instruction time. Coaches utilize extra practice time to work on specific areas or with specific athletes. This results in loss of information such as strategies and tactics. It is also possible that a student-athlete may suffer an injury due to lack of conditioning.

As coaches plan practices and prepare game lineups, it is important to know which athletes will be available. For this reason, we do request that prior to the season all athletes communicate intended family vacations to their coach. Parents and athletes should be aware that if they leave the team for a family vacation they obviously run the risk of losing their position. There is no guarantee that the athlete who has left the team for a vacation will continue to play in the exact position that he/she left.

To insure the health and safety of our student-athletes who are returning to a sport after a break, it is necessary for them to have time to regain lost cardiovascular fitness, reflexes and skills of the sport. Therefore, we will adhere to the following guidelines:

- Students will practice with the team immediately upon returning from vacation to prevent injuries.
- Coaches will decide, on an individual basis, how many days of practice are needed before competing (based upon actual number of missed practices/games).
- Rule of thumb: If students are gone four to six days, they should practice for at least three days before competing. If they're gone for three days or less, they should practice for at least two days.

4. **INDIVIDUAL TEAM POLICIES:** The coaching staff will have the flexibility to establish, with administrative approval, reasonable and fair rules for their sport. Prior to the season coaches should provide you with a written statement of their policies regarding such special situations, including the aforementioned conditions. This policy statement should be signed by each student-athlete and his/her parents, if so required by the coach.

5. **CAPTAIN'S PRACTICES :** Rockport High School does not in any way sanction, encourage, or condone "Captain's Practice" in any sport. Students should check with the Athletic Director's office regarding out of season workout guidelines.

II. NOTICE OF ATHLETIC INJURY RISK: Participation in athletics is inherently dangerous. Although we provide a professional staff and quality equipment, injuries can and do take place. All students participate in athletics voluntarily with the permission of their parents. Along with participation, students and their parents accept the inherent risks to which students expose themselves. All athletic injuries must be reported to the coach immediately. Failure to do so may result in the loss of insurance benefits.

III. UNIFORMS: Students are issued uniforms each season as well as other equipment. The student is responsible for any and all equipment issued to her/him, and if said equipment is lost, stolen or damaged beyond ordinary wear and tear, the student will provide proper restitution. Students are not to wear school issued uniforms or practice gear anywhere other than to regular games or practices, or to school as game day dress.

IV. TRANSPORTATION: With the exception of home ice hockey games/practices at the Talbot Rink in Gloucester, home games/practices at off campus sites in Rockport, and cooperative games/practices in Manchester, students shall travel to and from

interscholastic competition on school provided transportation ONLY .Students who have been assigned detention and miss the bus will not compete on that particular day. Students may return from a game or match with a parent only, provided written or oral permission is received. Under no condition will an athlete be allowed to drive him/herself to or from a game without a parent or legal guardian present. A coach (or his/her designee, approved by the superintendent) must be present on the bus, to and from competitions. Students who travel "on own" as described in the aforementioned situations do so to with the understanding that the Rockport Public Schools shall not be held liable for accidents or injury sustained en route.

V. SCHOOL CANCELLATION: In the event of emergency cancellation of school, all home games and practices may be cancelled. There will be the possibility of playing an away game. Contact your team captain(s) or the coach.

VI. AWAY GAMES -TIME OF RETURN: Please inform your parents of the approximate return time of all away games, particularly night contests. If you are unsure, please see the Athletic Director.

VII. AWARDS: Sports awards night will be held at the conclusion of each season (Fall, Winter, and Spring). All athletes and coaches are encouraged to attend. Students who violate the alcohol/drug policy shall not be eligible to receive their varsity letter.

A. Coaches shall have the final discretion in awarding Varsity Letters. In general, letters will be awarded only to those athletes in each varsity sport who play in one half or more of the season's games or matches. Once an athlete officially enters a contest as an active player, a game is counted toward the necessary figure needed to receive a letter. Any senior who has not met the criteria for a letter, but has received a certificate in that same sport as an underclassman, shall receive a letter. A senior out for the team for the first time who did not meet letter qualifications shall receive a certificate. All others shall receive certificates.

B. Section VII.A above notwithstanding, any student who is dismissed from any team for disciplinary reasons will not receive recognition for participating in that sport. The coach, Athletic Director, and Principal reserve the right to deny a student an award when his/her conduct may be considered detrimental to proper school citizenship.

VIII. USE OF FACILITIES: For reasons of liability, student-athletes are not to be in the gymnasium or weight-rooms unsupervised at any time. These are restricted areas; a coach or supervisor must be present at all times.

IX. PLAYING TIME: Athletes are not guaranteed playing time on HS or MS interscholastic teams, even with a user fee. The philosophy of Middle School athletics is as follows: "The focus of the program shall be in the areas of participation skill development, and enjoyment. Our primary goal is to involve as many students as possible; providing them with the opportunity to participate on one of two levels: interscholastic or intramurals. All students in grades 6-8 are encouraged to "tryout" for interscholastic teams in soccer, field hockey, and boys and girls basketball. Consistent with our foundation philosophy that "making commitments and sacrifices in order to attain goals is basic to any type of competition in life," those judged by the coaching staff to possess the requisite skills, character, and desire shall be assigned to the interscholastic team. No student, however, shall be denied the opportunity to participate. Those who do not make the interscholastic team will participate in our intramural program where they will be able to compete and work on fundamental skills on a regular basis."

X. HAZING. In accordance with the laws of the state of Massachusetts, Rockport High School does not condone hazing (as defined by M.G.L., Chapter 269, Sections 17, 18, and 19) in any activity associated with the school, including athletics. Participation in any hazing activity will result in suspension from the team for an indefinite period of time.

XI. SWITCHING TEAMS: Students shall not be allowed to switch from one sport to another after the first official week of practice, regardless of the level.

XII. COOPERATIVE TEAMS: For consistency purposes, students participating on cooperative teams based at Gloucester (Girls Ice Hockey) or Manchester H.S. (Football and Swimming) shall adhere to Gloucester or Manchester school policies, team rules and regulations. The reverse holds true for out of district students playing on our ice hockey team.