

# Great Hearts Western Hills Athletics Handbook



### ***Athletics Mission Statement***

The purpose of athletics at Great Hearts Western Hills is to cultivate the hearts and minds of student athletes through the beauty of competition. Practices, games, and related activities are to develop a community of young men and women committed to moral, intellectual, and physical excellence.

While the school takes pride in fielding successful teams, it does not condone winning at all costs. The school discourages any and all pressures that might lead to neglecting good sportsmanship and good health.

### ***Athletic Handbook Purpose***

The Great Hearts Western Hills Athletics Handbook provides students, families, coaches, and administrators with the policies, guidelines, and expectations for the schools' athletics programs. All students and families must read through the entire Handbook prior to participation in a sport. While the handbook does not give an exhaustive treatment of school policies and expectations, it does provide a framework in which each sports program must operate. Any issues falling outside the bounds of the Handbook will be dealt with by the coaching staff, athletic director, intramural athletic director and school administration as need.

### ***Athletic Program Objectives***

- The athlete learns the value of teamwork, self-discipline, strong work ethic and sacrifice. Contribution to the team is more important than personal goals or individual achievement.
- The athlete learns how to be a competitor while developing self-control, honesty and a spirit of cooperation.
- The athlete learns to be a good winner as well as a gracious loser in defeat. A true athlete is one who is humble in victory as well as takes pride in defeat.
- The athlete learns to appreciate the skills and abilities of his/her opponent.
- The athlete learns an appreciation of playing by given rules.
- The athlete learns the value of physical fitness that leads to a sound body, healthy mind, and lifelong habits.

### ***Athletics***

The athletics program is reserved for students in grades 6 – 10<sup>th</sup>. Great Hearts Western Hills participates in the Texas Charter School Academic & Athletic League (TCSAAL). The academy reserves the right to cancel a sports season due to low participation. For the 2023-2024 school year the following sports will be offered:

#### ***Fall Sports***

Cross Country - High School & Middle School - Boys & Girls

Flag Football - High School & Middle School - Boys

Volleyball - High School & Middle School - Girls & HS Boys

#### ***Winter Sports***

Basketball (October – January) – High School & Middle School – Boys & Girls

Soccer (January – March) – High School & Middle School – Boys & Girls

Track & Field (January – May) – High School & Middle School – Boys & Girls

### *Spring Sports*

Softball – High School & Middle School – Girls

Baseball – High School & Middle School – Boys

### ***Intramurals***

The intramurals program is a program designed for 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. Students will work together to build camaraderie and spirit in their Houses as they compete against each other for points towards the house cup. It is understood that intramural sport is for all students of all levels to participate and enjoy, and that playing time is as equal as possible. The academy plans to offer the following intramural sports for 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> grade students for the 2023 – 2024 school year:

Fall

Flag Football – Boys

Volleyball – Girls

Winter

Soccer – Boys & Girls

Spring

Basketball – Boys & Girls

### **7<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Intramurals**

7<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> graders will get the opportunity to band together in camaraderie and compete for house points following the succession of the Athletics year. The season will start in April and end in May. Boys will play volleyball and girls will play flag football.

### **Athletic & Intramural Fees**

Each sport and intramural season require the athlete to pay a fee to participate. These fees help cover league fees, coaches' salaries, insurance, facility rentals and operating costs and any other game operation expenses. All athletic fees must be paid before the conclusion of the season. Athletes with outstanding balances will not be eligible to participate in athletics. The following fee structure will apply to the 2023-2024 school year:

Intramural Sports: \$100 or \$115 (to include the cost of the t-shirt)

Middle School Athletics: \$275

High School Athletics: \$300

It is important to note, money should never be an inhibiting factor for a student to participate in athletics. The academy has a discount structure and family cap in place.

Family Cap: \$750/per family per year, to include intramural athletics.

Discount Structure:

For Single Scholar Homes:

a) the third sport will be 25% off

For Multi-Scholar Homes:

- a) the second sport will be 10% off
- b) the third sport will be 15% off.

It is the parents' responsibility to communicate with the Athletic Director immediately if they qualify for a discounted rate (sibling or FRL) or if they believe they are close to the Family Cap maximum. Configio will NOT keep track of these totals itself.

### *Student Cost Waiver*

Great Hearts does not want to exclude any student from participation due to financial hardship. Eligibility for waived or reduced athletic fees is initially determined according to the same standards as those found in the Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) application. For families who qualify, the following pay structure applies:

Free Lunch: 75% off

Reduced Lunch: 50% off.

However, if there are any financial difficulties that remain – regardless of whether the FRL application was approved – please reach out to the athletic department. Simply put, athletics are an important part of a student's development and we do not want registration fees to be a barrier to participation.

### *Additional Fees*

Additional expenses vary by sport. These costs may include, but are not limited to:

- Hotel expenses
- Team Meal Fees
- Team T-Shirt, spirit wear
- Pictures
- End-of-season banquet

### ***Eligibility***

#### *Student Behavioral Expectations*

Participation in athletics is a privilege and not a right. Students must meet school behavior standards to be eligible for athletics. Additionally, all athletes shall abide by a code of ethics that will earn them the honor and respect that participation and competition in the interscholastic program affords. Acts of unacceptable conduct tarnish the reputation of everyone associated with the athletic program. Any conduct – to include inappropriate use of social media – that results in dishonor to the athlete, team or school will not be tolerated and can result in being suspended or permanently removed from the team as well as being denied the privilege of future athletic participation.

There are many advantages of being a member of an athletic team and representing Great Hearts Western Hills. With these privileges comes responsibility. The Great Hearts Student-Athlete is reminded of the following:

- Any student serving an in school or out of school suspension may not either practice or participate in a contest while the suspension is being served.
- A student who is serving multiple detentions due to behavioral conduct may be determined ineligible to participate in a practice or a competition by the coach or school administration.
- Missing practices due to a detention could affect an athlete's playing time, as they are missing important information.

#### *Academic Eligibility Requirements – Athletics*

Student-athletes are required to earn a 70% (C-) or above in all classes to participate in competitions. Eligibility is determined two times during a quarter:

- 1) Progress Report Cards
- 2) Report Cards

Both are sent home to the parent through the parent portal. It is the Athletic Director and Coaches' responsibility to communicate with an athlete who has not met the required grades that they are ineligible. The parent's notification is the progress report and report card showing a D or lower in a class.

Students may **earn back** their eligibility to participate in competition when they have brought the grade to or above 70% in the class, they were ineligible in. This is determined in a bi-weekly progress report that every teacher sends home with a student. It is imperative that parents sign and return these bi-weekly progress reports as they are for a homework grade.

Academically ineligible student-athletes are expected to participate in practice sessions and sit the bench during games. They **may not participate in contests until eligibility is regained**. Ineligible student-athletes may not miss classroom instructional time to travel to away athletic contests.

Student-athletes should use the biweekly progress report to gauge their performance for each class and to determine if they are in danger of becoming academically ineligible. Students who are in danger of becoming academically ineligible or are ineligible should understand that it is their responsibility to consult with their instructor(s) to determine action necessary to retain eligibility.

#### *Academic Eligibility Requirements – Intramurals*

Intramural athletes are required to earn 70% (C-) or above in all classes to participate in intramural competitions. Eligibility is determined two times during a quarter:

- 1) Progress Report Cards
- 2) Report Cards

Both are sent home to the parent through the parent portal. It is the Athletic Director and Coaches' responsibility to communicate with an athlete who has not met the required grades that they are ineligible. Parents of student-athletes who are participating in intramurals will be notified via email by the Intramural Athletic Director that their scholar is earning below a 70% and is ineligible for competitions.

Students may **earn back** their eligibility to participate in competition when they have brought the grade to or above 70% in the class, they were ineligible in. Because the intramural season is a 6-week season, grade checks are done weekly on the Monday before competition. Parents will be notified via email by Tuesday afternoon of the status of their child's eligibility. Communication concerning details of grades

should always be between the parent, student, and their instructor(s). The intramural athletic director is not responsible for discussing why a student's grade is what it is.

## **Dress, Uniform and Equipment Requirements**

### *General Requirements*

An athlete is expected to comply with all hair and grooming standards as established in the school handbook. Moreover, an athlete is expected to comply with established standards when wearing the school uniform worn to class. When not required to be in a school uniform, an athlete shall dress presentably at all times, such as on trips and banquets (the dress code at all sports banquets is "dressy casual"). Coaches may also have team specific dress codes for game days or away games. These will be communicated in their beginning of the season, Team Meeting with parents. All shirts worn for athletic practices and field day should be modest, loose fitting, in good repair (e.g., no holes, torn sleeves, etc...), should be worn either tucked in or well over the waist of the pants/shorts if not tucked in. No midriffs may be shown. T-shirts are preferred – no camisoles or sports bras may be worn as outer garments. Sleeveless shirts may be worn if modest. No clothing should represent popular culture images (e.g., band shirts, movies, etc...). These requirements apply to summer camps and training.

### *Team Uniform Wear Policy*

Only uniforms issued by the school will be worn for contests and all school-issued uniforms are to be used for athletic contests only. (Note: some teams might require athletes to purchase shorts or pants). These items are not to be worn in P.E. class, in school, in the community, at home, or even at practice, unless directly specified for a special event by the Athletics Staff. In addition, athletes should never allow other individuals to wear their uniforms. A student-athlete will not be allowed to play in a future season until all school-issued uniforms, warm-ups, equipment, etc. have been returned. Lost or damaged items may result in a fine and/or cost of replacement fee.

### *Use of Team Uniforms and Equipment*

All school equipment and uniforms are loaned out each season and should be treated with the utmost care. Irresponsible use may result in the student athlete repaying the cost of the item to the athletic department. Likewise, facilities should be treated with great care, whether they are rented, belong to another school, or are on campus, and an effort should be made to leave the facility as clean or cleaner than it was before use.

## **Team Attendance**

Being part of a team requires commitment. For a team to be successful, all members must be present and working towards the same goal. While 100% attendance at all team events is the goal to strive to achieve, it is understandable that absences will occur.

### *Unexcused and Excused Absences*

When a student joins a school team, the expectation is for that team to be that student's primary extracurricular commitment for the duration of the season. The baseline of "100% commitment" includes being on time for and staying for the duration of all official team activities as designated by the

coach. There are generally five acceptable forms of “excused absences” from team events:

- 1) Required tutoring
- 2) School event conflicts that are mandatory for credit or college admission
- 3) personal illness or medical appointment
- 4) significant family event (i.e. wedding, funeral, etc..)
- 5) when there was a last minute change to the time or day of the team event.

In each case, excused or unexcused, the correct procedure is to notify the coach directly as soon as the conflict becomes apparent. A student may lose their privilege to participate on a team after 3 unexcused absences. They will be notified by the coach and then asked to turn in all school uniforms and equipment.

#### *School Attendance Requirements*

Student-athletes must attend a minimum of one-half of their classes during the school day to participate in a practice or competition that day. In the case of extenuating circumstances, school administration may grant relief from this requirement. This must be done in advance.

Missed class time on Fridays does not affect weekend participation.

#### *Dual Participation in Different GHWH Sports*

In certain cases, students will be allowed to participate in multiple sports in one season or make the roster for an upcoming season while the previous season is wrapping up. When considering this, the student should contact the Athletic Director first, then meet with both head coaches to discuss and approve the practice/contest schedule for the athlete. The basic arrangement should be as follows: students will attend as many practices for both teams as possible but will not be required to participate in more than one practice per day. Ball sports (such as volleyball and soccer) rely more on live in-person practice with teammates than more classical sports (such as cross country and track & field), therefore practice time should be weighted toward the ball sport.

A contest for one team trumps a practice for another team, but if both teams have a contest on the same day, the decision should not be case-by-case but rather by

- a) which commitment was entered into first, i.e., if basketball season overlaps soccer season, the student should play out their commitment to basketball before prioritizing soccer
- b) by designating a “primary” and “secondary” sport at the beginning of a season, e.g., committing to a cross country meet over a volleyball match (or the opposite) if the contest schedules were to conflict.

#### *Absence and Club Sports Policies*

Student-athletes should not miss a school practice or competition due to commitments to a club program. It is expected that Great Hearts student athletes prioritize school practices and competitions above involvement in programs outside of school.

#### *Dropping from a Team*

Students who do not finish a season damage their team and affect their potential future participation. Students who do not fulfill their commitment, except for illness or injury, potentially could be suspended or not allowed to participate in any sport the following season. On occasion, however, an athlete may find it necessary to drop a sport for a good reason. If this is the case, the following

procedure must be followed: 1) Consult with the head coach, 2) Consult with the Athletic Director and 3) if the final decision is to stop participating, check-in all equipment and uniforms immediately. Refunds will be determined case by case.

### **Registration Requirements**

#### *Required Forms – Intramurals & Athletics*

Every year, parents and students must complete various forms to properly register a student for athletics. These forms are completed/submitted on-line, a link to which can be found on the GHWH Athletic Webpage. These forms include:

- A medical physical signed & dated by a doctor  
\*These are valid for 1 year
- Medical History form – typically found on the front page of the physical
- A complete registration in Aktivite
- A signed Athletics Handbook

All of the above forms must be completed and submitted before a student can try out for a sport. If at anytime during the athletics season an athlete's physical expires, they must obtain and complete a new one before they can resume attending practices and competitions.

### **The Great Hearts Parent**

Parents are a vital component of any student-athlete's experience and success in athletics. We encourage active participation in your student-athlete's experience; however, we do ask that you recognize and respect the following boundaries.

#### *Role of the Parent*

- Be a parent, first. You are here to celebrate your child's successes and encourage them when they have challenges.
- It is the coach's job to coach, not the parents.

#### *Communication Coaches Expect from Parents*

- Concerns expressed directly to coach via email or phone call (not a BAND, Group ME or Aktivite app).
- Notification of any schedule conflicts, illness, or injury in advance.
- Avoid using SOCIAL MEDIA negatively towards coaches, school administration, other students, and/or other teams. This includes teams within our school, the Great Hearts network, and teams we may play in other districts.

#### *Appropriate Concerns to Discuss with Coaches*

- Coach's interaction with your child or interaction with others.
- Ways to help your child improve athletic skills.

#### *Topics Left to the Coach's Discretion*

- Playing time



- Play calling
- Team strategy
- Other students/athletes

An important consideration to keep in mind: as a general rule, neither the coach nor the Athletic Department will discuss and athlete's playing time with a parent. While parents are able to raise this concern, it will most likely be met with a simple "thank you for raising this concern" or "please have your child talk to me if they have any questions".

#### *Parent-Coach Meeting Procedure*

Should a parent wish to speak with a coach in person, they must follow the below procedure:

- Send an email to the coach requesting a meeting.
- If the coach is unavailable, call the Athletic Director (Coach Elizabeth Disney Alvarado) and request a meeting to be arranged.
- **DO NOT** confront a coach before, during or after practice or game. Meetings of this nature usually do not promote positive environments. Any concern regarding playing time, grades, eligibility etc. should be addressed via email or meeting, and not before, during, or after a competition. Not following this request will result in suspension from attending athletic contests.

Two important considerations to please keep in mind:

- 1) As a general rule, neither the coach nor the Athletic Department will discuss and athlete's playing time with a parent. While parents are able to raise this concern, it will most likely be met with a simple "thank you for raising this concern" or "please have your child talk to me if they have any questions".

#### **The Great Hearts Western Hills Athlete**

There are many advantages of being a member of an athletic team and representing Great Hearts Western Hills. With these privileges comes responsibility. The Great Hearts Student-Athlete is reminded of the following:

1. You must pass all classes to be eligible to play and are expected to excel in the classroom.
2. Training rules may cramp your social life. Time management is key to success in athletics.
3. You will have to practice, after school, and some contests will be held on Saturdays.
4. You may practice and never get to start or have limited playing time.
5. Do not expect favors because you are an athlete; expect a challenge.
6. You will be expected to be well-behaved on and off the field. What you do off the field may get you dismissed.
7. You must be enrolled in Great Hearts Western Hills and will be expected to follow the GHWH Student Code of Conduct.
8. Per U.I.L. and TCSAAL guidelines, gender is determined by the gender listed on student's birth certificate.

## **Great Heart Western Hills Standards**

Most of the following standards should be self-imposed rules. Self-discipline and maturity are necessary when representing your school. However, lack of either attribute could result in disciplinary action, possibly even permanent dismissal from all athletic programs.

1. No fighting, profanity, or trash talk. Remember, people don't see you; they see the school's (or House) name across your chest. Ejections may result in suspensions from future athletic contest.
2. If a student/athlete is ejected from an athletic contest for unsportsmanlike behavior, the following is mandatory prior to being allowed to play:
  - A parent/student conference with coach
  - A written assignment to be turned into the coach
3. School attendance is required on game day unless approved by the coach and the principal.
4. Truancy is unacceptable.
5. Go to practice. There are very few acceptable excuses to miss a practice, but if you do have one, give your coach notice.
6. Any athlete who quits a sport will not be allowed in another sport until the sport he or she quit has finished or has received the consent from all coaches involved. Also note that any athlete who quits or is dismissed from a sport forfeit that sports athletic award.
7. If a student become academically ineligible two times in a row, they may be dismissed from athletics. The student can be reinstated when academic stability is demonstrated.
8. NO HAZING/BULLYING. This includes any activity intentionally taken in which any student(s) humiliates, degrades, or physically or mentally abuses any other student. This includes SCIOAL MEDIA.

*Violations of GHWH Athletic Standards are subject to being "written up" resulting in a strike. Obviously, all situations cannot be noted. Therefore, the athletic staff can determine inappropriate behavior.*

### **Penalties for Violations**

FIRST STRIKE OFFENDERS of rules are subject to disciplinary action, suspension or expulsion from athletics. Action recommended might be in addition to any action taken as a result of policies that apply to all students. The coach and Athletic Director, and School Administration will consult parents.

All first offenders will be "written up" resulting in a Strike One.

SECOND STRIKE OFFENDERS of rules are subject to disciplinary action, suspension or expulsion from athletics. Action recommended might be in addition to any action taken as a result of policies that apply to all students. The coach and Athletic Director, and School Administration will consult parents. All second offenders will be "written up" resulting in Strike Two.

Minimum mandatory suspension for strike one: 1 game

Minimum mandatory suspension for strike two: 2 games

### **DISMISSAL PROCEDURE**

If a student athlete has been allowed to return after a second strike, this student will return on a "three strikes and you're out" status. This means a third violation would be STRIKE THREE! This would result in automatic dismissal from the athletic program. The Athletic Director and School Administration has the

right to determine if this dismissal is for the remainder of the school year, or the student's academic career at Great Hearts Western Hills. Permanent dismissal will be valid in the following consecutive grades: 6-8 and 9-12. Therefore, if a student is dismissed in 7<sup>th</sup> grade from participating in athletics, they may participate starting in 9<sup>th</sup> grade with a clean slate.

### **SPECTATOR BEHAVIOR**

Spectators removed from an athletic event or have exhibited inappropriate conduct **will receive** a minimum one game suspension. The Athletic Department has the authority to extend the suspension beyond one game, including permanent dismissal. Parents are reminded that they are considered spectators.

Inappropriate behavior can be determined, but is not limited to, the following:

- Yelling, trash talking, or arguing with a coach, official, or team (whether their student-athlete is on that team, or the contesting team).
- Stepping onto the field of play without explicit permission from the coaches and/or officials