

# Zeeland Public Schools

## Athletic Code of Conduct – Policy 2431.03



### **ATHLETIC CODE**

The purpose of the Athletic Code is to establish uniform standards for all student-athletes. The spirit of the Athletic Code is to accentuate the athletic experience while taking into account the student-athlete's well-being. The Athletic Code applies year-round, twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week, for the duration of the student-athlete's secondary athletic career (grades 7-12). Participation in extracurricular competitive athletics is a student's privilege, not a right, and can be revoked at any time for failure to meet the standards and requirements of Zeeland Public Schools and the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA). The MHSAA is a private, not-for-profit corporation of voluntary membership by over 1,500 public and private senior high schools and junior high/middle schools which exists to develop common rules for athletic eligibility and competition.

### **GENERAL RULES OF ATHLETIC ELIGIBILITY**

The following are general rules for eligibility that apply to all student-athletes:

1. Student-athletes must have current physical exams dated on/or after April 15 of the previous school year.
2. Student-athletes must be of an appropriate age for their grade. By the senior year, student-athletes cannot be 19 before the start of the school year and still participate. The proper age then adjusts down from there. If a student was 15 before the start of their eighth grade year, they would have to move to high school.
3. Student-athletes must be passing four of six classes. More information below on academic eligibility.
4. Student-athletes must not accept any award exceeding \$25 in value.

### **ACADEMICS**

Student-athletes must be passing four out of six classes to participate, or 67%. An eligibility list will be given to all teachers. If an athlete is deemed ineligible, he or she will not be able to compete until his/her grades improve. Once a student-athlete is determined to be ineligible, he/she must sit out a minimum of one week before he/she can return to competition. Student-athletes can practice during this time, although some coaches may set aside part of the practice time to catch up on homework. After one week of ineligibility, the student-athlete can check to see if his/her grades have improved enough that he/she can return to competition.

Student-athletes must be in school for a minimum of at least half of the day to compete in that day's contest. Special consideration may be granted from the principal or athletic director. Any unexcused absences during a school day will result in the student-athlete being held out of practice or competition for that day. Often times, unexcused absences are not discovered until one or more days after they occur. When an unexcused absence is discovered, the student-athlete will be forced to sit out a day equal to the day he/she was unexcused. In other words, if a student-athlete is unexcused on Tuesday and Tuesday was a practice day, and the unexcused absence is discovered on Thursday, the student-athlete must sit out the next practice. The student-athlete also must suffer any consequences for missing practice that the coach has established. If, in the example above, Tuesday was a competition day, the student-athlete would miss the next day of competition.

### **PRACTICE**

Below are the requirements for a student-athlete regarding practice:

- Be on time and prepared to listen and learn. Lock all belongings in the locker room.
- Respect your teammates and coaches. No putdowns!
- Communicate to your parents when practices will be completed and with your coach if you cannot attend or will be late for practice.
- An emergency contact form must be completed and turned into the main office before an athlete may participate in practices.

### **GAMES**

Below are the requirements for a student-athlete regarding games:

- A physical exam is needed from a doctor prior to the first game or contest.
- Stay with your team and coach at all times.
- Show respect to both your opponent and their facilities, win or lose.

- If you wish to not ride the bus home from an away contest, an athlete must be signed out by his or her parent with their coach. Coaches will have a sign-out sheet for parents at away games.
- Remember that bus rules are the same for athletic contests, as they are for school.

### **ADDITIONAL REGULATIONS**

- **LOITERING ON SCHOOL PROPERTY** – Athletes are not to be in the locker rooms, gymnasium, or athletic facility unless properly supervised by their coach. Once a practice or contest has been completed, the student-athletes are to leave the building as soon as possible.
- **TEAM MEMBERSHIP (CUT SPORTS)** – In some sports, limiting team size is necessary. When this occurs, the coach will explain to the student-athletes the criteria for making the team before practices begin. Students not making the team are welcome to discuss the reasons with the coach, however, a coach's decision is final.
- **COACHES REGULATIONS** – Individual coaches may institute other regulations for their particular sport not contained in the handbook. These regulations are to be written and distributed to all student-athletes at the beginning of each season.

### **ATHLETIC CONDUCT**

It is understood that the athletic code of conduct is in effect 24/7, 365 days per year. The athletic director may suspend a student-athlete at any time when a student-athlete's conduct may have a detrimental effect upon the image of the Zeeland Public Schools.

1. Conduct of all student-athletes, both in and out of school, shall be above reproach, and shall not bring discredit to the student-athlete, the team, school, parents or community.
2. Students athletes may not threaten the safety of or attack people or property (school or personal), physically or verbally. This includes, but is not limited to, theft or destruction of school or personal property and electronic bullying or harassment.
3. Student athletes may not have in their possession and/or use any form of tobacco, alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, including steroids and other performance-enhancing drugs or other un-prescribed drugs or look-alikes.
4. **ATTENDANCE REGULATIONS:**
  - a. A student-athlete must be present in school for a half school day in order to participate in games or practice. Exceptions may be granted by the athletic director.
  - b. A student-athlete who is on suspension from regular school attendance may not practice or take part in inter-scholastic competition during said suspension.
  - c. A student-athlete who is marked unexcused in a class is ineligible to participate in practice or an athletic event that day.

In addition, to the specific Athletic Conduct rules above, all general rules that are outlined in the student handbook will also be enforced.

### **DISCIPLINARY ACTION**

Discipline for infractions of the Athletic Code shall be handled by the Athletic Director and other school administration. The student-athlete has the right of appeal. Appeals shall be handled by a review board made up of the Assistant High School Principal, Principal, a student and a citizen appointed by the High School Principal. Action of this board may be appealed to the Superintendent and then to the Board of Education. Appeals will be heard promptly. The student-athlete on suspension may not participate in games or contests during the appeal process.

Discipline issues can be divided into one of three categories below:

- **PERSONAL INTEGRITY OFFENSES** – These would include any violation of team rules. Examples would include misbehavior in class, on the bus or in the locker room. Other offenses would include

unbecoming conduct, horse-play, or disrespect to coaches, teammates, opponents or officials. Discipline for Personal Integrity Offenses will be determined by the coach, in consultation with the Athletic Director as needed, and should always be communicated to the Athletic Office. Multiple Personal Integrity Offenses could become a Code Violation. Personal Integrity Offenses do not follow a student-athlete from middle school to high school.

- **CODE VIOLATIONS** – When we think of Code Violations, we typically think of violations for illegal activities, including but not limited to the use of alcohol and other drugs, including steroids, tobacco products, any kind of vaping, and other run-ins with law enforcement officials, excluding minor traffic infractions. These violations will result in suspension from the team using a punishment sequence, based on the number of offenses, found below.

Since we hold our student-athletes in Zeeland to a high standard, there are other Code Violations besides those relating to illegal activity. These would include any suspension out of school, repeated Personal Integrity Offenses, or egregious unbecoming conduct (as determined by the Athletic Director). These actions are also considered Code Violations and will subject the student-athlete to the same punishment sequence found below.

Code violations for illegal activities will follow an athlete from middle school to high school. Those for lesser offenses will not. In other words, an athlete who is caught using alcohol in middle school will move on to high school with one “strike” on the punishment sequence. An athlete who received consequences in middle school for a suspension from school (not related to illegal activities) would have his or her record cleared for high school.

- **GROSS MISCONDUCT** – We feel strongly that in certain, rare circumstances, the consequence for egregious behaviors need to jump beyond the traditional punishment sequence found below. With Gross Misconduct, the Athletic Director will work with other building administrators to determine an appropriate consequence. In cases of Gross Misconduct, the traditional sequence of consequences may not apply. The Athletic Director and other building administrators could impose a one year ban for a first offense, for example, should circumstances warrant. Examples of Gross Misconduct would include, but are not limited to: arson, assault, criminal sexual conduct, dealing drugs, hazing, weapons, and felonies or other significant legal issues.
- **PUNISHMENT SEQUENCE** – When an student-athlete commits a Code Violation, the typical punishment sequence looks like this (keeping in mind that some of these steps can be skipped for Gross Misconduct):
  1. First Offense shall be suspension from 25% of the scheduled games in the student-athlete’s current and/or next sport. Presentation of any awards will be at the discretion of the coach and athletic director. The student-athlete shall be suspended from the prescribed number of games immediately and successively after the rules infraction has occurred. The student-athlete will practice with the team throughout the suspension and complete the season in good standing to have served the athletic suspension unless otherwise decided by the athletic director and coach. For a first offense involving drugs, alcohol, or tobacco products, the student-athlete will be required to complete an assessment program before the suspension ends.
  2. Second offense shall be suspension in the current and/or next sport for 50% of the scheduled games with loss of award. The student-athlete shall be suspended from the prescribed number of games immediately and successively after the rules infraction has occurred. The student-athlete will practice with the team throughout the suspension and complete the season in good standing to have served the athletic suspension unless otherwise decided by the athletic director and coach. If the offense is the student’s second offense involving drugs, alcohol or tobacco products, the student-athlete will be required to complete an assessment program, and treatment/education program before the suspension ends.
  3. Third offense shall be a suspension for one (1) calendar year from the date of offense. During this time they may not practice or participate with any Zeeland athletic teams. If the offense is the student’s third offense involving drugs, alcohol or tobacco products, the student-athlete will be required to complete an assessment program, and treatment/education program before the suspension ends.

4. Fourth Offense shall be suspension for the duration of his/her high school career.

### **PARENT/COACH CONFERENCE**

Communication between parents and coaches is essential for a successful athletic program. We strongly encourage our coaches to be in regular communication with parents and to be proactive in communicating expectations, schedule changes, and anything that could impact the student-athlete or his or her parents. There is also a proper time and place for a parent/coach conference. Please follow the guidelines below when scheduling a conference with your child's coach:

1. Call to set up an appointment. Many coaches will share contact information with parents. If you do not know how to contact your child's coach, call the main office at middle school or the athletic office at high school.
2. Please do not attempt to confront a coach before or after a contest or practice. These can be emotional times for both parents and coaches.
3. If you have further concerns after speaking with the coach, please feel free to contact the Athletic Director. Josh Glerum, Athletic Director for Cityside and Zeeland East, can be reached at 616-748-3124. Jordan Bandstra, Athletic Director for Creekside and Zeeland West, can be reached at 616-748-4541.

In the end the purpose of inter-scholastic athletics is to make a positive contribution to the development of the participants, spectators, and community. At Zeeland Public Schools, student-athletes will enjoy a meaningful experience through practices and competition while growing physically and emotionally. Athletics will contribute to the development of sport skills and enhance the knowledge needed to enable student-athletes to pursue sports both on a competitive basis and in their leisure time. Interscholastic activities will contribute to the development of character, sportsmanship, attitudes, and behaviors. Through participation in athletics, students will learn to work cooperatively with fellow students and coaches.

### **PARENT CONDUCT**

Athletics is an extension of the classroom with learning for life at its core. Parents should cheer for a player, team, coach or community and not cheer against a player, team, coach or community. Social media posts should be positive in nature to celebrate the goals of high school sports. Social media posts detrimental to a student athlete are inappropriate and could be illegal depending on content. Parents who abuse these privileges may lose the opportunity to spectate in person.