

DUNHAM

MIDDLE SCHOOL

ATHLETIC HANDBOOK

2012



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INTRODUCTION

The mission of the Dunham Athletic Department is to provide an athletic program that plays an integral part of The Dunham School mission to educate the whole child: academically, physically, emotionally and spiritually. In addition we believe that the athletic program should be educationally safe, sound and productive.

As an athletic department we believe that athletic experiences contribute to the development of discipline, commitment, stewardship, sportsmanship, confidence, work ethic, and character, which together play a significant part in preparation for adult life.

As a Christian school we seek to compete with a level of character, intensity, enthusiasm, and sportsmanship that is consistent with the Christian faith.

This handbook has been developed to provide a guide to the policies and procedures of the Athletic Department. This handbook provides a framework from which coaches, athletes and their parents can work together for the benefit of our overall athletic program. Although it is intended to be comprehensive in nature, there will inevitably be situations that occur that are not covered in this handbook. Coaches, students and parents should always use good judgment in handling any situation.

Coaches, athletes and parents are required to sign an agreement indicating you have read and understand this handbook before coaches and athletes can participate in a sport. Please refer to this handbook throughout the year for all sports. Coaches, athletes and parents are obligated to be knowledgeable and supportive of these policies and procedures.

Athletic Director

THE DUNHAM SCHOOL
SPORTS OFFERINGS

Fall:

Band (US and MS)
Cheerleading (Varsity and MS)
Cross Country (Varsity including MS)
Football (Varsity, JV and MS)
Swimming (Varsity and MS)
Volleyball (Varsity, JV, and Freshman)
Softball (MS)

Winter:

Band (US and MS)
Basketball (Varsity, JV and MS – Boys and Girls)
Cheerleading (Varsity and MS)
Soccer (Varsity – Boys and MS – Boys and Girls)
Wrestling

Spring:

Band (US and MS)
Baseball (Varsity, JV and MS)
Golf (Varsity – Boys and Girls)
Soccer (Varsity – Girls)
Softball (Varsity)
Track and Field (Varsity)
Tennis (Varsity)
Volleyball (MS)

PHILOSOPHY

The athletic program is an integral part of the overall educational process at Dunham. Through sports, students are taught the value of hard work, discipline, team building, sportsmanship, and other values that help develop a child's character. At Dunham, we will provide an opportunity for as many students as possible to take part in as many quality sports activities as they desire under the leadership of qualified coaches. Part of this task includes providing an environment in which students achieve not only athletic success but also lays the groundwork for success in life. An attempt shall be made continually to encourage as many students as possible to share in the benefits of athletic participation. While broad participation is to be encouraged, it is a privilege to compete as a team member for the school.

The student should be the center around which all activities are organized, keeping each student's welfare at the focal point of the program. While striving for victory is the nature of athletic competition, it is only one criterion for determining a season's success. Guiding a team to reach its maximum potential and an athlete to reach his/her maximum potential are the ultimate goals. Along with this comes an emphasis on good sportsmanship, which includes being modest in victory and accepting in defeat. Although The Dunham School takes pride in winning, it rejects any and all pressures and practices to condone winning at all costs.

The athletic program as designed and administered should contribute substantially to the total educational program offered to the students by the school. Participation in athletics will be regarded in its proper perspective as one of several worthwhile types of educational experiences.

SPORTSMANSHIP

Although we will compete hard, we will compete fairly and respectfully with our opponents. Coaches, athletes, students and spectators must recognize that their conduct plays an important role in establishing the reputation of our school and our positive actions can contribute directly to the success of our teams.

During home contests we serve as hosts to the visiting team, its students, and spectators. They are our guests, and they should be treated accordingly. As visitors, we are expected to act as invited guests. We will treat the home school's facilities with care and respect.

Sportsmanship includes being appreciative of all good plays by both our team and the opponent. Cheer for our team, not against the opponent.

ASSUMED RISK

Providing a safe environment for practice and competition is a priority of everyone involved in the athletic program. Every step is taken to ensure the safety and well-being

of all participants. However, student/athletes and their parents must be aware that the risk of injury is inherent in athletic participation. Accidents ranging from minor to severe may occur. It is mandatory that the parents or guardians of all athletes sign a consent form before they are allowed to participate in Dunham athletics. By signing this form, parents and guardians acknowledge the risks associated with playing sports.

AFFILIATIONS

The Dunham School is a member of the Louisiana High School Athletic Association (LHSAA), which governs both public and private schools throughout the state. Dunham adheres to all LHSAA policies and procedures. The Middle School competes in several leagues, including but not limited to the Private School League (PSL), Baton Rouge Soccer Association (BRSA) and the Baton Rouge Girls Athletic Association (BRGAA).

MIDDLE SCHOOL ATHLETIC PROGRAM

All Middle School students are welcomed and encouraged to participate in the athletic program, with the understanding that there is a level of commitment expected and required.

Large teams will be split into Cardinal and White teams to ensure maximum playing time. The students will be placed where the coaches feel they may have the most success.

There are no exceptions from physical education or sports requirements. A doctor's note (may not be a family member) must be presented for a student to be excused from daily participation in either physical education or sports practice.

Middle school athletes may be eligible to tryout for an Upper School Varsity program after meeting with and receiving permission from the Middle School Principal, the Middle School Athletic Director and the Upper School Athletic Director.

TO THE PARENTS

This handbook is presented to you because your son or daughter has indicated a desire to participate in interscholastic athletics and you have expressed your willingness to permit him/her to compete. Your family interest in this phase of our school program is important to us. We believe that participation in sports provides a wealth of opportunities and experiences, which assists students in their personal growth within the framework of a team. We do believe that a student who elects to participate in athletics is voluntarily making a choice of self-discipline and self-denial, to the appropriate extent.

We who are concerned with the educational development of boys and girls through athletics feel that a properly controlled well-organized sports program meets the students' needs for physical, emotional and mental growth. When you son/daughter signed up for

one of our sports programs, he/she committed our staff to certain responsibilities and obligations, which are:

1. To provide adequate equipment and facilities;
2. To provide well-trained coaches;
3. To provide an environment in which the athlete can grow and mature spiritually and physically, to name only a few.

Likewise, we feel that athletes, parents and coaches have committed to certain responsibilities and obligations. We would like to take this opportunity to acquaint you with the specific policies that are necessary for a well-organized program of athletics.

It is the role of the Athletic Department to make rules that govern the spirit of competition for the community. These rules need a broad basis of community support, which is only achieved through communication to the parent. It is our hope to accomplish this objective through this athletic handbook for coach, student and parent.

TO THE COACHES

Every coach at The Dunham School is expected to adhere to a code of conduct.

Components of this code include:

- Exemplify the highest moral character as a role model for young people
- Recognize the individual worth and reinforce the self-image of each team member
- Encourage and assist team members to set personal goals to achieve their highest academic potential
- Create a set of training rules for athletes which reflects the positive values of abstaining from the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco
- Strive to develop the qualities of leadership, initiative, and good judgment in each team member
- Communicate and interpret program goals and objectives to parents and community
- Provide a safe environment for practice and competition
- Gain awareness of the importance of prevention, care and treatment of athletic injuries
- Respect the integrity and judgment of the game official
- Teach and abide by the rules of the game in letter and in spirit
- Build and maintain ethical relationships with coaches and administrators
- Strive for excellence in coaching skills and techniques through professional improvement
- Be modest in victory and gracious in defeat
- Encourage a healthy respect for the overall athletic program and its vital roles in education
- Communicate game results to the Middle School Athletic Director

TO THE ATHLETE

Being a member of an athletic team is something that many students aspire to from an early age. The attainment of this goal carries with it certain traditions and responsibilities that must be maintained. A good athletic tradition is not built overnight; it takes the hard work of many people over many years. Our tradition has been to win with honor. We desire to win, but only with honor to our athletes, our school and our community. Such a tradition is worthy of the best efforts of all concerned. Throughout the history of our school, there have been many notable teams and programs that have achieved success year after year. We realize that this tradition has its roots in the middle school where athletes begin to develop a sense of pride for competing in representation of their school.

When you wear the colors of Dunham, we assume that you not only understand our traditions, but also are willing to assume the responsibilities that go along with them.

RESPONSIBILITIES TO YOURSELF

The most important of these responsibilities is to broaden yourself and develop strength of character. You owe it to yourself to get the greatest possible good from your middle school athletic experiences.

RESPONSIBILITIES TO YOUR SCHOOL

Another responsibility you assume as a team member is to your school. The Dunham School cannot maintain its reputation as an outstanding school unless you do your best in whatever activity you choose. By participating in athletics at your maximum level of ability, you are contributing to the reputation of your school.

You assume a leadership role when you are on an athletic team. The student body and the people in the community know you. You are on the stage with the spotlight on YOU. The student body, the community and other communities judge our school by your conduct and attitudes, both on and off the playing field. Because of this leadership role, you contribute greatly to school spirit and community pride.

RESPONSIBILITIES TO YOUR TEAM

As a team member you have made a commitment to your team. Athletes leaving a game and/or practice prior to the completion of either without the permission of his/her coach will be subject to discipline, which may or may not include suspension from the team. Remember that your team is relying upon you to do your part and be punctual to every scheduled event whether it is a game or a practice. It is also important that you understand that your team was formed with you in mind, counting on your commitment.

SPORTS ETIQUETTE

The team bench is an athletic classroom. Athletes on the bench are expected to focus and concentrate on that game, listen to the coach and support their teammates. The bench area can provide a unique and important opportunity to learn and teach. Athletes may be asked to enter a game at any time. It is their responsibility to pay attention and know what changes have been made either during the game or a time-out

We ask that parents and spectators afford the coach and players the same level of respect and courtesy given to teachers and students in the academic classroom. Please maintain an appropriate distance to allow an athletic classroom atmosphere around our team benches.

PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS AND MEDICAL FORMS

No student may participate in any portion of Dunham athletics unless all required forms have been turned in and an up-to-date physical exam in on file in the Athletic Office.

The forms for high school athletes or middle school athletes participating at the high school level include the following:

- LHSAA Athletic Participation/Parental Permission Form
- LHSAA Medical History Form (valid for one calendar year)
- LHSAA Substance Abuse/Misuse Form
- Copy of the student/athlete's birth certificate

The forms for middle school athletes includes the following:

- Middle School Athletic Participation and Parental Permission Form
- The Dunham School Athletic Code of Conduct

ELIGIBILITY

Middle school: Must maintain a quarterly cumulative "C" average in academic courses to participate in the athletic program. Eligibility for a season is based on the grades earned the previous quarter.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

The athletic department requires that a student attend school a minimum of half a day (4 entire class periods) in order to participate in a practice or game that same day. A full day's excused absence may entitle a student to participate, pending permission from the division head and the athletic director.

Athletes are expected to be at practice every day. Any absences may result in diminished playing time, not out of punishment, but rather in fairness to those who have regularly attended practice. Repeated, unexcused absences could result in dismissal from the team.

Early Dismissal: When teams are excused early for any athletic event, each student is responsible for contacting his/her teachers and arranging a time to make up class assignments, notes, etc. that may be missed.

Trips – When excused from classes for a full day or more, each student must:

- Take a release form to each of his/her teachers to sign
- Return the release form to his/her coach at least one (1) day prior to departure.
- Arrange to do all homework and assignments as per your teachers' instruction.

ACADEMIC PROBATION

The Dunham School recognizes that the primary reason for attending a college preparatory school is for the academic education. Because of this belief, academics must take priority over athletics.

An athlete may be put on academic probation for the following reasons:

- Failure of two or more subjects in a grading period, or
- A recommendation from the student's advisor as a result of poor performance in one or more academic subjects.

An athlete on academic probation is subject to suspension from their sport for a minimum of one week or until cleared by an academic counselor. It is imperative for athletes to maintain these academic standards in order to participate in athletics. Coaches are advised to schedule contests so that athletes miss as few classes as possible.

ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND DRUGS

Not only does the use of alcohol, drugs and tobacco by athletes violate team training rules, it is illegal. Athletes are not to use alcohol, tobacco or drugs. Athletes determined to have used alcohol, tobacco or drugs will be subject to not only Dunham administrative suspensions but may be suspended from their teams as well. Additionally, athletes may be completely removed from a team.

PRE-SEASON PARENT MEETINGS

Head coaches are required to conduct pre-season meetings to include all players, parents and coaches in the Upper School and/or Middle School. Attendance is required of all athletes and their parents at these meetings. Coaches should communicate the following:

- Philosophy of the coach, both generally and specific to their sport
- Locations and times of practices and contests

- Expectations of the players and the team
- Team rules and consequences for violations
- Injury and emergency medical procedures
- Spirit pack information and order form
- Role of parents in terms of volunteer help, team meals, game day help, etc.

PARENT/COACH COMMUNICATION

Parenting and coaching are each difficult tasks. Understanding each other's roles and following the proper channels of communication will enable parents and coaches to best work together to provide a meaningful experience for student athletes while they are participating in Dunham sports. By establishing communication and an understanding of each position, we are better able to accept the actions of the other and provide greater benefit to the athlete. To be successful, communication is vital and requires involvement, dedication, sacrifice and commitment from parents, athletes and coaches.

At the core of any good relationship is trust. It is important to understand there may be times when things do not go the way athletes, parents and coaches desire. There may be times when it is difficult for parents to understand how playing time is allotted, why people are playing certain positions, strategy, etc. It is imperative that parents and athletes trust that our coaches are trying to do the right thing for the team and all individuals involved. It is important for parents to understand that the coaches are the ones with the team on a daily basis and therefore will make decisions based on the results of practice and what they feel is in the best interest of the team. Playing time, players' positions and strategy must be left to the discretion of the coach.

However, if you have a concern to discuss with a coach, there is a process. The proper order of communication is as follows:

- 1) Meet directly with the coach involved
- 2) Athletic Director
- 3) Division Head
- 4) Headmaster

If you are not satisfied with the meeting, go to the next person on the list. It is important not to confront a coach before or after a game or practice. These can be emotional times and not best for resolving conflicts. A 24-hour waiting period is a must to address any concerns.

Parents should notify coaches of any health issues concerning your child. Please let coaches know well in advance of any schedule conflicts.

COMMUNICATION PARENTS SHOULD EXPECT FROM THE COACH

1. Coach's and program's philosophy
2. Individual and team expectations

3. Location and times of all practices and contests
4. Team requirements, i.e. practices, special equipment, off-season conditioning
5. Procedure followed should your child be injured during practice or a contest
6. Any discipline that may result in denial of your child's participation

COMMUNICATION COACHES SHOULD EXPECT FROM PARENTS

1. Concerns expressed directly to the coach.
2. Notification of schedule conflicts well in advance
3. Specific concerns with regard to a coach's philosophy and/or expectations
4. Support for the program and the attributes of dedication, commitment and responsibility that are essential ingredients for success and excellence.
Encourage your child to excel.

APPROPRIATE CONCERNS TO DISCUSS WITH COACHES

1. The treatment of your child, mentally and physically
2. Ways to help your child improve and develop
3. Concerns about your child's behavior

Coaches make decisions based on what they believe to be the best for the team and all the athletes involved. There are certain areas and issues that can and should be discussed with your child's coach. Other things, such as those below, should be left to the discretion of the coach.

ISSUES NOT APPROPRIATE TO DISCUSS WITH COACHES

1. Playing time
2. Team strategy
3. Play calling
4. Other student-athletes

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

In the event of health related emergencies, parents will be notified as soon as possible. The coach or trainer will inform parents as to the type of injury, the extent of the injury, what has been done to treat the injury, and whether further medical attention is necessary. It is important to always err on the side of caution.

If a student has been taken to a doctor or hospital, parents will be informed of the exact location and phone number. The purpose of the emergency medical form is so that emergency treatment can take place, if necessary, until parents arrive. The athletic director should be informed of any emergency situation.

COACHES' RESPONSIBILITIES FOR AWAY GAMES

Coaches are responsible for all aspects of chaperoning for road contests. Coaches should abide by the following guidelines:

- Prepare a checklist for all equipment needed
- Have players double check their equipment before departure
- Take all emergency medical forms
- Arrange for pre-game meals if necessary
- Re-emphasize that we are guests in someone else's home when playing on the road
- Enforce proper discipline on the bus. Clean the bus upon arrival back at Dunham
- Stay with all students upon return to Dunham until all have been picked up

NO-CUT POLICY

Dunham adheres to a "no-cut" policy for sports. Because of the value of sports participation mentioned in our philosophy, we feel all students should have the opportunity to participate regardless of skill level. As a result of this policy, teams may consist of members whose abilities vary considerably. We hope our students will see this as a positive opportunity to help one another.

In sports with a sub-varsity team or more than one team in middle school, the coaching staff will determine which team a player is best suited for.

In the case of sports which require an off-campus facility, roster limitations may be imposed. Athletes must be of varsity caliber to make the competition roster. If this becomes the case, it is our goal to provide development squads with abbreviated practice schedules.

It is the hope of the athletic department that those who come out for sports are there in competitive spirit, to enjoy and learn. Varsity sports are for those who are extremely serious about competition. Even though Dunham possesses a no-cut policy, athletes with repeated absences or discipline issues can be excused from a team pending approval from the athletic director and the middle school principal. Coaches will schedule a meeting with the parents of any athlete in jeopardy of being dismissed from a team.

PLAYING TIME

Because of our "no-cut" policy, teams will consist of members whose abilities vary considerably. In addition, the "no-cut" policy will produce teams with larger rosters than would ordinarily be the case. While every effort will be made to provide playing time for all team members, we will not jeopardize the collective efforts of the team in order to provide playing time to an individual. Playing time can be reduced or taken away due to disciplinary issues, lack of practice participation, or injury. The coach should

communicate with the player, the players' parents, and the athletic director prior to the next scheduled contest regarding any discipline issues that result in loss of playing time.

Fifth & Sixth Grade

Many students at these grade levels are still learning the rules and developing the skills for each particular sport. It is important that skill work is the primary focus for these grades as well as learning the meaning of commitment and sacrifice that are so important in sports and life.

The leagues in which we participate require mandatory play for 5th and 6th grade students who are regular attendees at practice and scheduled events, demonstrate good attitudes and are in good academic standing. This rule exists so that all students will have the opportunity to learn and be engaged in the sport they have chosen. There is, however, a misconception about mandatory play. Depending on the rule of the sport, it does not mean equal playing time; it means that each student will have the opportunity to play. Students will be awarded playing time based on their attendance at practices and games, their work ethic, their attitude, and their skill level.

Seventh & Eighth Grade

Students in these grades are preparing for participation in high school athletics and should understand the meaning of commitment and sacrifice. Mandatory play is only in effect for some 7th grade teams and is at the discretion of the coach based on attendance, attitude and academic standing. As stated before in this handbook, Dunham rejects the idea of winning at all costs and every effort will be made to include every player in each contest. Awarding playing time is encouraged at this age level but is not guaranteed. It is important for students of this age to learn that playing time is earned through hard work, commitment and sacrifice, which will help them develop important character qualities.

In Jill Rigby's book Raising Respectful Children in a Disrespectful World, she addresses the issue of Cheerleading vs. Coaching. Ms. Rigby cites several examples of parents who praise their children even after poor performance on the field or court. It is her stance that this "false praise diminishes trust". Students want to trust their parents above all others and they also want to trust their coach. If these people are not honest with them, they stop trusting us. "False Praise Undermines Ambition" – if we praise them for poor performance then we reduce their motivation to improve. "False Praise Fails to Offer Guidance" – it is our job to help student-athletes figure out how to improve and identify their mistakes so that they can grow.

We ask that parents partner with the coaches to help the students feel valued, learn how to work hard, learn what commitment looks like, learn how to receive constructive criticism so that they may grow in every way, and learn to trust us because we are honest with them.

QUITTING

Quitting a team is never a good option unless it is for health, family, or sometimes, academic reasons. Any reason for leaving a team will require a conference between the athletic director, the athlete, the athlete's coach, and possibly the athlete's parents. An athlete who quits a sport is not allowed to participate in another sport until the season of the original sport is over.

Furthermore, an athlete who quits a team for academic reasons will not be permitted to rejoin a current team or join a subsequent team for a minimum of six weeks within the same school year. The coach of a subsequent team is not required to allow an athlete to join a season in progress.

CLUB SPORTS

Club sports are growing rapidly in popularity. Although club sports are an avenue for athletes to further their skills in a particular sport outside the normal season, they can have a negative effect on an overall athletic program if athletes devote their time outside their season solely to club sports. It should be the ambition of every athlete to wear the jersey of their school in as many sports as possible without allowing club sports to interfere.

It is possible to compete simultaneously in both Dunham and club sports. **However, in situations of conflict, Dunham sports must take precedence.**

MULTI-SPORT ATHLETES

All athletes in good academic standing are encouraged to participate in multiple sports at Dunham. There is a myth that athletes must concentrate on one sport in high school or even middle school in order to play at the next level. Statistics show that very few professional and collegiate athletes participated in just one sport during their high school years.

Participating in multiple sports is not for everyone, particularly those with a true gift in a single sport. But generally speaking, a good athlete will be good in whatever sport he or she plays. The Dunham athletic program will be stronger if our quality athletes participate in as many sports as possible.

**THE DUNHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL
ATHLETIC CODE OF CONDUCT**

Student-Parent Agreement for Athletic Participation

Participation in extra-curricular athletics is both a privilege and a responsibility. It is a privilege to develop your specific athletic skills with classmates in an organized setting. It is a responsibility to represent your school and community with your best sportsmanship and appearance.

The following rules must be followed by each athlete participating in any and all athletic programs for The Dunham School.

1. I will demonstrate good sportsmanship at all times.
2. I will be a positive representative of my school at all games.
3. I will try to show that I can accept winning or losing a game in a gracious manner.
4. I will not use vulgar or objectionable language in school, at practice or at any athletic event.
5. I will not criticize game officials at any time under any circumstances; I will not communicate with game officials except to answer a question.
6. I will not use or be in possession of tobacco products, alcohol or illegal drugs at any time.

I have read the above rules, as well as The Dunham Middle School athletic handbook, and agree to abide by the guidelines outlined by these documents. Should I not follow any rule, I realize I may be suspended from games and practices for the next scheduled event up to the remainder of the school year.

Student Signature

Date

I (we) have read the above rules as well as The Dunham Middle School Athletic Handbook, and agree to abide by the guidelines outlined by these documents. I (we) will help the athlete in abiding by them, as well.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date