

Dawson High School
Water Polo/Swimming Handbook 2025-26



MISSION STATEMENT

The Dawson High School Swimming program empowers student-athletes to grow in skill, character, and confidence. We value effort, teamwork, and resilience, striving for excellence in the pool, the classroom, and in life.

Program Policies and Expectations

Attendance Policy

All athletes are expected to attend every scheduled practice, meet, and team event. If an absence is unavoidable, athletes should notify a coach in person whenever possible and must also provide notice by email before the absence occurs. This ensures clear communication and accountability for both the athlete and the team.

Unexcused absences—defined as missed practices or events without prior notification or a valid reason—will be recorded. These absences will be taken into consideration when awarding varsity letters, as consistent participation and commitment are key factors in representing Dawson Swimming at the varsity level.

Health & Illness Protocols

The Dawson Swim Team follows Pearland ISD's district health guidelines for all illnesses, including flu, strep, COVID-19, and other communicable diseases. Please review the district's "When to Keep Your Child Home" guidance here:

<https://www.pearlandisd.org/departments/health-services/when-to-keep-your-child-home>

Athletes must follow these guidelines and obtain clearance from the school nurse or a physician (when required) before returning to practice or competition.

Grades

During the season, student-athletes' grades will be checked at the 3-, 6-, and 9-week marks of each term. Athletes failing or in danger of failing will be placed on a tutorial plan during Eagle Hour. Per UIL guidelines, failing grades make a student ineligible for competition.

Communication Policy

This policy applies to both students and parents in how they communicate with the coaching staff. There are several ways to get in touch with the coaching staff: email, SportsYou, text (with a parent included on all texts), and in person.

All parents and athletes are required to join SportsYou, our primary method of communication, using the following codes: Water Polo – BGK33KRL and Swim – JJH6FZEF

For routine updates or quick questions, SportsYou or in-person conversations are appropriate. Texting should only be used for time-sensitive matters, and a parent must always be included on the message.

For serious concerns or important questions, the preferred method is email with all coaches cc'd. Email provides a clear record of communication, ensures all coaches are informed, and allows us to respond thoughtfully and consistently. If a phone call is necessary, a time can be arranged by email.

Our goal is to maintain open, respectful, and transparent communication among athletes, families, and coaches to best support the success of every student-athlete and the program.

Discipline and Conduct Policy

The Dawson Aquatics program expects all student-athletes to uphold the highest standards of sportsmanship, integrity, and respect—both in and out of the pool. Participation on the team is a privilege, and athletes are responsible for maintaining conduct that reflects positively on themselves, their teammates, and Dawson High School.

Minor Infractions

Examples include (but are not limited to):

- Unsportsmanlike behavior in practice or competition.
- Disrespectful or disruptive conduct in the classroom.
- Failure to follow team or coach instructions.

At the coaching staff's discretion, these issues may be addressed directly between the coach and athlete. Consequences may include fitness accountability, loss of participation opportunities, or a coach/athlete meeting to review expectations. If concerns persist, or if the coach deems it appropriate, a meeting including the athlete, parent(s)/guardian(s), and coaching staff may take place.

Major Infractions

The following infractions are considered serious violations and will involve the Athletic Director and/or Principal, as well as the athlete's parent(s)/guardian(s):

- Vaping, tobacco use, alcohol use, or steroid use (all prohibited under UIL rules).
- Repeated unsportsmanlike or insubordinate behavior.
- Actions resulting in school discipline such as ISS (in-school suspension) or suspension.
- Violations of district policy, UIL rules, or the law.

Consequences may include suspension from practices or competitions, placement on a behavior contract, or dismissal from the program. Actions involving law enforcement will immediately be referred to school administration and district officials.

Final Authority

In all cases, the **coaching staff and administrators will have final authority** regarding disciplinary actions. Decisions will be made to protect the integrity of the program and ensure the safety, well-being, and success of all student-athletes.

Digital Citizenship

As representatives of Dawson High School, our swimmers' conduct online carries the same weight as their behavior in the pool and classroom. Social media and digital communication are powerful tools that can reflect positively or negatively on both the individual and the team. This policy outlines our expectations to ensure that every athlete upholds the values of respect, integrity, and school pride in all online spaces.

- **Respect Yourself:** Choose appropriate online names, avoid posting inappropriate or offensive content.
- **Respect Others:** No bullying, harassment, or negative responses. Be respectful, credible, and truthful.
- **Protect Others:** Report abuse and do not forward inappropriate content.
- **Honor the Uniform:** Represent Dawson positively in all posts. Team uniforms may not be shared or misused online.
- **Protect the Team & School:** Comply with school policies, support teammates and staff, and avoid posting content that harms the team's reputation.

Failure to follow these guidelines may result in disciplinary action under team, school, UIL, or district policies.

Practice Expectations & Procedures

Practices are an essential part of the Dawson Swimming program. All athletes are expected to arrive on time, prepared, and ready to give their full effort. Because our schedule depends on pool availability, practices may shift from week to week due to games, meets, weather closures, facility maintenance, or shared use with other programs. It is the responsibility of each athlete to stay informed about schedule updates and to plan accordingly.

Transportation to practice will be provided daily by bus immediately following 6th period. Practices typically conclude around 4:00 p.m. Start times indicate when athletes should be in the water, not walking through the door; swimmers are expected to allow enough time to change and be on deck ready to begin. At the end of practice, athletes should be picked up in the back parking lot, not the front, in accordance with Natatorium policy. Students who drive themselves to practice must also park in the back lot.

In accordance with HR 1351, students are not permitted to use cell phones during school hours. If a student has an issue making it to the bus, they should ask a teacher or the front office to contact the coaching staff on their behalf.

Transportation to Games and Meets

Away Competitions

All athletes will travel to away meets and games by bus. Students are not permitted to drive themselves to competitions. Tardiness will not be tolerated—if an athlete is late for the bus, the team will depart without them. Our responsibility is to ensure the team arrives at the pool on time.

Traveling Home with a Parent/Designated Adult

If a parent wishes to take their child home after an away meet or game, an Alternate Travel Form must be completed and submitted to the school in advance. Coaches are responsible for the safety of every athlete on the team, and proper documentation ensures accountability. This form must be completed for each away competition.

Dawson High School Water Polo – Lettering Policy

To be eligible for a varsity letter in Water Polo, all student-athletes must:

- Maintain all passing grades every 6 weeks throughout the season.
- Remain in good standing with the team, school, and district policies.

Once these prerequisites are met, a student-athlete may earn a varsity letter by achieving one or more of the following:

1. Performance-Based

- Qualify for the UIL State Championship Tournament roster.
- Contribute to advancement by appearing on the UIL Regional or Playoff Roster.
- Play in a regular season (non-scrimmage) game.

2. Commitment & Contribution

- Complete two full years in the water polo program in good standing.
- Maintain consistent attendance at practices and competitions (no unexcused absences in a season).

- Display leadership, sportsmanship, and a team-first attitude, both in and out of the pool.
3. Improvement & Development
- Show significant progress in skills, conditioning, or understanding of the game during the season.
 - Assist in developing newer players by demonstrating patience, encouragement, and team mentorship.

Dawson High School Swimming – Lettering Policy

To be eligible for a varsity letter in Swimming, all student-athletes (and team managers) must:

- Maintain all passing grades every 6 weeks throughout the season.
- Remain in good standing with the team, school, and district policies.

Once these prerequisites are met, a student-athlete may earn a varsity letter by achieving one or more of the following:

1. Performance-Based

- Qualify for the UIL State Championship Meet (individual or relay event).
- Qualify for the UIL Regional Meet (individual or relay event).
- Score points for Dawson at the District Meet (individual or relay event).

2. Commitment & Contribution

- Complete two full years on the swim team in good standing.
- Demonstrate consistent attendance (no unexcused absences in a season) and strong effort in both practice and competition.
- Represent Dawson with exemplary sportsmanship and leadership, serving as a positive role model for teammates.

3. Improvement & Development

- Show significant personal improvement in times or skills over the course of the season, as determined by coaching staff.
- Take on mentorship of younger swimmers (helping with technique, supporting new team members).

4. Team Managers

- Managers can earn a letter by completing a year of reliable service, demonstrating honesty and responsibility, attending practices and meets/tournaments, and performing duties effectively.

Key Contacts

Coaching Staff

- **Michele Gatlin** – Head Coach Water Polo, Assistant Coach Swimming
Email: gatlinm@pearlandisd.org
- **Sarah Fernandezlopez** – Co-Head Coach Swimming, Assistant Coach Water Polo
Email: fernandezlopezs@pearlandisd.org
- **Esteban Fernandezlopez** – Co-Head Coach Swimming, Assistant Coach Water Polo
Email: fernandezlopeze@pearlandisd.org

Athletic Administration

- **DHS Girls' Athletic Coordinator:** Isabel Gomez
- **DHS Boys' Athletic Coordinator:** Mike Allison
- **DHS Principal:** Erin Hamann
- **PISD Athletic Director:** Ben Pardo
- **PISD Assistant Athletic Director:** Laneigh Clark
- **PISD Superintendent:** Larry Berger

Social Media & Booster Club

Stay connected with Dawson Aquatics through the Dawson Aquatics Booster Club (DABC):

- Website: dawsonaquatics.com
- Instagram: @dawsonaquatics
- Facebook: Dawson Aquatics

Acknowledgement of Policies & Expectations

Acknowledgement of Policies & Expectations

This packet outlines the rules, policies, and expectations established by the Dawson Aquatics coaching staff. While we recognize that unique situations may arise, this document provides clear guidance for most circumstances. All policies and consequences described here will be upheld and enforced to ensure fairness, consistency, and the success of our program.

By signing below, both athlete and parent/guardian acknowledge that they have read, understood, and agree to the expectations contained in this packet. Athletes are responsible for their own choices and behavior, and parents acknowledge their role in supporting these standards. This acknowledgement will remain on file for the duration of the season and off-season, beginning August 1, 2025.

Athlete Acknowledgement

I, (printed athlete name) _____, have read this packet and understand the rules, policies, and expectations of Dawson Aquatics. I accept responsibility for my actions and agree to uphold these standards as a representative of Dawson High School.

Athlete Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Acknowledgement

I, (printed parent/guardian name) _____, have read this packet and understand the rules, policies, and expectations of Dawson Aquatics. I acknowledge that my athlete is responsible for their own decisions and must abide by these standards. I will support the coaching staff in holding my athlete accountable.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Note: In circumstances not specifically addressed in this packet, the coaches, principal(s), and/or athletic director reserve the right to determine appropriate action and enforce discipline as needed.