**Hancock County Middle/High School**



**Athletics Handbook**

Student-athletes at HCMHS understand and realize that playing a sport at HCMHS is a privilege and not a right. With this privilege comes responsibilities that student-athletes must follow.

1. A student-athlete must be responsible for his/her actions, good or bad and the consequences that follow.
2. A student-athlete must help to create and maintain team chemistry and culture.
3. A student-athlete must work hard not only in their respective athletics program, but they must first work hard within their classrooms. Remember your academics comes before sports. You are a student first and an athlete second.
4. A student-athlete must realize that playing time is earned and not given and will be left up to the discretion of the coaching staff.
5. A student-athlete must remember that they are not only representatives of themselves, but also of their families, the school, and their community.

**Parent/Legal Guardian Responsibilities**

Parents/Legal Guardians play a very important role in the HCMHS Athletics Program. Parents/Legal Guardians model attitudes and behavior for their children, and are highly encouraged to attend as many home and away sporting events not only to support their own student-athlete, but the team as a whole. However, most coaches at HCMHS have a closed practice policy so please be respectful of this policy.

1. Parental/Legal Guardian support helps our coaching staffs to create and maintain team chemistry and culture that provides a valuable athletic experience for all student-athletes.
2. Parents/Legal Guardians must be mindful of and respect what the coaching staffs are trying to do whether they agree with them or not by avoiding interference or public criticism, especially in front their own student-athlete, their teammates, and/or other community members.
3. Parents/Legal Guardians are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that will bring honor and respect to our athletics program and the school.
4. Parents/Legal Guardians must refrain from inappropriate behavior towards an official, a coach, an administrator, and/or a student-athlete of any and all schools.
5. Parents/Legal Guardians must realize that playing time is left to the discretion of the coaching staff and will not be discussed

**Season:**

* Tryouts
* Tryouts will take place as scheduled by the head coach of the respective sport and the athletic director. Students desiring to play for an athletics team at HCMHS must be in attendance and participate in the tryouts to be considered for the team. However, if extenuating circumstances do occur, alternate times for tryouts may be scheduled if the head coach of the respective sport deems it necessary.
* When it comes to who makes the team and who does not, this will be left up to the discretion of the head coach and their coaching staff of each respective sport. Team personnel decisions will be made in the best interest of the team. Please remember that playing a sport at HCMHS is a privilege and not a right.
* Uniforms/Equipment
* When it comes to uniforms and equipment distributed to student-athletes, they will be checked out to the student-athletes in an orderly manner and returned to the respective sports coaches in an orderly manner. Student-athletes and their parent/legal guardian are responsible for these uniforms and/or equipment assigned to them. In the case where a uniform and/or equipment is lost or damaged the student-athlete and their parent/legal guardian is responsible for any financial means of replacing or fixing the missing or damaged uniform and/or equipment.
* At the conclusion of a sports season, the student-athletes have 5 calendar school days to return any and all uniforms and/or equipment.
* Any student-athlete that quits or is dismissed (by coaches or administration) from an athletic team will have 5 calendar school days to return any and all uniforms and/or equipment.
* Season Completion
* Student-athletes must complete the athletic season of the sport they are participating in before proceeding on to the next sport season. However, if a mutual agreement is reached between the two coaches involved and the athletic director, the students-athlete may participate in both sports based upon the mutual agreement conditions.
* Quitting/Dismissal From Team
* Student-athletes of HCMHS that are put on a roster will have a two-week trial period once they make a team and the roster is published to determine whether or not they like the sport they have made the team of. During this two-week trial period if the student-athlete quits or is dismissed (by coaches or administration) he/she may move on to the next sport season. However, any student-athlete that quits or is dismissed (by coaches or administration) from an athletic team at HCMHS after the two-week trial period and during a specific sport season may not participate in any other HCMHS athletic team activities until the original athletic team’s season is completed.

**Practice:**

* Attendance
* At HCMHS each coach is entitled and encouraged to have their own specific set of attendance/tardy policies. How each coach handles these situations is up to their own discretion. However, student-athletes and parent/guardians must understand that missing practices and/or games for any reason during the school year, school vacations, and/or extended breaks is a concern, and depending upon game schedules, different coaches may have different consequences. As a courtesy to the coaches and fairness to the team it is imperative and expected that the student-athlete and/or parent/legal guardian communicate any vacation plans or other situations that may require the student-athlete to miss practice and games, to the head coach well ahead of time. Now we understand that extenuating circumstances can and will occur, we just ask in these circumstances that you please inform the head coach as soon as possible.
* However, it must also be understood that missing practices and/or games for any reason can and will affect team chemistry and performance. This is why missed practices and/or games can and will cause adjustments to the student-athletes playing time. We at HCMHS understand extenuating circumstances can and will lead to missed practices and/or games, but the adjustment to student-athletes playing time is not a punishment. It is a reward to those student-athletes that have attended the practices and/or games.
* Non-School Teams
* At HCMHS, student-athletes are expected to honor their commitment to our school teams first if a conflict arises between the school and non-school teams. Student-athletes who choose to participate in a non-school team event over a HCMHS team event should expect to face consequences as decided by their head coach. This could include but not limited to suspension and/or dismissal from the team. However, if a mutual agreement is reached between the head coach, student athlete, parent/legal guardian, and the athletic director, the students-athlete may participate with the school and non-school sports team based upon the mutual agreement conditions.
* Overlapping Seasons & Offseason Training
* Multi-sport student-athletes are extremely important to the health of any athletic program. At HCMHS it is our goal and responsibility as an athletic department to ensure the well-being of our student-athletes, teams, and coaches with how we handle multi-sport student-athletes. The goal and responsibility of our student-athletes that are in-season is to take care of their bodies in such a way that they can perform at their very best in both practices and games not only for themselves, but for their in-season teammates as well. With this said, student-athletes should only participate in school sponsored off-season conditioning and/or practice if the in-season head coach and the off-season head coach involved can come to an agreement that is approved by the athletic director. This does not prohibit skill development that does not take a toll on the student-athlete physically, but any sponsored skill development activities must and should be cleared by the in-season coach and the athletic director.

**Games:**

* Attendance
* All student-athletes must be present at school the days of games in order to participate unless they are on a school-sponsored field trip or extenuating circumstances exist. Ultimately, eligibility to participate in games will be determined on a case-by-case basis according to the student-athlete’s attendance patterns, academic standing, and legitimacy of the absence.
* Transportation
* At HCMHS it is required that student-athletes ride with your respective sports team on the bus to all away games unless extenuating circumstances exist. It is also strongly encouraged, but not required that student-athletes ride with your respective sports team on the bus back to the school on all away games. This is in the best interest of building and maintaining team chemistry and spirit, while also limiting athletic program and school liability.
* In situations where a bus provided by the school system is not available parents/legal guardians are responsible for ensuring their student-athletes arrive safely to the game and arrive safely back home.
* In situations where student-athletes do not ride the bus back from away games the coaches can only release the student-athletes with parents/guardians, grandparents, and anyone that is listed on the emergency contacts form established at HCMHS. Each coach will establish their own way of handling sign-out procedures, but the coaches must be informed by the parents/legal guardians, grandparents, and anyone that is listed on the emergency contacts form established at HCMHS before a student-athlete is released to above mentioned people.
* Behavior
* At HCMHS student-athletes are expected to exhibit the following behaviors while at practices, home games, traveling to a game, while at the game site, and traveling back from a game:

1. Follow your coaches’ directions and team policies.
2. Treat teammates, coaches, opposing coaches and players, referees, and fans with respect.
3. Stay out of unauthorized places.
4. Show respect and take care of our school facilities and modes of transportation, as well as opposing school facilities.
5. Always exhibit good sportsmanship, win or lose.

* When it comes to meetings between student-athletes, parents/guardians and coaches there are multiple guidelines that will be followed:

1. A student-athlete can request a meeting between himself or herself and the coaching staff to discuss what he or she needs to do in order to become a better player and/or other issues pertaining to the team. **At no point will another teammate be discussed during these meetings.**
2. A parent/legal guardian must first schedule a meeting with the coaching staff that will occur at the coaching staff’s discretion. This can be before or after practices, but never during scheduled practice times. **This scheduled meeting will only be to discuss the parent’s/legal guardian’s student-athlete. At no point will another student-athlete be discussed during these meetings.**
3. If the issue is not resolved during the first scheduled parent/legal guardian and coaching staff meeting then the next step is to schedule a meeting with the athletic director, coaching staff, and the parent/guardian. **This scheduled meeting will only be to discuss the parent’s/legal guardian’s student-athlete. At no point will another student-athlete be discussed during these meetings.**
4. If the issue is not resolved during this second scheduled parent/legal guardian, coaching staff, and athletic director meeting then the next step is to schedule a meeting with the principal, athletic director, coaching staff, and the parent/guardian. **This scheduled meeting will only be to discuss the parent’s/legal guardian’s student-athlete. At no point will another student-athlete be discussed during these meetings.**
5. If the issue is not resolved during this third scheduled parent/legal guardian, coaching staff, athletic director, and principal meeting then the next step is to schedule a meeting with the director of schools, principal, athletic director, coaching staff, and the parent/guardian. **This scheduled meeting will only be to discuss the parent’s/guardian’s student-athlete. At no point will another student-athlete be discussed during these meetings.**

* Meeting Criteria and Guidelines:

1. **All meetings must be scheduled in advance.**
2. **Do Not** approach, call, text, or message anyone on the coaching staff immediately after a game. A parent/legal guardian (other relatives and/or friends will not be allowed to talk with a coaching staff at any point) **MUST** wait **until the following morning** from the conclusion of a game before contacting the coaching staff. **During this phone call, text, message, or scheduled in-person meeting the parent’s/legal guardian’s student-athlete(s) will only be discussed and at no point will another student-athlete be discussed.**
3. **Playing Time** will be determined by the coaching staff and left to their discretion. **At no point will playing time be discussed other than what your student-athlete could do in order to earn more playing time.**
4. **Only the student-athlete(s) of the parent/legal guardian that has scheduled a meeting will be discussed. No other student-athlete(s) will be discussed at any point during the course of a scheduled meeting, phone call, text, message, etc.**
5. **Never approach or try to make contact with anyone that is part of the coaching staff or any of the student-athletes during the course of a game or practice. (Note: Failure to do this will lead to the immediate removal from the premises by law enforcement and/or school administrator and could lead to being banned from HCMHS Athletic Events.)**
6. At any point if any coaching staff member feels verbally or physically threatened or abused, they can end the phone call, text, message, or meeting and are encouraged to walk away from this situation and immediately call a school administrator.

* **At any point that any of the above is not followed a meeting will not be scheduled, a meeting will come to an immediate end, and lead to the immediate removal from the premises by law enforcement and/or school administrator, along with the possibility of being banned from all HCMHS Athletic Events.**

Due to the addition of Section 9. Unsportsmanlike Conduct of Fans to the TSSAA Bylaws and Constitution which states;

**Section 9. Unsportsmanlike Conduct by Fans**

**A. For fans coming onto the field or floor during an incident, the school will be fined a minimum of $250.00. In addition, other non-monetary disciplinary action may occur, including but not limited to probation and/or restrictive probation for the entire athletic program.**

**B. For fans ejected for unsportsmanlike conduct during a contest, the school will be fined a minimum of $250.00. In addition, other non-monetary disciplinary action may occur, including but not limited to probation and/or restrictive probation for the entire athletic program**

We at Hancock County Middle/High School have instituted the following HCMHS Athletic Department Policy

Any fan coming onto the field or floor during an incident or any fan that is ejected for unsportsmanlike conduct during a contest will pay any and all fines assigned to Hancock County Middle/High School which will be a minimum of $250.00 and possibly more. The fan(s) that receive this fine will also be suspended for two home games at HCMHS Athletic Facilities. However, if the fan coming onto the field or floor during an incident or the fan that is ejected for unsportsmanlike conduct during a contest does not or refuses to pay any and all fines assigned to Hancock County Middle/High School which will be a minimum of $250.00 and possibly more, he or she will be banned from all HCMHS Athletic Events until the fine(s) is paid. If this becomes more than one or multiple incidents throughout the school year the HCMHS Athletic Department Executive Committee will meet, and further, more severe disciplinary action will be imposed.

**Academically Eligible:** To be eligible for fall sports the student must have received credit towards graduation at the close of the previous school year in at least five (5) classes. In addition, the student must also be taking a minimum of five (5) classes (unless otherwise approved by school administration due to seniors having met requirements for graduation) during the season and meet the Grading Policy listed below of an overall 1.5 GPA or greater and no failing classes. Winter and spring sports eligibility is based on progress reports and report cards issued during the academic school year before their respective seasons begin.

**Summer School Grades** and **Other Educational Options** may not be used to substitute for failure to meet the academic standards during the last grading period of the academic school year and a student-athlete with intentions of playing a sport the next academic school year will be put on academic probation for one nine-weeks grading period. At the end of this academic probation period of one nine-weeks grading period the student-athlete must be able to prove that his or her grades have improved, are passing all classes, has been attending tutoring sessions on a regular basis, and have an overall 1.5 GPA or greater.

* Academic Probation: The student-athlete can practice, but cannot participate in games or scrimmages. The student-athlete is required to go to tutoring during this time period and if it interferes with practice time the student-athlete will be required to make-up that practice time.

**Grading Policy:**

1. The student-athlete is in good academic standing and encouraged to keep up the good work.
2. The student-athlete is in good academic standing, encouraged to strive for A’s, and to keep up the good work.
3. The student-athlete is in decent academic standing, encouraged to strive for A’s and B’s, and is strongly encouraged to attend tutoring sessions.
4. The student-athlete is in poor academic standing, encouraged to strive for A’s, B’s, and C’s, and is required to attend tutoring sessions.
5. The student-athlete is not in good academic standing, encouraged to strive for A’s, B’s, and C’s, is required to attend tutoring sessions, and is suspended from scrimmages and games until the F is brought up to a D or higher.

Note: If a student-athlete’s overall GPA falls below 1.5 during any point during the academic school year the student-athlete is suspended from all athletic teams for that academic school year. At the start of the academic school year if a student-athlete’s overall GPA is below a 1.5 they will not be allowed to participate in athletics during that academic school year.

* Students involved in any voluntary extracurricular activities shall be subject to random drug testing. Parents/Legal Guardians and students will be informed of this policy prior to participation and shall sign a consent to the drug testing and a release of information as a condition of participation. Extracurricular activity is defined as voluntary participation in activities not falling within the scope of regular curriculum and carrying no academic credit. This includes participating in athletic programs, cheerleading, band, clubs, student leadership positions, etc.
* Prior to performing a random drug test on a student participating in extracurricular activities, the following conditions must be met:

1. The test will yield evidence of the violation of school policy or will establish that a student either was impaired due to drug use or did not use drugs;
2. The test is in pursuit of legitimate interests of the school in maintaining order, discipline, safety, supervision and education of students;
3. The test is not conducted for the sole purpose of discovering evidence to be used in a criminal prosecution; and
4. Tests shall be conducted in the presence of a witness. Persons who shall act as witnesses shall be the School Guidance Counselor or Administrator

* **No student who tests positive under a random drug testing program shall be suspended or expelled from school solely as the result of the positive test.**

**Penalties**

1. Each confirmed incident will result in a referral to the Youth Services Officer (YSO).
2. First offense students will be suspended from all extracurricular activities for one calendar year.
3. Second offense students will be suspended from all extracurricular activities for duration of time enrolled or reenrolled in Hancock County school system.

Since HCMHS has 6th – 12th grade housed under one roof and since all high school sports and most middle school sports (exceptions: baseball, cheer, football, & softball) are members of TSSAA and TMSAA there are certain rules and regulations we must follow as listed in the TSSAA and TMSAA Constitution & Bylaws.

* Eighth Grade Participation (Varsity, JV) Section 8 of the TSSAA Constitution & Bylaws
* An eighth-grade student is eligible to participate for a member school provided he/she has been academically promoted and he/she is enrolled at the school.
* An eighth-grade student who continues to participate at the middle school level shall be ineligible at the high school varsity level in that sport.
* Students below the eighth grade are not eligible to practice or participate for a member school.
* Any student repeating the eighth grade shall not be eligible for high school participation during the year that the student is repeating the eighth grade.
* Participation as an eighth grader shall not reduce the number of semesters a student is allowed to participate after enrolling in the ninth grade.
* Grade Participation (Varsity, JV) Section 8 of the TMSAA Constitution & Bylaws
* No student in a grade below the 6th grade can practice or participate as a member of a team in the Tennessee Middle School Athletic Association.
* A school with teams in any combination of the Senior High Division, Junior High Division, and Middle School Athletic Association may certify a student for any division in which he or she may participate.
* A student may participate in only one division at any time. A student who has been certified as a member of the Middle School Athletic Association or Junior High Division may be advanced to a higher division at any time, provided the state office is advised to remove his or her name from the lower division eligibility report and a new eligibility report is filed to show that the student has advanced to a higher division.
* Once an eighth-grade student who is enrolled and in regular attendance at a high school practice or participates in a sport at that level, he/she will be ineligible to participate in the same sport for a member middle school.
* Other Grade Participation (Varsity, JV) as Set Forth by HCMHS
* No 5th grade or lower-level grades’ students can practice or participate with any HCMHS athletics teams that are not members of TMSAA.
* No 6th grade or higher-level grades’ students can practice or participate with any elementary school athletics teams.
* Student-athletes of TMSAA membership teams (basketball & volleyball) that are in the 8th grade may practice and play with the high school TSSAA membership teams only when their TMSAA season is over.
* Student-athletes of non-TMSAA membership teams (baseball, cheer, football, & softball) that are in 8th grade may practice and participate with both the middle and high school teams as long as the middle school team is the priority and certain guidelines are followed.

1. For an 8th grade student to be eligible for a high school JV or Varsity team he/she must be on a middle school Varsity roster of the same sport.
2. All middle school practices and games will take priority when there are scheduling conflicts with high school practices and games. For example, when the middle school team has a practice and there is a high school game scheduled at the same time, the 8th grade student-athlete must attend the middle school practice.
3. HCMHS coaches (baseball, cheer, football, & softball) that can share 8th grade student-athletes due to non-membership in TMSAA are highly encouraged and expected to work with each other. This is to ensure that the shared 8th grade student-athlete is protected from overwork and injury. HCMHS coaches are to make this a positive experience for these shared 8th grade student-athletes.

The world we live in today has created a social networking system that has become a very important aspect to many lives. This includes, but is not limited to chat rooms, message boards, blogs, texting, Facebook, X (Formerly known as Twitter), SnapChat, Instagram, TikTok, and countless other social media platforms that can and have posed serious danger to personal health, safety, and welfare. Certain actions within these social media platforms can and have led to serious issues at school and within athletic programs. As participation in HCMHS Athletics is a privilege and not a right, students and parents/legal guardians must realize that actions have consequences (good or bad) and accept personal responsibility for any images, postings, or any other information appearing on any social media platform. Any electronic posting or communication to any social media platform that disrupts the educational or athletic environment, which advocates the violation of any school or team policy, or attacks students, teams, coaches, administrators, or officials is unacceptable. These would include, but are not limited to the consumption of alcohol and/or the use of illicit drugs, activities involving bullying, hazing, or intimidation, speaking ill of teammates, opponents, officials, administrators, or coaches. Violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including removal from the athletics program and banned from all HCMHS Athletic Events.

Another thing that we deal with in today’s world is the creation of social media pages by outside sources that has no affiliation to the school. These outside sources use the school’s/teams’ name, logos, and likeness to promote their social media page. This is copyright and trademark infringement which is punishable by law. The only people allowed to create these social media pages are coaches and administrators. This is not only due to copyright and trademark laws, but also due to the fact that we at HCMHS have to also follow laws, guidelines, and federal and state regulations when it comes to protecting our student-athletes and their privacy. Anyone outside of coaches and administrators creating a social media page using the HCMHS name, logos, and likeness can be punished by law and will be banned from all HCMHS Athletic Events.

1. HCMHS Parental Consent and Release Form for Off Campus Sporting Events
2. HCMHS Student Drug & Alcohol Testing Consent Form
3. HCMHS Athletic Photo, Video, & News Release
4. HCMHS COVID-19 Form

**HCMHS/TSSAA/TMSSA Sports Physical**

* In order to participate in athletics at Hancock County Middle/High School a student-athlete must have a Sports Physical on file. This is also known as a PPE (Preparticipation Physical Evaluation). A Sports Physical or PPE can be completed with your Healthcare Provider or the ETSU Heath, Hancock County School-Based Health Center
* In order for these Sports Physicals or PPEs to count for a new school year, they must be completed after on or after April 15th of that year.

I certify that I have read, understand, and agree to abide by all of the information contained in the Hancock County Middle/High School Athletics Handbook. I further certify that if I have not understood any information contained in the handbook, I have sought and received an explanation of the information prior to signing this statement.

Student Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

I certify that I have read, understand, and agree to abide by all of the information contained in the Hancock County Middle/High School Athletics Handbook. I further certify that if I have not understood any information contained in the handbook, I have sought and received an explanation of the information prior to signing this statement.

Parent/Guardian Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_