

Athletic Code

School District of Mercer

Effective 2019-2020

Introduction

The following information has been prepared for the benefit of athletes, parents, and coaches in an effort to make athletics a contributing and worthwhile part of the total school program. It is the desire of the entire athletic staff that athletics be an enriching and healthful experience in which physical, mental and social growth can be stimulated through interscholastic competition.

Philosophy of the Athletic Code

Athletics are an integral part of our high school program. As such, it provides certain opportunities and privileges, but also includes responsibilities and obligations. Training rules are primarily a matter of self-discipline. However, a high school athletic program must have regulations that do not involve unreasonable suppression of individual rights but will assume the survival of an effective athletic program. Mercer School athletic activities have the following goals:

- To develop leadership skills and responsibility.
- To show team spirit, encourage others and contribute to positive morale.
- To be fair and treat others as one wishes to be treated.
- To keep commitments to the team.
- To treat persons respectfully regardless of individual differences.
- To generate a sense of pride and unity in athletic programs for students, staff, and community.

Conduct of Mercer School Athletes

Participation in athletics is a privilege that must be earned. A person becomes an athlete through hard work, desire, sacrifice, and self-discipline. The privilege of participating in athletics at Mercer is offered to all boys and girls as long as they are willing to assume certain responsibilities.

Your first responsibility is to be a credit to yourself, but an even greater responsibility is to be a credit to your parents, school, and community. To accomplish your responsibilities, it is required that you:

1. Display high standards of social behavior.
2. Display proper respect for those in authority, including teachers, coaches, and officials.
3. Have a real spirit of cooperation and a coachable attitude.
4. Display outstanding sportsmanship and a desire to do your best.
5. Use appropriate language.
6. Keep yourself clean and neat at all times. Extremes in grooming and dress will not be tolerated.

Student-athletes set an example for other students to follow. Any actions unbecoming an athlete in or out of school will be dealt with by the coaches or as minor or major code violations.

General eligibility rules enforced twelve months a year

A well-disciplined mind is a requirement for a well-conditioned body. The combination of both makes a successful athlete. The best performance each person is capable of doing comes only after the body and mind have been conditioned through a regular training routine. This is why we have training rules.

This code applies to student-athletes, cheerleaders, and managers. It will be enforced on a year-round, twelve-month calendar, becoming effective on the first day of athletic participation at Mercer School. Senior Athletes are reminded that their situation does not signify the end of the training rules for spring sports.

This code or rule violations for student-athletes in 5th to 8th grade are cumulative. Once entering grade 9 all student-athletes' offenses start over but offenses are then cumulative until they graduate from high school.

These Rules of Eligibility are established by the WIAA and are supplemented with Mercer School District rules.

1. Enrollment in the Mercer School District as a full-time student for high school students.
2. A current physical exam form or alternate year card to participate in athletic activities as determined by a licensed physician.
3. An emergency medical card must be completed every year.
4. Athletic code of conduct contract signed by the student and parent/guardian.
5. Payment of all required athletic fines from previous years.

Constitution prevails

Any student may participate in interscholastic athletics in the Mercer School District as long as the student meets all WIAA requirements and refrains from any acts in violation of WIAA rules and School Board Athletic Policies. The Official WIAA Constitution, by-laws, regulations, and guidelines as set forth annually in the WIAA Handbook and received as a condition of membership by all schools, shall govern in all instances except as herein modified by local board policy. These rules include but are not limited to:

1. Having a current WIAA physical card, signed by the physician, on file with the athletic director. To be current, the physical must be taken after April 1st to qualify for the next two years.
2. Having a parent/student-athlete rules of eligibility acknowledgment sign-off form on file with the Athletic Director.
3. Having the appropriate parental permission card signed and on file with the athletic director.
4. Complying with all the rules and regulations of the coaching staff as reviewed and agreed upon by the athletic director and administration of the School District of Mercer. It shall be the duty of each head coach to review and discuss training rules and policies at the start of each season with the team members. It shall be the responsibility of the individual athlete to know the training rules as they pertain to each sport. Ignorance is no excuse.

Attendance

1. Excused and unexcused absences for athletes is identical to the policy as published in the Mercer Student Handbook
2. The student/athlete must be in attendance the entire day of the competition or the athlete is not permitted to compete in the event unless excused by the administrator. The Student/athlete is also expected to be in attendance the entire day following if the school is in session. Exceptions can only be approved by the District Administrator. Students that violate this attendance policy will be issued. 1) first offense-warning, or 2) second or subsequent offenses-student/athlete being held out of the next scheduled athletic contest.
3. Athletes are expected to attend all practices and contests. Injury or illness will be a legitimate excuse for absence. Other reasons for absence must be cleared with the coach. If extra help sessions conflict with practices, those obligations shall be fulfilled and the athlete will report to practice immediately after the session. The coach should be notified in advance if the athlete is going to miss part or all of any practice, otherwise, the coach might impose penalties.
4. Athletes who are suspended from school under the school disciplinary policy may not attend extracurricular events at home or away and may not practice nor participate in athletic events on the day(s) of suspension. If the duration of the suspension is over a weekend or a vacation period, the above language remains in effect.
5. To help foster a sense of team membership, student/athletes are expected to travel to and from out of town contests in school-provided transportation, unless the student's parents/guardians make arrangements with the coach to personally transport the student/athlete to/from the event. The parent must speak directly with the coach and provide the coach with a note, dated and signed, stating they are taking their child home. The School District of Mercer will not assume any responsibility for any student who misses the prescribed mode of transportation to a contest and attempts to travel to contest site on his/her own. The student/athlete may not be able to participate in the contest at the discretion of the coach. Exceptions will be made for excused absences as previously listed, and the Administrator is given a written note from the parent beforehand.

Academic Scholastic requirements

WIAA by-laws dictate scholastic requirements for Mercer School athletes with the exception that Mercer School Board Policy allows no athlete to receive a letter grade of an "F" in any academic subject for a nine-week grading period.

The marking periods that will be used to determine eligibility related to grades are:

- 1st quarter
 - 2nd quarter
 - 3rd quarter
 - 4th quarter
- A. Any athlete who receives a failing grade at the end of any quarter in one course will be suspended for academic ineligibility and monitored by the coach and athletic director. The Athlete will be ineligible for 20% of the total scheduled activities or contests. The

suspension will begin on the Monday following the posting of grades. If the suspension begins during the season, it will not carry over to the next season.

- B. If a student receives a grade of “F” in two or more courses during a quarter, the student will be ineligible for 50% of the total scheduled contest or games. If the suspension begins during the season, it will not carry over into the next season. The student will start his/her suspension on the Monday following the posting of grades.
- C. For marking period grades of “F”: Students, with approval and in consultation with their teacher(s) will have two weeks, starting on Monday following the posting of grades, to improve their grade. During or at the conclusion of the two-weeks, based on the determined grade(s), the athlete will regain immediate eligibility or be subject to the applicable code in points a or b above.

Code Violations

1. Minor Violations include, but are not limited to: curfew, unexcused and other absences, dress and grooming code, minor behavior violations, and failure to obey established rules in the classroom and in other areas. These may be based upon reports and referrals from school administration. The coach and/or athletic director, subject to the veto of administration and Board of Education, will determine penalties for these violations.
2. Any athlete who is suspended or expelled from school shall be ineligible for all athletic participation during the period of suspension or expulsion. Students in suspension during any part of a day will be ineligible to participate in any athletic competition or practices that day.
3. Major Violations- the Mercer School Athletic Code is in full accord with WIAA rules and will be followed on a year-round basis. Any Major Violation is a serious matter and subject to the most severe of disciplinary measures.
4. Major types of code violations include:
 - a. ATOD- Possession or use of alcoholic beverages or tobacco, e-cigs, or e-cig product (even if not nicotine), or vaping in any form. Purchasing, possession, selling, or use of any controlled drugs.
 - b. Criminal- Any conduct that is considered illegal, (theft valued at \$25 or more), vandalism, fighting, or criminal law violations, not including minor traffic violations.
 - c. Other- behavior unbecoming a student-athlete. Any student-athlete that is identified on a social networking site which depicts illegal or inappropriate behavior may be considered in violation of the athletic code. Behavior that is unbecoming a student-athlete includes academic dishonesty, bullying, cyberbullying, vandalism, poor sportsmanship, hazing, immoral or unacceptable conduct, possession or use of “look-alike” tobacco, vaping, drugs, or weapons.

Interpretations

Major violations for all areas above are cumulative, meaning that the 1st offense in one area shall be construed to a 1st offense in either area. Any violation and penalty occurring previous to this document shall be considered part of this document when considering the number of offenses.

“Holding” an alcoholic, tobacco, or controlled drug product shall be considered the use of

the product. Attendance at events where illegal use of such products is occurring is prohibited. Athletes should avoid placing themselves in situations where their guilt or innocence is questioned.

If an athlete is suspended for a major violation, the athlete will forfeit the right to any special post-season award, i.e., MVP, Most Improved' for that sport. Letter winners are to be determined in the normal fashion at the discretion of the coach. If the suspension carries into the next sport season or the next year, the athlete must finish that season in good standing and the suspension time served is counted toward the violation.

Penalties

Code or rule violations for student-athletes in 5th to 8th grade are cumulative. Once entering grade 9 all student-athletes' offenses start over.

Any minor athletic code violation(s) are administered by the individual coach/athletic director.

Major Code Violations

1. ATOD Consequences

1. First Violation- Violator will be suspended from athletic competition for 20 percent of the regular season scheduled contests in that sport (rounded up) and required to complete 10 hours of community service. A contest is defined according to the WIAA standard for maximum allowable contests. The athlete who has the game suspension from competition for their first offense is expected to practice with the team, attend all games, at the coach's discretion, and sit on the team bench in clothing appropriate for athletes attending games. If the student-athlete does not comply with this, the contest will not count as their suspension.
2. Second Violation -Violator will be suspended from further athletic competition for 50 percent of the total number of the regularly scheduled dates (rounded up) in which he/she is participating and required to complete 15 hours of community service. The student-athlete must undergo, at his/her expense, an AODA assessment performed by a community-based health organization/AODA treatment agency, along with any recommendations for a treatment or education program, which is prescribed by the assessors to confront the behaviors of use/abuse. The student-athlete will provide the athletic director written certification of compliance with recommendations prior to any reinstatement of participation. Student-athletes will continue to practice with the team during the suspension period. If less than 50 percent of the contests remain on the schedule, the remaining percentage of the suspension will carry over into the contests of the next sport in which the athlete participates.
3. Third and Subsequent Violations - The student-athlete will remain ineligible until one calendar year from the date of the imposition of the consequence and required to complete 25 hours of community service. The student-athlete must undergo, at his/her expense, an AODA assessment performed by a community-based health organization/AODA treatment agency, along with any treatment program, which is prescribed by the assessors to confront the continued behaviors of use/abuse. The

student-athlete will provide the athletic director written certification of completion of these steps prior to any reinstatement of participation. Student-athletes who want assistance with ATOD concerns may self-refer to a school counselor who will facilitate arrangements confidentially for initial screening with appropriate personnel.

2. **Criminal Violations** - The suspension for criminal violations shall be determined by school officials.
 - a. 1st offense minimum: Suspension of competition, in one (1) scheduled contest to be determined by the coach with communication to the Athletic Director. In addition, the suspended athlete must complete 10 hours of community/school service with the approval of the athletic director' within one month of conviction or after all appeals. The athlete who has the game suspension from competition for their first offense is expected to practice with the team, attend all games, at the coach's discretion, and sit on the team bench in clothing appropriate for athletes attending games. If the student-athlete does not comply with this, the contest will not count as their suspension.
 - b. 2nd offense: Suspension of competition of 20% of the regularly scheduled contests plus 15 hours of community/school service, with the approval of the athletic director, within one month of the violation. If less than that number of contest suspensions remain in the season, the suspension carries into the next athletic season in which the athlete participates.
 - c. 3rd Offense: One calendar year suspension, in all sports, from the date of the incident.
 - d. 4th offense: Permanent suspension from Mercer High School interscholastic athletic program.
3. **Other (behavior unbecoming of a student-athlete)**
 - a. The suspension for behavior unbecoming of a student-athlete shall be determined by school officials and follow the same consequences as criminal violations.
 - b. Inappropriate use of social media allows for additional consequences. Any violation for conduct unbecoming of a student-athlete via the inappropriate use of social media results in at least a 10% suspension penalty of total scheduled activities and contests and it will not carry over to the next season.

CODE VIOLATION SUSPENSIONS When a suspension is assessed the athletic director or building administrator shall send a letter to the parent(s)/guardian(s) informing them of the decision and the basis for it. A copy of the appeal process will be included.

In-Season Violation: Suspensions shall begin immediately upon determination that a violation has occurred.

Out-of-Season Violation: A suspension must be served in the next sport he/she chooses to participate in. The athlete must complete that sport season in good standing as determined by the Head Coach in that sport. Failure to complete the entire season in good standing will result in the full suspension carrying forward into the next sport season.

Repeated offenses in the same category of the offense shall be interpreted as a signal that a destructive pattern is emerging. The priority of the Mercer School District is student welfare and education. Therefore, if after a second or third major code violation in the areas listed under major violations, the athlete and /or family seek out a professional assessment and counseling appropriate to the offense, the athlete may petition the athletic board to consider reducing the penalty by one half. To be considered for penalty reduction, the athlete must provide the athletic board with a written program with content, method, goals and completion requirements signed by the counselor.

Professional assessment and counseling programs include but are not limited to Smoking Cessation, AODA programs, Anger Management, Coping Skills, Stress Management, and individual counseling programs. The approval for the program shall come from the athletic board with input from appropriate staff such as the Medical Director, School Psychologist or Iron Count Social Services, as warranted.

If the athletic board approves the program and reduces the penalty, the student will be notified. Attendance documentation will be required and submitted weekly to the athletic director. If the athlete withdraws from the program without written counselor approval the full penalty will be immediately reinstated.

Appeals Board

In any case, where a major violation has occurred and is being contested/challenged, a meeting of the Appeals Board shall be called.

1. The board is composed of the athletic director, all head coaches of the high school teams, one non-coaching teacher and one representative from the middle school coaching staff. The administrator is an ex-officio member and has a vote only in case of tie votes among regular members. Each member of the committee has one vote only even if they coach multiple teams.
2. The athletic director is chairman of the board and conducts business in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order.
3. Three members plus one administrator constitute a quorum and a simple majority conducts business.
4. The athletic director will serve as a fact-finder for all reported violations and will enforce all penalties set forth and have jurisdiction in any matters not listed in the athletic code.

Procedures Reporting and Handling Violations

1. A person witnessing and or reporting a violation of the athletic code must submit a written statement to the athletic director of the alleged violation. The infraction should be submitted in a timely fashion. No more than the present academic year or the upcoming academic year if the infraction occurred in the previous summer. The statement shall include the time, place and type of violation and be properly signed. The person submitting the statement shall be made aware that the accused athletic code violator/parents will have access to the complaint.

2. A written confession made by a student/athlete personally shall be cause for disciplinary proceedings.
3. The athletic director will investigate and identify penalties for alleged violations of the athletic code. A fact-finding meeting, with the athletic director and coach, shall be held to make an initial determination on the violation prior to the next contest, if possible.
4. If sufficient collaborative evidence is found the athletic director will notify, both verbally and in writing, the student-athlete and parents involved. The athlete shall be informed of his rights of “Due Process” of what the alleged violation is, and the date and time of the athletic board hearing.
5. A report of all disciplinary measures taken in the case of infractions by athletes shall be reported, in writing, to the athletic director and school administration, so a file may be kept for future reference. The administration shall keep the Board of Education appropriately informed.

Due Process

1. The athletic board will hold a hearing prior to the next contest, if possible, with the student-athlete and/or parents so that they may present their side of the issue. The student-athlete may waive this hearing and the board will determine a penalty based on the athletic code violation penalties and the collaborative evidence.
2. The athletic board will review the evidence presented at the hearing and make a ruling as to whether the athlete has committed a violation of the training rules. Results of the hearing shall be sent to the athlete and parents within three (3) school days. Informing them of any penalty involved.
3. Athletes who are not satisfied with the decision of the athletic board may appeal the decision to a higher authority. The following steps should be taken:
 - A. Within three school days, after the athlete is notified of the athletic board decision, the athlete may file a grievance in written form, with the District Administrator, to be reviewed by the Board of Education. The Board shall consider the appeal in executive session within (20) calendar days of receipt of the appeal. Notification of the board’s final decision will be in writing within three (3) calendar days of the executive session.
 - B. If the athlete and/or parents remain dissatisfied, a review by the Executive Office of the WIAA may be requested through the school.
 - C. The final appeal is the Board of Control of the WIAA.

Additional Rules

Any coach of any sport is vested with the authority to enforce reasonable rules of conduct and training which go beyond those specifically outlined either by WIAA or by School Board policy but must be sure that those rules have been distributed in writing to each athlete involved. Rules and regulation, including the penalties for violation thereof, must go to the athlete, athletic director, and District Administrator. This document does not supersede the Student Handbook but is in addition to, the Student Handbook. Therefore, all rules in the Student Handbook and all School Board policies, apply to all students, including athletes.

Complaints

Any person that has a concern and/or complaint about a Mercer athletic program shall contact the coach of the program first. If the person is not satisfied with the coach's decision, the concerned complainant shall then contact the athletic director. If they still have no resolution then the District Administrator should be contacted.

Summary

To be eligible for athletic competition, an athlete must:

1. Follow the Code of Conduct for Mercer Athletes
2. Obey all training rules and regulation
3. Remain scholastically eligible
4. Have a current physical examination form on file in the athletic director's office
5. Have a current parents' permission form on file in the athletic director's office
6. Have a current athletic code commitment form signed by the athlete and parent filed in the athletic director's office

Athletic staff and administration believe that the Athletic Code will give their parents a better understanding of our athletic program's rules and what it takes to be an athlete at the Mercer School. We ask parents for commitment and cooperation in enforcing these rules and hope that a student athlete's hard and diligent work in their athletic career helps to make them a more mature citizen.

School District of Mercer Athletics Commitment Form

This is a commitment that you should consider carefully, with serious regard for the responsibilities you must accept. After reading the Athletic Code and Policies, please read the following, sign, date, and return the form to your Coach or the Athletic Director. This form must be completed, returned, and on file before any athletic participation can take place.

I, _____, promise to abide by all of the rules and regulations set forth by my school and my coaches. I agree to assume full responsibility for all equipment issued to me and to confine the use of such equipment to practice, games, or meets. I will practice as faithfully as possible the fundamental skills of the game. I will at all times conduct myself in a manner that will be a credit to myself, my family, my school, my community, and my team. I will try to create interest in athletics, not only in adults, but in future players younger than myself.

I am proud to be a Mercer Athlete. My goal is to make our team one that we can all be proud of a championship team.

Date

Athlete's Signature

I, as a parent of _____, have read and understand the eligibility requirements, rules and policies for athletic participation at the School District of Mercer. I will do my best to encourage my son/daughter in every way possible to abide by these requirements and rules and hereby give my permission for my son/daughter to participate under these conditions.

I also give my permission for the District to summon emergency first aid and /or transportation for _____, should it be deemed necessary.

Date

Parents Signature

Date Filed

Athletic Directors Signature