

NORTHWESTERN LOCAL SCHOOLS

Communication Guide - Athletics

Introduction

We are extremely pleased that your son/daughter has chosen to participate in the interscholastic athletic programs of Northwestern Local Schools.

A goal of the athletic department is to create an environment in which our athletes' extracurricular experiences will be as rewarding as possible. Maintaining open lines of communication is essential in creating this type of environment.

It is inevitable in any organization that concerns or questions will arise. What is most important is not that they arise, but that they are appropriately addressed.

It is our belief that concerns or questions are best addressed as close to their origins as possible. Common courtesy dictates that the staff members directly involved in an issue should be given the opportunity to address it first. Most conflicts can be addressed appropriately in this manner.

If a complaint cannot be resolved in this manner, then administrative involvement may become necessary. The appropriate chain of command to follow in such cases is listed later in this guide.

The staff and administration will make a concerted effort to address questions, concerns, and complaints appropriately. Issues that reach the administrative level will be investigated fully and fairly. However, in fairness to staff members, anonymous complaints will not be addressed.

Parent / Guardian / Coach Relationship

Both parenting and coaching are extremely difficult vocations, but maintaining open lines of communication can make both jobs easier. Communication is a two-way street. By trying to understand the reasons for each other's actions, we can create a more positive environment for our athletes. As a parent of an athlete, you have the right to understand the expectations being placed on your child. This all starts with clear communication from the coach.

Communication Parent(s) / Guardian(s) Should Expect From the Coach

- Expectations the coach has for members of the team, including your child
- Locations, dates, and times of practices and contests
- Team requirements – fees, special equipment, eligibility, attendance, off-season strength and conditioning
- Procedures to follow if your child is injured
- Athletic policy and any additional rules and regulations of the team
- Requirements to earn a varsity letter
- Discipline that results in the denial of your child's participation

It is our hope that all our athletes will experience some of the most rewarding times of their lives through their participation in our programs. It is important to understand that things may not always go as you or your child wish. At these times, discussion with the coach may be desirable to clarify questions and avoid any misunderstanding.

Communication the Coach Expects From the Parent(s) / Guardian(s)

- Express concerns directly to the coach first and at the appropriate time
- Notify the coach of any schedule conflicts well in advance
- Notify the coach of any special needs of the athlete
- Express specific concerns in regard to a coach's expectations

Appropriate concerns to Discuss with a Coach

- The treatment of your child mentally and physically
- Ways to help your child improve

- Concerns about your child's behavior

Inappropriate Areas to Discuss with a Coach

- Playing time
- Play calling
- Positions assignment
- Team strategy
- Any matter concerning other athletes

Procedure to Follow if a Parent Has a Concern With a Coach

- Contact the coach to set up an appointment
- If the coach cannot be reached after a reasonable number of attempts, contact the Athletic Director
- DO NOT ATTEMPT TO CONFRONT A COACH BEFORE, DURING, OR AFTER A CONTEST OR PRACTICE SESSION. These can be emotional times for all parties involved and do not promote resolution.

The Next Step

What can a parent/guardian do if the meeting with the coach does not provide a satisfactory result? Although total agreement may never be reached, the parent may contact the Athletic Director to discuss the situation. Then the appropriate next step will be determined. However, both parties may agree to disagree and there may not be a next step.

Chain of Command

Northwestern Local Schools and the Athletic Department follow the chain of command listed below:

- 1. Assistant Coach (if applicable)**
- 2. Head Coach**
- 3. Athletic Director**
- 4. Building Principal**
- 5. Superintendent**

Communicating With Your Children

- As the parent of an athlete, let them know that win or lose, scared or heroic, you love them, appreciate their efforts and are not disappointed in them. This will allow them to do their best without fear of failure. Be the person in their life they can look to for constant positive reinforcement.
- Try your best to be completely honest concerning your child's athletic ability, competitive attitude, sportsmanship, and actual skill level.
- Be helpful, but do not coach them. It is tough not to; however, it is much tougher for the athlete to be flooded with advice and critical instruction from multiple sources, particularly when those sources are in conflict with one another.
- Teach them to enjoy the thrill of competition, of giving their best effort, and of working to improve their skills and attitudes. Help them develop the feeling of competing, trying hard, and having fun.
- Try not to relive your athletic career through your child in a way that creates pressure. You were frightened, backed off at times, and were not always heroic. Do not pressure your child because of your pride. Athletes need the support of their parent(s)/guardian(s), so please do not withdraw. Remember, there is a thinking, feeling, sensitive, free-spirit in that uniform; one who needs a lot of understanding, especially when things do not always go the right way. If they are comfortable with you win or lose, they are on their way to maximum achievement and enjoyment.
- Do not compete with the coach. If your child is receiving mixed messages from two different authority figures, he/she will likely become disenchanted. Criticism of the coach to your child puts the student/athlete in a terrible "no win" situation.
- Do not compare the skill, courage, or attitude of your child with other members of the team.
- Always remember that children have a tendency to exaggerate both when praised and when criticized. Temper your reaction and investigate before over-reacting. Many times athletes will define all coach criticism as being "yelled at".
- Make a point of understanding courage and the fact that it is relative. Some people will climb mountains and are afraid to fly. Most people are frightened in certain areas. Explain that courage is not the absence of fear, but a means of doing something in spite of fear and discomfort.

- Remember that while it is difficult to watch your child struggle, the fact is that we all learn more from trials and tribulations than from absolute success. Athletics can be invaluable in teaching this lesson in life. Be careful not to “rescue” your child from all disappointments. Provide support through tough time and give guidance on how to deal with frustrations, but allow him/her to work through his/her own solutions.

Athletes Fair Play Code

- I will participate because I want to, not just because my parents or coaches want me to.
- I will play by the rules and in the spirit of the game.
- I will control my temper, since fighting and disrespect can spoil the activity for everyone.
- I will respect my opponents.
- I will do my best to try to be a true team player.
- I will remember that winning is not everything. Having fun, improving my skills, making friends, and doing my best are also important.
- I will acknowledge all good plays or performances by both my teammates and my opponents.
- I will remember that coaches and officials are there to help me. I will accept their decisions, show them respect and understand they have given their time to be with me.

Coaches Fair Play Code

- I will be reasonable when scheduling games and practices, remembering that young people have other interests and obligations.
- I will teach my athletes to play fairly and to respect the rules, officials, and opponents.
- I will ensure that all athletes receive instruction, support, and opportunities.
- I will not ridicule my athletes for making mistakes or performing poorly. I will remember that young people play to have fun and must be encouraged to have confidence in themselves.
- I will remember that young people need a coach they can respect. I will praise my athletes for a job well done and set a good example.
- I will make sure that equipment and facilities are safe and match the athlete’s ages and abilities.
- I will obtain proper training and continue to upgrade my coaching skills.

Family/Fan Fair Play Code

- I will remember that young people play sports for their enjoyment, not to entertain me.
- I will not have unrealistic expectations and will understand that doing one’s best is as important as winning. I understand that ridiculing an athlete for making a mistake is not acceptable behavior.
- I will respect the official’s decisions and will encourage all participants to do the same.
- I will respect and show appreciation for the coaches and understand that they have given their time to provide sport activities for our young people.
- I will encourage athletes and coaches to play by the rules and to resolve conflicts without resorting to hostility or violence.
- I will show respect for my team’s opponents, because I realize there would be no game without them.
- I will not use bad language and will not make negative comments toward the athletes, coaches, officials, or other spectators.
- I will always show good sportsmanship since young people learn best by example.

We hope that the information provided in this guide has been helpful. Thank you for your support of Northwestern Athletics.

ANY VIOLATION OF THE ABOVE MAY RESULT IN REMOVAL FROM A CONTEST OR IF REPEATED OCCURANCES, MAY RESULT IN BEING BANNED.

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Extra-Curricular Code of Conduct & Communication Guide

After both student and parents have studied these policies, please return this page with all required information and signatures. This page will be kept on file in the Athletic Department Office (athletics) or by the extra-curricular advisor to cover any activity in which the student participates during the school year. Retain the copy of the Extra-Curricular Code of Conduct for your reference.

Student Name (print)

Student signature

Date

Parent or guardian signature

Date