



Student and Parent Athletic Handbook

1st – 12th Grades
2021-2022

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Athletic Program Purpose

The purpose of our athletics program is to support the Academy's mission through athletic competition. Specifically, the program focuses on the character formation and physical development of student-athletes in order that they reach their fullest potential.

Athletics play an important role in the formation of the student in body, mind, and soul. While athletics contribute to physical fitness and can result in the joy of winning, most importantly they act as a school of virtue, including vital virtues such as perseverance, sportsmanship, teamwork, friendship, and humility.

Athletics through the 6th grade level focus on character development, learning the sport, and enjoying the team and competitive atmosphere.

Athletics in 7th and 8th grade continue to focus on character development, but begin to add emphasis on competing at the highest levels and enjoying the fruits of success.

At the high school level, while teams compete to win, character formation is still the primary objective. Players and coaches must never forego an opportunity to practice or grow in virtue in favor of winning at any cost.

Every Aquinas Academy student is encouraged to participate in athletics. Even students who are not athletically inclined can choose an appropriate sport, and work to gain satisfaction in meeting the sport's physical and mental challenges.

All involved in Aquinas Academy Athletics are expected to work towards fulfillment of these goals, giving glory to God in action and in speech.

No Cut Policy

This policy ensures that any student who wishes to participate is free from the fear of not making the team due to current ability level, lack of experience, or any other reason.

In the event that a team has too many participants, the department will make every effort to create a second team so that every participant has the opportunity to play. The first team (varsity in the high school, “navy” in the lower and middle school) will be composed of the more advanced athletes, while the second team (junior varsity in the high school, “gray” in the lower and middle school) will be made up of those athletes that need more development.

No Quit Policy

This policy is, in a certain sense, the flip-side of the “No Cut Policy.” It ensures that athletes follow through with their commitments and that a team will not lose players once the season has begun.

Persevering through difficulty and fulfilling one’s commitments are important lessons that can be learned through athletics. Therefore, any student that makes a commitment to a team will not be permitted to quit the team once a season has begun.

Students are expected to fulfill their commitment to the team by attending all practices, games, and meetings during the season. If a student is unable to attend an event, he/she must notify the coach as soon as possible. Consequences for unexcused absences are at the coach’s discretion, in consultation with the athletic department.

When a season ends, students are not obligated to participate in the following season.

Sportsmanship Policy

Aquinas Academy continually expects students, athletes, coaches, and parents to behave in a sportsmanlike manner.

Aquinas Academy students, athletes, coaches, and parents shall, at all times, represent themselves and their school with proper conduct, integrity, and good sportsmanship. They must understand that competitive rivalries are encouraged but disrespect toward opponents, officials, coaches, or fans will not be tolerated and runs contrary to the philosophy and mission of this school.

Student-athletes shall fully comply with the rulings of the officials, and in no way, either by voice or gesture, demonstrate dissatisfaction with decisions that are made.

As representatives of their school, Aquinas Academy students, athletes, coaches, and parents shall conduct themselves in the proper manner at all times, both as spectators and athletic participants.

Academic Eligibility

Students who are failing will not be permitted to participate in practices or games until they have brought their grades up to a D.

This policy will help students see that academics are a priority and they must learn to balance the academic workload with the rigors of athletics. Ineligible students are not permitted to attend any practices or games.

When a student becomes academically ineligible, the parents, coaches, and athletic director will be notified. These same individuals will be notified once the student becomes academically eligible to participate.

Playing Time Policies

1st through 4th Grades: At this level, the sports program is offered as an introduction to athletics and focuses on developmental. Basic skills and fundamentals are taught. Playing time should be as equal as possible.

5th through 8th Grades: Student-athletes begin to compete more rigorously at this level. Coaches should make every effort to ensure each player has some playing time in each game, but the amount is at the coaches' discretion and may be based on ability, attendance at practices, enthusiasm, competitive spirit, physical conditioning, and game situations.

If resources permit, additional teams may be formed on the basis of player proficiency so that developing athletes have additional opportunity for playing time.

High School: This is our highest level of competition, in which teams are striving to win. Participants have a right to practice time, but playing time is earned. The more advanced players will see more playing time in an effort to achieve victory.

At each level, if the result of a competition is no longer in question (as either a win or loss), coaches are highly encouraged to distribute playing time among athletes.

Conflict Resolution Policy

Unfortunately athletics within a school setting can sometimes result in interpersonal conflict. In such situations, parents, athletes, and coaches should put into practice the Catholic principle of subsidiarity and attempt to resolve the conflict at the lowest level possible.

For example, issues with playing time should first be discussed between athlete and coach. If they are unable to come to a resolution, then the parent should discuss with the coach. If unable to come to resolution, the parent and coach should work with the

athletic director. Only after failure at each of these levels should the parent involve higher levels of authority such as the Head of School.

Supplemental Player Policy

There may be instances in which a team lacks enough rostered players to field a team. This could be due to shortage of players at a grade level (e.g. not enough players for 4th grade soccer, so 3rd graders are asked to “play up”) or due to a shortage of players on a team (e.g. not enough high school girls soccer players, so other female high school athletes asked to crossover).

The coach will work with the athletic department to source additional players in a transparent and equitable basis, keeping in mind that sometimes awareness of the need happens at the last minute and sourcing must happen in an expedited manner.

Coaches will follow the playing time policies above, albeit with a bias towards regularly rostered players. If you/your child wish to be on the “short-list” of those considered, please indicate this to the appropriate athletic director and/or coaches at the start of the season.

Same Season Multi-Sport Athletes

In some cases, an athlete may sign up for multiple sports in a single season. Due to inevitable conflicts between the schedules of each team, the player and parents should work with the coaches to establish a plan for when the player will be at each team’s practices and games.

Coaches of the teams effected are also encouraged to coordinate with one another on an acceptable schedule. The athletic department will make every effort to minimize conflicts, especially with section competitions.

Transportation Policy

The school will provide transportation to athletic events whenever possible. Priority is placed on high school events and events immediately during or after school. However, when transportation cannot be provided, parents will be informed and encouraged to coordinate carpools to minimize the burden. Students cannot transport other students to events unless parent permission is granted.

Policy for Adding and Removing Athletic Offerings

The Athletic Department may add new sports to the athletic program when there is sufficient interest, enough participants to offer the new sport, enough projected future participants, and when the Department and Board believe that it is in the best interest of Aquinas Academy.

The Athletic Department may remove a sport offered when there is insufficient interest among players and families to maintain the offering, or when the Department and Board believe that it is in the best interest of Aquinas Academy.

Preparticipation Requirements

Athletes must have the following completed in order to be eligible to participate:

- Register for each sport via FinalForms
- Pay required athletic registration fees
- Submit the proper physical or physician release forms
 - The “Parent and Physician Release Form” is required for athletes grades 1-6
 - The PIAA CIPPE Section 7 is required for athletes grades 7-12. This form may not be completed earlier than June 1 of the upcoming school year and shall be effective until May 31 of the following year, or the conclusion of the spring sports season.

- Complete a baseline concussion test for contact sports in grades 7-12.
 - Testing is offered through the school at the start of the season, or can be completed through one's own physician, with evidence of completion submitted to the athletic department.

High School Sports Offered

Girls Sports:

- Fall: Soccer, Field Hockey, Cross Country, Golf
- Winter: Basketball, Fencing
- Spring: Lacrosse, Track

Boys Sports:

- Fall: Soccer, Cross Country, Golf
- Winter: Basketball, Fencing
- Spring: Lacrosse, Track, Volleyball

The majority of our high school teams compete in the Western Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic League (WPIAL). Co-ops may be available for other sports (e.g. ice hockey, tennis, etc.). In addition, some athletes may be able to compete independently in some sports, e.g. swimming. If interested in these alternate offerings, please contact the Athletic Department.

Lower and Middle School Sports Offered

Fall Sports:

- Soccer – Co-ed teams from 3rd-8th grade
- Field Hockey – Girls from 5th-8th grade
- Cross Country – Boys and Girls from 3rd-8th grade
- Volleyball – Co-op with Blessed Trinity Academy for Girls from 5th-8th grade

Winter Sports:

- Basketball – Boys and Girls teams from 3rd-8th grade
- Fencing – Boys and Girls from 6th-8th grade

Spring Sports:

- Soccer – Co-ed teams from 1st-8th grade

- Lacrosse* – Girls teams from 5th-8th grade
- Track – Boys and Girls from 3rd-8th grade
- Intramural Tennis – Girls from 5th-8th grade

Most of our lower and middle school teams compete in the Diocese of Pittsburgh leagues against parochial schools. We also schedule independent games against other local schools. Intramural sports are “in-house” and typically will focus on skill development rather than competition against other schools.

**Our 3rd through 8th boys often play Lacrosse in the Spring with the local North Pittsburgh Saints club team.*

Athletic Awards

Varsity Letter A letter will be awarded to any high school student who participates in half or more of the games at the varsity level in a given season.

Middle School: A pin and pennant will be awarded to any student that participates on any of the teams offered.

The Sportsmanship Award - The Aquinas Academy Sportsmanship Award honors student-athletes in 7th – 12th grades who, through their actions in the competitive arena of athletics, have demonstrated one or more of the ideals of sportsmanship, including fairness, civility, honesty, unselfishness, respect and responsibility. The award is chosen by the coach and athletic director and is given to that student-athlete who is outstanding in the display of sportsmanship during the year.

The Most Valuable Player Award - The Aquinas Academy Most Valuable Player Award honors student-athletes in 7th – 12th grades who, through their actions in the competitive arena of athletics, have had the most positive influence on their team through their superior performance, willingness to always boost the spirits of team members, and their continued leadership in practice and during games. The award is chosen by the coach and athletic

director and given to that student-athlete who if he or she were removed from the team, the team's ability to contend would change drastically and has leadership skills that take his teammates to a higher level.

The Most Improved Player Award - The Aquinas Academy Most Improved Player Award honors student-athletes in 7th – 12th grades who, through their actions in the competitive arena of athletics, have shown the most positive growth over the course of a season in their respected sports. The award is chosen by the coach and the athletic director and is given to that student-athlete that has demonstrated a new understanding of the sport both in terms of their mental knowledge of the game and their ability to play at a new level from the start of the season.

The Scholar-Athlete Award –The Aquinas Academy Scholar Athlete Award is given annually to those scholar-athletes in 6th – 12th grades that have maintained a minimum unweighted GPA of 3.5, as well as, show outstanding leadership as an athlete, as a student, and in other scholastic endeavors. The scholar-athlete award is chosen by the coaches and athletic director and is given to athletes that maintain high academic standards along with a willingness to do their best in the arena of athletics.

Aquinas Academy Crusader Senior Letterman Award – The Aquinas Academy Crusader Senior Letterman Award honors student-athletes that have participated in their senior year. The award recognizes the sport participated in, the year or years of participation, and individual and team accomplishments of seniors throughout their athletic career.

The Outstanding Athlete of the Year Award - The Aquinas Academy Outstanding Athlete of the Year Award is given annually to the scholar-athlete in the high school that continually demonstrates superior performance in the sport or sports he/she has participated in. The award is chosen by the coaches and athletic director and is given to one male and one female athlete in the high school that strives to reach his/her potential in all aspects of competitive sports participation and makes a positive impact on

their respective team or teams. (This award can only be received once during a student's four years in the high school.)

AQUINAS ACADEMY of PITTSBURGH

“A school in the Catholic Tradition: Academic Excellence, Lifelong Values”

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