SHALER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT



STUDENT-ATHLETE HANDBOOK

(Revised April 2026)

Shaler Area School District

Student-Athlete Policy

The following information is provided to assure that the students and parents/guardians of Shaler Area School District are properly and adequately informed of the policies, procedures, and guidelines relating to interscholastic athletics. These policies apply to all students connected to the athletic programs and shall govern athletes, managers, statisticians, mascots, and cheerleaders.

The Board of Directors shall set policy for the operation of the athletic program within the Shaler Area School District and will make all decisions as are required by law. The Shaler Area Athletic Department will follow guidelines as outlined in SASD Board Policy #122 and #123.

Approved Sports

Baseball
Basketball
Bowling
Cross Country
Competitive Cheer
Football
Flag Football
Golf
Soccer
Softball
Swimming
Volleyball
Tennis
Track & Field
Wrestling

Club Sports

Ice Hockey
Inline Hockey
Slow Pitch Softball
Unified Bocce

Athletic Administration

Athletic Affiliations

Shaler Area School District is a participating member of the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (P.I.A.A.), District 7 (WPIAL), and the Big 56 Athletic Conference.

Communication

Students/Parents/Guardians are urged to use the proper line of communication when questions or situations arise: All discussions should adhere to a 24-hour waiting period to allow time for reflection.

Communication Flow:

1. **Student-Athlete to Coach**
2. **Parent with Student-Athlete to Coach**
3. **Coach with Parent and Student-Athlete to Athletic Director**
4. **Involvement of Central Office Administration/School Board**

Athletic Awards

Athletic awards will be determined and distributed by the coaches. In rare instances the Director of Athletics can administer awards. The general rule for earning a varsity letter is participation in at least half of the varsity "minutes" of competition (quarters, matches, meets, etc.) or its equivalent.

Cancellation of Scheduled Athletic Events

The Director of Athletics or designee will make the decision on cancellations.

- If school is cancelled before the day begins, the Superintendent may authorize

school-sponsored and non-school sponsored activities to continue, but participation by students is strictly voluntary.

- If school is cancelled before the day begins, all Junior High athletic events are cancelled but the Superintendent may allow students to participate in tournaments.
- If school is cancelled during the day and students are dismissed early, all school-sponsored and non-school sponsored activities, except for tournaments and post-season athletic competitions (district or state playoffs), will be cancelled. Any other requests for exceptions must be directed to the Director of Athletics and also the Superintendent.

Extra-curricular Severe Weather Plan

For the safety of the students, players and/or spectators of extra-curricular events, Shaler Area School District has developed a Severe Weather Plan. When severe weather threatens the safety of spectators and participants, an event official may make a decision to direct spectators and participants to evacuate the event.

- **For evacuation of indoor activities,** established and posted evacuation plans should be followed to a safe location within the building.
- **For evacuation of outdoor activities,** everyone will vacate to their own vehicle, team bus, or to the designated safe location within the closest school building as directed by officials.

You may be asked to follow additional procedures by school employees if the severe weather should warrant additional safety measures.

Parent/Guardian Meeting

The head coach will arrange a mandatory parent/guardian meeting at the beginning of the sport season to distribute and explain team rules, coaching expectations, and the Student-Athlete Handbook. Students will not be permitted to participate in games or competitions until this information has been passed along to parents/guardians and all forms have been signed.

Transportation

Coaches, athletic teams and cheerleaders will be transported by school district transportation or approved charter carriers to and from ALL athletic events.

To protect the students, their families and the school district against unwarranted liability, all final transportation arrangements, agreements and contracts will be performed by the school district transportation department under the direct supervision of the Superintendent or his/her designee. Any individual or group electing to act independently, without regard for this provision of the policy will automatically lose the School Board sanction and all protection connected thereto.

- Students must return to the point of departure on school vehicles.
- Students not returning to the point of departure on school vehicles must submit a written request from their parents to the Director of Athletics or his/her designee for approval **in advance** of the activity. **Students may be permitted to return in such cases with parents or legal guardians ONLY. The Director of Athletics may grant an exception to this rule.** Coaches are to have a sign-out sheet at each event for parents to sign out their student athlete.
- In the event of an emergency, when the Director of Athletics is not available, the person in charge of the activity may release a student to a parent or guardian upon receipt of written request by the parent or guardian.

College Athletics Information

Participation in collegiate athletics requires proactive planning, organization, and communication throughout the recruiting process. Student-athletes and their parents/guardians are primarily responsible for managing this process, including communication with college coaches and completing requirements through the NCAA Eligibility Center.

High school coaches serve as important resources and are available to provide guidance, share game film, and communicate with college programs when appropriate.

NCAA Eligibility Center **LINK:** https://web3.ncaa.org/ecwr3/

It is the responsibility of the student athlete who plans on participating in Intercollegiate Athletics at the Division I or II level to register with the N.C.A.A. Eligibility Center online and notify the guidance office to have a transcript sent.

Collegiate Celebratory Signing Event

The Shaler Area Athletic Department will host a celebratory signing event for all student-athletes who will be continuing their athletic careers at the post-secondary level. This celebration includes *all* athletes—both scholarship and non-scholarship—who are competing at any collegiate level. The celebratory signing event **will take place in *April/May*** of the school year. Individual signings for athletes will no longer go through the athletic department.

Requirements to Participate:

1. Student-athletes are asked to bring a copy of their athletic scholarship offer letter, NCAA celebratory signing form, or other official letter from your college/university to "sign" on Signing Day.
2. *Registration* – Sign-ups will open at least one month prior to the event through the Athletic Office.

Student-Athlete Rules & Expectations

Off-Campus and Co-Curricular Activities/Discipline

The Shaler Area District considers participating in co-curricular/interscholastic activities to be a privilege. The Shaler Area School District has the right to adopt and enforce reasonable rules and regulations governing participation in co-curricular/interscholastic activities.

District Policy #218 this policy shall also apply to student conduct that occurs off school property and would otherwise violate the Code of Student Conduct if any of the following circumstances exist:

1. The conduct occurs during the time the student is traveling to and from school or traveling to and from school-sponsored activities, whether or not via school district furnished transportation.
2. The student is a member of an extracurricular activity and has been notified that particular off-campus conduct could result in exclusion from such activities.

3. Student expression or conduct materially and substantially disrupts the operations of the school, or the administration reasonably anticipates that the expression or conduct is likely to materially and substantially disrupt the operations of the school.
4. The conduct has a direct nexus to attendance at school or a school-sponsored activity, for example, a transaction conducted outside of school pursuant to an agreement made in school that would violate the Code of Student Conduct if conducted in school.
5. The conduct involves the theft or vandalism of school property.
6. There is otherwise a nexus between the proximity or timing of the conduct in relation to the student's attendance at school or school-sponsored activities.

Conduct which may not result in exclusion from school under Policy 218 may still result in denial of the privilege of participating in athletic or co-curricular activities notwithstanding where the conduct occurred.

Student-athletes serve as visible representatives of our school. Their conduct, attitude, and choices, both on and off the field, including in the community and online, reflect on the entire school community and play an important role in shaping school spirit and pride.

Student-athletes are expected to follow all school policies, athletic department guidelines, and team expectations established by their coach. Failure to meet these standards may result in disciplinary action, including restricted or revoked participation, as involvement in interscholastic athletics is a privilege.

Hazing

The District Hazing Policy #247 is summarized below. For the entire hazing policy refer to the Shaler Area School District Website and school board policies.

Hazing is “defined as any activity that recklessly or intentionally endangers the mental health, physical health, or safety of a student for the purpose of initiation or membership in or affiliation with any organization recognized by the Board.”

The purpose of this policy is to maintain a safe, positive environment for students and staff that is free from hazing. Hazing activities of any type are inconsistent with the educational goals of the district and are prohibited at all times.

Drug and Alcohol Policy

The School Board of the Shaler Area School District recognizing that the misuse of chemicals is a serious problem with legal, physical, emotional and social implications for the whole school community, adopts the position that students must be chemically free in order that they may develop in the most productive and healthy manner.

It is therefore, by following SASD Board Policy 227.1, this district’s policy to prevent and prohibit the possession and/or use, mimic of use, sale, and/or mimic of sale, distribution, and/or intent of distribution of any illegal or controlled mood-altering chemical medication or abused chemical not approved by past policy, on school property, at school-sponsored events, on school buses and in route to and from school by any mode of travel. Policy 227.1 invokes timed suspensions from team activities dependent upon the number of violations and the timing of the violation.

Uniforms and Equipment Responsibility

Each student athlete is required to return all school-issued uniforms and/or equipment within the time limits established by the coach. Lost, stolen, or damaged uniforms and/or equipment must be paid for by the student-athlete, parent or guardian. Any student who has not accounted for uniforms/equipment will not be issued any other school uniforms/equipment until said uniforms/equipment are accounted for. Athletic awards will not be issued until the participant has returned all assigned athletic uniforms and/or equipment.

Responsibilities of Student Athletes

Student-athletes are expected to uphold the following responsibilities:

1. **Commitment & Communication**
   Attend all practices, meetings, and competitions, arriving on time and prepared. Communicate promptly with coaches regarding absences, conflicts, or concerns.
2. **Health, Safety & Wellness**
   Prioritize personal health and team safety by maintaining proper hygiene, using equipment responsibly, and reporting injuries, illnesses, or wellness concerns to coaches and athletic staff.
3. **Respectful Behavior**
   Demonstrate respect for teammates, coaches, officials, opponents, and school staff at all times, both in-person and online.
4. **Sportsmanship**
   Display positive sportsmanship in victory and defeat, encouraging teammates and representing the program with integrity.
   a. “Good sportsmanship involves a commitment to fair play, ethical behavior, and integrity. In perception and practice, sportsmanship is defined as these qualities which are characterized by generosity and genuine concern for others. The ideals of sportsmanship apply equally to all activity disciplines. Individuals, regardless of their role in activities, are expected to be aware of their influence on the behavior of others and model good sportsmanship.” (National Federation of High School Associations).
5. **Accountability & Integrity**
   Take responsibility for actions and decisions, both on and off the field, and uphold honesty and integrity in all situations.
6. **Representation of School & Community**
   Represent the school with pride through appropriate dress, behavior, and conduct at school, events, and in the community.
7. **Substance-Free Participation**
   Refrain from the use, possession, or distribution of tobacco, alcohol, vaping products, or illegal substances. Violations will result in disciplinary action in accordance with Board policy.
8. **Academic Responsibility**
   Maintain strong academic habits by attending classes, completing assignments, and seeking support when needed.
9. **Time Management & Responsibility**
   Balance academic, athletic, and personal responsibilities, including commitments at home, school, and in the community.
10. **Positive Team Culture**
    Contribute to a safe, inclusive, and supportive team environment where all individuals feel valued and respected.

Rules Governing Student-Athlete Eligibility

Residency: Students must be residents of the Shaler Area School District and comply with PIAA Requirements. Cyber, Charter, Home School and Private School students who live in the Shaler Area School District are permitted to participate in SASD sports that their school does not offer. For non-SASD students, the parents/guardians and/or their school administration is required to provide weekly eligibility and attendance information to the school.

Transfers: Students who have recently (within the last 12 months) moved into the Shaler Area School District or transferred to SASD must notify the Athletic Director immediately. Additional PIAA transfer paperwork may be required before the student can participate in any scrimmages or competitions.

Age: If the maximum age of nineteen (19) is attained on or after July 1, the student shall be eligible to compete through that school year.

Period of Participation: A student may not represent the student's school in interscholastic athletics if the student has: A. Reached the end of the student's fourth consecutive year (8th consecutive semester or the equivalent) beyond the 8th grade year, without regard to the student's period of attendance; B. Participated in six seasons beyond the sixth grade or four seasons beyond the eighth grade in any sport; or C. Ceased to be enrolled.

Medical Physicals: Each student athlete is required to obtain a PIAA physical **before participating** in any in-season SASD sponsored activity. Sport physicals must be dated ON or AFTER 5/1 of the participating school year and must be signed by MD, DO, PAC, CRNP, or SNP.

Student-Athlete Handbook: Each student-athlete and parent/guardian must review the Student-Athlete Handbook and sign the acknowledgement form prior to participation in any in-season SASD sponsored activity

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Student Participation in PIAA Sanctioned Playoffs in Sports Not Sanctioned by the District

Students who seek to qualify for participation in P.I.A.A. sanctioned playoffs in sports not sanctioned by the district must conform to the following:

1. The student must contact the athletic director in a timely fashion and indicate his/her desire to participate.
2. The student must meet all P.I.A.A. and Shaler Area eligibility requirements.
3. The student must meet the minimum requirements of the P.I.A.A. to qualify for the particular event or sport for which the student wishes to participate.

A district sanctioned coach or advisor, approved by the SASD will accompany the student(s) in this case.

School Attendance:

1. Students **must arrive prior to 10:00 AM and be in school for a minimum of four full periods** to be considered eligible to participate in practices and/or competitions that day.
2. **Early Release**: Students who have been granted early release and are involved in extracurricular activities or athletics must attend a **minimum of four full periods** on their schedule to be eligible to participate in after-school events, including practices, competitions, and performances. Students must be present for the entirety of four scheduled periods —arriving late or leaving early from any period will not count toward the attendance requirement.
3. **Students who miss a full day of school**, will be denied participation in extracurricular activities or athletic events scheduled for that day. **Exceptions to this rule require documented reasons**, such as a note from a physician, a court order, or proof of attendance at a funeral. Notes must be submitted to the attendance office.
4. **Suspension** (In-School or Out-of-School)- Students are not permitted to participate in practice or competition until the suspension is satisfied. A student who finishes the school day on suspension is not eligible until the following day, and **may not stay** on school premises or return.
5. **Detention**: A student athlete may participate in practice or competition at the Principal and Coach's discretion.
6. **Absences:** If a student-athlete is absent from school during a semester for a total of 20 or more school days, they will lose their eligibility until they have been in attendance for a total of 45 school days following their 20th day of absence.

The Director of Athletics will determine the acceptability of an excuse for athletics participation that day due to an absence or tardy that does not meet the listed requirements. Principals have the discretion to make decisions in matters where extenuating circumstances apply.

Academic Eligibility:

1. Student-athletes must meet both the PIAA and SASD Eligibility requirements in order to participate in interscholastic athletics.
2. PIAA Eligibility Rules (PIAA By-Laws Article X):
    a. Students must be passing at least four courses.
    b. In cases where a student's work in any preceding grading period does not meet the standards of passing four courses, said student is ineligible to participate in interscholastic athletics for at least fifteen (15) school days of the next grading period where the school has four (4) grading periods per school year.
    c. At the end of the school year, the student's final credits in the student's subjects rather than the student's credits for the last grading period shall be used to determine the student's eligibility for the next grading period.
3. SASD Eligibility Policy 123.2 (Grades 7-12):
    a. Eligibility reports are run on Fridays, and this report is final for the upcoming week (Sunday to Saturday). Any work turned in after this time will apply to eligibility for the following week.
    b. Eligibility reports will be sent to the head coach. It is the head coach's responsibility to communicate with the student and/or family regarding ineligibility.
    c. Weekly Checks: Students failing **2 OR MORE** subjects may still practice BUT cannot dress, travel for games that require an early dismissal from school, or play in competitions during the upcoming week (Sunday to Saturday).
    d. Students must maintain a 2.0 **cumulative** grade point average (GPA).
        i. Students with below a cumulative 2.0 GPA may compete for any current nine-week grading period if he/she achieves a 2.0 or above GPA in the previous nine-week grading period.

1. Example: 1.8 cumulative GPA; 2.3 GPA for previous nine-weeks = ELIGIBLE

ii. Students with below a cumulative 2.0 GPA AND below a 2.0 GPA at the end of the quarter, are deemed ineligible for the first 4.5 weeks of the following quarter. A student may gain eligibility to compete for the remaining 4.5 weeks of a current nine-week grading period if he/she achieves a 2.0 GPA at the 4.5 week progress review period.

1. Example: 1.8 cumulative GPA; 1.9 GPA for previous nine-weeks = INELIGIBLE for first 4.5 weeks of current grading period. If at the 4.5 week mark of the current grading period, the student has a 2.5 GPA, then they are ELIGIBLE for the remaining 4.5 weeks (must also meet the weekly checks for 2 failing grades).

e. End of Semester: In the event that postseason play occurs within fifteen (15) days of the end of a grading period, PIAA Eligibility Regulations will be adhered to.

4. High School Study Session Requirements (Grades 9-12)
   a. High School students failing ONE course may still practice and play in games but will need to complete 4 study sessions during the week.
   b. High School students failing 2 OR MORE subjects may still practice BUT cannot dress, travel for games that require an early dismissal, or play in games; MUST complete 4 study sessions during the week.
   c. Study sessions are available during the school day and after school.
   d. Study session accountability sheets must be signed and turned into the HS Athletic Office by 3:30pm on Friday.
   e. FAILURE TO DO THE STUDY SESSIONS means the student is ineligible the following week, regardless of grades.
   f. Coaches will contact athletes by Monday if they are failing one or more classes and ensure they are aware of the study session requirements.
   g. Study sessions are not required for middle school student-athlete eligibility (grades 7-8).

Sports Medicine

Athletic Trainers

Sports Medicine services are provided through a collaborative agreement between SASD and UPMC Sports Medicine. Services include: first aid and emergency care, injury evaluation, on site injury evaluation, treatment, rehabilitation, and plan of care. Physician referral as necessary. The sports medicine staff uses a point system to decide overlap coverage when multiple events are happening at the same time. Amount of points decided by: Level of risk (High risk of injury vs low risk); Level of skill (varsity vs middle school); Event status (game vs practice).

ImPACT Testing

Immediate Post-Concussion Assessment and Cognitive Testing (ImPACT) is a concussion management tool utilized in concussion recovery to provide objective data to healthcare providers.

UPMC provides ImPACT baseline testing at no cost to you for contact and collision PIAA sports including: Fall-Football, Soccer; Winter- Basketball, Wrestling, Diving; Spring- Lacrosse, Some field events for Track/Field. Baseline tests are valid for 2 years. Students will be tested in 7th grade, 9th grade, 11th grade OR on an as needed basis.

Return to Play

Athletes removed from play for injuries require athletic trainer clearance to return. This can be facilitated through trainers directly or in conjunction with outside doctor(s). If removed for a concussion, the student-athlete must follow the UPMC return to play protocol available through the athletic trainers. Once cleared, student-athletes are required to participate in at least one full contact practice prior to returning to game action.

Injuries and Insurance

It is the athlete's responsibility to immediately report an injury to the coach and athletic trainer.

Shaler Area School District generally does **not** provide primary medical/accident insurance for students who attend district schools. Each student's parents or guardians are responsible for providing the primary Insurance coverage they believe is appropriate to provide medical care in the event the student becomes ill or is injured while attending school and extra-curricular activities.

The District does, however, provide a *secondary* insurance policy for students who participate in school-sponsored and supervised interscholastic athletic activities. This policy is generally designed to cover out-of-pocket expenses that are not otherwise covered by the parents' primary insurance. Parents/guardians may subsequently submit a claim to the district's carrier for out-of-pocket amounts such as deductibles, co-payments and co-insurance. Parents/guardians should work with the athletic trainers to facilitate this process.