

St. Thomas the Apostle School
Athletic Program Guidelines
2020-2021



St. Thomas the Apostle School
West Hartford, CT
Athletic Program Guidelines

Catholic school athletic programs exist to develop the minds, bodies, and souls of Catholic school students to form Disciples of Christ who will proclaim and live the Gospel.

With this goal in mind, the following guidelines will be used by all participants in athletic programs at St. Thomas the Apostle School. These guidelines are consistent with the recommendations and policies set down by the Office Education, Evangelization and Catechesis (OEEC) for the Archdiocese of Hartford.

Use of this Handbook

This handbook will be used to govern all athletic programs at St. Thomas the Apostle School. Athletic Directors, coaches, parents/guardians, and student athletes shall be required to sign that they have received, read, understand, and agree to abide by this handbook.

Role of the Participants

Principal: The Principal/Chief Administrator in consultation with the Pastor has final responsibility for and authority over all athletics teams.

Athletic Director: The Athletic Director's responsibility is to plan and oversee the school's athletic programs. The Athletic Director shall report directly to the Principal.

Coaches: The Athletic Director, with the approval of the Principal, is responsible for appointing coaches. Coaches report directly to the Athletic Director. Coaches shall be selected for their character and willingness to abide by school policies, as well as for their coaching skills. All coaches shall complete a formal volunteer application, on a standardized form provided by the OEEC. If the league requires, the Principal shall forward a copy of the coaches' applications to the league director.

Protection of Our Children: All athletic staff must meet the requirements of clearing a Criminal Background Check and completing the approved Safe Environment Education program for the Archdiocese of Hartford. As far as is practicable, such requirements shall be met prior to beginning service, but no later than 30 days after service has commenced. All appointments to serve are contingent upon satisfactory completion of these requirements.

Required Training: All athletic staff shall meet the following training requirements:

- A. Orientation:** Athletic Directors shall provide an orientation meeting for all *new* athletics staff members.
- B. Policy Review:** On an annual basis, the Athletic Director shall review current athletic policies, highlighting any changes as well as recapping the Code of Ministerial Behavior for Personnel of the Archdiocese of Hartford Who Have Regular Contact with Children or Young People and Policies and Procedures for the Protection of Children and Youth.
- C. Review of Medical Needs:** The Athletic Director shall review the medical needs of all student athletes with the school nurse. Respecting confidentiality, all necessary precautions will be taken to ensure the well-being of our student athletes. When necessary, additional

training for coaches will be provided at the expense of the school. Those areas of training may include:

- Catholic Coaching Essentials
- Coaching skills for a specific sport
- First Aid
- Use of cartridge-injectors (e.g. Epi-Pens®)
- Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)
- Use of Automatic External Defibrillators (AED)

Supervision/Evaluation: The Principal shall see to it that all athletic programs are properly supervised and evaluated.

Termination of Service: Engagement of athletic staff services is “at will” and may be terminated at any time for any reason by the Pastor in consultation with the Principal.

Specific Duties of Coaching and Athletic Staff:

The coaching/athletic staff must always remember that they are functioning within the context of a Catholic educational community. Towards that end they must keep in mind that they bear the following duties.

Duty to Instruct: Use the latest methods of proper instruction, using sound progress in learning motor skills.

Duty to Learn: Keep up-to-date on coaching skills and changes in sport rules.

Duty to Provide a Safe Environment: Check the facility used for protective equipment, well-marked fire alarm and exits, debris, litter, obstacles in the practice or competition area, location of an External Automated Defibrillator (EAD) and its directions for use. Bring all emergency contact numbers and a complete first-aid kit.

Duty to Keep Records: Document each and every incident or injury and complete forms as required by the school, town, or archdiocese. Submit such reports immediately to the Athletic Director and call the Athletic Director in the case of a major incident or when an injury requires medical attention. Likewise keep attendance at every practice, competition, or team event. The Athletic Director will make sure that all athletes have met eligibility requirements before they turn out for their first practice.

Duty to Follow Fair Practice: Protect student athletes from discrimination to gender, race, color, creed, or other unfair practices from parents, students, coaches or spectators. Report any incidences of bullying or discrimination to the Athletic Director as soon as situations are made known.

Duty to Safely Transport Athletes: (See Code of Ministerial Behavior) Ensure that all athletes have safe transportation to and from practices and/or competitions. Supervise each athlete until his/her transportation arrives. Do not (if at all possible) remain alone with a student, but at least two adults, one being the coach shall wait with any students. Students will be transported by their parent or guardian unless other arrangements have been made and have been communicated to

the coach by the parent or guardian in writing.

Duty to Foresee: A prudent coach should be able to foresee the potential danger that may occur if an activity continues in a facility, with equipment, or with behavior in a given situation. The coach should take actions to prevent the activity from continuing until the problem is corrected.

Mandated Reporter - Duty to Report Alleged Abuse or Sexual Misconduct: Any coach who, in the course of his/her coaching duties determines that he/she has reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a child is a victim of abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect must report to the Department of Children and Families, and shall immediately report to the principal.

Duty to Use Caution with Multi-Aged Teams: When combining students in grades four and five into one team, consideration must be given to the different levels of ability and stages of physical development.

Eligibility and Participation

The following shall be the norms governing participation in the St. Thomas the Apostle School athletics programs.

- **Only students enrolled at St. Thomas the Apostle School** may participate in the sports programs at St. Thomas the Apostle School.
- **Only students in Grades Three, Four and Five are eligible to participate in STA's inter-scholastic sports' teams.** This shall apply to cheerleading squads and clubs within the school whether such clubs or squads are cheering at sporting events or are engaged in cheerleading competitions.
- **Only students receiving grades of C or better in all academic subjects may participate** in the sports programs at St. Thomas the Apostle School. He/She must show consistent effort in classes and model a positive attitude toward his/her teachers and peers. *Participation in athletic programs is a privilege and not a right.*
- **Participation in the Third Grade Skills Program is offered to all interested boys and girls.** The focus of this program is skill building and sportsmanship.
- **St. Thomas the Apostle School has a no cut policy.** While the programs for the Fourth and Fifth Grade students are more competitive, they should still be viewed as instructional in nature. Coaches shall see to it that all interested students eligible for membership receive substantially equal playing time.
- **If a student has been exempted from physical education** as a result of illness or disability, he or she is not eligible to participate in athletic programs.

- **If a student has been suspended from school** (whether in or out of school), he or she is deemed to have been suspended from participating in athletic programs for the duration of the suspension from school.
- **If a student is out of school because of illness**, he or she is ineligible to participate in sports that day. If the illness occurs on one day, and there is no school the next day, but there is either a competition or practice, he or she is eligible to participate.
- **If a student is absent for all or part of a day** for any reason other than illness, the student's eligibility to play is left to the principal's discretion. In this case, the parent/guardian shall request permission for the child to participate. The administrator shall render the decision in writing. Without authorization from the principal, the coach shall not allow the student to participate.
- **If a student has been absent from practice**, he or she will not be able to play in the next competition/game, but must attend the game in uniform.
- Schools shall observe and comply with the directives from the local board of education or local health district regarding sports physicals as part of their eligibility requirements.
- **All parents/guardians shall sign an athletic participation permission slip and provide the coach with necessary emergency information.** Absent these documents, students are not eligible to participate in practices or competitions.
- **Allergies and Medications:** Parents/guardians who are aware that their child has a serious allergy shall also provide written permission for the administration of an Epi-Pen® or other prescribed cartridge auto injection and shall supply the coach with that medication. **In the absence of a coach who has been trained to administer such a medication, the parent/guardian shall attend all competitions. As per any time a medication delivered by cartridge auto injector is administered the coach shall see to it that emergency medical services are summoned.**

Games and Practices

The basketball season at St. Thomas the Apostle School officially begins at enrollment. All practices will take place at the St. Thomas the Apostle School gym unless otherwise arraigned in consultation with the principal and Athletic Director.

Practices:

- The gym at St. Thomas the Apostle School is a shared space. Therefore, it will be necessary for all teams to divide the available time equitably keeping in mind the noted restrictions for holidays, weather, and religious observances.
- Students should enter and exit the building through the gym doors. Parents are asked to drop their child off for practices on time and return at the appropriate time for pick-up. *Parents and guardians should not remain in the school during practices. The focus of the practices should be on the coaches and the exercises planned.*
- Teams may practice up to a maximum of two times each week in the pre-season. During the sports season and in the post-season, teams may practice provided that the combined number of practices and competitions do not exceed three in a calendar week.

Weather Related:

When school has been cancelled due to inclement weather or other emergencies, all practices and competitions are likewise cancelled.

Religious Observances:

In order to allow for families to worship together and to ensure the proper focus of Catholic School Athletic Programs, no practices or regular season, post-season, or tournament competitions may be scheduled to begin any earlier than 12:00 Noon on Sundays.

Similarly, Holy Days of Obligation and other Religious Holidays such as Ash Wednesday, Holy Thursday, and Good Friday shall be reserved exclusively for religious observance – no game of any kind or practice shall be scheduled. Similarly, principals and Athletic Directors shall consult with the parish coordinator (or Director) of religious education to ensure that games and practices are not scheduled that will conflict with religious education programs or major parish events.

Games:

All game schedules are set down by the Coordinator of the Deanery. Every effort must be made on the part of the coaches and Athletic Director to protect the physical, emotional and academic needs of our students. This may require further discussion and compromise at the Deanery level after the yearly schedule has been proposed. This is to ensure compliance which states, *“Over emphasis on competitive athletics shall be avoided on the elementary level, and interscholastic sport programs shall not interfere with the regular academic program.”*

Scheduling Games

- Teams may participate in no more than twenty (20) games in the regular season.
- Teams may compete in a maximum of three (3) regional tournaments.
- Exclusive of any state or New England championships, the total number of games played may not exceed thirty (30).

Use of Facilities:

Head coaches and the Athletic Director will be given access to the building with keys or key cards. The keys must not be duplicated or shared with anyone including substitute coaches without the knowledge of the principal and Athletic Director. The use of the building for practices allows access to the gym and bathrooms. *Students should not be given access to the upper or lower floors of the building for any reason.*

Transportation:

Transportation to and from practices and games is the sole responsibility of the parents and guardians of the athlete. Coaches or other staff members may not transport an athlete. School employees may not transport students on school sponsored activities.

Financial Arrangements, Contracts and Emergency Forms

All financial transactions, athletic contracts and emergency forms must be finalized before the beginning of the basketball season. A student will not be allowed to attend practices or acquire a

uniform until the necessary paper work has been submitted to the coach and reviewed by the Athletic Director and principal.

Codes of Conduct and Related Matters

The St. Thomas the Apostle School Athletic Program seeks to further the mission of our school and the Catholic Church. Therefore, it is expected that all practices and games shall begin with prayer and with the Pledge of Allegiance or the National Anthem.

The school athletic handbooks shall include codes of conduct for athletic staff, participants, parents/guardians, and spectators.

Code of Conduct for Coaches/Athletic Staff

Coaches and athletic staff shall:

1. Support the Catholic identity of St. Thomas the Apostle School and team by leading the team in prayer before each practice and competition.
2. Exemplify the highest moral character, behavior, and leadership; adhering to strong ethical and integrity standards.
3. Will never place the value of winning, or his/her own personal satisfactions, above the value of instilling the highest desirable ideals of character and Christianity that are consistent with a Catholic school education.
4. Support and adhere to all Archdiocesan school and league policies regarding athletic programs set down in this handbook.
5. Work collaboratively with other school, league and Archdiocesan officials in reviewing athletic programs, policies, and procedures to make the sporting experience more beneficial to the students.
6. Respect the integrity and personality of the individual athlete.
7. Abide by and teach the rules of the sport both in letter and in spirit.
8. Set a good example for players and spectators to follow by refraining from arguments in front of players and spectators, gestures which indicate disagreement with or disregard for contest officials or opposing coaches, throwing objects.
9. Set a good example for players and spectators by publicly shaking hands with contest officials and opposing coaches in welcome, gratitude and congratulations.
10. Respect the integrity of contest officials.
11. Display modesty in victory and graciousness in defeat.
12. Confine remarks to contest statistics and to the performance of your team.
13. Instruct participants and spectators in proper sportsmanship responsibilities and demand that they make good sportsmanship a high priority.
14. Refrain from the use of profanity or obscene language or improper actions. Ensure that student athletes do the same.
15. Refrain from the use of alcohol or tobacco during practices and competitions and take an active role in preventing students from the use of such products.
16. Encourage parent/guardian participation and observation as is practicable.

Signature of Coach/Assistant Coach: _____ Date: _____

Code of Conduct for Athletes

The student-athlete in at St. Thomas the Apostle School shall:

1. Start every competition with a team prayer.
2. Act in a Christian manner exhibiting good sportsmanship both on and off the court keeping in mind that he/she is an official ambassador of St. Thomas the Apostle School.
3. Respect opponents, officials, coaches, teammates, and spectators at all times.
4. Remember that participation is a privilege not a right.
5. Remember that participation in athletic programs is an opportunity to learn and have fun, and not to focus on winning or pleasing other people.
6. Welcome opponents when they arrive and congratulate them sincerely at the end of the competition.
7. Be a good sport; applaud all good plays regardless of which team made the play.
8. Accept both victory and defeat with pride and honor – never be boastful or bitter.
9. Maintain grades (class work, homework, projects, and tests) giving the best effort in academics and in the life of the school.
10. Maintain good behavior in school and at school events (even those not associated with athletic programs).
11. Listen to and learn from the coach.
12. Work hard to improve skills and help the team.
13. Follow all the rules and regulations set by the coach, school, sport/league, and Archdiocese.
14. Co-operate with officials, coaches, teammates, and opponents as without them there would be no competition.
15. Respect the judgment of the officials. Never argue or show disrespect to the officials or opposing coaches. Only the coaches should ask the officials for a clarification of the rules.
16. Attend all practices and competitions. If not able, the athlete or the parent/guardian should notify the coach in advance.
17. Respect school property at all venues and refrain from damaging or destroying that property.
18. Return all school property including uniforms to the coach in a timely manner and in good condition.

Signature of Student Athlete: _____ Date: _____

Code of Conduct for Parents/Guardians

The parents/guardians of a student-athlete in a St. Thomas the Apostle School shall:

1. Model Christian behavior for all students, spectators, and coaches, remembering that they represent the school and their child/children in the community and at the sporting venue.
2. Complete all required paperwork before the first practice.
3. Encourage good sportsmanship, effort and teamwork from the student athletes, coaches and spectators.
4. Remember that a ticket or admission to a competition is a privilege.
5. Learn the rules of the sport so that you may understand and appreciate why certain situations take place or respectfully inquire of the coach about such situations after the competition.
6. Respect the judgments of the officials and efforts and the strategies of the coaches by refraining from yelling, shouting, arguing, gesturing or inciting other spectators to such behaviors.
7. Remember that athletic experiences are learning opportunities for the players.
8. Make sports a part of the child's life not everything in his/her life. Keep winning and losing in perspective; help the student to do the same.
9. Help the student-athlete meet academic requirements as well as meeting the responsibilities of the team and coach.
10. Let the coach guide and instruct your child during competitions and practices.
11. Leave the school building during the practices so the focus of attention from your child will be on the coach and the activities designed by the coach.
12. Compliment and encourage all participants. Never ridicule or yell at a child for making a mistake or losing.
13. Support all efforts to remove poor sportsmanship from children's sporting events.
14. Refrain from the use of alcohol, drugs, or tobacco before and during competition and/or after competitions while still on or near the site of the competition.
15. Ensure that the student-athlete has returned all school property including uniforms in a timely manner and in good condition. Parents are responsible for replacing or repairing any missing, damaged, or destroyed property.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Code of Conduct for Spectators

All spectators at Catholic school sporting events shall:

1. Model Christian behavior for all students, spectators, and coaches, remembering that they represent St. Thomas the Apostle School in the community and at the sporting venue.
2. Encourage good sportsmanship, effort and teamwork from the student-athletes, coaches and spectators.
3. Remember that a ticket for admission to a competition is a privilege.
4. Respect the judgments of the officials and efforts and strategies of the coaches by refraining from yelling, shouting, arguing, gesturing or inciting other spectators to such behaviors.
5. Remember that athletic experiences are learning opportunities for the players.
6. Keep winning (and losing) in perspective.
7. Let the coach guide and instruct the team during competitions and practices.
8. Compliment and encourage all participants. Never ridicule or yell at a child for making a mistake or losing.
9. Support all efforts to remove unsporting behavior from children's sporting events.
10. Refrain from the use of alcohol or tobacco before and during competition and/or after competitions while still on or near the site of the competition.
11. Use only those cheers that support and encourage the teams involved.
12. Refrain from damaging or destroying the property of the school hosting the event.

Athletics and Discipline

At any given sporting competition, the coach holds primary responsibility for maintaining good order. If the school administrator, athletic director/coordinator, or other designated supervisor is present she or he shall assist the coach in maintaining good order, especially working with the student-athletes, parents/guardians and spectators.

There are some disciplinary issues which will be addressed directly by the principal and Pastor which may have ramifications beyond limiting participation in athletic programs and which may be cause for detention, suspension, or expulsion from school as outlined in the school's parent handbooks.

Violation of the Code of Conduct

1. In the event that a student violates the code of conduct, the coach reserves the right to provide appropriate corrective action that is proportional to the violation. Such corrective actions may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Counseling the student regarding the conduct
- Advising parents of the violation
- Removing the student from the practice or competition

2. In the event that a student has repeatedly violated the code of conduct or if the student has engaged in a serious violation that is completely inconsistent with school or athletic rules, the coach reserves the right to:

- Notify the parents in writing of the violation
- Notify the school administration of the violation
- Remove the student from the practice or competition
- Suspend the student from the team, after consultation with the school administration
- Permanently remove the student from the team after consultation with the school principal and Pastor

3. In the event that a spectator violates the rules, the coach, Athletic Director, or principal (if present) shall take appropriate corrective action to remedy the situation. Such actions may include:

- Reminding groups or individual spectators of the rules
- Quietly counseling the spectator
- Asking the spectator to leave
- Having the spectator removed (only in extreme situations)
- Reporting the incident to parents of the spectator when the spectator is a minor
- Reporting the incident to the school administration and requesting that the spectator be barred from attending additional competitions
- Barring the spectator from future attendance at sporting events
- Additional disciplinary actions deemed appropriate in response to school rules

4. Parents/guardians attending as spectators who violate the code of conduct shall be subject to the same corrective actions as above.

5. In the event that the spectator is a student from the opposing school, the problem will be brought to the attention of the opposing coach who will address the issue with the student and the adult who brought the student to the competition.
6. Coaches shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary actions.
7. In more serious matters the parties involved shall follow a resolution process.

Suggested Resolution Process

The resolution process should be flexible and enable a choice or course of action to be taken which specifically suits each complaint. The process reflects Jesus’ teaching about conflict with our brothers and sisters and dealing with them with honesty and integrity. Below are two approaches that can be used either on their own or as a step-by-step process toward resolution.

Direct Approach:

The direct approach involves clear and polite request for conversation about a specific situation or concern that has been observed. This is best done at least one day after the incident when calmer tempers prevail. Examples of situations in which this approach can be useful include:

- A coach asking a parent (or other spectator) to be more positive when supporting the team.
- A parent speaking to a coach about being more encouraging rather than critical when addressing the team during breaks.

Indirect Approach:

The parties involved in the complaint meet, either together or separately depending on the situation either with the Athletic Director or the Principal to resolve the issue. This would be appropriate when:

- The complaint is of a serious nature.
- The person making the complaint has good reason to feel uncomfortable in using the direct approach.
- The direct approach has not worked.
- In the event that the parties have met with the Athletic Director, they may have recourse to the school principal.
- The Athletic Director or principal shall explain the process to all parties involved and shall document the outcome of the process.
- Remedies coming out of the resolution process include, but are not limited to:
 - Unearthing of a misunderstanding with no further action needed
 - Student suspension from practice/competition for short term
 - Student removal from team
 - Formal apology by student to affected people
 - Additional disciplinary actions as per school handbook
 - Parent/guardian restricted from attendance at games
 - Coach counseled by administration
 - Formal apology by coach
 - Suspension or removal of coach