

St. Ambrose Catholic School

Athletic Program Handbook



2026-2027 School Year

PHILOSOPHY

The purpose of the athletic program at St. Ambrose Catholic School is to complement the home, church, and school in the development of the whole person. Activities of the program are for the benefit of the children suited to their age and physical growth. The goals are to recognize the need of physical fitness in the wholesome growth of the child and to provide enjoyable recreational activity that develops Christian attitudes of sportsmanship and fair play that can be sustained beyond the elementary level. The primary function of elementary athletics should not be the development of exceptional athletes. Rather, it must be the participation and development of student-athletes who genuinely display the Christian qualities of good sportsmanship and fair play in every aspect of life. The successful operation of athletics depends upon a true commitment from all adults involved.

STRUCTURE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The St. Ambrose Catholic School Athletic Program is separate from the St. Ambrose Catholic School Physical Education program. The Physical Education Program is provided to all students grades PK-8 during regular school hours. The athletic program provides students in grades 3 through 8 with the opportunity to improve their skills in specific sports through practice and competition outside of regular school hours.

The St. Ambrose Catholic School Athletic Program is an extension of St. Ambrose Catholic School and is subject to the policies of the Pastor, Principal, Athletic Association, and School Advisory Council. The general administrative responsibilities are conducted by the Principal. Policies and operating guidelines for the athletic program are recommended by the St. Ambrose Catholic School Athletic Association and approved by the St. Ambrose Catholic School Advisory Council, Principal, and Pastor. The purpose of the Athletic Association is to provide a fun, instructive and positive sporting environment where children can learn sportsmanship and the fundamentals of sports along with other life skills that are consistent with the teachings of St. Ambrose Catholic School.

The Athletic Association consists of the following positions:

- Athletic Director / President
- Treasurer
- Concessions Director
- Secretary

The **Athletic Director(s)** reports to the Principal and is responsible for the implementation of the policies and guidelines established by the Athletic Association and the School Advisory Council. The Athletic Director(s) is responsible for the scheduling and coordinating of all athletic program activities and serves as president of the Athletic Association.

The **Treasurer** performs all accounting duties associated with the Athletic Association. He/She is responsible for depositing athletic fees and fundraising monies, and providing a financial status report at each Athletic Association meeting.

The **Concession Director** is responsible for control of concessions/admissions monies, payments to referees, and providing a status report at each Athletic Association meeting.

The **Secretary** records the minutes of each Athletic Association meeting and distributes the meeting minutes to each member of the Athletic Association and to the school Principal.

SPORTS OFFERED

The following sports/activities will be offered for the school year:

Fall

Boys and Girls Golf
Boys Baseball
Cross County
Girls Softball

Winter I

Boys and Girls Basketball
Cheerleading

Winter II

Boys and Girls Volleyball

Spring

Boys and Girls Track and Field

There is a participation fee set annually by the Athletic Association. The fee must be paid by the stated deadline for each respective sport. Late fees will be assessed for payments received after the due date. Families with special needs may be exempt from this fee at the discretion of the Athletic Director or Principal.

In addition to the fee, **PARENTS ARE REQUIRED TO VOLUNTEER** a proportionate amount of time to benefit the St. Ambrose Athletic Program if their child participates. Parents are needed to coach, work the score table, admissions table, and the concession stand. A work schedule will be distributed when game schedules are made available. **Parents who cannot work their scheduled time slot are responsible for finding a replacement worker** (i.e. another parent).

PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

Each student athlete is required to submit the following information **prior** to his/her participation:

- St. Ambrose Athletic Program Handbook-Consent with Paid Fees
- Current Physical-Statement of Good Health or Sports Physical
- Proof of Insurance
- Athletic Handbook Consent

STUDENT ACTIVITY CODE AND ELIGIBILITY POLICY

Athletic & Extracurricular Activity Participation

Student activities at St. Ambrose Catholic School are a privilege and not a right. Students are expected to live up to an acceptable norm of conduct when they represent the school in extracurricular activities.

An activity participant at St. Ambrose Catholic School is a student who participates in any of the above activities. Any student activity participant of St. Ambrose Catholic School will be subject to disciplinary action if he/she commits any of the following violations as reported by law enforcement authorities or school personnel.

Also included as student violations are: student use of or possession of tobacco products; student use of, possession of, or distribution of alcohol, marijuana, the abuse of any non-prescription drugs, or the abuse of prescription drugs.

This Extracurricular and Athletic Activities Code of Conduct applies, where applicable, to all school-sponsored athletic and extracurricular activities that are not part of an academic class nor otherwise carry credit for a grade.

Athletic Programs

Any school-sponsored athletic programs shall be part of the school curriculum and shall be subject to policies of the pastor and School Advisory Council as well as to the general administrative responsibilities of the Principal of the school. Further, school-sponsored athletic programs shall be guided by the general curriculum goals of the school and should in no way detract from the academic and religious goals of the school.

Requirements for Participation in Athletic Activities

A student must meet all academic eligibility requirements, have appropriate equipment including properly fitting protective gear, and have the following fully executed documents on file in the school office before being allowed to participate in any athletic activity:

1. A current certificate of physical fitness issued by a licensed physician, an advanced practice nurse or physician assistant **dated within one year of participation.** The preferred certificate of physical fitness is the IHSA's or IESA's "Pre-Participation Physical Examination Form."
2. A digital consent/permission slip to participate in the specific athletic activity signed by the student's parent or guardian.
3. Proof the student is covered by medical insurance.
4. Signed documentation agreeing to comply with the school's policies and procedures on student athletic concussions and head injuries.

Academic Eligibility

Eligibility for most athletics is also governed by the rules of the Illinois High School Association or Illinois Elementary School Association and, if applicable, these rules will apply in addition to this Extracurricular and Athletic Activities Code of Conduct. In the case of a conflict between IHSA or IESA and this Code, the most stringent rule will be enforced.

Grades will be averaged and submitted each Monday by 2:00 pm. Any student participating in extracurricular activities having a grade percentage of two Ds (69-60%), or one F, (59% or lower) in any subject(s) will not be allowed to participate in the activity for that week (Tuesday through the next Monday). When an ineligibility occurs, the principal notifies the Athletic Director who will, in turn, notify the coach or sponsor. The entire week of ineligibility will be served. This applies to practices as well as games or competitions. The following week, every effort will be made to provide sufficient opportunity to improve the grade. Any students participating in a sport or activity while knowingly ineligible will serve an immediate in- school suspension.

Absence from School on Day of Extracurricular or Athletic Activity

A student who is absent from school after noon is ineligible for any extracurricular or athletic activity on that day unless the absence has been approved in writing by the principal. Exceptions may be made by the designated teacher, sponsor, or coach for justifiable reasons, including: 1) a pre-arranged medical absence; 2) a death in the student's family; or 3) a religious ceremony or event.

A student who has been suspended from school is also suspended from participation in all extracurricular and athletic activities for the duration of the suspension. A student who is absent from school on a Friday before a Saturday event may be withheld from Saturday extracurricular or athletic activities at the sole discretion of the designated teacher, sponsor, or coach.

Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct applies to all extracurricular and athletic activities and is enforced 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. This Code does not contain a complete list of inappropriate behaviors. Violations will be treated cumulatively, with disciplinary penalties increasing with subsequent violations. A student may be excluded from extracurricular or athletic activities while the school is investigating the student's conduct. Any student serving a suspension may not participate in extracurricular activities during the period of suspension.

The student shall not:

1. Violate the school rules and policies on student discipline including policies and procedures on student behavior;
2. Ingest or otherwise use, possess, buy, sell, offer to sell, barter, or distribute a beverage containing alcohol (except for religious purposes);

3. Ingest or otherwise use possess, buy, sell, offer to sell, barter, or distribute tobacco or nicotine in any form;
4. Ingest or otherwise use, possess, buy, sell, offer to sell, barter, or distribute any product composed purely of caffeine in a loose powdered form or any illegal substance (including mood-altering and performance enhancing drugs or chemicals) or paraphernalia;
5. Use, possess, buy, sell, offer to sell, barter, or distribute any object that is or could be considered a weapon or any item that is a look-alike weapon. This prohibition does not prohibit legal use of weapons in cooking and in athletics, such as archery, martial arts practice, target shooting, hunting, and skeet;
6. Attend a party or other gathering and/or ride in a vehicle where alcoholic beverages and/or controlled substances are being consumed by minors;
7. Act in an unsportsmanlike manner;
8. Violate any criminal law, including but not limited to, assault, battery, arson, theft, gambling, eavesdropping, vandalism and reckless driving;
9. Haze or bully other students;
10. Violate the written rules for the extracurricular or athletic activity;
11. Behave in a manner that disrupts or adversely affects the group or school;
12. Be insubordinate or disrespectful toward the activity's sponsors or team's coaching staff; or
13. Falsify any information contained on any permit or permission form required by the extracurricular or athletic activity.

Hazing is any humiliating or dangerous activity expected of a student to belong to a team or group, regardless of his or her willingness to participate. *Bullying* includes cyber-bullying (bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication) and means any physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

1. Placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student's or students' person or property;
1. Causing a detrimental effect on the student's or students' physical or mental health;
1. Interfering with the student's or students' academic performance; or
2. Interfering with the student's or students' ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.

Examples of prohibited conduct include name-calling, using derogatory slurs, stalking, sexual violence, causing psychological harm, threatening or causing physical harm, threatened or actual destruction of property, or wearing or possessing items depicting or implying hatred or prejudice of one of the characteristics stated above.

Behavior Eligibility

Behavior will be checked through FACTS and submitted each Monday by 2:00 pm. Any student athlete issued a Saturday detention or ISS will not be allowed to participate in sports that week (Tuesday to Monday). When ineligibility occurs, the Athletic Director will be notified who will, in turn, notify the coach. The entire week of ineligibility will be served. This applies to practice as well as games. Any athlete participating in a sport while knowingly ineligible will earn an immediate in-school suspension.

Detentions

Detentions may be assigned by teachers for minor rule infractions of discipline and unfinished school work. Detentions may be up to 45 minutes in length and supervised by different teachers. A detention will be a period of quiet study or a work task, depending on the teacher supervising the detention.

Saturday Detentions

Students will be issued Saturday detentions for every third detention received. A student may also be issued a Saturday detention by an administrator for serious examples of disrespect and classroom disruptions. Saturday detentions will be served 8-9:30 am. Skipping or being late to Saturday detentions will warrant a day of in school suspension and a week of athletic and activity ineligibility. During detention time the students will work on practice work, be assigned a work task, **or** sit quietly depending on the teacher supervising. No food or drinks, no electronic devices, no sleeping, and students must be on time.

In School Suspension

ISS will be held as needed. If a student is tardy, he or she will serve an additional ISS time. ISS is a more severe punishment than detention or Saturday Detention. It *is* imposed for repeated violation of school rules or more serious acts of wrongdoing. The principal will assign the date of ISS.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF COACHES

All coaches and assistant coaches must complete the Safe Environment program of the Diocese of Springfield, including having fingerprints run, complete a background check, and complete concussion protocol training. Any parent volunteers must have Protecting God's Children or Safe Haven.

Coaches are responsible for their team. Any concerns by athletes or parents should be handled by the Head Coach. Unresolved issues may then be brought to the Athletic Director, followed by the Principal. Any issues that do not follow this will be referred back to the Head Coach.

If an issue does reach the Principal's desk, the following items will be looked at to see how to address the conflict:

Did the coach follow school policy?

Did the coach consistently follow his/her own stated team policy/rules?

Did the coach act reasonably?

Coaches should maintain open communication with team parents and provide answers to any questions about their athlete.

Coaches are asked to not speak negatively of any other school, program, or coach.

Coaches are asked not to allow any unregistered students to participate in practices.

Coaches and coaching staff are not permitted to use alcohol or tobacco products on school grounds while coaching.

It is a violation of federal medical confidentiality statutes to discuss the medical status of a student-athlete. If asked about a players' injury just reply that "Student medical information is confidential."

If needed, there is an AED machine located near the stairs in the gym.

No practices on Sundays before noon. Also no practice on Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Christmas Eve, or Christmas Day.

Sportsmanship should be a priority for all teams. All technical fouls, flagrant fouls, unsportsmanlike conduct, player ejections, and coach ejections must be reported to the Athletic Director.

Any fan who causes disruption, engages in abusive behavior, or uses derogatory/inflammatory remarks to/about coaches, players, officials, or other fans, at an athletic activity will be asked to leave the site. The fan is subject to exclusion from future athletic contests.

Accident Reports

Coaches or a member of the coaching staff will be responsible for filling out an accident report for an injured athlete. Once completed, the report must be given to the school office. Coaches should always have accident reports on hand. For home games accident reports will be in a yellow folder in the box on the scorekeepers table.

If there is a fan injury the volunteer working the Gate table will need to fill out an injury report and submit that to the school office.

Coaches are expected to adhere to the following: General

Responsibilities

- Be aware of and adhere to the diocesan and St. Ambrose athletic guidelines.
- Have a completed copy of the St. Ambrose Sport Participation Health Record for each of their student athletes with them at all practices and games.
- Discipline fairly and consistently.
- Keep documentation on all disciplinary actions and forward it to the School Office and Athletic Director(s).

Pre-season Responsibilities

- Complete the requirements of Safe Environment training/expectations of the Diocese of Springfield.
- Meet with the athletes and parents at least once before the season begins and explain all rules regarding practices, play, uniforms, etc.
- Notify athletes and parents of the necessary forms that must be completed before they will be allowed to participate. The school office or Athletic Director(s) will distribute the necessary forms to the coaches.
- Attend a meeting with the Athletic Director(s), commissioner, and other coaches for their sport to schedule practice times, discuss rule changes, have a gym key issued, and share all other necessary information.
- Complete the Concussion training.

During-the-Season Responsibilities

- Teach fundamental techniques and skills that enable the student athletes to develop to their fullest potential.
- Give all student athletes equal coaching time and encouragement.
- Organize and schedule practice sessions on a regular basis with the idea of developing the athlete's greatest potential.
- Work with the Athletic Director to set up initial practice schedules and reservation of facilities for practices. If a coach wishes to schedule practice for a time other than originally scheduled, the coach should contact the Athletic Director.
- Apply Catholic discipline in a firm and positive manner consistent with the St. Ambrose School athletic philosophy. Treat all student athletes fairly with respect and dignity.
- Give all student athletes the opportunity to participate.

- Model good sportsmanship whenever they are with student athletes or representing the school as a coach. Avoid the use of inappropriate language, loss of temper, etc.
- Be present for all practice sessions and games. When this is not possible, the coach should find a qualified adult replacement (assistant coach or commissioner) to coach the team. If unable to find a replacement for a game, notify the Athletic Director.
- Be responsible for the safety and behavior of the athletes from the time they arrive for a practice or game until the time they leave the school premises. Students should not be allowed to remain after the practice session without adult supervision. The coach should be the last person to leave.

ATHLETIC FEES

All St. Ambrose sports require a participation fee. Fees vary depending on the needs of the sport, with fees typically around \$45. Students will only have to pay a maximum of 2 athletic fees during a school year. All athletic fees must be submitted before the first game or contest. If the fees have not been paid by the first contest, the student will not be able to participate until the fee is paid.

CANCELLATION OF GAMES

In the event of a cancellation of games or practices, the coach will contact his or her players as soon as possible. However, if there is a **school cancellation due to inclement weather** such as a **snow day**, it should be presumed that all school sponsored events and extracurricular activities will be **canceled for the day**. Scheduled practices on snow days should be considered canceled unless the coach receives permission from the Principal.

UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT

Uniforms will be purchased by the school, distributed to the athletes, and collected at the end of the season in the school office. It is the responsibility of the athlete to launder the uniform according to instructions. The athlete will be charged for damage beyond normal wear, or for failure to return the uniform to the school at the end of the season. The athlete will not be allowed to participate in another sport until the uniform is returned or the obligation is paid. In addition, grade cards will be held and students will not be allowed to participate in graduation or other events until all uniforms have been returned and obligations have been met.

POLICY REGARDING PLAYING TIME

The emphasis of the athletic program in grades three through five shall be learning fundamental skills and gaining self-confidence. Coaches shall give each student athlete equal playing time and playing time at different positions if possible. The

student athlete's attendance, attitude, and behavior at practices and games will also help determine playing time.

Playing time and selection of starters in grades six through eight will be at the discretion of the coaches and will be dependent upon a coach's evaluation of the student athlete's ability, attendance, attitude, and behavior at practices and games. All student athletes in good standing should receive at least 20% of the playing time available in a given season.

POLICY FOR PLAYING UP

A student athlete may "play up" a grade level to help another team avoid forfeiture.

EXTREME WEATHER PROTOCOLS

The recommended IESA/IHSA wet-bulb globe index will be used for athletic contests when heat may be a concern. Outdoor activity will be cancelled when temperatures or wind chills are below freezing.

CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR FOR STUDENT ATHLETES

At all times St. Ambrose students participating in athletics or extracurricular activities are expected to act in a Christ-like manner. Expectations include;

- Being supportive and respectful towards teammates and coaches
- Being supportive and respectful towards opponents
- Being respectful towards officials
- Refraining from the use of inappropriate language, inappropriate gestures, inappropriate symbolism, or inappropriate markings on the body or uniform

If at any time a student participant acts in a manner that is deemed UNCHRISTIAN by the Coach, Official, Athletic Director, Principal, or Pastor, they are to sit for the remainder of that contest. Further incidents may lead to additional consequences, including possible suspension or being removed from the team.

If at any time a student participant uses profanity, inappropriate gestures, or displays other inappropriate behavior, they are expected to sit out the remainder of that contest.

PROBLEMS / SUGGESTIONS

Occasionally the student athlete, parent, or coach may have a question, a suggestion, or a problem relating to the student's involvement in the athletic program. Prompt, open communication is important when this occurs and can usually resolve the situation before it becomes a major issue. The recommended sequence for this communication is as follows:

- A. The **STUDENT ATHLETE** and the **COACH** should discuss the situation / issue.
- B. If not resolved, the **COACH**, the **PARENTS**, and possibly the **STUDENT ATHLETE** should meet to talk about the issue.
- C. If the issue is still not resolved, the **PARENTS**, the **STUDENT ATHLETE**, the **COACH**, the **ATHLETIC DIRECTOR(S)** should discuss the issue.
- D. If still not resolved, the **PARENTS**, the **STUDENT ATHLETE**, the **COACH**, and the **PRINCIPAL** should meet to discuss the issue.

Concussion Information

A concussion is a brain injury and all brain injuries are serious. They are caused by a bump, blow, force, or jolt to the head, or by a blow to another part of the body with the force transmitted to the head. They can range from mild to severe and can disrupt the way the brain normally works. Even though most concussions are mild, **all concussions are potentially serious and may result in complications including prolonged brain damage and death if not recognized and managed properly.** In other words, even a “ding” or a bump on the head can be serious. You can’t see a concussion and most sports concussions occur without loss of consciousness. Signs and symptoms of concussion may show up right after the injury or can take hours or days to fully appear. If your child reports any symptoms of concussion, or if you notice the symptoms or signs of concussion yourself, seek medical attention right away.

Symptoms may include one or more of the following:	
• Headaches • “Pressure in head” • Nausea or vomiting • Neck pain • Balance problems or dizziness • Blurred, double, or fuzzy vision • Sensitivity to light or noise • Feeling sluggish or slowed down • Feeling foggy or groggy • Drowsiness • Change in sleep patterns	• Amnesia • “Don’t feel right” • Fatigue or low energy • Sadness • Nervousness or anxiety • Irritability • More emotional • Confusion • Concentration or memory problems (forgetting game plays) • Repeating the same question/comment
Signs observed by teammates, parents and coaches include:	
• Appears dazed • Vacant facial expression • Confused about assignment • Forgets plays • Is unsure of game, score, or opponent • Moves clumsily or displays lack of coordination • Answers questions slowly • Slurred speech • Shows behavior or personality changes • Can’t recall events prior to hit • Can’t recall events after hit • Seizures or convulsions • Any change in typical behavior or personality • Loses consciousness	

Concussion Information Sheet

What can happen if my child keeps on playing with a concussion or returns too soon?

Athletes with the signs and symptoms of concussion should be removed from play immediately. Continuing to play with the signs and symptoms of a concussion leaves the young athlete especially vulnerable to greater injury. There is an increased risk of significant damage from a concussion for a period of time after that concussion occurs, particularly if the athlete suffers another concussion before completely recovering from the first one. This can lead to prolonged recovery, or even to severe brain swelling (second impact syndrome) with devastating and even fatal consequences. It is well known that adolescent or teenage athletes will often fail to report symptoms of injuries. Concussions are no different. As a result, education of administrators, coaches, parents and students is the key to student-athlete safety.

If you think a child has suffered a concussion

Any athlete even suspected of suffering a concussion should be removed from the game or practice immediately. No athlete may return to activity after an apparent head injury or concussion, regardless of how mild it seems or how quickly symptoms clear, without medical clearance. Close observation of the athlete should continue for several hours, days, or even weeks. The Return-to- Play Policy of the IESA and IHSA requires athletes to provide their school with written clearance from either a physician licensed to practice medicine in all its branches or a certified athletic trainer working in conjunction with a physician licensed to practice medicine in all its branches prior to returning to play or practice following a concussion or after being removed from an interscholastic contest due to a possible head injury or concussion and not cleared to return to that same contest. In accordance with state law, all schools are required to follow this policy. In addition to written clearance from a physician or a certified athletic trainer all athletes must follow the Return to Play Policy (see below). St. Ambrose Catholic School has a Concussion Oversight Team that helps ensure Return to Play policies are followed. The Concussion Oversight Team consists of the Athletic Director, Assistant Athletic Director, Principal, Pastor, and other appointed members.

If you think that your child may have a concussion, please inform the coach immediately. Remember it's better to miss one game than miss the whole season. And when in doubt, the athlete sits out.

For current and up-to-date information on concussions you can go to:

<https://www.cdc.gov/headsup/youthsports/index.html>

Return To Play Process / Steps

It is important for an athlete's parent(s) and coach(es) to watch for concussion symptoms after each day's return to play progression activity. An athlete should only move to the next step if they do not have any new symptoms at the current step. If an athlete's symptoms come back or if he or she gets new symptoms, this is a sign that the athlete is pushing too hard. The athlete should stop these activities and the athlete's medical provider should be contacted. After more rest and no concussion symptoms, and under the direction of a medical professional, the athlete can start at the previous step.

Step 1: Back to regular activities (such as school)

Athlete is back to their regular activities (such as school) and has the green-light from their healthcare provider to begin the return to play process. An athlete's return to regular activities involves a stepwise process. It starts with a few days of rest (2-3 days) and is followed by light activity (such as short walks) and moderate activity (such as riding a stationary bike) that do not worsen symptoms. You can learn more about the steps to return to regular activities at: https://www.cdc.gov/headsup/basics/concussion_recovery.html.

Step 2: Light aerobic activity

Begin with light aerobic exercise only to increase an athlete's heart rate. This means about 5 to 10 minutes on an exercise bike, walking, or light jogging. No weight lifting is recommended at this point.

Step 3: Moderate activity

Continue with activities to increase an athlete's heart rate with body or head movement. This includes moderate jogging, brief running, moderate-intensity stationary biking, moderate-intensity weightlifting (less time and/or less weight from their typical routine).

Step 4: Heavy, non-contact activity

Add heavy non-contact physical activity, such as sprinting/running, high-intensity stationary biking, regular weightlifting routine, non-contact sport-specific drills (in 3 planes of movement).

Step 5: Practice & full contact

Young athlete may return to practice and full contact (if appropriate for the sport) in controlled practice.

Step 6: Competition

Young athlete may return to competition.

Student/Parent Consent and Acknowledgements

By signing this form, we acknowledge we have been provided information regarding concussions.

Student

Student Name (Print): _____

Grade: _____

Student Signature: _____

Parent / Guardian Name (Print): _____

Parent / Guardians Signature _____

Date: _____

Each year IESA member schools are required to keep a completed Acknowledgement and Consent form and a current Pre-participation Physical Examination on file for all student athletes.

Adapted from the CDC and the 3rd International Conference on Concussion in Sport