

Houghton-Portage Township Schools

Student Athlete Handbook



Proudly offering:

Baseball, Basketball, Cross Country, Football, Golf, Gymnastics,
Hockey, Skiing, Soccer, Softball, Swimming, Track, and Volleyball

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Parents – Welcome to “The Team”

Dear Parents,

My passion for over 25 years has been high school athletics. I have been directly involved as a player, coach, official, parent, and an administrator. I have seen first-hand the positive impact and significance that high school sports plays in our lives. I have seen and been part of many different experiences that have taught tremendous lessons. There are lessons to be learned from winning, but there are also important lessons that we can all learn from the disappointing times.

As a coach, my goal was to teach student athletes the values that are needed to be successful well beyond their time in school. As an administrator, my goal is to provide leadership and support to the Gremlin team to ensure the educational objectives of the HPTS district are met along with the goals on the MHSAA.

Our Gremlin Team is made up of more than just HPTS Administrators, Coaches, and Student Athletes. Parents and supporters play a very challenging but important role. You are a very important member to this team and it is my hope that as you review these parent guidelines

- 1) Understand your role. Just as players play – coaches coach – and officials officiate, parents must parent. Support and encourage everyone, no matter the score or the outcome. Remind your child you are proud of them. Encourage them to listen to their coach. This will allow them to play at their highest level. Mixed messages will only cause confusion, which will cause a decrease in performance.
- 2) Act with class and dignity in all situations. As a parent, it’s extremely difficult to not get emotional during a competition. Please refrain from yelling at officials, players, or coaches. You may not realize this, but it embarrasses your child. Every year thousands of officials refuse to come back because of abuse from parents and fans. It is my goal that all events involving our athletes will also be a positive experience for parents, players, coaches, fans, and officials.
- 3) Allow your child to face adversity. Throughout the long and unpredictable athletic seasons, there will be good days just as there will be bad days. Your child will learn perseverance through their experiences with athletics. This perseverance is one of the greatest lessons that athletics can teach. Every athlete plays their own unique role. Please encourage them to embrace this role with their team. Support them as they are allowed to solve their own problems and as they succeed through the adversity that they encounter.

Our goal is to provide a first-class athletic experience for your child. This is not possible without your support. Parents play an incredible role in helping us create a culture of excellence. From time to time, please take a moment to remind yourself of the role you play on “The Team”. You are the most important teacher, coach, mentor, roll model, etc. that your child has in their life. We all appreciate your support on this exciting, sometimes frustrating, but extremely rewarding and educational journey.

Thank you!

Rob Fay, Athletic Director

Athletes – Making the Gremling Commitment

Dear Student Athlete,

I want to welcome you to the Gremlin team as you become a member of the Gremlin athletic program. It is very important that you understand that participation in athletics is a privilege. It is expected that you will make a commitment to uphold the values and standards of your team, yourself, your academic studies, your school, your community, your family, and to all future Gremlins.

Responsibility to Yourself: The most important of these responsibilities is to broaden and develop strength of character. You owe it to yourself to derive the greatest benefit from your high school experiences, to live a healthy lifestyle and to always respect your health both physically and mentally.

Responsibility to your Academic Studies: Your academic studies and your participation in other co-curricular activities prepare you for life as an adult. In all cases, your academic performance must meet eligibility standards prior to participation in any co-curricular activity.

Responsibility to Your School: Houghton cannot maintain its reputation as having outstanding schools unless you do your best in the activity in which you are engaged and are a good role model. Other students and faculty are watching you. They know who you are and what you do. Make them proud. Be an example. Do not do anything to let them down.

Responsibility to your Community: You assume a leadership role when you are involved in athletics. The student body and citizens of the community know you. You are very visible with the spotlight on you. Our desire is that our students are a class act, known as young people of character and excellence that extends well beyond the athletic competition.

Responsibility to Your Family: Never give your parents and supporters anything to be ashamed of or embarrassed by. When you know in your heart that you have lived up to all the training rules, that you have practiced to the best of your ability every day and that you have participated in the activity, you can keep your self-respect, and your family can be justly proud of you, win or lose.

Responsibility to Younger Students: The younger students in Houghton are watching you. They know who you are and what you do. Make them proud. Be an example. They will copy you in many ways. Set good examples for them.

Athletics can be an integral part of your high school experience. The values of sacrifice, teamwork, sportsmanship and loyalty are very worthwhile and athletic competition provides the setting for experiencing them. Most of all, have fun! Participate in multiple sports, meet new people, challenge yourself. You're only in high school for a short time so make the most of it!

Good luck and Go Gremlins!

Mr. Fay, Athletic Director

Athletic Philosophy

Participation in Houghton-Portage Township School's (the "District") athletics is a privilege, not a right. Student-athletes are students first. When participating in District athletics, student-athletes are District representatives and are held to the highest standards. Accordingly, this Athletic Code of Conduct applies 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Student-athletes and parents should be familiar with this Athletic Code of Conduct. By participating on any school-sponsored athletic team both student-athletes and parents agree to abide by these terms and by those defined in the HPTS Student Athlete Handbook.

While our number one goal as a school district is to provide a sound academic experience for all our students, athletics provide unique opportunities for students to promote their mental, physical, social and emotional development.

By providing a strong athletic program, Houghton High School extends the privilege of enriching the mind and body to any student meeting district and Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) requirements. Like anything of value, it comes with responsibility. Athletes who comply with this code of conduct demonstrate a desire to dedicate themselves to self-improvement as well as to enhance the best interests of fellow teammates, coaches and school.

Roles and Responsibilities

Actions by coaches, student athletes, administrators, parents and the board of education are subject to the same standards and expectations as stated in board policy and the contractual agreement between the board and the teacher's association. The same expectations of teachers, as stated in these documents, is expected of coaches.

Student Athletes will:

- Come prepared to work at every practice where they are physically able.
- Accept the team rules as established by the coach and the athletic department.
- Attempt to communicate all questions and concerns with the coach in a timely fashion.
- Display a respectful attitude towards teammates, coaches, officials, spectators, and opponents at all times.

Coaches will:

- Abide by MHSAA coaching standards as stated in the MHSAA Handbook.
- Come prepared to practice daily.
- Make a strong effort to run a safe practice and competition area.
- Communicate important information (such as team expectations and important dates) to parents and administration.

Administrators will:

- Communicate to parents the "conflict resolution process."
- Enforce the chain of command as outlined in the "conflict resolution process."
- Review with coaches the expectations as stated in the team's guidelines.

Parents will:

- Be supportive of not only their children, but of all competitors.
- Support team guidelines and goals.
- Abide by the guidelines noted in the parent welcome letter above.
- Communicate concerns directly to the coach while respecting the 24 hour “cooling off period.”

The Board of Education will:

- Recognize athletes and programs for academic and athletic success.
- Serve as an arbitrator in disputes that have exhausted the full grievance process.
- Enforce the chain of command as outlined in the “conflict resolution process.”
- Remain neutral by refusing all requests to become involved in a dispute before the superintendent has been notified and all steps in the “conflict resolution process” have been exhausted.

Conflict Resolution Process

Athletic seasons are long and unpredictable. There will be good days and there will be bad days. We encourage parents to allow their student to self-advocate when problems arise. We understand that there may be situations where students can't solve their own problems. When these situations arise, please refer to the following for guidance.

- Wait 24 hours before contacting the coach.
- Schedule a time to speak with the coach, either via phone or in-person, at the coach's discretion.
- If the issue is unresolved, schedule a time to speak with the Athletic Director, either via phone or in-person, at the Athletic Director's discretion.

Step 1 Start with the Source

The player will speak directly to the coach. A cooling off period will be granted for all parties before resolution is sought. This meeting should be done in private, away from practice sites and game arenas, and should be conducted face to face. Students who do not feel comfortable speaking solely to the coach may request a parent to be present, however the meeting should be conducted by the athlete.

Step 2 Move to program head

This step is necessary only if the issue is in regards a subordinate or assistant (i.e. an assistant, JV coach, etc.). If going to the source does not resolve the problem, then the head of the program should be notified, and they should attempt to facilitate a solution. If the “source” is the head of the program, move to step three.

Step 3 Contact Athletic Director

If an agreeable solution is not reached, then the athletic director will conduct a meeting between the parties in an attempt to find resolution.

Step 4 **Contact Principal**

If an agreeable solution is still not reached, then the principal will conduct a meeting between the parties in an attempt to find resolution.

Step 5 **Notify the Superintendent**

At this point in the process, individuals who still believe their disputes have not been resolved adequately can submit a written narrative of their complaint to the School Superintendent. A copy of this will be given to all concerned parties, who will be afforded the option of a written rebuttal. The superintendent reviews the documents and can conduct a meeting in a final attempt to resolve the dispute.

Step 6 **Request non-partisan School Board mediation**

This final step is appropriate only in extreme circumstances and shall follow the same process laid down for the superintendent.

Through good communication, people feel valued and understood, even if complete agreement is not always reached. We are all concerned about the education of our students. Part of the process of growing up is learning to handle your own difficult situations. If a conflict or misunderstanding between an athlete and a coach occurs, learning to resolve it is an important educational experience for the athlete. Parents should react slowly. Children tend to exaggerate at times, leave out part of the story, or present a skewed version of an incident. Parents should always seek more information before drawing conclusions. When a student successfully deals with difficult interpersonal conflicts, they learn and grow. Of course, a parent always retains the right to intervene on behalf of a child.

Student contacting the Source: The student should talk directly with the coach, in private, face-to-face, away from the practice site or game venue. A telephone call may be necessary to arrange an appointment. E-mail, voicemail, texts and letters are good methods for communicating information, but they are not as effective for communicating feelings, and concerns. By their nature they tend to distance coaches and athletes.

Parent Contacting the Source: Contact the coach to talk directly, in private, face-to-face, away from the practice site or game area. Making an appointment, sitting down and listening to both sides is far more productive in reaching a mutually satisfying resolution. Our coaches are expected and encouraged to meet with individual parents to discuss concerns that affect that parent's child. Our coaches are not expected to meet with groups of parents to discuss issues of concern. Please do NOT attempt to confront a coach before or after practice or a contest. These can be emotional times for both the parent and the coach. Our coaches are NOT expected to endure yelling, verbal or physical abuse from parents. Please, help teach your child the skills of mature conflict resolution.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Eligibility Requirements

These Rules of Eligibility are established by the Houghton-Portage Township School District in conjunction with the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA).

This athletic code is in effect 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and is IN ADDITION to the Discipline Rubric in the Student Handbook. Should a report be received by the school district of an alleged student violation of this code, an investigation will be initiated within ten school days of the receipt of the report. (For example, if a student violates the code in July, but a report of such a violation is not received by the school authorities until November, action will not be taken until after the school investigation is completed, which would be after the November reporting.)

Age: High School student athletes must be under 19, unless their birthday occurs on or after September 1.

Amateurism: See MHSAA Handbook interpretation Section 11 (A) - (D).

Attendance: Student athletes are expected to have regular and continuous attendance. Lack of attendance at school should be for reasons allowed by school regulations. Unless otherwise approved by your coach, if school is in session, athletes must attend school for the previous 3 continuous class hours prior to dismissal to be eligible to practice or play in an event on the same day. Absences due to professional and medical appointments must be accompanied by a written excuse from the appropriate office.

An unexcused absence from any class or study hall (even if the time is made up) automatically makes a person ineligible for the next event or contest. (Note: this rule applies “in season” only. Once the first practice begins, we are “in season.”) Leaving school without permission from the high school office is an unexcused absence. Always “sign-out” before leaving the building.

Awards: Students may accept in kind, for participation in athletics, a symbolic or merchandise award which does not have a value over \$25. Banquets, luncheons, dinners, noncompetitive trips, and fees or admissions to be a spectator at events, are permitted if accepted in kind. Also, game ball presentations are allowable. However, awards in the form of cash, merchandise certificates, or any other negotiable document are never allowed.

Cheating/Plagiarism: Students in violation of our Cheating/Plagiarism Policy will be ineligible for the next event.

Criminal Behavior: Students shall not be involved in any criminal activity including but not limited to theft, vandalism, assault, inappropriate texting, cyberbullying, arson, breaking and entering, or any felony.

Enrollment: Students must be enrolled full time in the school for which they compete. Students cannot be enrolled in high school for more than eight semesters. The seventh and eighth semesters must be consecutive. Students are allowed only four first semesters and four second semesters. Students cannot compete if they have graduated from high school.

Disqualification Rule: If a student athlete or coach is disqualified during a contest for unsportsmanlike conduct, they shall be withheld from the next day of competition. A disqualification in hockey will result in missing the next two contests. The student athlete will not be eligible to participate in the MHSAA tournament for that sport that season if he/she is disqualified for unsportsmanlike conduct three or more times during a season or is ejected for abusive action to an official at any time during that season. Unsportsmanlike conduct that should have resulted in a disqualification can also be penalized at the discretion of the MHSAA, Athletic Director, and/or Head Coach.

Academic Eligibility: Student athletes must meet all MHSAA and HPTS academic requirements in order to participate:

Semester Eligibility

No student shall compete in any athletic contest during any semester who has not successfully passed 66% (5 of 7 classes) of course work the last semester during which he or she was enrolled in grades nine through twelve. Transfer students shall have met the academic eligibility standards of the school in which they had been enrolled during the previous semester. A student with any grade of “Incomplete” at the end of any semester will be ineligible until the school accepts the credit. A student entering 9th grade for the first time may participate without reference to their 8th grade records.

Weekly Eligibility

Any student who is seriously deficient (D- or E) in two or more classes will be ineligible. A student must be passing at least 66% of his/her classes.

Eligibility is determined each week, from the beginning of the semester. Eligibility checks are done every Thursday, no later than 3:00 p.m. Students who are deficient will be ineligible from 8:00 a.m. Monday until 8:00 a.m. the following Monday.

Athletes who are academically ineligible, will be expected to practice with their team or group, but will not travel to away events with the team.

An ineligible student can become eligible again on the first Monday following a satisfactory Thursday eligibility check.

Training Rules / Violations (Use of prohibited items)

Students may not possess and/or use any tobacco products including electronic cigarettes, vaping devices, paraphernalia or supplies, drugs, including drug paraphernalia, steroids and/or alcoholic beverages. Consequences for these rules are as follows:

1. First Offense: Suspension from all extra-curricular activities for 20% of the contests or competitions in the current season and/or the next season of competition.
Alternative Penalty: The student/parent may choose a 10% loss of the contests or competitions plus 20 hours of community service to be completed *before* the student may resume competition.
2. Second Offense: Suspension from all extra-curricular activities for 40% of the contests or competitions in the current season and/or the next season of competition.
Alternative Penalty: The student/parent may choose a 25% loss of the contests or

competitions plus 40 hours of community service to be completed *before* the student may resume competition.

3. Third Offense: Suspension from all extra-curricular activities for one calendar year. If one calendar year passes without any participation in extra-curricular activities, the suspension for an activity code violation is negated.
4. Fourth Offense: Suspension from participation in all arranged competition at Houghton High School for remainder of the student's high school career.

NOTES:

- A scrimmage with another school may not count as a scheduled inter-scholastic competition.
- A student suspended from interscholastic competitions must continue to demonstrate the qualities of sportsmanship outlined in this Handbook.
- If a suspension cannot be completed in the present season, the suspension will be carried over to the student's next sports season. The amount of dates to be suspended will be determined by the Athletic Director.
- Offense for steroid use: Any student suspected of steroid use will be required to submit to a drug test. Failure to take or pass this test will cause removal from the team for the balance of the season. Any further participation in high school athletics must be approved by the Athletic Director, Principal, and Head Coach.
- Suspensions for Activity Code Violations assessed by other school districts will be carried over to Houghton High School for transferring students.
- Actions displayed on the internet are considered a source of evidence in determining a violation of the Activity Code of Conduct.

Presence at party or gathering where alcohol or drugs are being illegally consumed: If an athlete attends a party where alcohol or drugs are being illegally dispensed and/or consumed, the student must **LEAVE IMMEDIATELY AND SAFELY**. To remain in the presence of this illegal activity may constitute a violation of the code of conduct. * **Note: Athletes should encourage as many classmates as possible to leave with them.**

*The intent of the "presence at a party" rule is not to deny participation with adult family members in gatherings such as weddings, anniversaries or other family gatherings.

Parents of students involved in any drug, alcohol or tobacco related offenses, including the use of electronic cigarettes, vaping devices, paraphernalia or supplies, that may result in a suspension will be notified prior to the suspension of the student athlete. Any student or parent has the right to call for a hearing with the Athletic Director on any of the above steps. Proof of notification or attempts to notify the parents will be documented in writing. Within three (3) school days following the assessment of a penalty, a student or students' parent/guardian may file an appeal in writing with the student's principal.

Self-Referral Program

Any athlete may seek the help of a substance abuse program without penalty, by confiding in his/her coach, athletic director, principal, or counselor prior to a violation of the training rules being reported. The athlete will be assisted in finding a suitable rehabilitation program to be paid for by the student. The athlete is expected to continue athletic participation while attending and completing the program unless otherwise advised by those conducting the program. An athlete may only participate once in the self-referral program. Any subsequent violation of the training rules will be treated as a second violation.

Social Media Guidelines

Social Media (i.e., Facebook, Snapchat, X/Twitter, Instagram, etc.) are a representation of the student-athlete, along with the school community. The administrators and coaches have the right to monitor these sites and student-athletes will face discipline depending on the scope of the infraction. Nobody should post information about specific student-athletes, unless it is related to an award or honor. Please follow the guidelines of FERPA and good taste.

If you are ever in doubt of the appropriateness of your online public material, consider whether it upholds and positively reflects your own values and ethics as well as the athletic department and Houghton High School. Remember to always present a positive image and don't do anything to embarrass yourself, the team, or your family. Nothing posted should ever be considered private.

Hazing

The act of "hazing" is a crime in the state of Michigan and will not be tolerated by the District. The District will comply, in all ways, with Michigan law regarding "hazing" incidents. "Hazing" means any intentional, knowing, or reckless act meant to induce physical pain, embarrassment, humiliation, deprivation of rights or that creates physical or mental discomfort, and that is directed against another student for the purpose of being initiated into, affiliating with, holding office in, or maintaining membership is totally or predominately other students from the District. Students engaging in any hazing or hazing type behavior, in any way, connected to any activity sponsored or supported by the District, will be subject to disciplinary action.

Steroids (Performance Enhancing Substances)

The illegal use of a performance enhancing substance (as published by the NCAA) by a student athlete, is considered a violation of the athletic code. Student athletes who are under a physician's care and who have been directed by a physician to use anabolic steroids due to a medical condition requiring such treatment, must present proof of the physician's orders to the Athletic Department prior to participating in any practice or contest.

Limited Team Membership

After practicing with a high school team, students cannot participate in any athletic competition not sponsored by his/her school in the same sport in the same season. Students in individual sports may participate in a maximum of two (2) non-school meets or contests during the school season while not representing their school. Students who have represented any MHSAA school in competition in any MHSAA sport shall not compete at any time in any MHSAA tournament sport in all-star contests or national high school championships, regardless of the method of selection. Participation in an all-star contest shall cause that students to become ineligible for a maximum period of one year of school enrollment in that sport.

A student who has completed his or her 12th grade season in a sport may participate without loss of eligibility for other sports in one high school all-star event in that sport if held after the MHSAA Final in that sport. Parents should always check with the Athletic Director before allowing a student athlete to participate in any non-school athletic activity.

Physicals

A physical form must be properly completed and signed by the parent/guardian and physician. This form shall be kept on file by the Athletic Office of the high school before a student can participate in athletic activities. A physical examination given after April 15, is valid for the following school year.

Injury / Athletic Insurance

There are dangers and risks of playing or practicing to play any athletic events or contests. Participation may result in serious injury or physical disabilities that may affect the normal life-time activities, general health and well-being of participants. Every participant in athletics is required to report any injury to the coach at the time it occurs. The coach will fill out an accident report form.

The MHSAA requires that students participating in interscholastic athletics be covered by some type of health insurance. The school will make available, through an independent carrier, a policy of secondary coverage (your insurance pays first, if you have insurance). If this insurance is not purchased, a statement of insurance coverage must be on file in the athletic office stating the name of the insurance company and policy number under which the athlete will be covered. Please report any changes in your insurance status as soon as possible.

Transportation

Students are required to travel to and from athletic events by the transportation provided. This requirement may be waived for extenuating circumstances by the parents of the student submitting in writing, a request to the coach and/or athletic director.

Uniforms and Equipment

Any individual who has failed to return, in good condition, any equipment issued shall be ineligible for an award and from participation in any other sport until such equipment is satisfactorily returned or the Athletic Department is reimbursed. The theft of school equipment is larceny and will be handled under Michigan law.

Athletic Awards

The requirements/criteria for awarding athletic awards varies. The head coach of each individual sport should inform the athletes of the letter requirements. Senior athletic awards are presented only to those seniors who participate and letter in their senior year.

NCAA Eligibility

Students interested in competing in division one or two collegiate athletics must register with the NCAA Eligibility Center. Students should contact either the Athletic Director or the Counseling Office, or view the NCAA website at <https://web3.ncaa.org/ecwr3/>