

Westford Academy

Athletic Handbook



2019-2020

Westford Academy
30 Patten Road
Westford MA, 01886

Mission Statement

The purpose of the Westford Academy athletic program is to provide an opportunity for student athletes to participate and share in a positive environment of spirited competition. Our goal is to instill basic values that build character, self-discipline, and self-esteem as an individual and member of a team through the involvement in an interscholastic athletic program.

Introduction

Interscholastic Athletics...the extended classroom.

“Winning isn’t everything, it’s the only thing.” That is a quote we often hear when people talk about sports. In today’s world of professional sports, you might substitute the word “money” for winning. In either case, that phrase clearly is what separates interscholastic sports from professionals.

Interscholastic athletics have one main purpose, to add to the opportunities for young adults to develop their character and individual capabilities. In the classroom, students are exposed to academic courses in math, science, language, history, etc. As well as obtaining a broad awareness and knowledge of those areas, students find their niche and gravitate toward their favorites as they start to define their future. Likewise, other opportunities such as athletics, music, drama,

journalism, computer science and other clubs, allow students to develop.

What it means to be a student athlete...

At our level of athletics, student-athletes learn much more than specific sport skills; they learn values and experience valuable lessons in life. To be successful, you must have a strong work ethic. The time and effort that student athletes put into practice represent a commitment to work and improve their skills; A commitment which becomes evident when the “game” begins. Student-athletes also learn to depend on others. Team sports are a microcosm of life. We depend daily on our family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers to succeed. Nowhere is that more evident than in a team sport where student-athletes learn to work together with others. The ones who score the points or goals don’t have the opportunity unless a teammate “blocks, rebounds, passes” or performs their role. The teammates, who work hard in practice but may not gain much game time, are every bit as valuable as the ones who play because they make everyone better through practice. Everyone on a team has a role and contributes to the team success. Interscholastic athletics also help student athletes deal and cope with adversity. A critical element of sports is keeping score. That means someone will win the game and someone will lose. But even in defeat, student athletes learn what it takes to improve and what they can do either as an individual or as a team to become better. In the grand scheme, the score of a single game has little impact on their life, but the experience gained will last forever.

Honesty is another characteristic of athletics. A student-athlete knows when he or she is giving their best effort. They also know when they follow or break team rules. As a member of an interscholastic team, the student-athlete has a responsibility to their teammates, coaches, parents, and classmates to be faithful to their commitment. When they fail to do so, they not only do themselves an injustice, they let many others down whom are trusting and depending upon them.

Expectations...

To be successful, everyone needs to know and understand the goals and objectives. At Westford Academy, we provide a student athlete handbook to help share our desires and goals for our students and athletic community. In the handbook, we have outlined the purpose of our programs and expectations for everyone involved; student athletes, coaches, parents, and fans. We want interscholastic athletics to be a vehicle to teach solid values and build character. Our goal is to give every student athlete an opportunity to succeed. How is success measured? Success is not measured in wins and losses and it is not measured in touchdowns, goals, or points. Success is measured in hard work, honesty, teamwork, sportsmanship, and character. Every individual is different and has a particular skill. Those who use their skill and give their very best effort to take advantage of their own opportunity are the ones who succeed.

Opportunity...

At Westford Academy, we compete in 33 MIAA sponsored programs. Within those sports, we offer varsity, junior varsity, and in some cases freshman competition. There is excellent participation by the student body and many opportunities for our male and female student-athletes. In recent years as a member of the Dual County League, Westford Academy has developed a strong tradition of excellence in athletics. There are many ways students can participate in interscholastic athletics beyond being a player. Every team needs managers to help assist the coaches and run the team activities. Another area is journalism or TV game production. We are always looking for students who have an affinity for writing to cover our teams and write for either the school newspaper or our website. Finally, every student is welcome to join in the athletic community as a fan and support our school teams. Interscholastic athletics is an important aspect of our community. It has a role in helping to develop our young adults into solid and productive citizens. It provides an opportunity for the entire community to participate in a positive and active role. I invite all of you to join with us and share in the fun and excitement which comes with interscholastic athletics at its best.

SPORTS OFFERINGS

SEASON	SPORT	LEVEL	
FALL	Football	Varsity, JV, & Freshmen	
	Soccer, Boys	Varsity, JV, & Freshmen	
	Soccer, Girls	Varsity, JV, & Freshmen	
	Field Hockey	Varsity, JV, & Freshmen	
	Volleyball, Girls	Varsity, JV, & Freshmen	
	Golf, Coed	Varsity	
	Cross Country, Boys & Girls	Varsity & JV	
	Cheerleading	Varsity & JV	
	WINTER	Basketball, Boys	Varsity, JV, & Freshmen
		Basketball, Girls	Varsity, JV, & Freshmen
Ice Hockey, Boys		Varsity, JV & JV2	
Ice Hockey, Girls		Varsity	
Wrestling		Varsity & JV	
Indoor Track, Boys & Girls		Varsity & JV	
Gymnastics		Varsity	
Swimming, Boys & Girls		Varsity	
Alpine Ski, Boys & Girls		Varsity	
X-Country Ski, Boys & Girls		Varsity	
	Cheerleading	Varsity	
SPRING	Baseball	Varsity, JV, & Freshmen	
	Softball	Varsity, JV & Freshman	
	Outdoor Track	Varsity & JV	
	Tennis, Girls	Varsity & JV	
	Tennis, Boys	Varsity & JV	
	Volleyball, Boys	Varsity, JV & Freshman	
	Lacrosse, Boys	Varsity & JV	
	Lacrosse, Girls	Varsity & JV	

Rules and Regulations

Westford Academy is a member of the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association. As such, we adhere and comply with all of the rules and regulations set forth and published in the MIAA handbook. A copy of the MIAA handbook is maintained in the Athletic Department and is available to review by students, parents, and interested citizens. A copy can also be found on www.miaa.net. Westford Academy has additional requirements and standards, in some cases more stringent than the MIAA, which student athletes must meet in order to participate in our interscholastic programs. This includes attendance, academics, and general conduct. Student-athletes must present proof of parental release/permission in order to participate in athletics. Coaches and administrative officials are responsible to implement and carry out all rules and regulations.

Academic

All student-athletes are required to meet a minimum standard of academic performance. We believe that all students should strive for excellence in all courses. In order to meet eligibility guidelines for athletic participation, students will be eligible if they fail no more than one (1) class. This does not mean that we encourage students to fail a class, but students are eligible for participation in our athletic programs if

they fail one course. If a student fails two (2) or more classes, the student is ineligible for such participation. Meaning of participation if non-eligible; *Athletics*: If determined to be non-eligible because the student has failed two (2) courses, the student is not permitted to practice or participate with their team in any way. Upon the issuance of the next progress report, should it be demonstrated that the student is passing all classes, she/he may practice and participate in the sport (at the discretion of the coach) but are not permitted to “suit up” or participate in any competition, including scrimmages, against another school’s team until the issuance of the next report card when eligibility will be re-determined. If the student has received more than two (2) failing grades, the student is ineligible for the duration of the quarter (until the issuance of the next Report Card) and may not try out, practice or participate with the team in any way. This includes the term preceding the start of the season and any reporting period that occurs during the course of the season. Students that fail to meet the requirements are ineligible until the next reporting period. Eligibility is determined on the day report cards are issued by the school. Progress reports are not acceptable for return to eligibility in MIAA events. Final grades from the previous school year will determine eligibility for activities during the first grading quarter.

Activity Fee

Student-athletes are asked to pay an activity fee to help offset the cost and expense of athletics here at Westford Academy. Although money is allocated through the annual budget, it does not cover the total amount of costs incurred throughout the year. The activity fee is set at the beginning of the school year and all Student-athletes are expected to pay the fee prior to the first contest. Activity fees are nonrefundable. In the event of hardship, student-athletes or their parents/guardians should contact their respective coach or the Director of Athletics for assistance.

Attendance

In order for student-athletes to participate in practices or games, they must be recorded as having met the school attendance criteria. To be eligible, the student-athlete must be on time to school for the opening period and stay through the end of Period 4; or be in school by the start of Period 3 and stay in school for four periods. Student-athletes must meet attendance requirements on Friday in order to participate in weekend contests. Student-athletes in either in-house or out-of-school suspension are not allowed to participate in practice or events during the suspension period. Reasonable exceptions to this rule must be cleared through administration or the athletic department prior to the absence.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

Communication between staff and students must be appropriate. Both parties need to keep communication related to academic, athletic or co-curricular content. Students and staff must refrain from anything related

to sexual behavior, drugs or alcohol, hazing or harassment. Do not speak about any other students or staff in a manner that is inappropriate. Make sure all communications are transparent and observable. Be sure to report anything that is inappropriate or suspicious.

Loyalty to a High School Team: Bona Fide Team Member Rule

A bona fide member of the school team is a student who is consistently present for, and actively participates in, all high school team sessions (e.g. practices, tryouts, competitions). Bona fide members of a school team are precluded from missing a high school practice or competition in order to participate in a non-school athletic activity/event in any sport recognized by the MIAA. First Offense: Student athlete is suspended for 25% of the season

Medical

Student-athletes are required to have successfully completed a physical within 13 months prior to participating in tryouts, practices, or events. Proof of physical must be provided to the coach prior to participation. *If a physical expires during the season, the student-athlete will not be allowed to continue participation* to the completion of the season. Each student-athlete is required to provide complete emergency information regarding parental or guardian contact. Student-athletes are responsible for their own medications (i.e. inhalers, epi-pens) and the administration of such medicines. Student-athletes who are injured and not able to play, are required to have authorization from a physician (or school nurse,) and/or the

athletic trainer before being allowed to resume activities. In the event of any question regarding the medical fitness of a student athlete to participate, the trainer has the final authorization.

Chemical Health & Wellness

For young adults to participate in athletics, they must be physically and mentally fit. Student-athletes at Westford Academy are required to follow the guidelines of the MIAA as defined in Part IV article 62 regarding alcohol, tobacco, and drugs. If any student athlete is found to be in the possession of, consuming, or buying /selling of such substances, they will be in violation of the rule and subject to penalty. This rule is in effect from the beginning of the interscholastic athletic year as determined by the MIAA governing body and ends with the final day of classes in the academic year. It applies to student-athletes in or out of season. Penalties for out of season violations will be in effect for the next season of participation. A student must complete the season in which the penalty is served in order to comply with the requirements. First Violation – when the principal or designee confirms following an opportunity for the student-athlete to be heard, that a violation has occurred, the student-athlete shall lose eligibility to participate in events totaling 25% of the season schedule including postseason. The suspension shall be served in consecutive contests. Second and Subsequent Violations - when the principal or designee confirms following an opportunity for the student-athlete to be heard, that a repeat violation has occurred, the student-athlete shall lose eligibility to participate in events

totaling 60% of the season schedule including post-season. The suspension shall be served in consecutive contests. Penalties shall be cumulative in nature and carry from one season to the next or one academic year to the next in order to fulfill the requirements. During the suspension period, the student athlete is required to attend all team practices. At the direction of the coach, the student athlete may attend the games but will not be allowed to dress in game uniform. Team captains who violate the Chemical Health & Wellness regulations will lose their captaincy for the season and for the remainder of the academic year. Student athletes that violate this rule will not be allowed to captain any team for one calendar year. Violation of the Chemical Health & Wellness regulations is very serious and we encourage student-athletes to avoid situations that may compromise their status and eligibility.

Muscle Enhancements

Unfortunately, the use of steroids or other types of muscle enhancements have become a part of the athletic landscape...most notably in professional sports. The people that we hope would set positive examples as role models, instead have disappointed. The thinking is that by using artificial means to build up one's body, they can become faster and stronger thereby gaining an edge on the competition. Short term that may prove true, but in the long run, the medical community states that the risk for adverse health is real and dangerous. We reject the use of enhancements and steroids and strongly discourage their use by our student-athletes. In our opinion, their use in sport is cheating. The best and

most effective way for students to improve their physical performance is to eat healthy, exercise, and get adequate rest. The real “competition” is within each student athlete. They should measure their own success by how much they improve their own performance through hard work, effort, and teamwork. ***The unauthorized use, consumption, possession, buying/selling or distribution of steroids or growth hormones (controlled substances) is prohibited. See Chemical Health & Wellness section above.

Transportation

When Westford Academy provides transportation to and from athletic events, student-athletes are required to ride that transportation. The members of the athletic staff feel it is in the best interest of team unity that everyone travel together and share the game experience. As the “guardian” during these trips, it is also important that the athletic staff be able to account for all student-athletes and insure their safe whereabouts. In the event that there are extenuating circumstances and the parent wishes to take responsibility for the transportation of their son or daughter, it is required that the parent provide a written 24 hour notice to the coach requesting the exception. Student-athletes may then ride with their parent or on their own. Student-athletes may not ride with other student-athletes. It is expected that our student-athletes will conduct themselves appropriately while on bus transportation. Any misconduct will result in a penalty including and up to dismissal if warranted. Student-athletes will be responsible for any damage to

bus property and subsequent costs to repair or replace.

Uniforms & Equipment

Student-athletes are responsible for the care and maintenance of equipment and uniforms provided to them as a member of an athletic team. At the end of a season, they are obligated to return all WA team property. Student-athletes who fail to return uniforms and/or equipment will be responsible for the cost to replace such including damage incurred due to abuse or misuse. Students must properly clean, wash and maintain any school owned property. Student-athletes who do not meet their obligation will not be able to participate in other athletic programs until they have resolved all outstanding issues and may be subject to further discipline as determined by the administration.

MRSA

MRSA is a kind of *Staphylococcus aureus* (“staph”) bacteria that is resistant to some kinds of antibiotics. Staph is bacteria commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. Sometimes, staph can cause an infection, especially pimples, boils and other problems with the skin. These infections often contain pus, and may feel itchy and warm. Occasionally, staph cause more serious infections. When appropriately identified, staph and MRSA infections can be treated successfully. Staph, including MRSA, is spread by direct skin-to-skin contact, such as shaking hands, wrestling, or other direct contact with the skin of another person. Staph are also spread by contact with items that have been touched by people with staph, like towels shared after bathing and drying

off, or shared athletic equipment in the gym or on the field. Staph infections start when staph get into a cut, scrape or other break in the skin.

MRSA Prevention

-Regular hand washing is the best way to prevent getting and spreading MRSA.

-Keep your hands clean by washing them frequently with soap and warm water or hand sanitizer, and especially after direct contact with another person's skin.

-Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until they have healed. Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages.

- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels, washcloths, toothbrushes, and razors. Sharing these items may transfer MRSA from one person to another.

Regularly clean and wash all equipment, practice gear and uniforms throughout the season.

-Keep your skin healthy, and avoid getting dry, cracked skin, especially during the winter. Healthy skin helps to keep the MRSA on the surface of your skin from causing an infection underneath your skin.

-Contact your doctor if you have a skin infection that does not improve.

Cell/Smart Phones

The use of smart phones has become commonplace among student-athletes. Students are strictly prohibited from using cellular telephones with camera or photo capability in locker rooms or restrooms. Any student-athlete found inappropriately using cell phones with camera or photo capability in a restricted area will have their phone confiscated and face disciplinary action.

Westford Academy Staff and Coaching Out of Season

The Westford Academy coaching staff follows Rule 40 of the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association Handbook. In addition, Westford Academy coaches may not provide private lessons out-of-season for financial gain to any potential freshman, junior varsity, or varsity candidate

Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct is a guideline of sportsmanship for student-athletes, coaches, parents, and spectators to act while participating or attending an interscholastic event. Everyone involved has a responsibility to behave appropriately.

Pre-Event Announcement

"In the spirit of interscholastic athletics, we welcome you to today's contest. As an MIAA sponsored event, we ask everyone to conduct themselves appropriately and provide a positive environment for spirited competition between these two teams. Please cheer enthusiastically for your team and refrain from negative or disparaging remarks toward the players, coaches, or officials. We hope you enjoy the game."

Student-athletes

Always treat coaches and teammates with respect and honesty; follow the team, athletic department, and school rules; follow the rules of fair play and never taunt, demean, or ridicule teammates, opponents, coaches, or officials; never use profanity or obscene gestures. All student-athletes are

responsible for all policies and guidelines in the WA Student Manual. Hazing* of any sort is strictly prohibited. All student-athletes are required to treat their fellow teammates with respect and dignity. Students who violate this policy will be subject to discipline** up to and including dismissal from the team. *Mass. General Law, chapter 269 and Mass. General Laws 76, 119, 151, and 622. ** WA Student Manual – see sections on Student Suspensions and Hazing

Coaches

Always treat the student-athlete with respect and honesty; never allow the fervor of competition to display anger towards student athletes or officials; never use profanity; provide positive encouragement and support to the student-athlete; set a positive example of leadership and fair play for all participants.

Parents

Always provide continuing support and encouragement for your son or daughter; emphasize the positive aspects of their play or that of the team; treat coaches with respect and honesty and accept their role and responsibility as decision makers; never ridicule or disparage the coaches or other team members; follow the guidelines for issue or problem resolution with your son or daughter.

Spectators

While at an interscholastic event, never ridicule, taunt, or demean the opposing players, coaches, officials, or opposing spectators. Cheer enthusiastically for

your team and demonstrate your support for our student-athletes. Spectators who fail to conduct themselves appropriately at athletic events will be asked to leave the site and may be banned from future events at the discretion of the athletic department and school administration. Spectators must remain in the area reserved for fans and not enter the field of play including the player bench area.

General

The Westford Academy Athletic department reserves the right to address any issues of misconduct on the part of student-athletes, coaches, parents, or spectators and take the appropriate action consistent with our goals of fair play and sportsmanship. It also reserves the right to address character issues of misconduct or inappropriate behavior on the part of student-athletes or coaches which may occur outside of school or school sponsored events not specifically covered in the student or athletic handbooks.

Concussions

Westford Academy Head Injury/Concussion Regulations

The staff and administration at Westford Academy realize that athletics are a very large part of our student's lives. With this comes the risk of concussions. Due to increased awareness regarding this topic and the implementation of better concussion management programs there is progress for our student athletes. When identified immediately and cared for

properly those who suffer concussion injuries tend to recover well. To ensure that our athletes are properly cared for if they sustain an injury of this type, there are steps we follow to help ensure the best possible outcome.

1) Education- All Westford Academy coaches, trainers, and athletic director will complete one of the free MDPH approved online training videos annually. Parents and students will also complete the free online video annually before participation begins.

Furthermore, pre season information will include information about the signs, symptoms, recovery from a concussion, the role that cognitive and sideline testing play and the risks associated with returning too soon. All coaches will also be instructed to teach proper technique aimed at reducing the risk of concussions and head injuries.

2.) Pre Participation Reporting -

Students and parents must complete the online registration process before participation may begin. Students will not be allowed to participate until this process is completed and reviewed. This will supply Westford Academy coaches and the athletic trainer with the most up to date information regarding past head injuries as well as verification of the annual training requirement for parents and students. Any student indicating a history of head injuries/concussion must have a review done by the Athletic Trainer at Westford Academy before participation may begin.

3.) Baseline Testing- ImpACT (Immediate Post Concussion Assessment and Cognitive Testing) is the

program used for this purpose at Westford Academy. Selected contact sport players will take a pre season computerized test at least once every two years to establish a baseline score.

4.) Evaluation- Based on the assessment of the onsite athletic trainer or the coach, any player observed or suspected to have suffered a head injury and exhibiting any signs or symptoms of such an injury will be removed from that day's game, practice or workout for further evaluation by a medical professional. They will not be allowed to return that same day. If there is an observed or suspected loss of consciousness 911 should be called without hesitation. Someone shall stay with the injured athlete on the sideline until advanced help arrives.

5.) Notification of the head injury will include parents, coaches, athletic trainer, athletic director, school nurse, guidance, administration and teachers. Parents will be notified of the injury by the coach or athletic trainer as soon as possible and recommend a medical evaluation of the injury. In the event that the athletic trainer is not present, the coach shall notify the parents and athletic trainer of the injury as soon as possible. Upon receiving notification, the athletic trainer will notify the athletic director, appropriate coaches, nurses, Westford Academy administration and guidance counselors of the status of the student athlete. Guidance counselors will communicate the information to the student athlete's teachers and staff.

A student athlete who suffers a head injury outside of Westford Public School

athletics shall be required to complete the WPS Head Injury Report Form “Outside of WPS Athletics”. The form must be returned to the athletic trainer.

6.) Documentation: The coach will complete the Westford School Department Student Accident- Incident Report as soon as possible. The report should be sent to the athletic trainer for recording purposes. The athletic trainer or middle school nurse will retain all pre-participation forms, student accident report forms, and “Outside of WPS Athletics Head Injury Report Forms” for the required length of time as required by the MDPH. The Westford Academy nurses will maintain a head injury master database in the WPS Student Physical Database. The athletic director will report the necessary head injury cumulative data to the MDPH on a yearly basis.

7.) Academic Support- Due to ongoing symptoms following a concussion, some students have difficulty keeping up with academic demands. If following medical evaluation it is determined the student needs specific accommodations, the guidance counselors will be notified so as to help facilitate the recovery of the student.

8.) Return to Participation- Following a concussion injury, the athlete should have regular communication with the athletic trainer to update his/her condition. There should be no practice or exercise, in or out of school, while the athlete is symptomatic. The athlete may be cleared to return to play when he/she has been free of symptoms for a minimum of one week (may be longer), neurocognitive scores are back to

baseline, have been cleared by personal physician and cleared by the athletic trainer. Return to participation will also include a stepwise increase in activity/exertion as follows:

- Light aerobic activity
- Aerobic activity and weight training
- Non contact sport specific drills
- Full contact sport specific activity
- Game play

The athlete must remain free of symptoms for 24 hours to advance to the next level. If symptoms return at any point, a 24 hour rest is mandated and the previous step is repeated following the rest period. Final clearance by physician follows.

Opioid Addiction and Prevention

In 2015 the Governor of Massachusetts enacted an emergency Law for the epidemic of opioid addictions and deaths across the Commonwealth. The athletic department’s role in this new law is to educate the student athletes and parents in our community. For youth, opioid addiction may start when a clinician prescribes opioids following an injury; through having access to painkillers in the family medicine cabinet; or by borrowing from friends. Although these medications are effective when prescribed and taken appropriately, they can be misused and lead to significant negative consequences, including overdose and addiction. Some people who are addicted may even transition to heroin,

which is less expensive and widely available. For more information of Substance Abuse please visit the following www.mass.gov/stopaddiction.

Issue/Problem Resolution

In the normal course of events, it is sometimes necessary to address issues or problems. All student-athletes should feel confident that they can communicate with the administration and are encouraged to address issues/problems for the purpose of resolution. It is our goal as an educational institution to help our young adults succeed and develop the skills they need to be productive citizens. Communication is a key to

issue/problem resolution. Often solutions can be identified at the earliest stage with open and honest communication among parties. The outcome may not always be to the satisfaction of everyone, however, the opportunity always enables all concerns and opinions to be heard in the interest of fairness. To help establish a chain of communication, we suggest the following order of contact.

- Student-athlete and coach
- Student-athlete with parent and coach
- Student-athlete with/without parent and Director of Athletics
- Student-athlete with/without parent and Principal
- Student-athlete with/without parent and Superintendent
- Student-athlete with/without parent and School Committee

Appendix

NAME	POSITION	TELEPHONE
Jeff Bunyon	Dir. Of Athletics	978-692-5570 x2108
Jim Antonelli	Principal	978-692-5570 x2104
Bob Ware	Dean of Students	978-692-5570 x2138
Dan Twomey	Dean of Students	978-692-5560 x 2103
Betsy Murphy	Dean of Students	978-692-5570 x 2116
Bill Bombaci	Athletic Trainer	978-692-5570 x2133
Betsy Parke	Secretary	978-692-5570 x2121
Varsity Coach Emails	www.wagreyghosts.com	

