



Blessed Sacrament School Athletic Program Handbook 2023-2024

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Mission Statement

The Blessed Sacrament athletic program exists to support the school in the development of students spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, and physically. The athletic program supports this philosophy by providing a positive and supportive athletic environment for all its students. Each child will have an opportunity to participate, with emphasis placed on teamwork, sportsmanship, physical fitness, and development of fundamental skills.

The objective of our Blessed Sacrament athletic program is to provide the student with an atmosphere that encourages all athletes to reach their fullest potential, while being part of the team. In support of this, the adult athletic leadership commits itself to support the school philosophy. The adult leadership will place emphasis on development of the individual and the importance of working as a team and being part of a team concept. With this as our objective and priority, along with hard work and determination, winning should be the result of our actions versus a goal or measure of success.

Levels of Sports

Blessed Sacrament School embraces the understanding of various levels of youth sports, proposed by Rev. Richard J. McGrath (*Coaching Catholic: Gospel Values in Youth Sports*, pp. 22-3). This understanding identifies two, out of three, levels that can be found at Blessed Sacrament School: the Primary level and the Transitional level.

1) The Primary Level focuses on “instruction and participation,” with an “emphasis... on the enjoyment of playing, participation, learning the basics of the sport, and fulfilling the need for young people to belong, to learn, and to participate. This level should be inclusive, instructional, positive, emphasize the skills of the sport,” and without a strong emphasis on competition.

2) The Transitional Level, since it is designed to assist the athletes in transitioning toward the varsity level in high school, specifically at Notre Dame Catholic High School & Morton High School, is “more competitive and concentrates on basic skills, but moves forward to skill refinement, team development, and advanced skill learning. A thorough explanation of the nuances of the game and its finer points is provided through extensive instruction and practice, game playing, and game-like situations.”

Roles and Responsibilities

Athletic Board

The Blessed Sacrament Athletic Board (the “Board”) assists and advises the Athletic Director with the athletic program. The board will meet regularly to discuss Athletic Policy and review the progress of the year’s athletic program.

Voting members of the Board shall consist of a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 12 laypersons and the Athletic Director. The Pastor and Principal shall be non-voting members. Board members are appointed to a 2-year term. At the end of the term, the Athletic Director, subject to the approval of the Principal, shall determine whether to appoint a Member to a successive term.

Athletic Director

The Athletic Director is responsible for all aspects of the operation of the Blessed Sacrament athletic program, in consultation with the Board and subject to the approval of the Principal.

The Principal, in consultation with and subject to the approval of the Pastor, selects the Athletic Director, and he or she shall serve until he or she resigns or is removed by the Principal. The Principal, in consultation with the Board, shall evaluate the Athletic Director.

Athletic Coaches

Responsibilities

- Coaches & Assistant Coaches are required to conduct themselves, and their program, in a manner consistent with Christian values and leadership. Abusive behavior and/or profane language will not be tolerated.
- Developing each individual student as an athlete;
- Emphasizing working as a team, with the team concept of utmost importance;
- Be a positive role model and representative of Blessed Sacrament School at all times
- Instilling in the student/athlete and demonstrating personally good sportsmanship toward all students, athletes, parents, officials, and other coaches.
- Follow the guidelines of the “Levels of Sports”
- Head coaches will choose assistant coaches with final approval from the Athletic Director

- For Transitional Level sports (as defined on page 3), preference will be given to qualified coaching applicants who do not have a child of their own playing on the team they will be coaching.
- All coaches are responsible for completion of Diocesan and IESA compliance requirements.

Selection

- The AD and/or Board shall solicit candidates for all Head Coach positions.
- The Athletic Director will present all candidates to the Athletic Board, which will review the submitted candidates.
- After evaluation of the applications, the Athletic Director will make a recommendation to the Principal and Athletic Board.
- Final coaching appointments will be made by the Principal and the Athletic Director after due consideration of the Athletic Board's recommendation.

Sanctions and Removal

Failure to meet the goals and objectives by a Coach or violation of other Blessed Sacrament School and IESA athletic program policies and mission may result in rejection to coach in a proceeding year. Violations as determined by the Athletic Director, in consultation with the Board, may result in immediate dismissal. The Athletic Director has the ability to suspend a coach, and then after consultation with the Board, can reinstate or dismiss the coach in question.

Students

Eligibility for Athletics

BSS Extracurricular activities are open to all students who meet the grade level and academic eligibility requirements. For eligibility requirements, refer to the current Student Handbook. Students must complete all required IESA and BSS Athletic forms prior to participation. These forms will be made available at student registration and from the Athletic Website.

No student shall be permitted to compete in a tryout, practice, or contest unless such student has filed with the school principal a certificate of physical fitness issued by a licensed physician, physician's assistant, or nurse practitioner as set forth in the Illinois State Statutes not more than 395 days preceding such tryout, practice, or contest in any athletic activity.

Students failing to meet eligibility standards will receive a written warning notifying them they have one week to improve performance, or a one-week suspension will be issued. Warnings are to be signed and returned by parents to the Principal. Parents and students, upon receipt of a warning letter, are advised to confer with the teachers and or Principal to establish a plan for improvement. Students may practice, participate, and play with the team during a warning week. At the end of the warning week, the principal will evaluate performance. If it does not meet standards, a week's suspension will be issued. Students may not participate, practice, or play during the suspension week. Suspension notification will be issued on Monday, will begin on Tuesday, and end the following Tuesday. Special eligibility rules apply in the case of gross misconduct or violation of school rules.

Disciplinary Actions

Any violations of the student code of conduct, as outlined in the Student Handbook, will be reviewed on a case by case basis with the Athletic Director and Principal.

Absences from Practices and/or School

A student must attend school the entire day of a scheduled athletic contest in order to participate. Absences prior to a weekend or holiday event may result in non-participation. The principal may excuse absences due to medical appointments, emergencies, funerals, and family emergencies. The principal will notify the Athletic Director of his decision, who will notify the appropriate coach.

General Policies

The seventh and eighth grade athletic activities will be governed by the policies as outlined in the IESA by-laws and the fifth and sixth grade athletic activities will be governed by the BSS Athletic Policy (and adhering to IESA policies when applicable). BSS coaches and board members will complete all Peoria Diocesan requirements to volunteer around our student athletes.

Playing Time

Primary Level Sports – (Refer to the definition of primary level sports on page 3). For Primary Level Sports programs, the intent is that playing time will be distributed as evenly as possible for every dressed player during each game/match, with the exception of tournament games. If the number of players, or the number of games, necessitates splitting the team into separate squads for basketball or volleyball, coaches shall not designate players to specific squads based on ability (no “A” and “B” teams for these sports).

The following sports will be Primary Level Sports:

- 5th and 6th grade basketball (boys and girls)
- 5th and 6th grade volleyball (girls)

Transitional Level Sports – (Refer to the definition of transitional level sports on page 3).

Playing time in transitional level programs will be skills-dependent, in the team's best interest, and may not be equal for all players. Younger players who "play up" either due to an insufficient number of players to fill a Transitional team roster or due to advanced skills, will not be guaranteed playing time when on a Transitional team. Permanent student-athlete "play-up" situations must be approved by the Athletic Director and/or Principal. Players who "play up" due to advanced skills must not exceed 6 quarters per day for non-tournament games in basketball, and 1.5 matches per day in volleyball. Based on the number of players at the transitional level, an exception to the 6 quarter rule/1.5 match rule may be warranted resulting in a student athlete playing up to the IESA maximum of 8 quarters per day in basketball or 2 matches per day in volleyball (exceptions must be approved by the athletic director and/ or Principal).

The following sports will be Transitional Level Sports:

- 7th and 8th grade basketball (boys and girls)
- 7th and 8th grade volleyball
- Cheerleading (8th grade girls)
- Cross Country (5th through 8th grade boys and girls)
- Track (5th through 8th grade boys and girls)
- Baseball (Refer to Morton Bethel Lutheran School athletic policy at <http://www.bethellutheranschool.org/athletics.html>)

Team Size

Primary Level Sports – all interested students will be allowed to be members of the team. In the event the number of interested students exceeds a manageable level, the Coach, Athletic Director, and Principal will meet to decide how to address the situation.

Transitional Level Sports – team size shall be limited to the IESA guidelines. If the number of interested students exceeds IESA guidelines, the Coach, Athletic Director and Principal will meet to decide how to address the situation. In this case, all interested students may not be allowed to participate in the State Tournament Series.

Team Composition

Blessed Sacrament School follows a no-cut policy. No students will be cut from a team, except for disciplinary or academic reasons. All students in grades 5 through 8 are eligible and encouraged to participate.

For activities in which multiple grades form a single team at the junior high level (such as baseball, cross country, and track), students are considered equal team members with no distinction by grade.

Cheerleaders: All interested and eligible students in the 8th grade may participate in the cheerleading program. The number of cheerleaders asked to perform for any game is left to the discretion of the cheerleading coach. The Principal and the Athletic Director, in their sole discretion, may ask for 7th grade participation in the cheerleading program where there is an insufficient number of 8th grade girls participating or eligible for the cheerleading program.

Awards and Recognition

1. Team recognition and team banners to hang in the gymnasium will be established by the Athletic Board.
2. Eighth grade players involved in athletics may receive awards at the discretion of the Athletic Director. Players in 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th are eligible to receive one BSS letter during their athletic career. In addition, those players will receive participation pins for all athletic activities in which they complete the season.
3. No other team awards are authorized, unless approved by the Athletic Board.

Finance

The athletic programs are self-supporting (independent of the school and parish budgets). An athletic fee, determined by the board, will be charged to each participant prior to participation.

Grievance Procedure for Athletics

This is a step by step procedure to handle any problems that may arise within the athletic program and Blessed Sacrament School. This policy has been put in place to solve problems efficiently and effectively. These steps need to be followed.

Step 1 – The player and/or parent should attempt to resolve the problem with the coach. It is not appropriate to discuss issues with the coach immediately before, during or following a game. The '24 hour rule' should be followed in the event of a problem or grievance against the coach or Athletic Program (wait 24 hours to address the problem). The coach will inform the Athletic Director of the conversation.

Step 2 – If the problem is still unresolved after Step 1, the parent should discuss the situation with the Athletic Director in order to arrive at a solution.

Step 3 - If the problem still remains unresolved, the parent should submit, in writing, the problem or grievance to the Athletic Director and the Principal. The written submission should include details of the incident(s) in question and a proposed solution. The Athletic Director and Principal will then schedule a special meeting of the Athletic Board and invite the parent(s) involved. The decision of the Board will be final with the approval of the Principal and Pastor. The following procedure will be followed by the Board in addressing grievances:

- The Athletic Board will see if and how this problem is addressed in the Athletic Handbook. If so, the solution will be determined according to the policies stated in the Athletic Handbook.
- If the grievance is not addressed by existing policy, the Board will determine a solution to the immediate problem and also discuss whether or not a new policy needs to be added to the Athletic Handbook.
- The Athletic Board will appoint one of its members to inform the parents of the Board's decision if they were not present at the meeting.

Current and Potential Co-Op Sports Guidelines

Co-op sports are approved agreements between the participating schools and the IESA. Through co-op sports, students at BSS are able to participate in additional sports that otherwise would not be available to them.

Any student who chooses to participate in a sport that is co-op with another school must adhere to the BSS athletic handbook as well as the host school's athletic handbook. Any concerns with a discrepancy between the BSS athletic handbook and the host school's athletic handbook should be brought to the attention of the Athletic Director. Parents of participating athletes may be the first and foremost liaison between the host school and BSS. It is imperative that any concerns regarding events that may conflict with the mission of BSS and the BSS athletic handbook be communicated with the BSS Athletic Director immediately.

Participants in co-op teams are required to pay the established BSS athletic fee and any athletic/activity fee that the host school may charge. Students that participate in co-op sports are also responsible for all work that is missed in class due to practice and/or games.

The Athletic Director will present any new co-op sport requests / opportunities to the Athletic Board and the Principal. The Athletic Board must approve entering into any new co-op sport agreements and must approve renewing any existing co-op sport agreements (prior to a BSS student practicing or participating at the host school of a co-op agreement).

Facilities, Equipment and Uniforms

Facilities

All usage of BSS athletic facilities must be approved and scheduled through the Athletic Director and/or Principal. The use of the BSS GYM or campus for non-school sanctioned BSS or BSC events is strictly prohibited (per Diocesan insurance requirements).

Uniforms & Equipment

Uniforms & Equipment Uniforms are provided to the students by the Athletic Board. Students and their parents/guardians are responsible for the upkeep and cleaning of uniforms. Uniforms must be turned in at the end of the season after having been washed and repaired. Damaged or lost uniforms will need to be replaced and all costs will be charged to the parents (uniform, special printing, shipping, etc.)

Any sweatshirts, T-shirts, or any type of warm-up attire purchased by any athletic team must have approval from the Athletic Director and the Principal prior to purchase.

Students are expected to use reasonable care in handling equipment purchased by the Athletic Board for their use. Willful or negligent damage to equipment is also the financial responsibility of the parent/ guardian.

Other Athletic Guidelines

ANY topic or subject matter not addressed in this handbook will be discussed and decided by the BSS Athletic Board.