



Union County Public Schools

Athletic Guidelines

Purpose of Athletics

While academics remain the top priority, athletics offer students valuable opportunities for growth, discipline, and teamwork beyond the classroom. Our athletic programs support the development of well-rounded individuals who contribute positively to their school, community, state, and nation.

Mission Statement

To provide student-athletes with meaningful experiences that foster sportsmanship, leadership, teamwork, commitment, responsibility, respect, and community pride through team participation.

Vision Statement

We strive to offer a model athletic program recognized across North Carolina—one that enhances academics, promotes school spirit, and supports lifelong wellness. Our goal is to maintain high-quality facilities, skilled coaching staff, and a culture of excellence that all students, staff, and families can be proud of.

Core Beliefs

- Athletics are an essential and unique part of a complete education.
 - Sports teach critical life skills: discipline, commitment, sportsmanship, teamwork, resilience, and the drive to succeed.
 - Participation in athletics positively impacts academic performance and school engagement.
-

Code of Conduct

Participation in athletics is a privilege, not a right. Student-athletes are expected to represent their school with integrity, respect, and good citizenship at all times—on and off the field. Misconduct may lead to suspension or removal from the team, in accordance with both UCPS and NCHSAA guidelines. Additional consequences may be imposed by the district when necessary.

Expectations for Parents/Guardians

We believe interscholastic athletics support student development in self-expression, physical health, and responsibility. Parents are expected to:

- Model respect and sportsmanship at all events.
 - Support athletes, coaches, and officials in a positive manner.
 - Understand that inappropriate behavior may result in removal from events.
-

Student-Athlete Expectations

Athletic participation is a meaningful accomplishment that comes with responsibilities. Whether upholding a proud tradition or helping build one, athletes must demonstrate dedication, integrity, and school pride.

Student-Athlete Pledge

As a student-athlete, I commit to:

- Acting as a role model for others.
- Showing respect for teammates, opponents, coaches, and officials.
- Avoiding disrespectful behavior such as taunting, profanity, or unsportsmanlike conduct.
- Representing my school and community with honor.

Your Responsibilities

To Yourself:

Take pride in your development—physically, mentally, and academically. These experiences shape your future.

To Your School:

Your actions reflect on your school. Represent it with integrity, both on and off the field.

To Your Team:

Support your teammates with effort, respect, and a positive attitude. Your behavior impacts the entire team.

Governance

Board of Education:

The UCPS Board oversees athletics by:

- Aligning policies with community and educational goals.
- Ensuring programs are effective, inclusive, and high-quality.
- Evaluating the impact of athletics on the school and community.

NCHSAA and NCDPI:

UCPS follows the regulations of the North Carolina High School Athletic Association and North Carolina State Board of Education, which ensures fair play and consistency across schools. All UCPS schools are NCHSAA members and agree to abide by its rules.

Requirements for Participation

To ensure the health, safety, and eligibility of all student-athletes, the following requirements must be completed **before** participating in any UCPS athletic activity. These and other agreements must be signed by parents and student athletes through the UCPS athletic registration process at each school.

1. Physical Examination

A valid **NCHSAA Physical Examination** is required annually. It must:

- Be completed by a licensed physician.
- Be on the approved **NCHSAA form**.
- Be valid for **395 days** from the date of the exam.
- Be submitted to the coach and kept on file in the school's athletic office.

2. Concussion Awareness (Gfeller-Waller Act)

In accordance with the **Gfeller-Waller Concussion Awareness Act** (2011), all student-athletes and parents must:

- Receive and review information about concussions and head injuries annually.
- Sign an acknowledgment form prior to participation.

3. Sport Participation & Medical History Forms

All athletes must complete the **NCHSAA Sport Participation Form**, which includes a detailed medical history section.

4. Emergency Medical Authorization

A completed Emergency Medical Authorization Form must be submitted by a parent/guardian. This form grants permission for medical treatment in the event the parent/guardian is not available and is kept by the school's athletic department.

5. Insurance Coverage

Student-athletes must have proof of insurance:

- UCPS provides an option to purchase school-based accident insurance.
- If using family insurance, the parent/guardian must provide the insurance provider's name and policy number.
- Some schools may require a signed form verifying insurance coverage.

6. Residence Eligibility

Students are only eligible to participate at the school to which they are assigned based on the Union County Board of Education's zoning policies.

- **"Residence"** is defined in accordance with North Carolina law as **"domicile."**

7. Injury Reporting and Clearance

All athletic injuries must be reported to the coach or athletic trainer immediately. If a student receives treatment from a physician:

- An injury report must be completed.
 - Written clearance from the treating physician is required before returning to activity.
 - Final clearance to return after an injury must be given from the Athletic Trainer
-

Scholastic Eligibility

All athletes must be registered through the UCPS Arbiter Sports system prior to participation.

Academic Standards (NC State Board of Education)

To be in good academic standing:

- The student must have passed **at least 70% of their courses** in the previous semester.
- The student must be **on track to advance** to the next grade or to graduate within the academic year.

Attendance Requirements

To be eligible, a student must:

- Have attended **at least 85%** of school days during the previous semester.
- Be present for **at least 50% of the school day** (two full class blocks) to participate in a contest on that day.

Criminal Charges and Athletic Eligibility

Reporting Requirement

Any student-athlete who is:

- Charged, cited, or petitioned (including juvenile petitions),
 - Arrested, or
 - Referred to Juvenile Services
for any criminal offense (excluding minor traffic violations, *but not including DWI*), must report the incident in writing to their coach and principal within 24 hours.
 - If the athlete is hospitalized or incarcerated, the report must be made within 24 hours of release.
 - The report must include all relevant details of the offense.
 - Failure to self-report will result in suspension and/or removal from the team and possible additional sanctions.
-

Automatic Suspension Upon Criminal Charges

If a student is charged with or receives a juvenile petition for any of the following:

- Felony
- Class A1, I, II, or III misdemeanors

Then:

- The athlete is immediately suspended from all school-sponsored athletic activities for a minimum of 20 calendar days, starting from the school's notification date (not the date of the charge).

Additional Notes:

- Out-of-season athletes may not participate in team activities (e.g., workouts, skills training).
- Summer months do not exempt athletes from these restrictions.

Return to Participation

The athlete remains ineligible until:

- Charges are dismissed *and* the 20-day suspension has been served, or
- The case is resolved in court.
 - Plea of "No Contest," "Deferred Prosecution," or "Prayer for Judgment Continued (PJC)" will be treated as convictions.
 - Diversion plans will be handled on a case by case basis.

It is the athlete's and/or guardian's responsibility to self-report all charges.

Criminal Convictions

Felonies: Any student athlete who is convicted of a felony-is barred from participation in interscholastic athletics for the remainder of his/her high school career per the NCHSAA guidelines.

Misdemeanors:

- **Class A1** or **Class I:** Students found guilty of a Class A1 misdemeanor, a Class I misdemeanor or are adjudicated delinquent for an offense that would be a misdemeanor if committed by an adult are not eligible to participate for 90 school days. If 90 days are not reached in one school year the suspension extends into the next school year. Time served after the initial twenty (20) calendar day suspension shall count towards the 90 day suspension.

- **Class II or III:** Students found guilty of a Class II or III misdemeanor or are adjudicated delinquent for an offense that would be a Class II or III misdemeanor if committed by an adult are not eligible to participate for 45 school days. If 45 days are not reached in one school year the suspension extends into the next school year. Time served after the initial twenty (20) calendar day suspension shall count towards the 45 day suspension.

Middle School Students: These guidelines also apply to middle school students. Charges carried over from the middle school must be resolved for athletic eligibility.

Second Offense (Misdemeanor or Juvenile Petition)

A second, unrelated conviction or juvenile petition for a misdemeanor-level offense results in automatic removal from all teams and activities for 180 school days.

Notification & Appeals

Notification:

The school principal or designee will formally notify the student-athlete's guardian of the eligibility consequences once a charge or conviction is reported or confirmed.

Appeal Process:

A parent or guardian may appeal the eligibility decision in writing. The appeal process is as follows:

1. Submit a written request to the **principal**.
2. The principal informs the **School Performance Director**.
3. The **Assistant Superintendent of Administration and Operations** or designee will review the case in consultation with school staff as needed.
4. A written decision will be issued within five (5) calendar days. If more time is needed, the Assistant Superintendent will notify the parent/guardian.

**Appendix A: TEMPLATE LETTER FOR NOTIFICATION TO PARENT
REGARDING ELGIBILITY**

INSERT ON UCPS LETTERHEAD

Name and Address

Dear Ms. /Mr.:

On <Insert Date>, I was notified that <insert student name> has been charged with <insert charge title> by the following means: < Insert notification method>. In accordance with the UCPS Athletic Guidelines, the following will take place effective <Insert Date>:

<Insert Student Name> will:

- Be ineligible to participate in any athletic activities effective <Same Date as notification date> and will remain ineligible until at least <insert calendar date>.
- The student athlete will remain ineligible to participate until charges have been resolved through the court system or dismissed and the twenty (20) calendar day suspension has been completed.
- If the student athlete is convicted of a crime, please reference the UCPS Athletic Guidelines for additional guidance associated with his/her eligibility to participate in co-curricular or extracurricular activities.

If you would like to appeal the period of ineligibility for your student athlete, please notify me in writing of such within ten (10) calendar days of the date of this letter.

Sincerely,

Principal

Appendix B: Appeal Considerations

If a parent/guardian requests an appeal of the eligibility of their student athlete, the following should be considered:

Mitigating circumstances may include:

- o The student was a passive participant or played a minor role in the offense;
- o The student reasonably believed the conduct was legal;
- o The student was acting under strong provocation; or
- o The student was aiding in the discovery of another offender.

The following are expectations for all student athletes, but may be considered when making this decision (NOTE – the following factors do not hold as much weight as those above):

- o The student has no history of disciplinary problems, or a significant amount of time has passed since the student's last disciplinary problem;
- o The student made a full and truthful statement admitting guilt at an early stage in the investigation of the offense; and
- o The student displayed an appropriate attitude and was cooperative during the investigation and discipline process.

Under no circumstance is prowess in a sport or the potential of scholarships or grants in aid a mitigating circumstance.