



Athletics and Fine Arts Handbook

2023-2024

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Welcome Message

We are grateful for your interest in Mercy Preparatory Academy. This school is unique in its ability to meet students where they are and partner with parents to help students fulfill their God-given calling. This model is not only academically rigorous and supportive of an ecumenical community but gives parents the time to be actively involved in their students' educational experience. The Athletics and Fine Arts Handbook touches on various topics pertaining to navigating the Mercy Preparatory Academy experience; while it cannot touch on every aspect, it is a detailed summary and guide to success. Therefore, it is important to read, understand, and be prepared to abide by the policies and procedures expressed.

Most importantly, it is imperative that the students and families fully understand the reasoning for such a handbook. As a voluntary, private, educational institution, we proclaim our Christian beliefs, as well as the standards of conduct expected of students, parents, faculty, and staff at Mercy Preparatory Academy. Our goal is that all stakeholders are in alignment regarding the spiritual, academic, and financial commitment this education demands. All readers of this handbook should prayerfully consider the full commitment of joining Mercy Preparatory Academy in a common goal to be examples of Christ in all we do. If you have questions regarding the handbook, please email info@mercyprep.org.

Concept

Athletic and Fine Arts Mission

The mission of athletics and fine arts at Mercy Preparatory Academy is to train student-participants to glorify God with their bodies, minds, and spirits, as inspired by I Corinthians 10:31. Our aim is to develop a Christian character within our participants that will positively impact their lives both on and off the field or stage. Additionally, we strive to foster a sense of community within our school by offering and supporting various athletic and fine arts events.

Mercy Prep Athletics and Fine Arts upholds a commitment to excellence in all aspects of our endeavors. We set high expectations and embrace a competitive spirit. A Mercy Prep Royal dedicates themselves to rigorous practice and fierce competition. We put forth our best efforts to achieve victory in every contest while exemplifying the values of Christ in our actions and behavior.

Mission

Mercy Preparatory Academy partners with parents to cultivate future leaders by giving students a well-rounded experience of faith, family, education, and service in a non-denominational setting.

We are committed to supporting families in their quest to impart a biblical worldview to their students to create strong Christian leaders who love God, love others, and serve joyfully. Our focus is to not only assist students in achieving their academic goals, but to also prepare them for their calling from God.

Vision

Mercy Preparatory Academy will leave a legacy not only with our graduates who will leave our school with strong discipleship principles, but also with our community who will greatly benefit from a school that is focused on loving and serving those around them.

League Affiliation

Mercy Prep is affiliated with the Texas Christian Athletic League (TCAL) for our junior high and high school sports. For more information on the leagues including districts and divisions, please see their website: <https://t-cal.org/>.

NCAA Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse

The NCAA is divided into three membership divisions: Division I, Division II, and Division III. Institutions belong to a specific division based on the size and scope of their athletic programs, as well as their provision of athletic scholarships.

If your student athlete intends to enroll in college as a freshman and desires to participate in Division I or Division II athletics, it is necessary to obtain certification from the NCAA Initial-Eligibility Clearinghouse. The Clearinghouse ensures consistent interpretation of NCAA initial-eligibility requirements for prospective student athletes at member institutions.

We strongly recommend that all parents and student athletes who aspire to compete in collegiate athletics access the websites listed below for comprehensive instructions and procedures. These resources will provide you with the necessary information to navigate the process effectively.

Athletic and Fine Arts Participation

Objectives of the Student Life Department

Participation in athletics and fine arts at Mercy Preparatory Academy is regarded as a valuable and meaningful experience that every student should have the chance to pursue. We believe that when participation is approached with integrity, they have the potential to positively contribute to the spiritual, intellectual, physical, social, and emotional development of our students. At Mercy Prep, our aim is to provide a student life program led by Christian, educationally oriented coaches/instructors who create an environment conducive to achieving these holistic goals. Through our student life program, we seek to nurture the growth and well-rounded development of our students in all aspects of their lives.

To realize the educational value of athletics and fine arts more fully, the student life program should strive to:

- focus on the spiritual growth of each student,
- teach, model and nurture leadership skills in each participant,
- emphasize the importance of excellence in the classroom,
- provide equitable and adequate funding for each activity,
- recruit and hire the best coaches possible,
- field competitive teams in each activity,
- increase participation in all activities,
- afford all students the opportunity to try out for athletics and fine arts teams,
- treat all students, parents, coaches, Mercy Prep employees, opponents and community supporters with the dignity, respect and grace that they deserve,
- encourage continual development and improvement of coaches/instructors,
- exhibit outstanding sportsmanship in victory and defeat, and
- operate within the letter and spirit of all TCAL and Mercy Prep rules and regulations.

Requirements for Participation (Mercy Prep & TCAL)

- To participate in athletics at Mercy Preparatory Academy, student-athletes must have a physical exam each year using the form provided by TCAL (available on the Mercy Prep website or from the Administration Office).

- Junior High and High School students must have paper copies of the physical, medical history and other Mercy Prep-required forms on file in the Athletics Office

Junior High Athletics Participation

Junior High Sports: Cross Country, Volleyball (girls), Basketball, Track & Field, Golf

The junior high athletics program at Mercy Preparatory Academy is dedicated to meeting the physical, social, and emotional needs of early adolescence. Our approach to athletics at this level emphasizes inclusivity and recognizes the unique challenges and changes that junior high students undergo. We believe that participation in athletics should not be solely determined by athletic ability. Therefore, we provide expanded opportunities for all students to engage in our program.

The Mercy Preparatory Academy Junior High program includes a wide range of activities and sports, fostering a well-rounded experience for our students. Our aim is to promote physical fitness, teamwork, and personal growth in a supportive and encouraging environment. Through our junior high athletics program, we strive to instill important values and life skills that will benefit our students both on and off the field. The Mercy Prep Junior High program will include:

- maximum exposure to ALL athletics activities,
- a “no cut” policy, except for basketball and volleyball or unless the number exceeds common sense guidelines for health and safety,
- all team members in each contest,
- limited practice times during vacation periods (some practice will be necessary).

High School Athletics Participation

High School Sports: Cross Country, Volleyball (girls), Basketball, Track & Field, Golf

At Mercy Preparatory Academy, athletic participation at the high school level brings a higher level of competitiveness compared to the Junior High program. Our Junior Varsity (JV) program serves as a crucial transition between the two levels, when enrollment constitutes availability. Varsity competition is primarily based on athletic ability, and involvement in this program demands a significant time commitment, as well as adherence to stricter team and Athletics Department regulations. It is important for parents and athletes to carefully consider these factors when making the decision to participate at the JV or varsity level.

To ensure clear communication and realistic expectations, it is essential for parents and students to fully grasp the level of commitment involved in High School competition. We encourage families to appreciate the dedication required and understand the impact it may have on their schedules and overall commitments. This open understanding will help foster a supportive environment where athletes can thrive and excel while balancing their academic and personal responsibilities.

- Team/player selection is based on ability and “cuts” are made at the discretion of the coach.
- “Playing time” is based on ability and substitutions are made at the discretion of the coach.
- Athletes who fail to complete a season may not be awarded a letter/certificate.

Junior High and High School Fine Arts Participation

Fine Arts Offering: see Mercy Prep website

To ensure clear communication and realistic expectations, it is essential for parents and students to fully grasp the level of commitment involved in fine arts classes and competition. We encourage families to appreciate the dedication required and understand the impact it may have on their schedules and overall commitments. This open understanding will help foster a supportive environment where athletes can thrive and excel while balancing their academic and personal responsibilities.

- Role selection is based on ability and “cuts” are made at the discretion of the instructor.
- “Playing time” is based on ability and substitutions are made at the discretion of the instructor.
- Participants who fail to complete a season may not be awarded a letter/certificate.

Participation in Multiple Sports

At Mercy Preparatory Academy, it is encouraged for student-athletes to participate in multiple sports. The school recognizes the value and importance of engaging in various sports to maintain competitiveness. We expect all Mercy Prep coaches to support and promote this approach as well.

Participating in multiple sports not only benefits student-athletes physically but also contributes to their character development. We believe that diverse athletic experiences enhance their overall growth. However, it is important to note that a student-athlete must complete their current participation in a Mercy Prep sport or activity before beginning another, unless arrangements have been made between the head coaches of the conflicting activities. This ensures proper management of schedules and allows student-athletes to fully commit to their teams and excel in their respective sports.

To participate in multiple sports within the same season, the approval of both coaches is necessary. The student must select one primary sport, which will take priority in the event of a scheduling conflict. In such cases, games/meets will be prioritized over practice sessions. To prevent any potential conflicts during overlapping seasons, both coaches should inform the Athletic Director about the student athlete's intention prior to the start of the season.

Commitment to a Team

When students choose to join the athletics program and participate in a specific team, they take on responsibility and make a commitment to that team and their coach. We strongly believe in honoring commitments, and it is deemed unacceptable to simply walk away from those commitments. With this philosophy in mind, our participants are expected to adhere to the following principles:

- It is important to note that a student-athlete who is participating in a team sport must complete their current sport before beginning another Mercy Prep sport. However, if arrangements have been made with the current sport's coach, the student-athlete may begin working with the coach of the next sport in preparation for the transition. This ensures a smooth and organized transition between sports while respecting the commitments made to the current team.
- Any athlete who leaves a team, in season, will not be allowed to participate in another sport until current season of the team s/he left has ended.

- An athlete who is dismissed from a squad for disciplinary reasons (e.g. violation of the Code of Conduct, insubordination, excessive unexcused absences, etc.) would be subject to the same policy.

At Mercy Preparatory Academy, we provide a 14-calendar-day grace period for students to assess their commitment to a sport. This period commences when the athlete attends their first practice or tryout. During this grace period, the student is free to leave the team without facing any repercussions, as no formal commitment has been made. We believe in giving students the opportunity to explore their interests and make informed decisions regarding their participation in sports.

Uniform Requirements

Mercy Preparatory Academy recognizes that dress is a matter of personal taste and preference. At the same time, maintaining an appearance that is appropriate for high academic and Christian standards is important. Likewise, promoting an environment conducive to undistracted, student learning is paramount.

Keeping these goals in mind, teachers and administration will make every effort to carry out the responsibility to uphold the following dress code policies with respect, tact, and with as much gentleness as possible.

Students must abide by these guidelines and always remain in proper dress code while on campus or school-sponsored events.

Casual Dress

Friday classes and extracurricular activities allow for Casual Dress code. All students are welcome to maintain the Traditional Dress code any day of the week or at any event. Casual dress includes any school sponsored t-shirt (containing the words Mercy Preparatory Academy, Royals, MPA, or the Mercy Preparatory Academy logo) and appropriately fitting (tightness and length) denim jeans with no holes, rips, or tears.

Designated athletic teams may wear an appropriate upper body jersey/uniform after receiving approval from the Director of Athletics and/or Administrator.

General Guidelines

Visible tattoos are not allowed.

No sweatpants, pajama pants, yoga pants, or any pants outside of those designated in this document are allowed.

Outerwear

Only outerwear purchased through Land's End and including the Mercy Preparatory Academy logo will be permitted in the classroom. Outerwear may be a jacket, sweater, hoodie, or pullover.

Hoods on outerwear can be worn outside but not inside school buildings.

Hair

Hair must be clean and neatly groomed and may not include distracting styles.

Non-natural hair coloring is acceptable in moderation, coverage of 10% or less.

Girls

Earrings must be modest and small. No other visible jewelry piercing is allowed.

Nails and polish must be modest.

Make-up must be modest and only for grades 7-12.

Boys

Hair must remain off the shoulders. We are not opposed to longer hair, but hair, during the school day and school sponsored events, must remain off the shoulders.

Facial hair is allowed for Grades 7-12 but must be groomed and not exceed ¼" in length or distracting.

One earring stud per ear for Grades 7-12 is allowed. No other visible piercings are allowed.

Accessories

During school hours, sunglasses, hats, caps, and visors are not to be worn indoors.

Hoodies are not to be worn over the head inside school buildings.

Appropriate rings and necklaces may be worn.

Any article of clothing, jewelry, or adornment of any portion of the body deemed by faculty or administration to be unusually distracting is not permitted.

Shoes

Shoes must have a closed toe and heel. Any shoes with black soles will need to be anti-scuff or no-mark varieties so they do not leave marks on flooring. Shoes identified as leaving marks will result in a request to refrain from future wear on campus.

Dress Code Violations

A student who is wearing clothing outside of the dress code will be asked not to wear it again, a parent may also be contacted to be made aware and/or be responsible to immediately bring a change of clothes. Subsequent dress code violations may be handled with more severe consequences including dismissal from school. Such assessment is based not only on the number of violations, but also on the attitude and response of the student to corrective measures.

Mercy Preparatory Academy reserves the right to change and amend all dress code policies as new fashion "trends" emerge and present themselves in the popular culture. Any questions regarding the dress code shall be decided by the Administrator.

The Role of Mercy Preparatory Academy

Qualified Coaches and Instructors

The success of our student life program at Mercy Preparatory Academy relies heavily on the recruitment of highly qualified and motivated coaches and instructors. Positions are appointed on a yearly basis, and there is no tenure.

For all Mercy Prep Athletics and Fine Arts personnel, regardless of whether they are paid or volunteer, and who work with our students in any capacity, both on and off the field/court during the regular course of the season, including off-seasons or in-season practices/rehearsals, it is mandatory to complete an employment application and undergo a background check performed by the Administration. This ensures the safety and well-being of our students and upholds our commitment to providing a secure environment for their athletic development.

All Mercy Prep coaches must meet the following criteria:

- Set an example of sound Christian values and good sportsmanship.
- Be professional in all areas.

- Approach competition as a healthy and constructive exercise, not as a life and death struggle that requires victory at any price.
- Be modest in victory and gracious in defeat and instruct our participants accordingly.
- Stress academic achievement with our participants at every opportunity.
- Dress appropriately for practice and for games and be well groomed.
- Abstain from the use of profanity, crude or abusive language with players, opponents, officials, or spectators and expect the same behavior from our participants.
- Respect the judgment of the officials. Instruct the participants not to argue. Any questions with officials concerning rules interpretation should be made by the captain or coach.
- Remove players from competition who demonstrate unsportsmanlike behavior.
- Abstain from use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs while representing Mercy Prep at any contest or practice, or in any other official capacity.
- Know and comply with all TCAL policies and procedures. Keep current certifications including CPR/First Aid and all coaching certifications as required by TCAL.
- Embrace the core mission/vision of Mercy Preparatory Academy.

Facilities

At Mercy Preparatory Academy, the Athletics and Fine Arts Department holds the responsibility of scheduling the use of all facilities for practices, scrimmages, and games. To ensure proper coordination, all requests for facility usage, whether from coaches or other organizations, must be submitted to the Athletics Department at athletics@mercyprep.org or Fine Arts Department at syee@mercyprep.org. The Athletics and Fine Arts Departments will handle the arrangements for supervisors, scoreboard operators, ticket takers, as well as ambulance/trainer coverage as needed. By centralizing these processes, we aim to streamline facility management and ensure efficient and safe operations for all athletic events.

Practice Policy

It is the responsibility of the head coach/instructor to plan and conduct practices/rehearsals on a regularly scheduled basis.

- Practices/rehearsals should be scheduled to create the minimum amount of daily conflict with normal family activities and study time.
- Regular team prayer and devotions, or Bible instruction, will be scheduled.
- Sunday Practice/Rehearsal – There will be NO team practices on Sundays; however, in instances when Sunday travel is necessary, it can be scheduled with the Athletics Department's prior approval.
- On days when ACT, SAT, and PSAT tests are administered, consideration should be given to scheduling practices and scrimmages so that conflicts do not arise with the test times.
- Practice/rehearsal sessions will be well planned and structured to make the most of the time we have with our participants.
- Practices/rehearsals may be held on vacation days such as over Thanksgiving, Christmas and Spring Break. However, they should be scheduled with family commitments taken into consideration.
- Junior high practices/rehearsals, during vacation periods or on Saturdays, will be minimal.

Letter Jacket Eligibility and Requirements

1. **Eligibility for Purchase:** All high school (grades 9-12) student participants who have participated on a varsity team will be eligible to purchase a letter jacket.
2. **Approved Vendor:** To ensure consistency and quality, all letter jackets must be purchased through the school-approved vendor. Details regarding the vendor will be provided by the athletic department.
3. **Custom Designed Patches:** If a student participant wishes to have a custom designed patch on their letter jacket, it must be approved by the athletic department. The guidelines and approval process for custom patches will be communicated by the department.
4. **Letter Award:** All high school (grades 9-12) student participants who actively participate and successfully complete a varsity season will receive a letter as recognition for their dedication and achievements.

We encourage our student participants to proudly display their accomplishments through the letter jacket program, following the guidelines and procedures outlined above.

Professional Photography

Parents will be provided with the opportunity to purchase team and/or individual pictures of their student participant for each sport they participate in. Prior to the picture session, coaches will send an email to parents containing the date and time of the session, as well as the order form from the photographer. This ensures that parents have all the necessary information to arrange for pictures of their student.

Communication

The Athletic and Fine Arts Departments strive to keep parents well-informed about all events, schedules, and changes in a timely and efficient manner. This communication will primarily be facilitated by:

- Activity-specific pre-season coach/instructor information
- Annual mandatory athletic/fine arts meeting
- Email communication
- Messaging system platforms such as Bloomz or FACTS text
- Access to information on the Mercy Preparatory Academy website: www.mercyprep.org

Supervision of Students

It is the duty of each coach/instructor to provide supervision for their team members. This responsibility starts as participants enter the practice area and concludes when they depart the building or parking lot after practices or games. Our coaches/instructors are entrusted with ensuring the safety and well-being of their team members throughout these designated periods. By upholding this responsibility, we create a secure environment for our participants and foster a culture of care and support within our athletic and fine arts programs.

Transportation

Mercy Preparatory Academy will not provide transportation.

The Role of the Students

Students who opt to participate in our athletic and fine arts program are held to a set of fundamental standards of conduct. They are expected to exhibit self-discipline and willingly make sacrifices for the betterment of their team. Additionally, participants are required to demonstrate respect for the dignity and rights of others, uphold good sportsmanship, and display respect towards authority figures. These expectations foster a positive and respectful environment, emphasizing the values of integrity, teamwork, and character development within our athletic community.

Academic Eligibility

To take part in extracurricular activities at Mercy Preparatory Academy, all students must fulfill the eligibility requirements set by TCAL (Texas Christian Athletic League). These requirements encompass various criteria and should be thoroughly understood by reading the TCAL statement (outlined later in this document). Additionally, secondary students in grades 7-12 must meet the academic performance standards specifically outlined by Mercy Prep. By adhering to these eligibility requirements, we ensure that students are committed to their academic responsibilities while engaging in enriching extracurricular pursuits.

The First Six Weeks

- Students are eligible to participate in contests during the first six weeks of the school year if they have been promoted from the previous grade prior to the beginning of the current school year.
- Transfer students new to Mercy Prep may be eligible the first six weeks of school if they meet the criteria cited above or school officials are able to determine that they would have been eligible if they had remained in the school from which they are transferring.

After the First Six Weeks

- A student who receives, at the end of any grading period (after the first six weeks of the school year), a grade below 70 in any class may not participate in extracurricular contests for two school weeks. They may not be on the bench with the team, dress as a member of the team or travel with the team.
- They will be allowed (and expected) to practice with the team during this period. Ineligible participants will be allowed to attend the event as a non-participating Mercy Prep student. The student regains eligibility at the conclusion of two school weeks.
- A student may also lose athletic eligibility if placed on academic probation. The period of ineligibility is at the discretion of the Administration.

Grace and Waiting Period

A seven-calendar day grace and waiting period is always applicable after grading periods and periods of ineligibility. Example: A student is failing one or more classes at the End of Term 1, Friday, September 18th. The student becomes ineligible for competition at 3:30pm on Friday, September 25th. The student will regain eligibility on Friday, October 9th at 3:30pm.

Holiday Exception

During school holidays that span a full calendar week or more, all students are considered academically eligible. For instance, when students are dismissed for the December holidays, they maintain their academic eligibility until classes resume in January. This principle also applies to summer recess, fall

break, and spring break, if these breaks encompass at least a full calendar week (as indicated in the school calendar). If a student is found to be academically ineligible, their suspension would take effect at the conclusion of the holiday break, including any associated grace period.

At Mercy Preparatory Academy, student participants are held accountable for attending classes and submitting academic work punctually. Participation in athletics events does not justify neglecting academic responsibilities. In cases where a team must miss a portion of a school day due to travel, teachers will be informed in advance, except for post-season schedules that may be confirmed shortly before or on the day of the event. It is the responsibility of each student to proactively complete all assignments and exams before the trip, unless alternative arrangements have been made with the respective teacher. By upholding these expectations, we prioritize the importance of both academics and athletics, ensuring a balanced and fulfilling educational experience for our student-participants.

In-Season Attendance

At Mercy Preparatory Academy, participants are expected to demonstrate their commitment by attending all practices and games promptly and prepared to participate. The only acceptable reasons for missing practices or games are: (a) illness, (b) school-sponsored activities approved by the coach through the activity sponsor, (c) emergencies, or (d) church-sponsored mission trips.

If a student-participant is unable to attend or will be late for a practice or game, it is important to notify the coach as soon as possible on the day of absence.

Any missed practices, regardless of the reason, will require the participant to complete assigned makeup work as designated by the coach. While individual instruction cannot be made up, efforts will be made to compensate for the loss of conditioning.

To maintain team unity, support, and receive instruction, injured student-participants are expected to be present at all practices and games, even if they are unable to participate. Exceptions to this expectation can be made with prior arrangement made with the coach.

Each missed game will result in the player sitting out the subsequent game, and missing a tournament will require the player to sit out the following two games. This policy applies to all games, including holiday games and tournaments. However, absences due to the acceptable reasons listed above will be exceptions to this rule.

Consistent attendance issues may lead to dismissal from the team. A player's level of commitment is considered during the team selection process, and ongoing attendance problems can impact their continued participation.

TCAL Statement

1. Junior-High Participation: 7th or 8th grade students may participate on the varsity team at the coaches' discretion without affecting his/her eligibility for the remainder of their high school career (Amended 3/2012).
2. High-School Eligibility: Once a student has entered the 9th grade he/she has eight semesters to compete in varsity athletics. If a student transfers, does not compete, or fails a grade, the eight-semester rule is still in effect. This applies to any athletic participation at any school.
3. Eligibility Forms: Each passing student must be on the eligibility form filed with the District, Regional, or State office by the due date. Eligibility dates will be set each June prior to the

upcoming school year and will be given to each member school. Failure to comply with these dates may cause players and teams to temporarily or permanently forfeit eligibility.

4. Eligibility Periods: Four eligibility dates will be given each year. If a student is not eligible at any one of the T★CAL reporting dates, he has he/she has 7 days to reestablish eligibility (bring grades up.) IF after 1 week, the student still remains ineligible he/she MUST SIT OUT OF ATHLETIC COMPEITION A MINUMUM OF 7 SCHOOL DAYS. They may only return if the minimum eligibility standards of T★CAL have been documented and approved by the Compliance Officer and District Executive Committee Scty A waiver must be filled out if the student is moved from ineligible to eligible during the grading period District Executive Committee Scty for approval. Any Student or coach violating this rule will be subject to sanctions, forfeitures, or expulsion. Schools may enforce a more stringent academic compliance, but MAY NOT violate the T★CAL minimum standards. (Amended 1/17)
5. Multiple ineligibility: A student that appears on the ineligible list three times will be ineligible for athletic competition without the approval of the District Executive Committee. (Added 1/17)
6. Graduation: No one shall take part in any contest in this organization that has graduated, whether form his/her or any other school, at home or abroad, of equal or higher rank.
7. Age: A student is not eligible for competition if he/she has reached the age of nineteen prior to September 1 of current school year.
8. Players Using Profanity: If a player is assessed a technical foul or unsportsmanlike conduction violation because of profanity, he/she will be put upon Supervisory Probation. Upon a secondary offense, the said player will be suspended up to three games and will not be eligible for District, Region, or State recognition.
9. Fighting: players who initiate or retaliate to any type of physical provocation outside the rules of the contest will receive up to a five-game suspension.
10. Bench Players: If any type of altercation transpires of the field of play, any player leaving their designated area to advance in the direction of the altercation, whether they arrive or not, will be ineligible for their next game and will receive up to a three-game suspension. Both schools will face such sanctions as deemed necessary by the District Committee, Executive Board, and/or Rules committee.

The Athletics/Fine Arts Code (Discipline)

Students who are chosen to be part of a Mercy Preparatory Academy athletics/fine arts team should consider it a prestigious honor and privilege. It is important for them to acknowledge that they will be held to a higher standard of accountability compared to the general school population. As student participants, they serve as recognized representatives of Mercy Prep and are expected to embody the utmost levels of character and Christ-like behavior. This expectation reflects our commitment to fostering a positive and exemplary environment both on and off the field, where integrity and values are upheld.

Each coach/instructor bears the responsibility of upholding the high level of expectation set for our student-participants. Coaches/Instructors are entrusted with monitoring the character and behavior of team members both during and outside of the season, whether they are in uniform, on campus, or off-campus. The significant amount of time coaches/instructors spend with our participants offers a unique opportunity to observe, support, and intervene to assist student-participants in making wise decisions.

Each coach/instructor is accountable for establishing rules that align with Mercy Prep standards and the Athletics and Fine Arts Handbook. It is essential that these rules are not only distributed but also fully explained to the participants, with proper acknowledgment from their parent(s) through a signed agreement. Participants should not be permitted to participate in team practices until a signed copy of the agreement is returned. The coach must retain signed copies from all members of the squad, keeping them on file for reference. By adhering to these practices, we ensure clarity, accountability, and adherence to the standards set forth for our student participants.

Violations

The Athletics/Fine Arts Code in conjunction with the Mercy Preparatory Academy Student & Family Handbook identifies a broad range of behaviors that are detrimental to the progress and success of our athletic programs. The following behaviors are considered unacceptable and would be considered to be violations of the Athletics/Fine Arts Code.

Level I: Campus behavioral issue (example: dress code violation, classroom disruption, PDA, profanity, etc.) resulting in disciplinary action by Mercy Preparatory Academy administration or a violation of team rules.

Level II: Stealing, racial/ethnic slurs, bullying/intimidation, fighting, vandalism, major academic dishonesty, acts of unsportsmanlike conduct, the falsifying of TCAL or Mercy Prep forms, or repeated Level I violations.

Progressive Discipline

Mercy Preparatory Academy participants are expected to adhere to the Athletics/Fine Arts Code, and any violation of the code may result in disciplinary action. Our Athletics/Fine Arts Code follows a philosophy known as "progressive discipline," which means that different levels of student misbehavior correspond to appropriate disciplinary consequences. Under this system, two students who commit the same offense may receive different consequences based on their individual circumstances. For instance, a student with no prior infractions may be considered a first-time offender, while another student may have a history of previous misbehavior. The aim is to apply disciplinary measures that are fair and appropriate to the specific situation, while also considering the individual's disciplinary record.

Consequences

Participation in athletics/fine arts is not an inherent entitlement for students; it is a privilege that has been bestowed upon them. It is important to acknowledge that this privilege can be revoked under certain circumstances. The Administrator holds the authority to make such decisions, and in the event of a Level II violation, they may choose to remove a student from an athletics team. If a student is expelled from a team due to disciplinary reasons, they will be deemed ineligible for the subsequent sport season until the conclusion of the current one. For example, if a student is suspended from volleyball, they will remain ineligible for basketball until the volleyball season is completed. This policy ensures that accountability and disciplinary measures are maintained, while also providing an opportunity for students to learn from their actions and potentially regain the privilege of participation in future sport seasons.

Level I: A Level I violation will be handled on a case-by-case basis by the head coach and will not necessarily result in a report of infraction.

Level II: First offense. A Level II violation will result in a report of infraction and suspension from all athletic contests for two (2) consecutive events, or two weeks of the season, whichever is greater, with the student expected to participate in all practice sessions during that time. The student will not be allowed to suit up or travel with a team for competitions. Any infraction by a participant requires the coach to conference with the parents.

Level II: Second offense. After confirmation of a second violation, the student shall lose eligibility for six (6) consecutive weeks. The student is required to continue attendance in practice but may not participate in athletic contests. This suspension may be carried over from one sports season into another and/or from one year into the next year. The participant must complete the season during which the penalty is being served.

In cases involving the use of drugs (including performance enhancing substances) or alcohol, a mandatory conference will be convened with the Administrator, the head coach/instructor, the student participant, and the parent(s) or legal guardian(s). It is essential to address such incidents promptly and comprehensively. Until the coach determines that reinstatement is suitable and in the best interest of both the player and the team, the participant will not be allowed to participate in practices. These sanctions apply to all participants, regardless of whether they are currently involved in their sport(s) at the time of the violation. By implementing these measures, we prioritize the well-being of our participants and uphold the values of our athletics program.

The Role of Parent

The role of the parent holds immense significance in a student's life, encompassing spiritual growth, social development, intellectual awareness, and self-identity. As an educational institution, we recognize and value the influence parents have on their children. However, when it comes to the field or court of competition, the parent's role undergoes a shift. During these moments, it is crucial for parents to become steadfast supporters.

Financial Policy

- Prior to registering for sports/fine arts, families must be in good financial standing.
- All sports/fine arts fees must be paid in full via FACTS (full-time Mercy Prep students only) or cash/check/PayPal (homeschool participants).
- No refunds, whether full or partial, will be given to students temporarily barred from participating in extra-curricular activities due to academic or disciplinary issues.
- No refunds, whether full or partial, will be provided for missed practices and/or games resulting from weather-related cancellations.

Fundraising

Fundraising plays a significant role in supporting our athletic and fine arts program, and we strongly encourage such initiatives. To ensure consistency and accountability, the following guidelines will be applied to all athletics fundraisers:

- Prior approval from the Administrator is mandatory for any fundraising activity.
- All fundraisers must have a service-oriented focus and be organized and supervised by the Athletics and Fine Arts Department.

- It is strictly prohibited for coaches/instructors or parents to solicit funds, for any purpose, without the explicit approval of the Administrator. This policy ensures transparency and adherence to established protocols.

Volunteerism

Parental involvement is crucial to the success of the Athletics and Fine Arts Department at Mercy Preparatory Academy. We greatly value and appreciate the support and commitment of parents. There are numerous opportunities available for parents to contribute by volunteering. By getting involved, parents not only support our participants but also serve as role models for commitment and selflessness. The specific needs may vary across different sports, and here are some examples of ways to get involved:

- Ticket selling
- Clock and scorebook keeping
- Facility setup and cleanup
- Donations of meals and snacks

We encourage parents to find a way to contribute based on their interests and availability, and in doing so, they become an integral part of our athletic community.

Transportation

Practice Transportation: Parents are responsible for ensuring their student participant is transported to and from the practice location. Student participants are not permitted to ride with other student participants unless both parents have granted prior approval and the coach has been informed in writing.

Event Transportation: Parents may be requested to provide transportation for their student participant to and from athletic events. In such cases, the parent or guardian assumes full responsibility for the student participant and any other individuals being transported.

By adhering to these transportation guidelines, we prioritize the safety and well-being of our student participants. We appreciate your cooperation in fulfilling these responsibilities.

Booster Club

The Mercy Prep Booster Club, encompassing both athletics and fine arts, is essential for fostering unity, development, and financial success within the Mercy Prep Student Life Department. It comprises the Athletic/Fine Arts leaders, Booster President, and parent representatives from each sport and fine arts program available at Mercy Preparatory Academy.

The Mercy Prep Booster Club will elect individuals to serve as President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Their key responsibilities encompass, but are not limited to, the following areas:

- Organizing fundraising initiatives to support athletics and fine arts
- Actively promoting and advocating for Mercy Prep Athletics and Fine Arts
- Volunteering at games and events to provide support and assistance

Guidelines for Parents: Supporting Participants' Needs

At Mercy Preparatory Academy, we believe that a successful athletic and fine arts experience is built upon a strong communication triangle involving parents, participants, and coaches. Each party has a defined role in contributing to the participant's success. When handled effectively, the athletics experience can be tremendously positive and rewarding for everyone involved.

Parents play a crucial role in supporting their child's athletic journey, but it is important to recognize the fine line between providing support and unintentional interference. As parents, it is essential to strike a balance between offering encouragement and allowing the participant to grow and learn independently. Our coaches and parents share the responsibility of placing the needs of the participant at the forefront of every decision and action.

Effective communication between parents, participants, and coaches is paramount. By maintaining open lines of communication, we can foster a positive and collaborative environment that promotes the participant's development. Parents are encouraged to actively engage with coaches, ask questions, and seek clarifications when needed. Likewise, coaches are committed to providing timely and meaningful feedback to parents and participants, keeping them informed about training, performance, and any other relevant aspects.

During games, parents have a significant impact on the atmosphere and experience for all involved. The most valuable contribution a parent can make is to model appropriate behavior and sportsmanship. By displaying respect for all participants, including coaches, officials, opponents, and teammates, parents set a positive example that influences the overall sportsmanship and enjoyment of the event.

Remember, at Mercy Preparatory Academy, we prioritize the well-being and growth of our participants. By fostering effective communication, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to the participant's development, we can create an environment where every participant can thrive and achieve their full potential.

During the event

1. **Respect designated areas:** Please refrain from entering areas such as the bench, dugout, scorer's table, or any other location typically reserved for coaches/instructors or participants. These areas are specifically for Mercy Prep-approved coaches/instructors, student participants, or appointed volunteers fulfilling specific roles. To ensure compliance with our liability insurance, parents, visitors, or students not on the team roster should not be in these areas.
2. **Support, don't coach:** During contests, participants benefit from having only one instructional voice, and that voice should be that of the coach. While it is encouraged to cheer and provide positive encouragement, please avoid giving direct advice or continuous technique suggestions. Conflicting instructions may disrupt the coaching process.
3. **Show respect to officials:** Harassing the referees or officials during the game is not only detrimental to the participant, but it also reflects poorly on the team and our school. Please refrain from loudly criticizing or harassing the officials. Let's maintain sportsmanship and respect for all involved.

4. Embrace the spectator role: During a game, there are four distinct roles: spectator, competitor, official, and coach. As a parent, your role is that of a spectator. Enjoy watching and supporting your child's performance without interfering or trying to assume other roles.
5. Respect all participants: It is important to treat all participants, teammates, and opponents with respect. Avoid yelling at your child's teammates or the opposing team. Other people's children should be off-limits for any form of negative or aggressive behavior. Remember that most parents would not appreciate someone yelling at their child either.

After the event

1. Understand the Three A's: Recognize that playing time is earned, not granted, and is based on ATTENDANCE, ATTITUDE, and APTITUDE. Our coaches will guide participants in understanding their roles in relation to playing time. If a participant feels that their understanding is not aligning with their expectations, it is important for them to approach the coach and ask what needs to be done to earn more playing time. However, parents should refrain from discussing playing time with the coach/instructor.
2. Be a loving, supportive parent: Avoid making your child feel as if their value as a person is tied solely to playing time or the outcome of athletic contests. Remind them of the bigger perspective and the broader life lessons that sports offer.
3. Give them time and space: Understand that after a game, especially in highly competitive sports, participants may need time and space to process their emotions and experiences. Rather than assuming the role of another coach, provide them with the support of a parent and simply be there for them.
4. Avoid criticizing coaches/instructors in front of your participant: Criticizing coaches/instructors in the presence of your child is highly detrimental. The way a participant treats their coach in practice often reflects the parent's feelings towards the coach. Remember that it is the participant who ultimately suffers when caught in the middle of any conflict between parent and coach/instructor.

Parent-Coach/Instructor Relationship and Dispute Resolution

At Mercy Preparatory Academy, we prioritize the respectful interaction between parents, coaches/instructors, and school personnel. When disagreements arise, we expect parents to handle them in the following manner:

- Respect for professionals: Parents are expected to demonstrate respect towards coaches and school personnel, recognizing their expertise and professionalism.
- Direct communication with coaches/instructors: In the event of a disagreement, parents should initiate a conversation with the coach involved to address and resolve the problem. However, it is important to refrain from confronting a coach immediately after a game. Instead, parents are encouraged to schedule a meeting at least 24 hours later for a more constructive discussion.
- Following Biblical guidelines: We encourage parents and participants to adhere to Biblical principles, specifically Matthew 18:15-16, which advises individuals to first attempt to resolve any problems personally before involving others.
- Student-participant's responsibility: It is expected that the student-participant will make a genuine effort to resolve any issues independently before seeking parental involvement. This promotes personal growth and problem-solving skills.

- Escalation of unresolved issues: If the matter remains unresolved after direct communication between the parents and coach, the following level of authority should be approached:
 - Level 1:** Coach/Instructor - Parents or participants should first discuss the issue with the coach involved.
 - Level 2:** Athletic/Fine Arts Director - If the issue cannot be resolved at Level 1, parents may escalate their concern to the athletic director, who will provide further assistance and guidance.
 - Level 3:** Administrator - If the issue remains unresolved after involving the athletic director, parents can bring their concern to an administrator, who will carefully evaluate the situation and work towards a resolution.
 - Level 4:** Board of Trustees - In exceptional cases where the issue cannot be resolved at the previous levels, parents may address their concern to the Board of Trustees.

By following this conflict resolution process, we aim to promote open communication, understanding, and the well-being of all individuals involved in the Mercy Preparatory Academy community.

Uniforms and Equipment

In certain sports, there may be specific uniform pieces or equipment that are not included in the athletic fees. Coaches will communicate these suggested items to both parents and participants.

Guidelines

Issuance and return: Game uniforms will be provided to participants at the start of the season. It is important to note that these uniforms remain the property of the school and must be returned to the coach at the conclusion of the season.

Replacement cost: Parents will be held responsible for any game uniform that is not returned by the coach's designated due date. In such cases, parents will be charged the replacement cost of the missing uniform.

By adhering to these guidelines, we ensure the proper management and maintenance of uniforms, allowing future participants to benefit from their use.

Uniform Care and Maintenance

At Mercy Prep, a significant portion of the Athletic Budget is allocated annually to acquire new uniforms for our athletic teams. It is crucial that participants take responsibility for properly caring for the uniforms issued to them. To ensure their longevity and quality, please follow these guidelines:

Washing instructions: Participants and parents should wash all uniforms using a machine wash setting on cold or warm water, using a mild detergent without bleach. For uniform pieces with letters or numbers, please turn them inside out before washing.

Drying recommendations: It is important to hang dry all uniforms. Avoid using a dryer, as it can cause the numbers and letters on the uniform to deteriorate.

Injury Reporting and Participation Guidelines

It is important to promptly report any injuries to the coach. Please notify the coach as soon as possible if a participant sustains an injury.

Attendance at Practices and Games: Injured participants are expected to attend all practices and games unless otherwise approved by the coach. It is essential to communicate with the coach regarding any limitations or accommodations needed due to the injury.

Medical Attention and Clearance: Injuries that require medical attention must be evaluated by a healthcare professional. Before resuming participation, participants need to obtain medical clearance, ensuring their safety and well-being.

By following these guidelines, we prioritize the health and proper care of our participants. Your cooperation in adhering to these protocols is greatly appreciated.

Conclusion

This Student Handbook is intended to acquaint the students and parents with the current policies and practices of Mercy Preparatory Academy. Mercy Preparatory Academy reserves the right to make changes to the handbook anytime but will be intentional and timely with the dissemination of information to be considerate of subsequent enrollment years.

Required Participant Forms

The Required Participant/Athlete Forms can be obtained from either the Mercy Preparatory Academy website or from the school office. These forms are essential and must be completed annually before a student participant becomes eligible to participate in any athletic activity. It's important to note that all forms expire after one year. All necessary completed documents should be emailed to info@mercyprep.org or presented at the school office during a designated time (call 469-505-8377 or email info@mercyprep.org to schedule an appointment).

The following forms need to be completed:

- Mercy Prep Registration Form (all participants)
- Mercy Prep Application (PDF application for homeschool participants)
- Mercy Prep Athletic and Fine Arts Handbook Signature Page: This page requires a parent's and student's signature during registration.
- TCAL Transfer Form (if transferring from another school after freshman year)

Specific to athletics:

- Concussion Acknowledgement Form
- Steroid Agreement Form
- Medical History Form: This form should be filled out by the parent.
- Physical Examination Form: This form needs to be completed by a physician. We accept the physical exam form provided by the physician's office or the sample form in our packet.

Parent and Student Acknowledgement

Participant Name: _____

In signing the Athletics and Fine Arts Handbook the expectation is that the family has thoroughly reviewed and accepted the Handbook. Parents/guardians should cover age-appropriate topics with each of their children who will attend Mercy Preparatory Academy.

Please note that this handbook serves as a guide and a brief explanation of Mercy Preparatory Academy Athletics and Fine Arts policies, and it is not a contract or a substitute for the official Mercy Preparatory Academy school policy manual. Its purpose is to provide valuable information and address common questions to ensure a successful year for our Athletics and Fine Arts Department. It is designed to be a helpful resource for our athletes and their families. While not all Mercy Prep policies and procedures are included, those that are have been summarized.

It is important to understand that Mercy Prep policies and procedures are subject to change at any time. We welcome suggestions for additions and improvements to this handbook, which can be directed to the Administrator.

By acknowledging receipt of the Mercy Preparatory Academy Athletics and Fine Arts Handbook, you indicate that you have read the handbook and agree to comply with the standards, policies, and procedures outlined or referenced in this document.

Please be aware that the information contained in this handbook may be subject to change. It is your responsibility to stay updated on any changes in Mercy Preparatory Academy policies that may supersede, modify, or eliminate the information provided in this booklet. As Mercy Prep releases updated policy information, you are expected to read and adhere to the changes accordingly.

Participant/Student Signature

Date

Parent Signature

Date

*Please sign and date this form and return it to info@mercyprep.org.