

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS CATHOLIC SCHOOL
SPORTS PROGRAM HANDBOOK

UPDATED: APRIL 2010

BY ST. THOMAS AQUINAS CATHOLIC SCHOOL SPORTS COMMITTEE

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS CATHOLIC SCHOOL
STUDENT ATHLETE'S HANDBOOK

PURPOSE OF HANDBOOK

This handbook has been established to help the student athlete understand his/her responsibilities as a participant in any sports program provided by St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School. It should also serve as a guideline to the student's parents as well as coaches in helping to create a positive athletic experience for our children and the utmost sportsmanship and integrity in representing the school and the parish in interscholastic activities.

This handbook is intended to address specific policies that govern St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School Sports' programs and participation. They are meant to be followed as stated and should not be interpreted without consultation with the Sports Committee and the Principal.

DIOCESAN POLICY

All members of the Metropolitan Bridgeport Catholic School Conference will operate in accordance with the stated policies of the Office for Education of the Diocese of Bridgeport (posted on the St. Thomas web site). This handbook includes all statements from this policy noted in bold. This policy was last updated/approved on October 12, 2007.

ST. THOMAS RULES

This handbook also includes rules, policies, and practices specific to St. Thomas Aquinas School as defined by the Principal and the Sports Committee.

METROPOLITAN BRIDGEPORT CATHOLIC SCHOOL CONFERENCE

Membership

The Principals and students of all Catholic Elementary Schools located in the towns/cities of Bridgeport, Fairfield, Monroe, Shelton, Stratford, Trumbull, and Wilton are members of the Metropolitan Bridgeport Catholic School Conference.

The Principals are directly responsible for all Conference rules and regulations that support the policies of the Office for Education of the Diocese of Bridgeport. (This responsibility may not be delegated to anyone else). It is the Principal's responsibility to communicate these rules to all.

Decisions of the Principals, in concert with Diocesan policy, are final. The conference recognizes the discretion of the Principal in all decisions rendered.

Goals

The Metropolitan Bridgeport Catholic School conference has as its goals to:

- 1) Provide students with opportunities to participate in all interscholastic and extra-curricular sports activities which are part of each school's program.
- 2) To insure that all participants including students, coaches, faculty, and parents support the efforts of the Conference to reinforce Christian attitudes, good sportsmanship, school spirit, fairness, and a healthy sense of competition.

Rules and Regulations

Academic Requirements

1. Any student receiving a grade below a “C-“ in any subject at progress report time or report card time will be declared ineligible to participate in any Conference sponsored activity until such grade is removed. Students with special needs and/or disabilities will be considered eligible at the discretion of the Principal.
2. Any student participating in any Conference-sponsored activity who fails to complete homework and/or project assignments may be declared ineligible until such assignments are made up. These assignments shall be reviewed by the Principal.

Conduct

1. Students who receive a four (4) in any subject area including Conduct and Effort will be declared ineligible to participate in any Conference-sponsored activity until reinstated by the Principal.
2. Students are ineligible to participate in any conference-sponsored activity including practice sessions on a day in which they are absent from school **for any reason.**
3. Students are expected to show respect to coaches, officials, other students, and spectators at all times.
4. If a player is ejected from a game, he/she will sit out the next conference-sponsored tournament or league game.

Coaching Expectations and Requirements

1. Coaches involved in conference activities are approved by the Principal and are expected to be Christian models for the students and schools they represent.
2. Coaches for all sports teams must meet the following qualifications:
 - a) Acceptance, integration, implementation, and a clear understanding of the school’s mission and goals
 - b) Ability to constructively teach all participants, regardless of skill level
 - c) Ability to organize, run, and control practices
 - d) Positive attitude and coaching style
 - e) Good communication skills
 - f) Coaching ability to effectively teach the sport
 - g) Adequate knowledge of the sport
 - h) Ability to provide a safe and physical environment for all
3. No coach may coach alone. The Diocesan Code of Conduct including the “Rule of Two” must be followed at all times. All coaches must have a background check and be Virtus trained prior to the start of the season.

4. Any coach whose behavior and demeanor is not acceptable and such behavior does not enhance the Conference goals, may be dismissed by the Principal.

Behaviors which are not conducive to good discipline include:

- a) Repeated screaming done by a coach or assistant. This is professionally unacceptable.
- b) Threats of unrealistic punishments
- c) Repeated warnings with no follow up
- d) Inconsistent adherence to rules
- e) Foul language

Basketball Team Eligibility Rules

Members of all Catholic elementary school basketball teams:

1. Must be a full time student in a Catholic school
2. Must not have completed eighth grade
3. Must be under fifteen (15) years of age before September first (1st) of the school year. St. Catherine Academy students may participate as members of Catholic school teams at the appropriate developmental level, regardless of age.
4. Cannot play for a parish team while a member of the school team. Also cannot play for an independent team while a member of the school team when the independent team is participating in the same league as the school team.

Clarifications

1. The Conference recognizes the discretion of the Principal in all decisions rendered.
2. All coaches will submit a listing of the league their teams will participate in, and the tournaments they intend to enter, to the Principal, as soon as possible.
3. Our league complies with all state and local health requirements. Sports physicals are necessary yearly for all players.
4. All players must have a signed permission slip in order to participate.
5. Each team should have a first aid kit at all sports practices and games.
6. All players need to be covered by insurance.
7. The Conference expects that all Conference school teams will participate in a league program that is made up of other Catholic school teams **ONLY unless it is impossible.**
8. Coaches are expected to insure the participation of all team members in all sports games for a minimum of three (3) minutes . This includes all Conference-sponsored activities and tournaments except league playoffs, the Diocesan Basketball Tournament held in March and the New England CYO Basketball Tournament.

- 8a. For Junior Junior Varsity (Boys and Girls) basketball, this level is a non-competitive situation

and playing time, shall therefore be equal among the players.

9. Each team may participate in three (3) basketball tournaments (4 for host schools). League playoffs, Diocesan and New England Diocesan Tournament games are not considered to be part of the tournaments (3) that a team may enter.

10. A Catholic school basketball team can play in only one league.

11. Without exception, no games involving Conference teams will be held before 12:00 noon on Sundays. School night games (including Sunday night games) may not be scheduled to begin after 7:30 PM. This includes tournaments.

12. An individual need not have a child on a conference team to serve as a coach.

Approved.

INTERSCHOLASTIC ACTIVITIES AND OTHER ACTIVITIES GENERAL GUIDELINES

Students are encouraged to participate in school sponsored interscholastic athletic programs and other organized activities as offered (cheerleading teams, drill teams).

It should be clearly understood that all participants, as students in Catholic elementary schools, are expected to meet their obligations in the following areas: academics, attendance, personal behavior, conduct, appearance and all school policies and regulations.

All matters pertaining to athletic activities are considered the responsibility of the Principal and, as such, will be subject to the review and acceptance of the school Principal. His/her decisions shall be in concert with Diocesan policy.

All teams are to carry adequate insurance coverage for all participants.

SPORTS COMMITTEE and PROGRAMS

All inter-scholastic sports programs in which St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School participates are overseen and administered by the St. Thomas Sports Committee, reporting to the principal. The Committee shall consist of 10 to 13 volunteer parents of children entering the 4th through 8th grades at St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School.

Sports Committee Governance

Elections

Each Spring (after the last basketball game has been played), the Sports Committee will make best efforts to let the St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School community know that it is looking for new volunteers for the Sports Committee. Notification will include a notice on the "News" section of the St. Thomas School web site and St. Thomas School newsletter. The notification will give a deadline of at least 30 days from when the notice is first published. No nominations will be accepted after the deadline. Parents self nominate themselves by emailing stthomasbasketball@gmail.com. If more parents are interested in participating on the Committee than open positions, an election process will determine new members.

Term Limits

Sports Committee members shall serve a maximum of three (3) years on the Sports Committee. This policy is effective with members who joined the committee starting with the 2008-2009 season.

Sports Programs: St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School currently offers basketball and cross country as interscholastic programs. Additional sports will be reviewed and added as appropriate.

Duties of the Sports Committee include the following;

1. Administer the basketball registration process
2. Conduct tryouts and assign coaches
3. Arrange gym availability and times for practices
4. Ensure appropriate uniforms and equipment
All equipment, uniforms, warm-up clothing, etc. shall be solely provided and approved by the Sports Committee. This prohibits teams from obtaining their own uniforms, warm-up clothing, and equipment.
5. Interface with league administrators
6. Conduct the Annual St. Thomas tournament fundraiser
7. Hold a post season "Sports Night" honoring the players and coaches
8. Respond to parents questions and recommendations

STUDENT ATHLETE’S RESPONSIBILITIES

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS CATHOLIC SCHOOL–SPECIFIC CONDUCT REQUIREMENTS

Appropriate student conduct and academic effort take precedence over sports activities. The expected behavior of each student in dealing with the entire school community is of a higher priority than participation in sports programs.

In addition to adhering to the Diocesan Rules Academic/Conduct Rules referenced earlier in this document, student must also adhere to the following rules:

1. Students are ineligible to participate in any conference-sponsored activity or practice session on a day in which they are absent from school.
2. Students are expected to show respect to coaches, officials, other students, parents and teachers at all times. Two technical fouls in a game on a player will result in an automatic one game suspension for their next game. Two technical fouls by the same player in a subsequent game after the first suspension will result in the player’s removal from the team. Only technical fouls related to misconduct apply.
3. Fighting is not allowed in any aspect of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School basketball. This includes practices, games, and any activity related to St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School basketball (e.g. traveling to a game, team gathering, etc.)
4. Any student who is suspended from school will be automatically removed from the team for the duration of the season
5. Any student who receives a significant number of detentions in one academic quarter can be removed from the team.

REMOVAL FROM TEAM

The Principal will notify parents when a student is removed from the team. Either the principal or the Sports Committee will notify coaches.

When a student is removed from a team, he/she may not attend practices or games for a minimum of two weeks. This suspension applies to all tournament games as well. Notification of reinstatement will be given to the parent from the Principal. Coaches should not allow a player to participate until notified directly from the Principal or the Sports Committee. Notification from the student or from the parents is not valid. A student that receives more than one removal from a team during a season risks being suspended from the team for the remainder of the season.

TEAM SELECTION PROCESS

The Sports Committee team selection process for basketball is as follows:

- **Registration:** Registration is typically the first or second week of school. Registration will be held by the Sports Committee on two days – an afternoon session and a night session for parental convenience. Registrations must be submitted in person and with full payment at one of these two registration periods.
- **Evaluations:** Evaluations shall be conducted as follows:
 - Evaluations shall be held typically in the second or third full week of September. This is in order to meet numerous league registration deadlines that start as early as the third week of September.
 - Registrants (students) are required to participate in the evaluations.
 - There are no evaluations for the Junior Varsity (JV) Girls or Boys. JV is the fourth grade level of basketball.

- Evaluation Sessions: There shall be two evaluation sessions of at least one hour each for the remaining divisions in the basketball program. These remaining divisions are: Boys Varsity (7th & 8th Grade); Girls Varsity (7th & 8th Grade), Boys Junior Varsity (5th & 6th Grade), and Girls Junior Varsity (5th & 6th Grade).
 - Facilitators
 - Facilitators run the basketball evaluation sessions. Specifically, they facilitate the drills and scrimmages to give the evaluators the best possible visibility to the players for evaluation purposes.
 - The Sports Committee shall make best efforts to get facilitators with basketball knowledge and experience.
 - These facilitators shall have no/minimal ties to the given group for which they're evaluating. The facilitators shall not have any of his/her kids in the given group for which they're facilitating.
 - Evaluators
 - Evaluators assess, score, and rank all student participants and determine which team they should be on based purely on basketball decisions (skill, size, speed, etc.)
 - The Sports Committee shall make best efforts to get evaluators with basketball knowledge and experience.
 - These evaluators shall have no/minimal ties to the given group for which they're evaluating. The evaluators shall not have any of his/her kids in the given group for which they're evaluating.
 - Moderators
 - Moderators are Sports Committee members who ensure that the evaluations are run according to the spirit and practice of the aforementioned policy. Moderators are also required to supervise the facilities.
 - These moderators shall have no/minimal ties to the given group for which they're moderating. The moderators shall not have any of his/her kids in the given group for which they're moderating.
 - At the end of the two evaluation sessions, the moderators seek to get consensus from the evaluators on where each player ranks.
 - There shall be at least two moderators per session.
- **Roster Make Up:** Rosters shall be finalized based on the following guidelines:
 - Based on program precedent/roster history (see Appendix One)
 - Top level (more competitive) teams in each division.
 - Middle level (medium competitive) and development level teams based on league options, number of players/roster sizes.
 - Based on each division's league options
 - Boys Varsity
 - Only competitive leagues available
 - One competitive level team and any remaining teams split of evenly by talent

- Girls Varsity
 - Only competitive leagues available
 - One competitive level team and any remaining teams split of evenly by talent
- Boys Junior Varsity
 - Only division where there is a competitive league (typically Shehan Center), medium competitive league (typically St. Ann's), and developmental (typically St. Catherine's)
 - Teams are matched up according to the above league options.
- Girls Junior Varsity
 - St. Ann's league (medium competitive)
 - Teams are divided by more competitive and medium competitive.
- Junior Junior Varsity (Boys and Girls Fourth Grade)
 - One league option – St. Lawrence. Wakeman-like philosophy; non-competitive, everyone plays equal time.
 - Teams are divided by more competitive and medium competitive.
- Other key guiding principles
 - Roster size @ ~10/team; minimum of 8 players and maximum of 12 (exception: JJV)
 - Players can be singled out positively (e.g. one or two 7th graders make an A team). Players cannot be singled out on a lower team (e.g. only one or two 8th graders make a B team).
 - Bubble/swing decisions (i.e. deciding whether a player is on a competitive teams vs. a medium competitive team):
 - Look at players' roster history (if available) and coaches' evaluations from prior season (if available)
 - Higher grade player gets preference when deciding between players of similar skill and/or position – lower grade player must be clearly better than any higher grade players being considered for a spot(s). As a general rule, when in doubt the higher grade student gets preference
 - Other considerations
 - Brothers/sisters try to keep together or get parental approval to separate
- **Final Team Selection:** The last step is the final team selection and approval by the Sports Committee and the Principal.
 - The Sports Committee shall meet to finalize teams after the evaluations and not in conflict with any other St. Thomas events.
 - The Sports Committee finalizes teams based on the “Team Make Up” criteria described in the prior section.

- The Sports Committee has no input on basketball decisions. All basketball decisions are based on the evaluation data from the outside evaluators. In the rare case when there is no consensus from the evaluators, the Sports Committee shall look at the player's prior roster history and evaluation data from the coaches (from the prior season).
- No Sports Committee members shall be present or provide any input for team selections for which their child is participating. For example, if a Sports Committee member has a Boys Junior Varsity child, then this member will not be involved in any way with the finalization of any of the Boys JV teams.
 - In addition, Sports Committee members, with the exception of the Chair, shall learn of their child's final team placement at the same time and in the same way as all other St. Thomas students.
- The Principal must approve all team rosters in order for the teams to be finalized.
- The Sports Committee shall notify all parents of their child's team placement via an email from: stthomasbasketball@gmail.com.

COACHING SELECTION PROCESS

Head coaches are selected only after the teams have been created.

Outside coaches (non-parents) are given first preference over parents. Outside coaches can be nominated by anyone in the St. Thomas community (just email stthomasbasketball@gmail.com). The Sports Committee will review the coach's experience/resume and any past coaching assessments to determine what, if any, head coaching position the coach will have.

Parents who wish to be a head coach must indicate their interest in coaching by filling out the appropriate section of the registration form and describing their basketball, coaching experience. Once the team is selected (process described in the prior section), the same Sports Committee members look at the pool of parents who have volunteered to coach and decides which one is the best fit (based on coaching experience, any past coaching evaluations, etc). Again, just as in the player team selection process, parents of the kids for whom a coach is being decided cannot be present or part of the decision of who will be the coach.

If there are no coaching volunteers for a given team, the Sports Committee Chair will solicit and get volunteers to be head coach of the team. As a last resort only, the Sports Committee Chair can move a player up or down on a team (at the parent coach's approval) to fill a head coaching position.

Head coaches select their own assistant coaches.

Appendix One (St. Thomas Basketball Roster History)

BOYS VARSITY

Year	Total Players	A Team		B		C	
		Total Players	8th/7th Graders	Total Players	8th/7th Graders	Total Players	8th/7th Graders
2001-2002	25	13	9/4	12	4/8		
2002-2003	22	11	9/2	11	3/8		
2003-2004	25	13	13/0	12	0/12		
2004-2005	31	11	7/3	11	7/4	9	0/9
2005-2006	27	13	10/3	14	5/9		
2006-2007	27	13	8/5	14	6/8		
2007-2008	33	11	11/0	11	3/8	11	0/11
2008-2009	32	11	9/2	10	5/5	11	6/5
2009-2010	26	13	7/4	13	13/0		
Average	28	12		12		10	

BOYS JUNIOR VARSITY

Year	Total Players	A Team		B Team		C Team	
		Total Players	6th/5th Graders	Total Players	6th/5th Graders	Total Players	6th/5th Graders
2001-2002	27	12	9/3	15	2/13		
2002-2003	32	12	6/6	12	6/6	8	2/6
2003-2004	30	10	10/0	10	3/7	10	4/6
2004-2005	26	13	8/5	13	4/9		
2005-2006	28	10	8/2	9	4/5	9	0/9
2006-2007	38	12	10/2	13	5/8	13	0/13
2007-2008	36	12	10/2	13	5/8	11	0/11
2008-2009	34	11	10/1	11	6/5	12	5/7
2009-2010	29	10	7/3	11	4/7	8	0/8
Average	31	11		12		10	

GIRLS VARSITY

Year	Total Players	A Team		B		C	
		Total Players	8th/7th Graders	Total Players	8th/7th Graders	Total Players	8th/7th Graders
2001-2002	20	10	2/8	10	1/9		
2002-2003	34	12	10/2	12	3/9	10	0/10
2003-2004	25	12	10/2	13	3/10		
2004-2005	23	12	8/4	11	3/8		
2005-2006	24	11	11/0	13	13/0		
2006-2007	29	15	13/2	14	2/12		
2007-2008	19	10	9/1	9	1/8		
2008-2009	18	8	5/3	10	4/6		
2009-2010	18	10	8/2	8	0/8		
Average	23	11		11			

GIRLS JUNIOR VARSITY

Year	Total Players	A Team		B		C	
		Total Players	6th/5th Graders	Total Players	6th/5th Graders	Total Players	6th/5th Graders
2001-2002	35	12	10/2	13	9/4	10	0/10
2002-2003	29	12	7/5	12	4/8	5	2/3
2003-2004	30	12	12/0	9	0/9	9	0/9
2004-2005	30	13	13/0	9	0/9	8	0/8
2005-2006	24	12	9/3	12	4/8		
2006-2007	21	11	6/5	10	4/6		
2007-2008	22	11	9/2	11	0/11		
2008-2009	20	10	10/0	10	0/10		
2009-2010	24	12	8/4	12	0/12		
Average	26	12		11			