



GAHANNA JEFFERSON MIDDLE SCHOOLS

**STUDENT-ATHLETE /
FAMILY ATHLETIC HANDBOOK**
2025-26 SCHOOL YEAR

**GAHANNA - JEFFERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
GAHANNA MIDDLE SCHOOL EAST
GAHANNA MIDDLE SCHOOL SOUTH
GAHANNA MIDDLE SCHOOL WEST
DEPARTMENT OF INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS**

Gahanna - Jefferson Public Schools - Central Office

Superintendent: Dr. Tracey Deagle

Assistant Superintendent: Mrs. Jill Elliott

Website: www.gahannaschools.org

Gahanna Middle School East

730 Clotts Road, Gahanna, Ohio 43230

Principal: Mrs. Megan Kirsten

Main Office: (614) 478-5550

Gahanna Middle School South

349 Shady Spring Drive, Gahanna, Ohio 43230

Principal: Mr. Kristopher Fuller

Main Office: (614) 337-3730

Gahanna Middle School West

350 N Stygler Road, Gahanna, Ohio 43230

Principal: Dr. Kiev LaMarr

Main Office: (614) 478-5570

Gahanna Middle Schools Athletic Department

Middle School Athletic Director: Mr. Philip K. Dorn MA, CAA - dornp@gips.org

Middle School Athletic Trainer: Ms Haley Cole ATC - coleh@gips.org

Athletic Department Office: (614) 479-1631

Table of Contents

Welcome Letter from the Athletic Director	5
Gahanna Jefferson Middle School Athletic Department Philosophy	6
Middle School Athletic Mission	6
Requirements for Student-Athlete Participation	7
Eligibility Requirements	7
Academic Eligibility Criteria	7
Attendance Policies (OHSAA Guidelines).....	8
Health/Physical Exam Requirements.....	8
Annual Physical Examination	8
Required Forms and Permissions	9
FinalForms Registration Process.....	9
Gahanna Jefferson Middle Schools Athletic Department Code of Conduct	11
Purpose	11
Student-Athlete Expectations.....	11
Standards for Athlete Behavior	11
Conflict with Spectators.....	11
Inappropriate Participant Behavior	11
Sportsmanship Philosophy and Guidelines.....	12
Student-Athlete Code of Conduct.....	13
Expectations.....	13
Consequences for Violations	14
Social Media & Digital Citizenship	16
Substance Abuse Policy	17
Consequences for violations.....	17
Self-Referral Policy.....	17
Additional Disciplinary Action.....	18
Player Ejection from a Contest	18
Families and Fans Code of Conduct	20
Respect the Game	20
Spectator Expectations	23
Enforcement and Consequences for Spectators	23
Community and Attendee Sportsmanship Expectations.....	25
Team Participation Guidelines.....	26
Health and Safety	28

Sports Medicine Partnership	28
Injury Prevention and Management.....	28
Concussion Management	29
Emergency Action Plans.....	29
Communication with Families	29
Communication Guidelines	30
Appropriate Topics for Discussion	30
Topics Not Appropriate for Discussion	30
Communication Protocol	30
Conflict Resolution Steps	31
Transportation Guidelines	32
District-Provided Transportation	32
Parent/Guardian Transportation Requests	32
Coach Transportation Restrictions	32
Student Conduct on District Transportation	33
Emergency Situations and Delays.....	33
Transportation Registration.....	33
Recognition and Awards	34
Team and Individual Recognition	34
Season-End Celebrations	34
Criteria for Awards.....	34
Eligibility for recognition and awards is based on the following criteria:	34
Acknowledgment Forms	35
FinalForms Registration	35
Required Forms in FinalForms	36
Accessing FinalForms	36
Social Media & Online Resources	37
Official Athletics Website.....	37
Sideline Stores.....	37

Welcome Letter from the Athletic Director

Dear Student-Athletes and Families,

Welcome to the Gahanna-Jefferson Public Middle Schools Athletics Program!

We are thrilled to have you join a community that values teamwork, dedication, and character both on and off the field. Whether this is your first season or you're a returning athlete, we are committed to making your experience in middle school sports rewarding, educational, and enjoyable.

Our athletic program is an extension of the classroom, where students not only grow as athletes but also develop leadership skills, discipline, resilience, and a respect for others. We believe that the lessons learned through participation in sports contribute significantly to each student's overall growth and future success.

To help guide you through this experience, we've created this Student-Athlete and Family Handbook. It outlines our expectations, policies, and important information to ensure that everyone—students, families, and coaches—can work together in a spirit of cooperation and sportsmanship.

We encourage open communication and a positive partnership between families, coaches, and school staff. If you ever have questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to me or any member of our coaching staff.

Thank you for supporting our athletic program. We look forward to an exciting season ahead, filled with personal achievements, team successes, and lifelong memories.

Go Lions!

Warm regards,

Philip K. Dorn

Philip K. Dorn, MA, CAA
Gahanna Middle Schools Athletic Director
Gahanna-Jefferson Public Middle Schools
[dornp@gjps.org] | [614-479-1631]

Gahanna Jefferson Middle School Athletic Department Philosophy

The athletic programs at Gahanna Jefferson Middle Schools are a collaborative effort involving the Board of Education, administrators, staff, coaches, and the broader community. Participation in middle school athletics provides a foundational experience that complements classroom education, fostering essential life skills, emotional growth, and personal responsibility.

Interscholastic athletics at Gahanna Jefferson Middle Schools are considered an integral and enriching element of the overall educational experience. Student-athletes develop physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally, benefiting from structured programs that emphasize teamwork, sportsmanship, and personal growth. Participation is a privilege that comes with responsibilities toward oneself, teammates, the school, and the community.

Our athletic department is committed to fostering an environment where all students feel encouraged and valued, thereby promoting personal confidence, school pride, and community involvement. Conducted in accordance with the guidelines of the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) and aligned with district core values, our programs aim to nurture well-rounded students who excel both on and off the field of play.

Gahanna Jefferson Middle School Athletic Department Values:

Integrity: We uphold high standards of sportsmanship, honesty, and respect, demonstrating ethical behavior on and off the playing field.

Students First: We prioritize the holistic development and well-being of our student-athletes, ensuring athletics supports their broader educational journey.

Collaboration: We build supportive relationships among students, coaches, families, and the community to foster a cohesive and inclusive environment.

Empowerment: We encourage our student-athletes to develop confidence, leadership, and responsibility, preparing them for future challenges and opportunities.

Inclusivity: We ensure our athletic programs are accessible and welcoming to every student, regardless of their background, ability, or experience level.

Excellence: We inspire students to pursue excellence through dedication, effort, and continuous self-improvement, celebrating both growth and achievement.

Middle School Athletic Mission

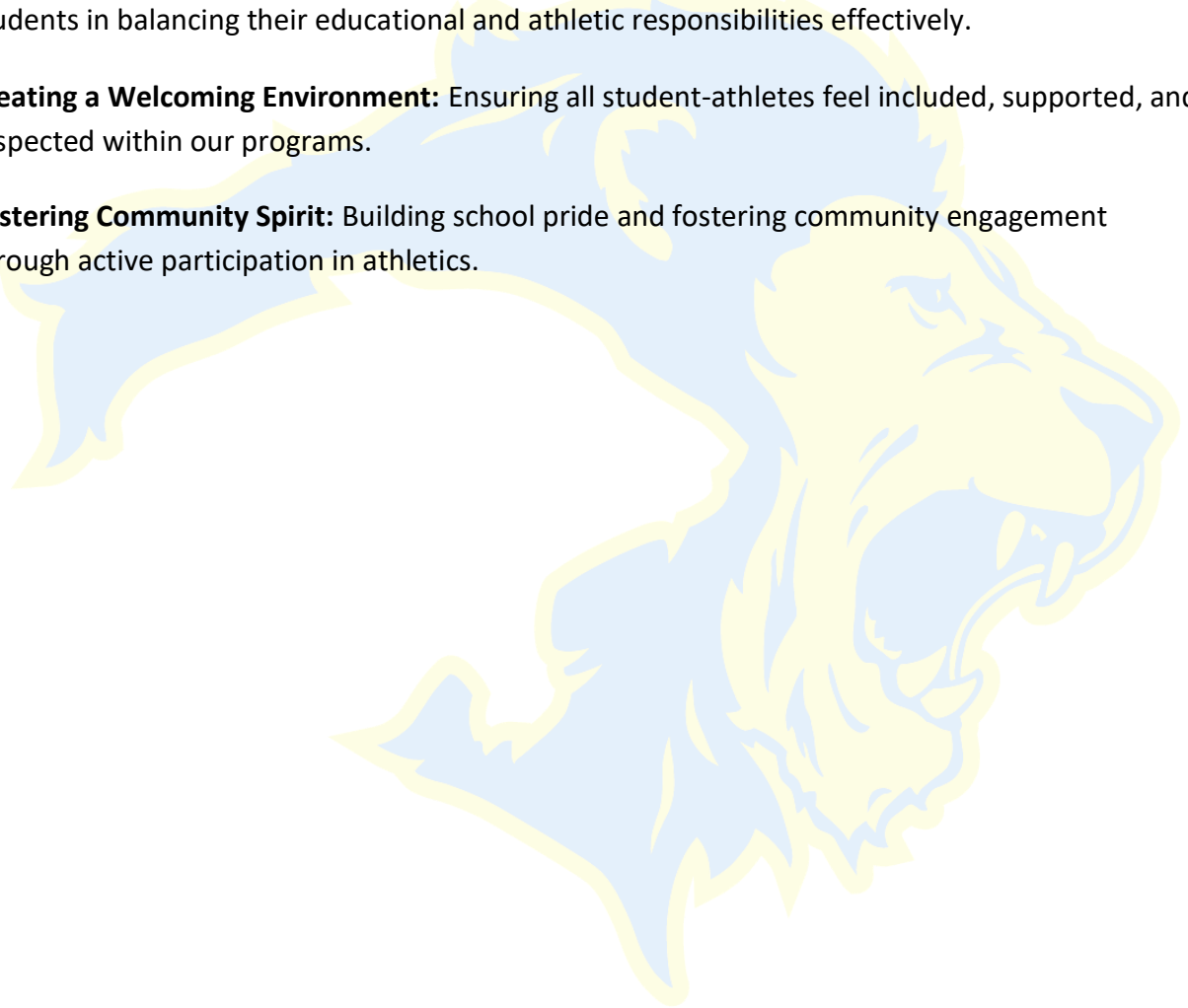
The mission of the Gahanna Jefferson Middle School Athletic Department complements the broader goals of Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools, focusing on:

Developing Character: Promoting positive attitudes, teamwork, respect, and leadership among student-athletes.

Supporting Academic Achievement: Reinforcing the importance of academic success, guiding students in balancing their educational and athletic responsibilities effectively.

Creating a Welcoming Environment: Ensuring all student-athletes feel included, supported, and respected within our programs.

Fostering Community Spirit: Building school pride and fostering community engagement through active participation in athletics.



Requirements for Student-Athlete Participation

To be eligible to participate in any athletic program at Gahanna Jefferson Middle Schools, student-athletes and families must complete the following steps in FinalForms:

1. **Valid OHSAA Pre-Participation Physical Exam** (must remain current through the entire sport season) - *uploaded to FinalForms before enrolling and trying out in the sport*
2. **Emergency Medical Authorization Form** - *uploaded to FinalForms before enrolling and trying out in the sport*
3. **OHSAA Authorization and Consent Form** - *completed in FinalForms before enrolling and trying out in the sport*
4. **OHSAA Eligibility and Authorization Statement** - *completed in FinalForms before enrolling and trying out in the sport*
5. **OHSAA Concussion Information Sheet** - *completed in FinalForms before enrolling and trying out in the sport*
6. **Meet academic eligibility requirements** - *the grading period immediately preceding the start of the athletic season*
 - a. Passing four (4) core credits or equivalent (OHSAA)
 - b. Achieving a minimum of a 2.0 GPA or greater (GJPS)
7. Attend a mandatory preseason meeting with parent(s)/guardian(s) and coaching staff, *as scheduled seasonally by the athletic department*
8. FinalForms must be completed by the student-athlete and parent(s)/guardian(s) - *completed in FinalForms before enrolling and trying out in the sport*

Eligibility Requirements

Academic Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for participation in any school-sponsored athletic program, students must meet the following academic criteria:

- Maintain a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale.
- Pass at least four (4) subjects during the preceding nine-week grading period.

- Continue to pass at least four (4) subjects during the current grading period (i.e., during the season in which the student is participating).

Eligibility is reviewed at the end of each nine-week grading period and may impact participation for the following quarter. Coaches and athletic staff will support student-athletes who may need academic assistance, and we encourage families to maintain open communication with teachers and school counselors.

Attendance Policies (OHSAA Guidelines)

In accordance with Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) guidelines, middle school student-athletes must adhere to the following daily attendance policy to be eligible to participate in practices or contests:

- ✓ A student must be present at school for at least half of the instructional day to be eligible to participate in a practice or athletic contest on the same day.
 - Exceptions may be made for pre-approved absences such as medical appointments (with documentation), funerals, or other circumstances deemed appropriate by school administration.
- ✓ Students who are absent due to illness or unexcused reasons for more than half the day are not permitted to participate in athletics that day.
- ✓ It is the responsibility of the student and family to communicate with the coach and school administration regarding absences and to follow all reporting procedures.

Health/Physical Exam Requirements

To ensure the safety and well-being of all student-athletes, Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools (GJPS) mandates the following requirements for participation in middle school athletics:

Annual Physical Examination

OHSAA Requirement: Before participating in any practice or contest, each student-athlete must undergo a physical examination by a licensed medical professional (MD, DO, DC, NP, or PA). This examination must be completed within the past year, and the signed Pre-Participation Physical Evaluation (PPE) form must be on file with the school.

Validity Period: Physical examinations are valid for 13 months from the date of the exam. However, exams conducted between May 1 and June 1 are valid through the end of the next school year's spring sports season.

Required Forms and Permissions

All student-athletes and their families must complete and submit the following forms via the FinalForms online platform:

1. OHSAA Pre-Participation Physical Evaluation (PPE) Form: Completed and signed by a licensed medical professional.
2. OHSAA Eligibility and Authorization Statement: Acknowledges understanding of eligibility rules and authorizes participation.
3. Concussion Information Sheet: Acknowledges awareness of concussion risks and protocols.
4. Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) Information Sheet: Acknowledges awareness of SCA risks and protocols.
5. Emergency Medical Authorization Form: Provides consent for emergency medical treatment.
6. GJPS Code of Conduct Agreement: Acknowledges understanding and agreement to adhere to the district's athletic code of conduct.

All forms must be completed and electronically signed by both the student-athlete and a parent/guardian in FinalForms. Physical forms must be uploaded directly into the system. Incomplete or missing documentation will result in ineligibility to participate in practices or contests.

FinalForms Registration Process

To complete the registration process:

1. Access FinalForms: Visit the GJPS Middle School Athletics page and click on the FinalForms link.
2. Create or Update Account: Families must create or update their FinalForms account and add their student-athlete.
3. Complete Forms: Fill out all required forms listed above.

4. Upload Physical: Scan and upload the completed PPE form signed by the medical professional.
5. Submit: Ensure all forms are signed and submitted electronically.

For detailed instructions, refer to the FinalForms Parent Instructions available on the GJPS Middle School Athletics website.



Gahanna Jefferson Middle Schools Athletic Department Code of Conduct

(for Student-Athletes, Families, and Spectators)

Purpose

The Gahanna Jefferson Middle School Athletic Department is committed to providing a positive, enriching, and inclusive athletic experience that promotes academic excellence, character development, and personal growth for all student-athletes. Our programs are extensions of the district's educational mission, grounded in our core values of prioritizing students, integrity, collaboration, empowerment, inclusivity, and a relentless pursuit of excellence.

All student-athletes, families, and spectators are expected to uphold these core values and contribute to a culture of respect, leadership, and school pride.

Student-Athlete Expectations

Standards for Athlete Behavior

At Gahanna Jefferson Middle Schools, student-athletes are expected to uphold the highest standards of behavior in all athletic-related settings, both in competition and outside of it. As leaders in our school and community, your conduct reflects not only on yourself but on your teammates, coaches, and the entire Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools community.

Maintaining a respectful, safe, and positive environment is essential. Therefore, the following standards must be followed:

Conflict with Spectators

- Student-athletes must remain within the designated playing area during contests.
- At no time may a student-athlete enter the spectator area to engage verbally or physically with a spectator, opponent, or fan.
- If a student-athlete leaves the playing area and enters the stands to engage in a conflict:
 - The student-athlete's privilege to participate in interscholastic athletics will be revoked, and the student-athlete will be ineligible for the rest of the school year.

Respect for others and self-control must always be maintained – even in emotionally challenging circumstances.

Inappropriate Participant Behavior

Student-athletes are prohibited from engaging in the following behaviors:

- Taunting or disrespecting officials, opponents, or spectators

- Leaving the bench area during an altercation
- Use of profanity during games, practices, or any school-related athletic activity
- Damage to or destruction of school property (either at Gahanna Middle Schools or other schools)
- Theft of school or personal property during any athletic event, practice, or related activity

Violations of these behavioral expectations may result in school-based discipline, athletic suspensions, or further penalties as directed by the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA).

Sportsmanship Philosophy and Guidelines

At Gahanna Jefferson Middle Schools, our student-athletes are leaders both in competition and in the community. As representatives of our school and community, all players must consistently demonstrate respect, integrity, and sportsmanship at all times. Our student-athletes are expected to:

- Be students first and focus on high achievement in the classroom.
- Demonstrate sportsmanship toward teammates by encouraging and cooperating with them, and by showing respect to coaches through listening, following instructions, and maintaining a positive attitude.
- Respect opponents as fellow competitors and guests, treating them with dignity during and after competition.
- Engage in positive sportsmanship by shaking hands with your opponents and offering sincere well wishes before and after contests, when appropriate.
- Demonstrate self-control by respectfully accepting officials' decisions without argument, gestures, or visible displays of disagreement.
- Win or lose with pride, grace, and humility, recognizing that success is measured by effort, attitude, and respect just as much as the final score.
- Embrace the responsibility of representing Gahanna Jefferson Middle Schools and the Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools with pride, both in athletic competition and throughout the community.

Student-Athlete Code of Conduct

Expectations

Student-athletes must:

- Maintain academic eligibility in accordance with district and Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) standards.
- Demonstrate respectful and responsible behavior at school, athletic events, and within the community.
- Use social media responsibly and represent your team, school, and district in a manner that reflects positively on them.
- Respect teammates, coaches, officials, opponents, and all community members.
- Commit to health and wellness by abstaining from alcohol, tobacco, illegal substances, and unsafe behaviors.
- Follow team expectations regarding dress, attendance, and conduct.

Unacceptable Behaviors for Student-Athletes

1. Unsportsmanlike Conduct

- Disrespect toward opponents, officials, coaches, teammates, or fans.
- Taunting, trash-talking, or any gestures meant to demean others.
- Arguing with or disrespecting officials.

2. Hazing, Bullying, or Harassment

- Any initiation, hazing, or harassment of teammates or others.
- Cyberbullying through social media, text, or any digital platform.
- Threatening or intimidating others verbally, physically, or electronically.

3. Substance Abuse

- Possession, use, or distribution of alcohol, tobacco, vaping products, or illegal drugs.
- Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs during school or athletic events.

4. Academic Dishonesty

- Cheating, plagiarism, or any form of dishonesty in the classroom.

5. Violations of School Policies

- established by the school. Violations of any code of conduct or student handbook rules
- Skipping class, unexcused absences, or repeated tardiness.

6. Criminal Behavior

- Engaging in theft, vandalism, or destruction of property.
- Physical assault, fighting, or any form of violence.
- Possession of weapons or dangerous objects.

7. Disrespect for Diversity and Inclusion

- Use of racial, ethnic, or gender-based slurs or any discriminatory language.
- Intolerance or harassment based on race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or disability.

8. Poor Representation of the School

- Wearing the uniform or representing the school while engaging in inappropriate conduct.
- Behavior that embarrasses the team, school, or community.

9. Failure to Follow Team Rules and Expectations

- Missing practices, games, or team meetings without a valid excuse.
- Not adhering to the team's dress code, curfew, or other program-specific guidelines.

Consequences for Violations

- Corrective discussions and interventions by coaches or administrators.
- Temporary suspension from athletic participation.
- Ruled ineligible and unable to participate.
- Disciplinary action consistent with the GJPS Student Handbook.
- Permanent removal from athletic programs for serious or repeated misconduct.

Social Media & Digital Citizenship

Student-athletes are viewed as leaders and representatives of Gahanna Lincoln High School, both on and off the competition area, including in digital spaces.

While social media can be a great way to share achievements and team spirit, it also creates public reflections of character. Content posted online is easily accessible by coaches, colleges, media, employers, and others.

Student-athletes must refrain from posting content that includes:

- Images, videos, or language showing or implying the use of alcohol, tobacco, or drugs
- Sexually explicit content or links to inappropriate material
- Profanity, hate speech, threats, or disrespectful remarks
- Derogatory or disrespectful comments toward teammates, opponents, coaches, or officials.
- Content that misrepresents Gahanna Lincoln High School, the Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools, or its athletic programs

Violations may result in:

- Written warning
- Meeting with the coach and/or athletic director
- Suspension or removal from the team, depending on the severity of the offense

Recommendations for student-athletes:

- Use strong privacy settings
- Avoid posting personal contact information
- Think before you post — if you wouldn't say it publicly at school or to a coach, don't post it online.

If you're unsure whether something is appropriate, ask: Does this reflect my values and represent my school in a positive light?

Substance Abuse Policy

The use, possession, or distribution of tobacco, alcohol, or illegal drugs is strictly prohibited — on or off school grounds, during or outside the season. This policy is enforced year-round and applies cumulatively from grades 7 through 12.

Violations may be verified by:

- Observation by school staff, coaches, or administrators
- Law enforcement reports
- Verified social media or digital content

Consequences for violations

First Offense:

- Minimum 7-day suspension from team participation
- Enrollment in a substance abuse education or intervention program (e.g., counseling or “Passages” equivalent)
- For alcohol/drug offenses: Professional assessment must be completed, and follow-up counseling, if recommended

Second Offense:

- Minimum 14-day suspension from participation
- Required enrollment in a formal intervention program
- Minimum of 10 hours of community service (must be approved in advance by the Athletic Director)
- Tobacco-specific offenses: Enrollment in a smoking cessation program

Third Offense:

- Suspension from all GJPS athletics for up to one calendar year
- Final decision made by the Athletic Disciplinary Council (Athletic Director, Building Administrator, and designated staff member)

Self-Referral Policy

Student-athletes (or their parent/guardian) may voluntarily disclose a substance abuse concern before any disciplinary investigation:

- Student-athletes must complete a professional assessment and follow all treatment recommendations
- Student-athletes may continue to participate as long as they remain compliant with the treatment plan

- A self-referral will be documented as a first offense in the event of future violations

Additional Disciplinary Action

Any violation of the Student-Athlete Code of Conduct, whether on school grounds, during school-related events, in the community, or online, may result in school discipline and athletic consequences.

The administration and athletic department reserve the right to evaluate each situation and apply appropriate consequences, including suspension or removal from a team.

Player Ejection from a Contest

The Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) has established strict regulations regarding player conduct during competition. Gahanna Jefferson Middle Schools fully supports and enforces these rules to promote the highest standards of sportsmanship.

If a student-athlete is ejected from a contest for unsportsmanlike conduct or a flagrant foul:

- The student-athlete is ineligible for the remainder of that day's contest(s).
- Additionally, the student-athlete must miss the next two regular-season or tournament contests in the same sport at the same level of play (or one contest if the ejection occurs in football).
- If the ejection occurs during the final contest of the season, the suspension carries over to the next sports season in which the student-athlete participates.

While under suspension:

- The student-athlete may remain a team member and can travel with the team, enter the locker room, sit on the team bench, and participate in team activities at the contest site. During this time, they must wear Gahanna Lincoln apparel (street clothes) and be under the supervision of a member of the coaching staff.

If a student-athlete is ejected a second time during the same season:

- The student-athlete in that sport will be suspended for the remainder of that season.
- If the second ejection occurs during the final contest of the season, the suspension may carry over into the next sport, with the specific length and terms determined by the OHSAA.

After the OHSAA-defined suspension has been completed, the return to play is at the discretion of the head coach, the athletic department, and the building principal.





Respect
THE
GAMESM

Families and Fans Code of Conduct

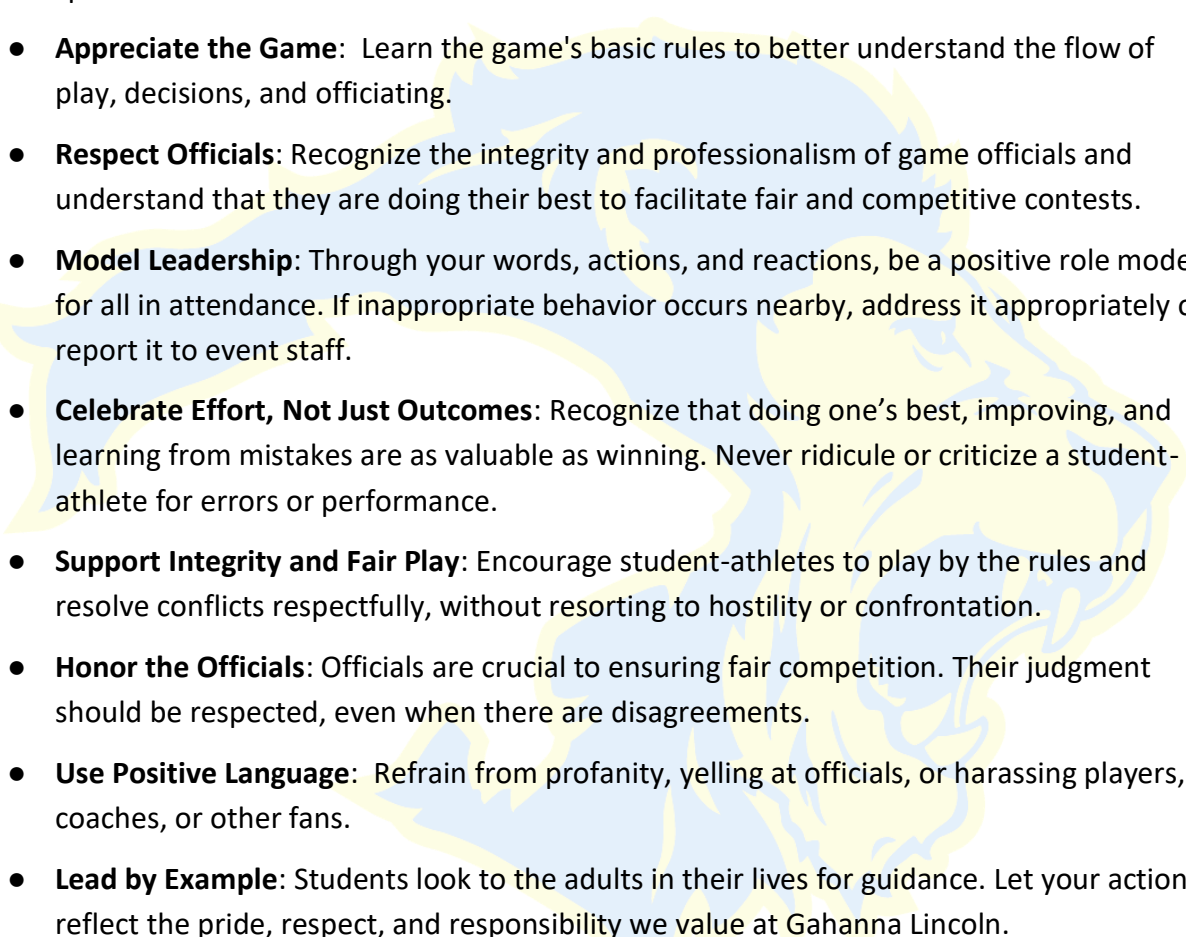
Respect the Game

At Gahanna Jefferson Middle Schools, interscholastic athletics are an extension of the educational process, teaching student-athletes essential life lessons in perseverance, teamwork, responsibility, and respect. Families and fans play a crucial role in shaping the athletic experience and modeling the behaviors we expect from our students.

A student's success or lack thereof in sports does not define their family. However, raising a student-athlete who is coachable, respectful, resilient, a great teammate, mentally tough, and committed to doing their best directly reflects strong parental support and guidance.

To help create the best environment for all students, families, and fans are asked to embrace the following:

- **Remember Why They Play:** Student-athletes participate for their growth, enjoyment, and love of the game, not to entertain a crowd.
- **Support the Coaches:** Get to know your student-athlete's coaches. We trust that the leadership, philosophy, and ethics of our coaching staff align with the values of our school and athletic department.
- **Respect Our Coaches:** Coaches dedicate their time and energy to developing student-athletes. Support their efforts, even if you don't always agree with every decision they make.
- **Focus on Growth:** Recognize that athletics are an integral part of the learning experience. Praise your student-athlete's effort and improvement, just as you would encourage growth in the classroom, whether in victory or defeat.
- **Attend with Purpose:** Attend contests to support and cheer for our teams. Avoid behavior that may intimidate opponents, other fans, or officials. Athletics should unite, not divide.
- **Respect the Opportunity:** Remember, a ticket to an athletic event is a privilege to observe and support the contest, not a license to be disruptive, confrontational, or abusive.

- 
- **Appreciate Our Opponents:** Competition wouldn't exist without them. Respect them as fellow participants working hard toward the same goals.
 - **Treat Others with Dignity:** Respect opposing players, coaches, fans, and support groups. Treat visitors as you would treat guests in your own home.
 - **Promote Positive Behavior:** Cheer for our team, not against our opponent. Refrain from taunting, booing, or derogatory remarks toward opponents, officials, or other spectators.
 - **Appreciate the Game:** Learn the game's basic rules to better understand the flow of play, decisions, and officiating.
 - **Respect Officials:** Recognize the integrity and professionalism of game officials and understand that they are doing their best to facilitate fair and competitive contests.
 - **Model Leadership:** Through your words, actions, and reactions, be a positive role model for all in attendance. If inappropriate behavior occurs nearby, address it appropriately or report it to event staff.
 - **Celebrate Effort, Not Just Outcomes:** Recognize that doing one's best, improving, and learning from mistakes are as valuable as winning. Never ridicule or criticize a student-athlete for errors or performance.
 - **Support Integrity and Fair Play:** Encourage student-athletes to play by the rules and resolve conflicts respectfully, without resorting to hostility or confrontation.
 - **Honor the Officials:** Officials are crucial to ensuring fair competition. Their judgment should be respected, even when there are disagreements.
 - **Use Positive Language:** Refrain from profanity, yelling at officials, or harassing players, coaches, or other fans.
 - **Lead by Example:** Students look to the adults in their lives for guidance. Let your actions reflect the pride, respect, and responsibility we value at Gahanna Lincoln.

At Gahanna Middle Schools, we take pride in our tradition of excellence in athletic performance, sportsmanship, leadership, and community spirit. Thank you for doing your part to "Respect the Game" and supporting our student-athletes in a positive and meaningful way.

Together, we can build an environment where every athlete, coach, official, and fan feels respected and where the true spirit of interscholastic athletics is preserved.

Lion Pride means respecting the game, respecting others, and representing Gahanna with class.

Spectator Expectations

At Gahanna Jefferson Middle Schools, spectators play a vital role in creating a positive and respectful atmosphere at athletic events. Your support of our student-athletes, coaches, officials, and opponents reflects the values of our school and community. All spectators are expected to uphold the highest standards of sportsmanship at all times, both before, during, and after every contest.

All families, family members, and spectators attending athletic events must:

- Demonstrate positive sportsmanship at all times.
- Support all participants, coaches, and officials with respect and enthusiasm.
- Promote a cooperative and positive environment in collaboration with coaches, administrators, and students.
- Refrain from coaching from the stands during games or practices.
- Honor officials' and coaches' decisions without confrontation.
- Treat all contests, home and away, with the same high standards of respect expected on GJPS property.

Unacceptable Behaviors

- Taunting, ridiculing, or verbally abusing officials, players, coaches, or other spectators.
- Using profanity, derogatory language, chants, signs, or cheers.
- Interfering with coaching responsibilities from the stands or sidelines.
- Entering the team box, locker rooms, or restricted areas during contests.
- Confronting another parent, coach, or official before, during, or after events.
- Criticizing school officials publicly at contests or events.
- Engaging in disruptive behavior that interrupts or delays a contest.

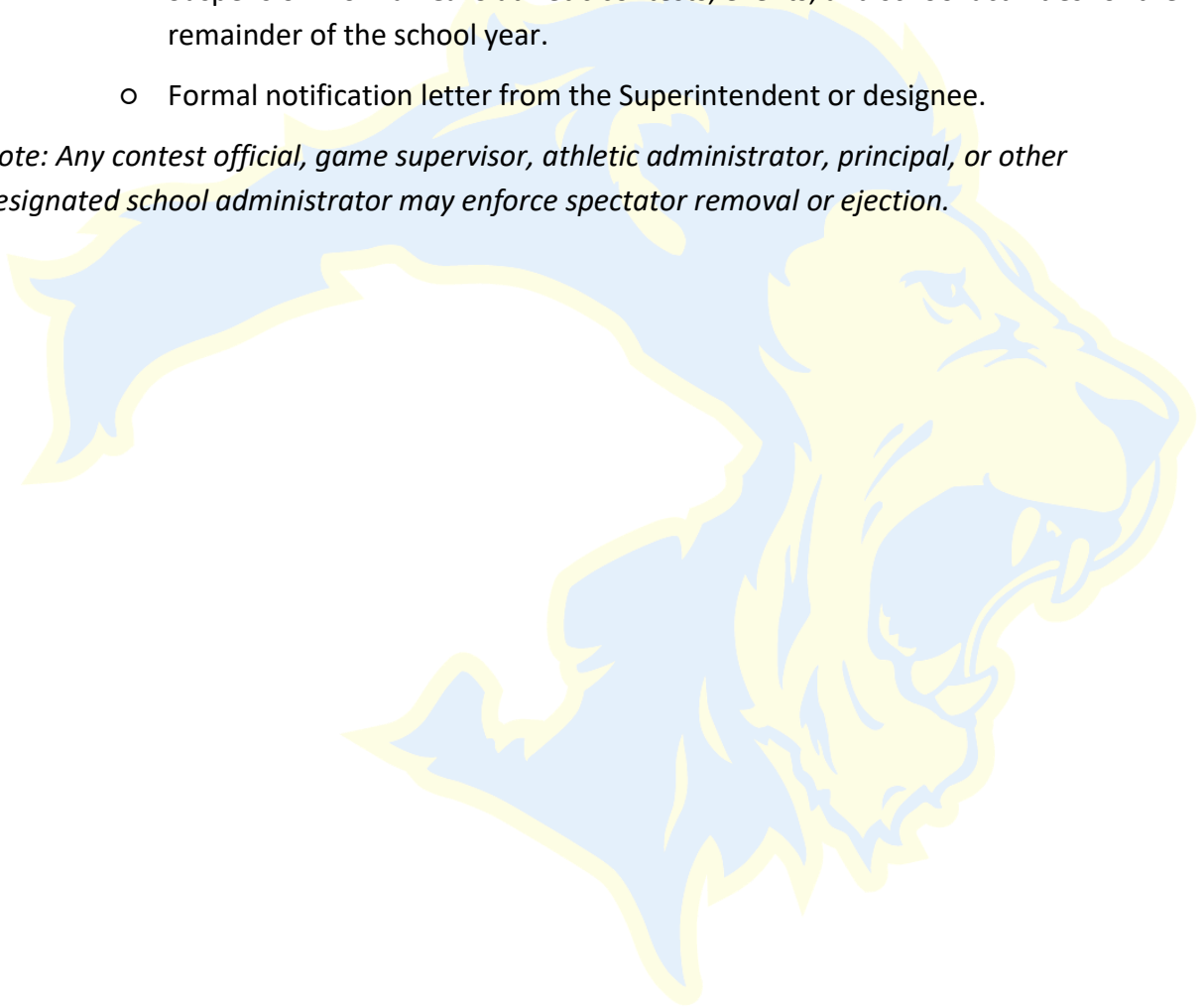
Being a spectator at extracurricular events is a privilege. Spectators should be advised that the athletic director and building/district administration reserve the right to restrict a spectator's attendance at events if unacceptable behavior is displayed.

Enforcement and Consequences for Spectators

- *First Offense:*
 - The Athletic Director will set up a meeting with the spectator.
 - Possible suspension from the following two (2) home contests in the same sport.

- Formal notification letter from the Athletic Department.
- *Second Offense:*
 - Suspension from all home athletic contests for the remainder of the season in which the infraction occurred.
 - Formal notification letter from school administration.
- *Third Offense:*
 - Suspension from all GJPS athletic contests, events, and school activities for the remainder of the school year.
 - Formal notification letter from the Superintendent or designee.

Note: Any contest official, game supervisor, athletic administrator, principal, or other designated school administrator may enforce spectator removal or ejection.



Community and Attendee Sportsmanship Expectations

At Gahanna Jefferson Middle Schools, we believe athletics are an important part of a student's educational experience. Through competition, we have the opportunity to teach and demonstrate respect, integrity, responsibility, and teamwork – the proper foundation for sportsmanship.

As members of the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA), Gahanna Jefferson Middle Schools and Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools are committed to promoting sportsmanship at all levels – from our athletes and coaches to families, fans, and spectators. Every community member plays a role in creating a positive and respectful environment.

We expect all Lions to embrace the following sportsmanship principles:

- **Respect Others:** Treat athletes, coaches, opponents, officials, and fellow spectators with dignity at home and away contests.
- **Honor the Game:** Follow the rules, support fair play, and respect officials' decisions.
- **Stay Composed:** Maintain self-control and represent our school with pride, regardless of the outcome.
- **Appreciate Excellence:** Recognize outstanding effort and performance from all participants on both teams.
- **Protect the Environment:** Take care of school facilities, equipment, and shared spaces, whether at your school or when visiting another school.

Team Participation Guidelines

Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools (GJPS) encourages student-athletes to engage in athletic programs that promote personal growth, teamwork, and school spirit. The following guidelines are established to ensure a fair and supportive environment for all participants.

Multi-Sport Participation

- Student-athletes are encouraged to participate in multiple sports throughout the academic year.
- Participation in multiple sports should be balanced to prevent overcommitment and ensure academic responsibilities are maintained.
- Coaches will collaborate to accommodate multi-sport athletes, facilitating communication and scheduling to support the student's involvement in various programs.

Travel Ball Participation

- While GJPS recognizes the value of external athletic opportunities, student-athletes must prioritize school-sponsored sports during their respective seasons.
- Participation in non-school teams (e.g., travel ball) during the same sports season is subject to OHSAA regulations and may impact eligibility.
- Student-athletes must notify their school coaches of any external athletic commitments to ensure compliance with eligibility requirements and to manage potential scheduling conflicts.

Tryouts and Team Selection

- Tryouts are conducted to assess the skills and abilities of student-athletes fairly and impartially.
- Selection criteria are based on athletic skill, teamwork, attitude, coachability, and adherence to team rules and expectations.
- Coaches will provide clear information regarding tryout procedures, expectations, and criteria before the commencement of tryouts.
- All students meeting eligibility requirements are welcome to try out; however, team selection is competitive, and not all participants may be selected.

- Feedback will be available upon request to assist student-athletes in understanding areas for improvement.

Commitment and Conduct

- Selected team members are expected to commit to the whole duration of the season, including practices, games, and team events.
- Student-athletes must adhere to the GJPS Code of Conduct, demonstrating sportsmanship, respect, and responsibility at all times.
- Failure to meet team expectations or violations of conduct policies may result in disciplinary action, including suspension or removal from the team.



Health and Safety

The health and safety of our student-athletes are of paramount importance. Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools (GJPS) is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for all participants in our middle school athletics programs.

Sports Medicine Partnership

GJPS partners with OhioHealth, a leading healthcare provider, to deliver comprehensive sports medicine services to our student-athletes. Through this collaboration, we ensure access to high-quality medical care, injury prevention strategies, and rehabilitation services.

Our dedicated GJPS Middle School Athletic Trainer, Haley Cole, ATC, is available to assess injuries, provide immediate care, and coordinate treatment plans. Haley works closely with coaches, families, and healthcare professionals to support the health and recovery of our athletes.

Injury Prevention and Management

To minimize the risk of injury, GJPS implements the following measures:

- **Pre-Participation Physical Examinations:** All student-athletes must undergo a physical examination before participation, as outlined in the Health/Physical Exam Requirements section of this handbook.
- **Proper Training and Conditioning:** Coaches emphasize the importance of appropriate warm-up routines, strength training, and conditioning exercises tailored to each sport.
- **Education on Safe Techniques:** Instruction on correct techniques and safety protocols is provided to reduce the likelihood of injuries.
- **Immediate Response to Injuries:** In the event of an injury, immediate evaluation and care are provided by the athletic trainer or appropriate medical personnel.

Concussion Management

GJPS adheres to the Ohio Department of Health's guidelines for concussion management:

- **Education:** Student-athletes and families receive information on concussion symptoms, risks, and management strategies.
- **Immediate Removal:** Any athlete suspected of sustaining a concussion is immediately removed from play and evaluated by a healthcare professional.
- **Return-to-Play Protocol:** A structured, step-by-step protocol is followed for an athlete's safe return to play, requiring medical clearance from a licensed healthcare provider.

Emergency Action Plans

Each athletic venue has a comprehensive Emergency Action Plan (EAP) in place, detailing procedures for responding to medical emergencies. Coaches and staff are trained to execute these plans effectively, ensuring prompt and coordinated responses.

Communication with Families

Open communication is vital to the health and safety of our student-athletes. Families are encouraged to:

- **Inform Coaches of Medical Conditions:** Share any relevant medical information or concerns with the coaching staff and athletic trainer.
- **Report Injuries:** Promptly report any injuries or symptoms experienced by the athlete during or outside of school activities.
- **Follow Medical Recommendations:** Adhere to prescribed treatment plans and communicate any changes in the athlete's health status.

By working collaboratively, we aim to provide a safe and healthy athletic experience for all GJPS middle school student-athletes.

Communication Guidelines

Effective communication among student-athletes, families, coaches, and administrators is essential for a successful athletic experience. Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools (GJPS) encourages open, respectful, and timely communication to address questions, concerns, and feedback related to the middle school athletics program.

Appropriate Topics for Discussion

Families are encouraged to discuss the following topics with coaches:

- The mental and physical well-being of their child
- Ways to help their child improve skills and performance
- Concerns about their child's behavior or academic progress
- Team expectations and requirements

Topics Not Appropriate for Discussion

The following topics are considered inappropriate for discussion with coaches:

- Playing time decisions
- Team strategy and play calling
- Other student-athletes

Communication Protocol

To ensure effective communication, please follow these steps:

1. Student-Athlete and Coach Communication: Encourage your child to speak directly with their coach about any concerns or issues they may have. This fosters self-advocacy and personal growth.
2. Parent/Guardian and Coach Communication: If further discussion is necessary, families should contact the coach to schedule a meeting. Please avoid approaching coaches before or after games or practices, as these are not appropriate times for discussions.

Please wait 24 hours after a contest or practice to contact a coach about specific concerns.

3. Athletic Director Involvement: If the issue remains unresolved after meeting with the coach, contact the Middle School Athletic Director, Philip K. Dorn, MA, CAA, to discuss the concern and explore possible solutions.
4. Building Principal Involvement: If the matter remains unresolved, schedule a meeting with the building principal to address the concern further.
5. District Administration: If all previous steps have been exhausted without resolution, contact the GJPS District Administration for further assistance.

Conflict Resolution Steps

GJPS is committed to resolving conflicts in a constructive and timely manner. The following steps outline the district's conflict resolution process:

1. Identify the Concern: Clearly define the issue and gather relevant information to support your understanding.
2. Communicate with the Appropriate Person: Address the concern with the individual most directly involved (e.g., coach, teacher).
3. Seek Resolution at the Building Level: If the issue remains unresolved, involve the building principal or athletic director.
4. Involve District Administration: If necessary, escalate the concern to the appropriate district-level administrator.
5. Board of Education: As a last resort, concerns may be brought before the GJPS Board of Education.

By following these communication guidelines and conflict resolution steps, we aim to foster a positive and collaborative environment for all participants in the GJPS middle school athletics program.

Transportation Guidelines

Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools (GJPS) is committed to ensuring the safe and efficient transportation of student-athletes to and from athletic practices and contests.

The following guidelines outline the district's policies and procedures regarding transportation for middle school athletics.

District-Provided Transportation

- For most district-sponsored sports, GJPS provides transportation for student-athletes to scheduled competitions and events.
- Transportation to off-site practices may be provided depending on the location and availability of district resources
- All student-athletes are expected to utilize district-provided transportation to and from athletic events unless prior arrangements have been approved.

Parent/Guardian Transportation Requests

- In certain circumstances, families may request to transport their student-athlete to or from an athletic event.
- Such requests must be submitted in writing using the Student-Athlete Travel Release Form, available on the GJPS Athletics website.
- The completed form must be submitted to the coach or athletic director at least 24 hours prior to the event.
- Approval is subject to review by the athletic director and is not guaranteed.

Coach Transportation Restrictions

- Coaches are not authorized to transport student-athletes in their personal vehicles under any circumstances.
- All transportation of student-athletes must adhere to district policies and utilize approved methods.

Student Conduct on District Transportation

Student-athletes are expected to adhere to the following conduct guidelines while utilizing district-provided transportation:

- Please remain seated and keep the aisles clear at all times.
- Refrain from loud, disruptive, or inappropriate behavior.
- Follow all instructions provided by the bus driver and coaching staff.
- Maintain cleanliness and respect for district property.

Failure to comply with these guidelines may result in disciplinary action, including suspension from transportation services or athletic participation.

Emergency Situations and Delays

In the event of an emergency or unexpected delay during transportation, coaches will communicate promptly with families using the contact information provided in FinalForms. Families are encouraged to ensure their contact information is current and accurate in the FinalForms system.

Transportation Registration

- All students eligible to ride a GJPS school bus must register for transportation services annually.
- The GJPS Transportation Department communicates registration details and deadlines, which are available on the district website.

By adhering to these transportation guidelines, GJPS aims to provide a safe and organized environment for all student-athletes participating in middle school athletics.

Recognition and Awards

Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools (GJPS) values the dedication, sportsmanship, and achievements of our middle school student-athletes. The district is committed to recognizing and celebrating the efforts of individuals and teams who exemplify excellence both on and off the field.

Team and Individual Recognition

1. **Certificates of Participation:** All student-athletes who complete a season in good standing will receive a certificate acknowledging their commitment and participation.
2. **Team Awards:** Coaches may present team-specific awards to recognize outstanding performance, leadership, improvement, or other notable contributions.
3. **Academic Recognition:** Student-athletes who demonstrate excellence in the classroom may be acknowledged for their academic achievements in conjunction with their athletic participation.

Season-End Celebrations

Each middle school may host end-of-season events or banquets to honor the efforts and accomplishments of their athletic teams. These gatherings provide an opportunity for coaches, players, and families to show gratitude, celebrate the season's successes, and reflect on the growth and development of the student-athletes.

Criteria for Awards

Eligibility for recognition and awards is based on the following criteria:

- Completion of the athletic season in good standing, adhering to team and district policies.
- Demonstration of sportsmanship, teamwork, and respect for coaches, teammates, opponents, and officials.
- Maintenance of academic eligibility as defined by GJPS and the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA).
- Exemplary conduct on and off the field, serving as a positive representative of the school and district.

By recognizing the achievements of our student-athletes, GJPS aims to promote a culture of excellence, integrity, and pride within our athletic programs.

Acknowledgment Forms

Participation in Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools (GJPS) middle school athletics requires the completion of several important forms to ensure the safety, eligibility, and well-being of our student-athletes.

GJPS utilizes the FinalForms platform to streamline this process, allowing families and students to complete and sign necessary documents electronically.

FinalForms Registration

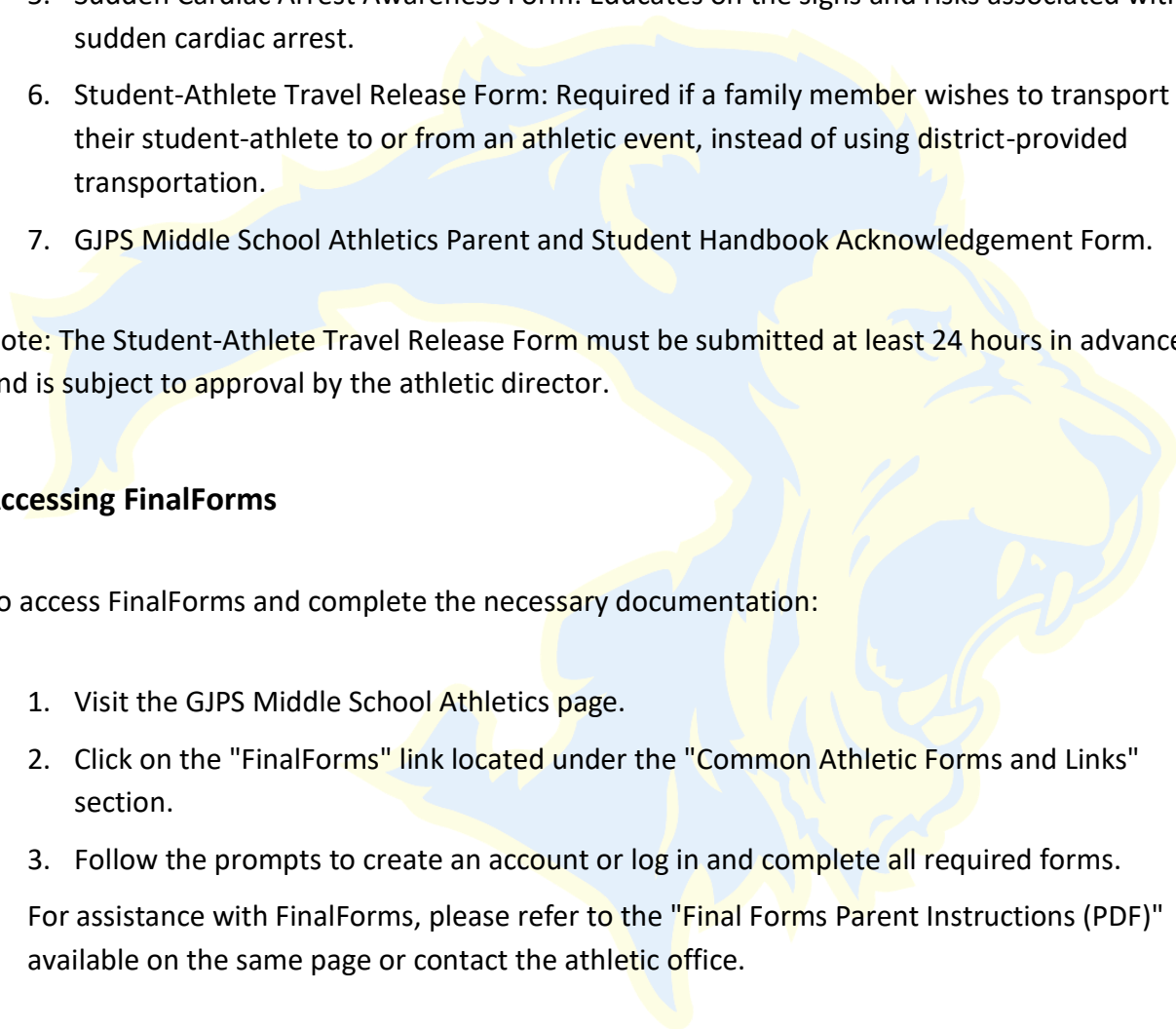
Before participating in any athletic activities, including tryouts and practices, the following steps must be completed:

1. **Parent/Guardian Account Creation:** A parent or guardian must create an account on FinalForms and add their student-athlete(s) to the system.
2. **Form Completion and Signatures:** Families are required to complete all necessary forms within FinalForms, providing accurate and up-to-date information. Once completed, the student-athlete will receive an email prompting them to sign their portion of the forms.
3. **OHSAA Physical Form Submission:** A current Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) Preparticipation Physical Evaluation Form, signed and dated by a licensed physician, must be submitted. Only pages 4 and 5 of the physical form are required and can be uploaded directly to FinalForms or submitted to the school's athletic office. Physicals are valid for 13 months from the date of examination.
Note: Student-athletes will not be permitted to participate in any athletic activities until all forms are completed and a valid physical is on file.

Required Forms in FinalForms

The following forms must be completed and signed within the FinalForms platform:

1. **Emergency Medical Authorization:** Provides consent for emergency medical treatment and lists pertinent medical information.

- 
2. OHSAA Eligibility and Authorization Statement: Outlines eligibility requirements and authorizes participation in interscholastic athletics.
 3. GJPS Code of Conduct Agreement: Acknowledges understanding and acceptance of the district's athletic code of conduct.
 4. Concussion Information Sheet: Provides information on concussion symptoms and protocols.
 5. Sudden Cardiac Arrest Awareness Form: Educates on the signs and risks associated with sudden cardiac arrest.
 6. Student-Athlete Travel Release Form: Required if a family member wishes to transport their student-athlete to or from an athletic event, instead of using district-provided transportation.
 7. GJPS Middle School Athletics Parent and Student Handbook Acknowledgement Form.

Note: The Student-Athlete Travel Release Form must be submitted at least 24 hours in advance and is subject to approval by the athletic director.

Accessing FinalForms

To access FinalForms and complete the necessary documentation:

1. Visit the GJPS Middle School Athletics page.
2. Click on the "FinalForms" link located under the "Common Athletic Forms and Links" section.
3. Follow the prompts to create an account or log in and complete all required forms.

For assistance with FinalForms, please refer to the "Final Forms Parent Instructions (PDF)" available on the same page or contact the athletic office.

By ensuring all acknowledgement forms are accurately completed and submitted, GJPS aims to provide a safe and organized environment for all student-athletes participating in middle school athletics.

Social Media & Online Resources

Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools (GJPS) Middle School Athletics maintains an active online presence to keep students, parents, and the community informed and engaged.

Below are the primary platforms and resources for accessing athletic information, updates, and merchandise:

Official Athletics Website

The central hub for all middle school athletic information, including schedules, forms, and announcements:

- GJPS Middle School Athletics Website:

<https://www.gahannaschools.org/departments/athletics/middle-school-athletics>

Sideline Stores

Show your school spirit by purchasing official GJPS Middle School Athletics merchandise through our Sideline Stores:

Middle School East Sideline Store:

<https://sideline.bsnsports.com/schools/ohio/gahanna/gahanna-middle-school-east>

Middle School South Sideline Store:

<https://sideline.bsnsports.com/schools/ohio/gahanna/gahanna-middle-school-south>

Middle School West Sideline Store:

<https://sideline.bsnsports.com/schools/ohio/gahanna/gahanna-middle-school-west>