

St. Thomas Aquinas Parish School Athletics Guidelines

Goals and Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish School Athletics

The goals of athletics at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish School are:

- For the student athletes to learn the basic skills and rules of their chosen sports.
- To provide the student athletes an opportunity to exercise and increase physical fitness.
- For the student athletes to learn some life lessons about setting goals, striving for self-improvement, and being a reliable teammate as taught through faithfully attending practices and participating in competition against other teams.
- For the student athletes to be prepared for participation in high school athletics. Students involved in the athletic program should leave knowing more about their sport, competition, conditioning, and what it takes to work toward common goals with their teammates.
- For the student athletes to have fun while playing sports.

Our philosophy at St. Thomas Aquinas is that living the values of the Catholic Christian faith and excelling in academics is the most important part of the school experience. If a student chooses to participate in athletics, it should be an enjoyable learning experience that can help build a lifelong form of fitness and fun.

At St. Thomas Aquinas we strive for the attitude that while we want to win and victory is a team goal, winning and losing is much less important than displaying good sportsmanship and playing hard for the love of the contest. Coaches, parents, and administrators involved in St. Thomas Aquinas athletics should nurture within the students a healthy desire for competition and self-improvement, while striving to teach each individual to behave as a loyal and dependable teammate.

Before the beginning of each athletic season, the St. Thomas Aquinas athletic director and the coaches will agree to specific goals for the team that will include but not be limited to these:

- To have the members of the team, the families, the coaches, and the followers of the team observe and enjoy a positive experience. The season is highlighted with lessons on self-improvement, team loyalty, and dedication to common objectives.
- To help all players understand that you win or lose as a team, not as individuals.
- Each player on the team should grow in knowledge and appreciation of the skills required to be a competent player.
- To have each team member learn and exhibit the effort and commitment it takes by every individual to form a solid, well prepared, unified team.
- Practices should be crisp and efficient. Each player receives the appropriate mix of instruction, practice, and conditioning to enter each competition well prepared.
- The athletic director, coaches, and student athletes all represent St. Thomas Aquinas and the parish, as well as the East Lansing community, properly. This includes, but not limited to, being polite, disciplined, well prepared, gracious (in victory OR defeat), and enthusiastic examples of good sportsmanship.
- Each player should know that academic success and representing Catholic Christian values is most important. Each player should also understand that playing for a St. Thomas Aquinas team is a privilege to be earned and it is not anything to be taken for granted. Each member of the team should be fully aware of school and team rules, and make every effort to follow the rules faithfully.
- As a team we enter each game ready to compete. We strive for excellence but also understand that winning is not as important as practicing the habits, behaviors, skills, and attitudes necessary to be at our very best.

Sports Offered

St. Thomas Aquinas Parish School currently offers the following sports:

Sport	Grades	Season
Football ó Jr. Cougar	4, 5, 6, 7 and 8	August ó October
Coed Cross Country ó Jr. Cougar	6, 7 and 8	August ó October
Coed Golf ó Jr. Cougar	6, 7 and 8	August ó October
Girls Basketball - STA	5, 6, 7 and 8	August ó October
Boys Basketball - STA	5, 6, 7 and 8	November - February
Girls Volleyball - STA	5, 6, 7 and 8	January ó March
Coed Track & Field ó Jr. Cougar	7 and 8	April - May

St. Thomas Aquinas is a member of the Catholic Youth Activities Conference (CYAC). The CYAC governs Girls and Boys Basketball, Girls Volleyball, Jr. Cougar Football (tackle and flag), Jr. Cougar Coed Cross Country, Jr. Cougar Coed Track & Field and Jr. Cougar Coed Golf. All 7th & 8th grade sports follow the rules and guidelines of the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA). St. Thomas Aquinas will help promote other area sports opportunities on a case by case basis.

Eligibility

A. Academic and Behavior

Academic eligibility will be checked regularly throughout the season. If a student is determined to be ineligible, he/she may not play in a game until the issue is resolved. The student athlete is encouraged, but not required, to continue practicing with the team. The first priority will be to take the steps necessary to make them eligible again. This may preclude their need to continue practicing with the team.

Students are ineligible if they have:

- Grades below a C or marks below a 2 (or any combination thereof) in two or more subjects. Grades will be checked on a regular basis throughout the season.
- Demonstrated consistent or gross misbehavior determined by the principal or athletic director with input from the coaches and/or classroom teachers. This includes classroom and playground behavior as well as behavior on the court, track or playing field.
- Student athletes will become eligible again after the teachers and principal have determined their grades and/or behavior have improved to a satisfactory level.

Athletic Eligibility Exception Policy

- If a faculty member, coach or parent feels there are extenuating circumstances affecting a student athlete's grades or behavior, they may request an exception to the eligibility policy. The principal (with input from the athletic director) will review each case on its individual merit and decide on eligibility in conjunction with the student athlete and their parents.

Behavioral

- If a teacher, administrator, or coach finds that a student athlete's behavior does not meet the expectations of a St. Thomas Aquinas student athlete, the coach reserves the right to reduce participation time for the next contest or if warranted for an entire game. Flagrant or severe behavioral problems may result in partial or complete exclusion from one or all sports participation for a school year, as determined by the principal in concert with the athletic director. An unsportsmanlike conduct technical foul in a game by a student athlete (or coach) will result in an automatic one game suspension.

B. Attendance

Each student athlete must be in attendance at school all day of a game. An excused absence from school may be allowed if arrangements are made with the principal, athletic director and/or coach prior to the absence. Failure to meet this requirement will be dealt with on an individual basis by the principal (with input from the athletic director).

C. Proof of Physical

No St. Thomas Aquinas student athlete will be allowed to practice or play in a sport until they can show proof of a physical examination given by a licensed physician that has taken place on or after April 15 of the previous school year. The physician can fill out the physical form provided by the school (forms can be found on the St. Thomas Aquinas school website under athletics), or otherwise certify that a student is physically able to safely participate.

D. Participation Fee

St. Thomas Aquinas currently assesses a participation fee for each sport in which the student athlete participates. This fee helps cover the cost of administration, coaches, uniforms, equipment, and game officials. No student athlete will be denied participation because of financial hardship. If necessary, please contact the school accountant to request financial assistance.

Expectations

A. Expectations for Coaches and Administrators

The role of the coach is to be a teacher and mentor. It is a position of responsibility, trust, and respect. All coaches are to:

- Adhere to the goals and philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish School Athletics.
- Say a team prayer before and/or after practices and games.
- Know and teach the proper rules for their sport.
- Teach the basic skills and strategies of the sport, allowing for learning and mistakes.
- Exhibit and teach good sportsmanship and show proper respect for the officials.
- Discuss and set team goals and reevaluate those goals throughout the season.
- Help student athletes set individual goals that improve each player individually as well as add to the team's improvement and success. Reevaluate those goals throughout the season.
- Stress the importance of physical fitness and conditioning.
- Exercise good judgment and fairness in deciding issues among players.
- Follow all the rules governing the CYAC.
- Follow all St. Thomas Aquinas Church requirements for volunteers.
- Assist with game and practice facility setup and cleanup before and after practices and contests.

B. Expectations for Student Athletes

- Adhere to the goals and philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish School Athletics.
- Maintain academic and behavioral eligibility.
- Attend all practices and games, unless arrangements have been made with your coach.
- Be prepared for games and practices, listen to instruction and value the time commitment by coaches.
- Treat coaches, officials, and teammates with respect, obeying the rules of the sport and the team.
- Show positive behavior and good sportsmanship in all practices and games.
- Participate in setting and evaluating team goals.
- Set individual goals and work to accomplish those goals.
- Give maximum effort according to individual abilities.
- Communicate with the coach if problems or conflicts arise.
- Assist with game and practice facility setup and cleanup before and after practices and contests.

C. Expectations for Parents

The attitude of young athletes toward sports is often shaped by the attitude of parents. Parents are expected to:

- Adhere to the goals and philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish School Athletics.

- Discuss individual goals and encourage your child to accomplish the goals set.
- Arrange for proper physical examination and payment of participation fees.
- Attend games whenever possible.
- Be available to provide transportation to and from practices and games.
- Model respect for coaches and officials. Exhibit proper sportsmanship and etiquette during games.
- Abide by the decisions of the coach concerning placement and playing time.
- Support your child in winning and losing, and help provide the proper perspective.
- Be available to assist with game requirements such as collecting money at the gate, working at the concession stand, and helping with scoring and time keeping. This support is much appreciated by the school and coaching staff.

Practices

Team members should attend all scheduled practices unless there is an extenuating circumstance that has been communicated with the coaching staff in advance. Practices will usually (but not always) be held at regular times. The practice schedule will be communicated in advance so everyone knows when they are to be at practices. We realize conflicts may prevent 100% attendance at team practices. Coaches need to know beforehand if possible. Be aware that missing practices could mean less (or no) playing time during the game(s).

Issues Between Student Athletes and Coaches

If a conflict arises between an athlete or parent and coach, the following steps are to be taken:

- The student athlete or parent should speak privately with the coach at a time other than during a game. Coaches are asked not to discuss conflicting issues with parents immediately before, during, or after a game. This is to avoid conversations taking place in the heat of competition. The best time and way for an athlete or parent to approach a coach is before or after practice, in private, with respect and an open mind.
- If the student athlete or parent does not feel they have achieved a satisfactory resolution after speaking with the coach, they should contact the athletic director.
- If the student athlete or parent still does not feel they have achieved satisfactory resolution after they have spoken with the coach and the athletic director, then the issue should be taken up with the principal.

Please respect these lines of communication. We want everyone to enjoy a positive experience. Input from student athletes and parents will always be respectfully considered.

Miscellaneous

A. Team Selection and Organization

St. Thomas Aquinas has a *no cut-off* policy for its athletic teams. Any student athlete that abides by the rules set forth in the St. Thomas Aquinas Parish School Athletics Guidelines will be permitted to play. In the event that the number of players exceeds the number of players needed for a team, a second team will be formed if possible. The coaches will make every effort to split the teams up evenly by talent level.

B. Transportation

Transportation to all events and home from all practices will be provided by parent drivers. Parents should make every effort to know the practice and game schedules so they are available to transport their student athlete to and from any events at the appropriate times.

C. Uniforms

Uniforms for games will be issued to all team members. These uniforms are the property of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish School Athletics and they are to be cleaned and cared for properly. Students will be charged for any loss or damage to uniforms. Uniforms must be returned to the school by the deadline given by the coach or athletic director.

St. Thomas Aquinas Parish School Athletics Guidelines

We have read and agree to the St. Thomas Aquinas Parish School Athletics Guidelines:

Student Athlete's Printed Name

Date

Signature of Student Athlete

Grade

Signature of Parent or Guardian