

## **Georgia Independent School Association Middle School Athletic Programs**

The Georgia Independent School Association (GISA) has developed best practices to assist schools in developing and designing middle school programs whose purpose shall be to promote academic excellence among member schools; to promote and develop athletic relationships among member schools; and to stimulate fair play, friendly rivalry, and good sportsmanship among contestants, schools, and communities.

The purpose of these practices is to provide students with opportunities to participate, develop skill levels, and experience the positive outcomes that result from well-planned, developmentally responsive sports programs.

GISA is not a regulatory agency for middle school athletics. These guidelines should be viewed as resources to guide member schools in the development of policies that are in the best interest of student-athletes and member schools.

### **Administrative Practices**

The middle school program of each member school should be under the direct supervision of the Head of School and his/her delegate.

Schools should procure qualified personnel who possess passion and knowledge for the interscholastic sports program and who will place safety above all else. Coaches should be required to have formal instruction on rule changes and safety precautions.

Each middle school coach (paid or volunteer) should be properly trained in concussion management and be fully informed of the Heat Policy adopted by the GHSA and GISA.

Schools need to secure written parental permission for participation in interscholastic sports.

Schools should present trophies and awards on a modest scale. Awards should be organized and administered in ways that encourage young student-athletes and help ensure the widest possible degree of continuant participation as well as show an appreciation for commitment. Consistency between middle school and varsity awards is advised.

Parent meetings are recommended for the purpose of understanding the standards for the competitions and for the individual school standards regarding advancement to the next level.

### **Eligibility**

Middle school student-athletes should be conclusive to 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades. *\*Student-athletes should be matched considering maturity, age, and size.*

The student-athlete shall not have reached 15 years of age prior to September 1 of the current school year for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade competition.

Pre-participation forms must be completed on every student-athlete before eligibility can be established.

Student-athletes must meet the scholastic requirements of their own school in order to participate in interscholastic activities. Schools are encouraged to also require a citizenship standard.

Girls should be permitted to participate on boy's teams in single gender sports.

Boys should not be allowed to participate on girl's teams.

### **Competitions and Preparations**

Establish policies for practice time. Practice time should never exceed two hours.

Schools should set limits on the number of games allowed for each sport.

Game times should take into consideration the loss of instructional time. Travel distances should also be considered in respect to maximizing instructional time.

Employ certified and approved officials to conduct all contests. Approved officials associations can be found on the GHSA and GISA websites.

All competitions should follow the NFHS rules for respective competitions with the exceptions as noted in the GHSA and GISA regulations. This will assist in an understanding of the game at the next level.

### **Sportsmanship**

Student-athletes should demonstrate respect for the opponent and for the game officials. Student-athletes should also be required to demonstrate graciousness in victory and accept defeat with dignity. Schools should require extensive emphasis in teaching citizenship and sportsmanship.

Coaching personnel should behave in a manner consistent with the GISA Code of Ethics and should align with the mission statement of the school. Accountability and integrity should be foremost.

Make an extensive effort to help parents understand productive and appropriate ways they can be involved in supporting their student-athlete(s). Orientation meetings should be conducted with an emphasis on the school's mission as it relates to sportsmanship. Parents should behave in a manner consistent with the GISA Code of Ethics.

The GISA Sportsmanship Statement is to be read at all GISA games and events that a speaker system is available.

*“The GISA encourages and promotes sportsmanship by student-athletes, coaches, and spectators. We request your cooperation by supporting the participants and officials in a positive manner. Profanity, racial, ethnic, or sexist comments, or other intimidating actions will not be tolerated and are grounds for removal from the event.”*

The significant responsibility of sportsmanship lies on those who influence sports and student-athletes – administrators, coaches, fans – to ensure that athletic competitions help build character and ethics of participants. Education and accountability make middle school competitions enjoyable and rewarding.