

# **NORTH HUNTERDON HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC PHILOSOPHY & EXPECTATIONS**

Dear Parent/Guardian and Student Athlete,

We are excited to have you become a part of the North Hunterdon High School's Athletic Program. We sincerely wish that your experience in our athletic program is satisfying and rewarding. We feel that participation in athletics is an important part of the educational process as athletic participation provides the opportunity for student athletes to develop knowledge, skill and attitudes so that they may become productive, contributing citizens of our community and society.

North Hunterdon High School serves as a community center due to sheer number of our sending districts and the far-flung nature of the geography of this region. Participation in sports and other activities is an important element in helping our students get to know each other and in teaching them the value of being part of the larger community. Athletics is an integral part of our students' education at North Hunterdon High School, whether they are spectators or participants. Participation in athletics is an extension of the school day, during which the learning process still continues. Students learn to respect competence, commitment, and sportsmanship. They learn the power of sharing their unique talents and the intensity the working together for a common goal. We encourage our students to become involved in as many programs as possible, to do their absolute best, and to support their coaches' and their teams' efforts to excel.

High school athletics are highly competitive, and teams in most sports vie for conference, county, and state titles. As educators, we recognize that few students will make their livelihoods as athletes, but all will need to know the values of hard work and joint effort toward a common goal. We have an excellent staff of coaches who take an interest, not only in the performance of our student/athletes' on the field, but in our students' academic and social performance as well

## **North Hunterdon High Schools Membership Affiliation:**

- New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association – Group IV North II Jersey
- Skyland Conference - Delaware Division
- Hunterdon/Warren County Athletic Association

Over the past years we have learned that parents and students may have misunderstandings regarding our highly competitive interscholastic sports programs. The information in this letter is designed to explain our philosophy, establish our expectations and address a few common misunderstandings. There are items that are not appropriate for parents to discuss with coaches such as playing time, team strategy, play calling or other student-athletes.

High school athletics are a source of local pride. In our larger community, they not only fill that role, they're also a major source of entertainment, with the local athletes being elevated to the level of local personality. It is important as a parent of our athletes to be a positive role model through your own actions to make sure your child has the best athletic experience possible and show respect for the opposing players, coaches, officials, spectators and support groups.

One way for parents to support their children's teams is to join the NHHS Booster Club. The purpose of the North Hunterdon Booster Club is to encourage and support the North Hunterdon High School Interscholastic Athletic program and all athletic activities through fund raising and volunteer efforts. There are many benefits to joining, such as the ability to obtain commercial liability insurance for team events, support for senior athlete gifts, the awarding of senior scholarships, help in purchasing team equipment, "the gifts of Spirit Kits" for each family, and participation in the Senior Athletic Awards Night.

The Athletic Department believes being a member of an interscholastic competitive athletic team, regardless of time spent in actual competition, provides an opportunity for our student athletes to learn many valuable lessons in commitment, citizenship, sportsmanship and life. Student athletes learn how to work together to meet team goals, understand responsibility and commitment to their team and school. They also gain insight into placing team above self, learning to accept constructive criticism, respect for others, winning and losing with dignity, self-control and being responsible for their actions.

One of the main goals of our varsity sports program is to put our most committed responsible and talented athletes of the team in competition to win the contest. Starting positions and playing time are not guaranteed to seniors making a team or anyone else. Student athletes at any high school grade level possessing the necessary skills have the same and equal opportunity to make any level team. Athletes are role models, so they must adhere to a higher standard of behavior. Athletes have to join the pool for random drug testing in order to participate in any athletic activities. Athletes will not play for at least two games after positive drug or alcohol tests.



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Each member of the team is very valuable to the team's overall progress. Some members may play a great deal of time in a contest while others may not see what a parent would consider significant playing time. There will be athletes on the team that start the athletic contest but this role is not guaranteed every game. Coaches will strategically play the best players at the particular time of the game or by the particular competition. Coaches, by the nature of their jobs, must look at the "big picture. It is the team that wins contests, not individuals. Coaches strategically play the best players during particular portions of a game or in particular competitions, so that the team has the best chance of winning. We remind parents and athletes that coaching decisions are made for the good of the team as a whole and for the future of the program, not just for the results of a single game or for the benefit of a single individual. Unfortunately, in a competitive interscholastic sports program, members of a team are not guaranteed or entitled to playing time. Therefore, each student athlete should have a personal improvement plan as one of their goals. Participation in athletics, like other extra-curricular activities, is a privilege, not a right under New Jersey state law.

In each program, the coaching staff is responsible for team member selection. Selection criteria are established by the entire coaching staff of each team. While the selection process incorporates many objective criteria, there is a certain degree of expertise in the process. If you have questions regarding the process, please feel free to address those questions directly to the head coach. Please call the coach to make an appointment outside of practice or game time. If a parent or student has a concern, it is important to follow the chain of command with the Coach, Head Coach, Athletic Director, Assistant Principal and Principal respectively. Please do not attempt to confront a coach before, during, or after a contest or practice. It is important to know that practices are closed to the public due to the athletes becoming distracted during a limited instructional period. When there is a conflict with instruction or teaching philosophies it is important to remember that these are emotional times for both the parent and the coach and this period does not support objective analysis of the situation.

As discussed, the North Hunterdon Interscholastic Athletic programs are highly competitive. Due to our large enrollment, we cannot place every student who wishes to participate on a team. One of the hardest things our coaches have to do is tell a student athlete that he or she will not be on the team. When someone tries out for the team, it is vital that the student athlete and his or her parents understand there is a very real possibility they may not be selected. Additionally, if selected, the student athlete and his or her parents need to accept placement at any team level such as freshmen, Junior Varsity and Varsity respectively. It is devastating to a team when a student tries out for a team and then quits because they are dissatisfied with the team level.

Coaches have a very short amount of time to make team selections. They try to do the very best they can in keeping the most committed, responsible and talented athletes. The coaches are trained in these skills and attend yearly workshops for professional development for their sport. They are expected to assemble the most competitive team possible. While any one of us using our own criteria might select different athletes for a particular team, it is the responsibility of the head coach and his or her staff to select the team members. Our coaches are in the business of coaching because they care about students and care about the game. Our coaches know the limits for positively pushing and communicating with student athletes. When athletes are pushed to their limits they gain motivation, life skills and tools to be successful in the world today. Athletes have fun when they meet their individual and team goals by learning how to play as a team.

There are many select athletic camps, recreation and Amateur Athletic Unions (AAU) sponsored by many different organizations with different philosophies. The coaches of these organizations may look at different selection criteria for his or her players. Participation on any of these organizations does not guarantee any player a spot on any North Hunterdon team. We believe that players can gain valuable experience outside of our interscholastic sports program but neither parents nor students should count on this type of participation to guarantee a spot.

We sincerely hope this information helps you to understand the philosophy, expectations, structure and procedures of the North Hunterdon High School Interscholastic competitive sports program. Please take a few minutes to discuss this letter with your family. In doing so, all of our student athletes, their parents and our coaches will have a more successful experience. Please feel free to contact the Athletic Director if you have any questions regarding this philosophy.

Respectfully,

**John Deutsch**  
Athletic Director-Administrator

**Michael P. Hughes**  
Principal

