



Morning Star Academy

Athletic Handbook

To the Parents and Student-Athletes:

Welcome to the Mustang season!

Whether this is your first time donning the blue and gold or your last, we are excited to have you as a part of our Mustang sports program.

Athletics as MSA is an integral part of the curriculum. We like to see athletics as co-curricular rather than extra-curricular because athletics gives us practical learning experiences. Athletics helps students learn lessons like: teamwork, commitment, discipline, and dealing with and overcoming adversity. These lessons help them develop into better students and ultimately better disciples.

Athletics also helps the MSA community as a whole by creating opportunities for parents, teachers, and those outside the community to bond. We hope to see relationships built at athletic events that strengthen the bond between parents as they enthusiastically support their students. We want everyone involved at Morning Star to be united in purpose and mission, and athletics helps us do just that.

This handbook contains the vision, philosophy, and policies that operate the Athletics Department. It gives detailed rules of what is expected of coaches, parents, and student-athletes. This handbook is intended to comprehensively cover the issues that may arise throughout the year; however it may not always do that. With a common understanding of these rules and procedures, we can reduce concerns and unforeseen problems that may arise.

Please read this manual completely with your student-athlete so they also have an understanding of what is expected from them. In order to participate in any sport, the Athletics Department must have a completed copy of the permission form on the last page.

We look forward to an exciting year of sports.

Go Mustangs!

Athletic Director

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## ATHLETIC PROGRAM

### **Purpose**

The Athletics Department exists to fulfill the mission of Morning Star Academy:

The mission of Morning Star Academy is to provide a balanced educational experience in which academic disciplines are integrated with Christ-centered living. We strive to meet the individual needs of each student and to equip the student with the values, knowledge, interpersonal skills, and discipline needed to excel in his or her chosen endeavors.

### **Philosophy**

In our day and age, athletics has become all about wins and losses. Players and coaches' success is based on how many championships they win. At Morning Star, we want to instill the values of competition into our student-athletes without idolizing wins or championships. We want to create a culture of excellence without sacrificing biblical values. To do this, we have three core values that make up our athletic philosophy:

- **Character**

*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”- Galatians 5:22-23*

At Morning Star, we want our student-athletes to exude Christ-like character towards the opponent, the officials, and their teammates.

- **Commitment**

*“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.” – Colossians 3:23*

We want our student-athletes to be fully committed to the sport that they are participating in, giving maximum effort, and striving for excellence.

- **Community**

*“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not to your own interest, but also to the interests of others.” - Philippians 2:3-4*

We want the humble attitude of Christ to flow through our athletics program, where the focus of our parents, student-athletes, and coaches is not on themselves, but on others.

At Morning Star, we want to help students develop healthy priorities: 1) God, 2) family, 3) academics, 4) athletics. When these are properly followed, it give the student-athlete the opportunity to be spiritually, emotionally, and physically healthy.

## **Goals**

The goals of the athletics department are:

- Creating a culture of excellence, both academically and athletically, by helping students reach their full potential individually and as a team.
- Instilling biblical values through coaches and parents who model what it looks like to follow Christ.

## **Team Level Philosophy**

With Morning Star providing opportunities for athletic involvement from 5<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade, there are differing philosophies that come with each level.

Grammar school athletic teams (5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>) encourage participation for all. At this level, what matters most is that students who are interested come and learn the fundamentals of the game and begin to develop a love for the game. Coaches should do their best to distribute playing time equally. This introduction should be fun and encouraging for the student-athletes, as well as build excitement for wearing a Mustang uniform.

Logic school teams (7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>) should further develop a love for the game, continue to learn the fundamentals of the sport, and begin teaching them more in-depth strategy of the game to prepare them for the varsity program. Playing time is given at discretion of the coach.

Rhetoric school teams (9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>) strive to cultivate potential with an emphasis on execution. Coaches will do their best to develop leadership skills, athletic talent, and a “team first” mentality. Each head coach will always put the team before any individual achievement, and will take knowledge, ability, attitude, conduct on and off the court, and safety into consideration when it comes to playing time. Try-outs and cuts may be part of the program; however it will vary year to year.

We desire to have a sustainable program that fields competitive teams year in and year out, however that may not always be the case. At times, we may not be able to field a team due to a variety of factors such as: limited participants, coaching availability, facility availability, etc. We desire to excel at whatever we do. Decisions to field teams will be made on a season-by-season, team-by-team basis if we cannot provide a good experience for everyone involved.

## **Multiple Sports and Programs**

We encourage students to be well rounded and participate in a variety of programs. Should a student desire to compete in both an athletic event and non-athletic event, they may do so, as long as both the coach and director of the event approve. There may be a time when one program requires full devotion from the student, in which case leadership needs to be in communication. There should be a declared priority from the student before the season begins that would take precedence if there were a schedule overlap. Ultimately, it is up to the student and parents to decide to participate in multiple activities.

## GENERAL POLICIES

### **Sportsmanship**

Remember, we cheer **for our team not against the opponent**. We expect that anyone in the Morning Star community treat the opposing athletes, parents and students with the utmost respect during and after the game. Remember that we serve as hosts to the visiting team when they come to play us. We also serve as guests when traveling to other schools. We should act as gracious hosts and grateful guests regardless of whenever, wherever, and whomever we may be playing. We must be humble in victory and gracious in defeat.

Regarding officials, no official has ever “lost” the game for a team. Much like the official does not get the credit when a team wins, we will not blame the officials for a loss. Much like the opposing team, officials are guests and we should treat them as such.

Our calling as a Christian school and as Christians in general, is to stand out from the crowd. We are called to be different, to live holy lives in an unholy world. We want the officials and opposing schools to see that transformation in us. It is expected that everyone in the MSA community follow this policy. Failure to do so by any athlete, parent, or coach may result in dismissal from the game and disciplinary action from the school. Engaging in inappropriate behavior such as profanity, fighting, or other misconduct will result in immediate dismissal from the contest.

### **Scheduling**

The athletics department does its best to schedule games well in advance of the season. Because we cannot control unforeseen circumstances, changes to the schedule will inevitably occur. We ask that everyone be flexible with the schedule and exhibit patience and grace when schedule changes do happen. Rhetoric school sports will have a schedule months before the season begins. However the Grammar and Logic school league we participate in creates the schedule only weeks before the season starts. We will do our best to get the schedule out to parents as soon as possible.

As a Christian school, we desire our student-athletes to participate and engage in youth activities at church, and often times these are on Wednesdays. We will do our best to keep Wednesdays free of games; however that is not always possible. Coaches may choose to have practices on Wednesdays, but if they choose to do so, practice must be done by 5pm.

### **Transportation and Travel**

At this time, teams are transported by carpool to either a contest or practice. It is up to the coach to organize carpools. We discourage students from driving themselves to contests for safety reasons. In some cases, that is unavoidable in which case the parent, and student-athlete need to communicate with the coach and athletic director.

### **Severe and Inclement Weather**

In the event of severe weather, coaches and athletic directors from both schools will be in discussion about whether to continue with the contest or postpone it. If school is cancelled, all athletic events scheduled for the day will be cancelled as well. The athletic director will make every attempt to reschedule the game, however there may be some games that are not rescheduled.

### **Fundraising**

Throughout the year, the athletics department will do some fundraisers. The funds raised will go towards new uniforms, covering costs, facility rentals, etc. The funds raised will also help the department give more back to the specific sports. Currently, athletic fees make up the bulk of our income, however we want that money to go back to that specific sport, and doing fundraisers will help us do that. At times, teams may want to do team specific fundraisers as well to cover warm-up costs, or things like that. These are encouraged, however not required.

### **Substance Abuse**

Morning Star has a zero tolerance policy for substance abuse of any kind. Any student-athlete who is known to use alcohol, tobacco, or any illegal drugs on or off campus are subject to disciplinary actions by the school. Penalties can include suspension, permanent removal from the team, or expulsion from school.

### **Hazing**

Hazing is defined as subjecting someone to an indignity, fright, abuse or threat and will not be tolerated. Violation of this rule subjects the person(s) to disciplinary action.

### **Gambling**

Gambling is not tolerated. Violation of this policy subjects the person(s) involved to disciplinary action.

### **Game Behavior**

Players are expected to act with sportsmanship and character during the game. If a student is ejected from a game, here are the following consequences:

1<sup>st</sup> Offense- Player must sit out next contest

2<sup>nd</sup> Offense- Player must sit out next 4 contests

3<sup>rd</sup> Offense- Player is ineligible for the remainder of the season

The offense and penalty is specific to that sport. The penalty may carry over into the next season if it is not fully served.

### **School Disciplinary Actions**

Detention- If a student is given a detention, they may not reschedule because of practice or a game. Any playing time consequences are up to the coach.

Suspension- Any student suspended from class is not eligible to play in a contest that day and will be ineligible for the next scheduled contest.

## STUDENTS

### **Participation**

Participating in sports at Morning Star is a privilege. In order to compete in athletics students need to do the following:

1. Complete Athletic Forms: This includes an up to date physical form, completed permission form from the handbook, Heads Up Concussion Sheet, and Medical Consent Form. These need to be completed each year. Physicals are good for 395 days from the date of the exam.
2. Pay Athletic Fee for each sport you participate in.
3. Clearance from previous sport: In order to compete in another sport, the student needs to be cleared from their previous sport. This means they need to have their uniform and any other equipment that was given out turned in and athletic fees paid.

### **Code of Conduct**

Being an athlete is not only a privilege, it is a responsibility. Athletes are responsible to their coaches and teammate, and ultimately to God. With responsibility comes expectations, and we expect that student-athletes conduct themselves in a way that brings glory to God. Just as Christians are ambassadors of Christ, student-athletes are ambassadors of Morning Star Academy and therefore represent the school wherever they go. Student-athletes are expected to behave at all times with consideration for others in thought, word, and deed. Student-athletes are also expected to abide by the school's rules designated in the Parent-Student Handbook at all times.

### **Age/Grade Eligibility**

#### Logic and Grammar School:

We abide by the Quad City 8 Conference By-laws. Students from 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade are allowed to compete on Morning Star teams. Students who transfer in must attend school one full week before being eligible to compete on teams.

#### Rhetoric School:

We abide by the Northern Illinois Christian Conference By-laws. Students from 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade are eligible to compete on the Varsity teams at Morning Star if they meet the eligibility requirement. A student who is nineteen (19) on or before August 15 preceding the season is not eligible to participate on any athletic teams for that school year. Students who are home schooled can participate on Morning Star teams provided they do one of the following:

1. Attend chapel throughout the duration of the season.
2. Attend a minimum of one academic class on a regular basis.
3. Participate in the school's annual achievement testing.

### **Academic Eligibility**

Students at any level (Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric) must sustain a grade of at least 70% in all classes to be academically eligible to participate in athletics. Grades will be checked every two weeks on Monday by the athletic director. If, at the end of a two week period, a student's grade drops below 70%, that student will be deemed academically ineligible until grades are checked again and that grade is raised. The athletic director will discuss with the student's teachers the reason for the failing grade. A student may continue to be eligible for extenuating circumstances such as absence due to illness if that is the contributing factor to their failing grade.

### **Time Commitment**

Grammar sports (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>)- three to four day a week commitment. Usually during the season, there will be two games a week and one or two practices per week. Practices will not exceed 1 hour 30 minutes. No team related events will be held on Sundays and only in a rare occurrences may events happen on Saturdays such as a tournament.

Logic school sports (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>)- four day a week commitment. During the season there will be one to two games a week and two or three practices a week. Practices will not exceed 1 hour 45 minutes. No team related events will be held on Sundays and will rarely have team events on Saturdays. Practices may be held on school holidays. No games will be played during finals week.

Rhetoric school sports (9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>)- four to five day a week commitment. During the season there will be one to two games per week with three to four practices a week. Practices will not exceed 2 hours. No team related events may happen on Sundays. Practices may be held Saturdays and there may be a few cases in which events occur on Saturdays like tournaments. Practices may be held over school holidays. No games will be played during finals week.

### **Sports Offered:**

#### Fall

Varsity Volleyball (August- early October)

Middle School Volleyball 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> (September-mid October)

#### Winter

Varsity Boys Basketball (November-February)

Varsity Girls Basketball (November-February)

Middle School Boys Basketball 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> (November-January)

Middle School Girls Basketball 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> (Late January-March)

### **Athletic Uniform**

Student-athletes are responsible for the equipment given to them. Uniforms and warm-ups need to be turned in to the athletic department no later than 2 weeks after the season has ended. Failure to do so will result in fees, and will prevent the student-athlete from moving on to their next sport. Damage or loss of a uniform will also result in fees.

## PARENTS

Parents are the most influential models for young athletes. Parents are also critical to the success of a team and the athletic program as a whole. The athletic department relies on parents to volunteer to fulfill a variety of positions throughout the year. Drivers, statisticians, scoreboard operators, scorekeepers, admissions are just a few opportunities throughout the year that parents can step into. Serving the athletic department in this way not only keeps our program healthy and running, but also shows a great example to the student-athletes.

### **Perspective**

Ultimately, our goal in athletics is not to win games or championships. Our goal is to work as hard as we can, have fun, and give all glory to God. This is the perspective that we want our students to have as they compete for Morning Star. Athletes learn this perspective from parents and coaches, so please model this not only for your student-athlete, but for their teammates as well.

### **Coach as Leader**

Each coach is thoughtfully and prayerfully considered before being hired to coach our student-athletes. As such they are given authority by the school over the student-athletes in that specific sport. Parents and student-athletes must trust that coaches do what they feel is best for the team as well as the individuals that make up that team. Parent's should help their students understand that being a member of a team means accepting the coach's decisions even when they may not agree with them.

It is also important to remember that coaches are not perfect. They are neither perfect play callers nor are they infallible talent evaluators. As such, parents should demonstrate and model grace for their student-athletes when a mistake is made.

### **Communication**

Direct communication between coaches and parents is extremely important. Parents should feel they can approach the coach if they have questions or conflicts. Inevitably, there will be times when it is necessary for a parent to schedule a meeting with the coach. Please call or email the coach to try and set up a convenient time to either meet in person or have a phone conversation. Try to exercise the 24-hour rule, wait 24 hours before placing the call or sending the email as sometimes our emotions get the better of us. Remember that before or after a practice or game is never an appropriate time to approach a coach. Coaches will be happy to meet with you, but it may be a few days before a convenient time can be arranged.

A meeting with the coach is an opportunity to exchange information and respectfully discuss any concerns you may have. This meeting shouldn't be viewed as an opportunity to convince the coach that your child should have more playing time, playing a different position, or that the coach should be employing a different strategy. If you feel the issue needs further discussion after the meeting, then the Athletic Director, coach, and parent

can meet together to resolve the issue. If the issue is still unresolved, then a meeting involving the Headmaster, Athletic Director, coach, and parent should take place.

If you have any concerns regarding officials, opposing schools, opposing coaches or fans contact the Athletic Director and they will deal with the matter appropriately.

## **COACHES**

Quality programs start with quality coaches. Therefore Morning Star strives to hire coaches who act as Christian role models for the students and are Christ-like ambassadors for the school. We want to see our coaches committed to the fulfilling the mission of the school, helping our students grow in their relationship with God and their sport, and have a deep passion and knowledge of their sport.

### **Code of Conduct**

Coaches are held to a high standard of conduct at Morning Star. If a student-athlete sees a coach acting a certain way, most often that behavior is repeated. We want our students to develop strong moral character, and therefore we expect that out of our coaches. Coaches should conduct themselves in ways that bring glory and honor to God and reflect positively on Morning Star and their athletes. Coaches should never demean or embarrass student-athletes, and instruction and correction, while demanding and critical, should be positive. Failure of a coach to conduct themselves in this manner may result in penalties or termination.

Coaches that are ejected from a game:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Offense- Suspended from next contest.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Offense- Suspended from next 5 contests.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Offense- Removal from position.

### **Communication**

Communication between parents and coaches is vital. Coaches should begin the season with a proposed practice and game schedule. Weekly communication between the Head Coach and parents is a minimum. It is especially important for the coach to coordinate carpools to games or practices or find a parent that is willing to fulfill that role.

## **GOVERNANCES**

### **Morning Star Academy**

The Board of Directors is responsible for all school policies and delegates the fulfillment of those policies to the administration. The head administrator delegated with the responsibility of the athletic program is the Headmaster. The day to day responsibility for overseeing the athletic program is assigned to the Athletic Director. Each participant is directly responsible to his/her head coach who is responsible to the Athletic Director who is responsible to the Headmaster.

### **Northern Illinois Christian Conference (NICC)**

A fellowship of Christian schools from the Northern Illinois/Quad Cities region. Member schools include: Unity Christian (Fulton, IL), Tri-State Christian (Galena, IL), Quad Cities Christian (Moline, IL), Faith Christian (Dixon, IL), Galesburg Christian (Galesburg, IL).

### **Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)**

Morning Star participates in the annual state/regional sports tournaments that the ACSI puts on for the Mid-America Region.

### **Quad City 8 Conference (QC8)**

An association of middle schools from around the Quad City area. Member schools include: Hampton Middle School (Hampton, IL), Rivermont Collegiate (Bettendorf, IA), Eagle Ridge Middle School (Carbon Cliff, IL), Our Lady of Grace (East Moline, IL), Jordan Catholic (Rock Island, IL), Colona Middle School (Colona, IL), Northeast Middle School (Silvis, IL), Quad City Christian School (Moline, IL).

### **Bettendorf High School**

Morning Star Academy currently has a co-operative agreement with Bettendorf High School that allows Morning Star students to compete in athletics at Bettendorf High School if the sport is not offered at Morning Star. If a sport is offered at Morning Star, then MSA students must compete only for MSA in that sport (note that AAU and club sports do not fall under this policy). Logic school sports also fall under the regulations of this co-operative agreement and policy.

### **IHSAA & IGHSAU**

Morning Star is an Associate Member of both organizations because of the co-operative agreement with Bettendorf. The Rules and By-laws of the IHSAA and IGHSAU will govern those policies not articulated in this handbook or the Northern Illinois Christian Conference Handbook.

