

Davidson Charter Academy

Athletics Handbook

2025-2026



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Section 1. Purpose & Authority

Davidson Charter Academy believes that interscholastic athletics are an extension of the classroom. Participation in athletics provides opportunities for students to grow in teamwork, discipline, perseverance, and sportsmanship while representing our school community with pride. The goal of our athletic program is to support the whole child by promoting physical well-being, character development, and academic success.

This handbook applies to all students in grades 6 through 8 who participate in Davidson Charter Academy athletics, as well as their parents/guardians, coaches, and staff. Its purpose is to provide clear expectations, ensure compliance with North Carolina law, and establish consistent procedures for safe and fair participation.

Athletic policies at Davidson Charter Academy are governed by:

1. **North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) Middle and Junior High School Athletic Manual** – the official rules and regulations for middle school athletics in North Carolina.
2. **Davidson Charter Academy policies** – including the Parent/Student Handbook and Employee Handbook, which apply equally to athletics.
3. **Team-specific rules** – developed by individual coaches, provided they do not conflict with state or school policy.

When policies overlap, the hierarchy is as follows:

- NCDPI requirements set the minimum standard.
- Davidson Charter Academy policies may add additional expectations or procedures.
- Team rules may further clarify day-to-day expectations but cannot override state or school policy.

The administration, Athletic Director, and coaching staff are responsible for enforcing these policies and ensuring the athletic program operates in alignment with the mission and values of Davidson Charter Academy.

Section 2. Eligibility

To participate in Davidson Charter Academy athletics, students must meet the following eligibility requirements. These standards ensure that athletics support, rather than distract from, each student's academic and personal growth.

Academic Standards

- Students must maintain a **minimum grade of 60 (D) or higher** in at least three of the four core subjects (English/Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies).
- Eligibility checks will occur at the end of each grading period (quarter).
- If a student falls below this standard, they will be declared **academically ineligible** and may not participate in practices or games until the next grading period when eligibility is re-evaluated.

Attendance Requirements

- Students must be present for **at least half of the instructional day** in order to participate in a practice or contest that day.
- "Excessive absence" is defined as **10 or more unexcused absences** in a semester. Students exceeding this limit will lose eligibility for the remainder of that semester.

Disciplinary Standing

- Students must be in good standing with the school's Code of Conduct.
- Any **out-of-school suspension** automatically results in suspension from all athletic activities for the duration of the suspension.
- Repeated misconduct, including multiple in-school suspensions, may result in removal from a team at the discretion of the administration and Athletic Director.

Enrollment

- Only full-time, enrolled DCA students in grades 6–8 are eligible.
- Students who withdraw from the school immediately lose eligibility.

Medical Clearance

- A current physical examination (within the past 395 days) and concussion acknowledgement form must be on file before any participation in tryouts, practices, or contests.

Section 3. Health & Safety

- The health and safety of student-athletes is the top priority of DCA. All athletic activities will follow state law and school policy to protect the well-being of students.
- DCA will provide a first responder at all home games.

Pre-Participation Physicals

- Every student-athlete must have a current physical examination on file, valid for **395 days** from the date of issue.
- Students may not participate in tryouts, practices, or contests until this requirement is met.

Concussion Protocol (Gfeller-Waller Act)

- Any student who exhibits signs of a concussion will be **immediately removed** from play.
- A student suspected of a concussion may not return to practice or competition on the same day.
- Written clearance from a licensed healthcare provider trained in concussion management is required before return to play.
- Parents and students must review and sign the annual Concussion Information Sheet.

Emergency Action Plans (EAPs)

- An Emergency Action Plan will be developed and maintained by the **Athletic Director** in coordination with the **Health and Safety Officer (HSO)**.
- Coaches are responsible for reviewing the EAP annually and knowing their roles in case of emergency.
- AED locations will be identified and accessible during practices and contests.
- The **HSO** will be present at all home athletic events to provide first responder support and coordinate emergency response if needed.

Heat & Weather Protocols

- Practices and contests will be modified, delayed, or canceled based on extreme heat, lightning, or other severe weather conditions.
- Heat index, air quality, and storm monitoring will follow state guidelines.

- Coaches may adjust water breaks, practice intensity, and equipment requirements as conditions dictate.

Illness & Injury Return

- A student who is absent from school due to illness may not participate in athletics that same day.
- A student who sustains an injury requiring medical care must provide **written clearance** from a licensed healthcare provider before returning to participation.
- The Athletic Director and Health and Safety Officer (or designee) will review medical notes before clearance is granted.

Hygiene & Safety Expectations

- Students must bring their own water bottles and should not share personal items.
- Locker rooms and equipment must be kept clean to reduce the spread of communicable diseases.

Section 4. Required Forms

All required forms must be **completed, signed, and submitted** before a student may participate in tryouts, practices, or games. Forms are valid for one school year unless otherwise noted.

1. Pre-Participation Physical Evaluation (PPE)

- Must be completed by a licensed healthcare provider.
- Valid for **395 days** from the date of the exam.
- Must be current and on file before any athletic activity.

2. Concussion Information & Acknowledgement

- Annual review and signature required by both student-athlete and parent/guardian.
- Confirms understanding of concussion symptoms, risks, and return-to-play requirements.

Section 5. Tryouts & Team Selection

Davidson Charter Academy values fair and transparent opportunities for students to participate in athletics. The following policies govern all tryouts and team selection processes.

Eligibility Verification

- Students must have all required forms on file before participating in tryouts.
- Academic, attendance, and disciplinary standing will be verified prior to tryout participation.

Tryout Process

- Tryouts will be held at the start of each season and scheduled by the Athletic Director in coordination with coaches.
- Evaluation criteria (such as skill, effort, teamwork, and coachability) will be communicated to students before tryouts begin.
- Coaches will use consistent evaluation rubrics to ensure fairness across all participants.

Team Selection

- Rosters will be determined by the head coach in consultation with the Athletic Director.
- Team size limits will be based on safety, supervision, equipment, and competitive needs.
- Not all students are guaranteed placement on a team.

Multi-Sport Participation

- Students may try out for more than one sport in a season.
- If selected for multiple teams with overlapping seasons, the student and family must **declare their primary sport** before the season begins.
- Conflicts between teams will be resolved in consultation with the Athletic Director, with priority given to safety, school commitments, primary sport, and fairness to teammates.

Confidentiality & Communication

- Results of tryouts will be communicated directly to students by the coach.
- Feedback may be provided to students upon request, but evaluation notes will remain confidential.
- Rosters will not be publicly posted with non-selected students' names.

Spectators

- Tryouts are closed to parents, guardians, and spectators. Only coaches, the Athletic Director, and approved staff may be present.

Appeals

- Team selection decisions are final. Appeals regarding placement will not be considered unless there is a documented violation of policy.

Section 6. Participation Expectations

Student-athletes at Davidson Charter Academy are expected to meet the following standards of commitment and responsibility once selected for a team.

Attendance

- Athletes are expected to attend all scheduled practices, games, and team meetings unless excused by the coach in advance.
- Absences due to illness, family emergency, or academic obligations should be communicated to the coach as soon as possible.
- Excessive unexcused absences (three or more in a season) may result in reduced playing time, suspension, or removal from the team.

Commitment

- Athletes are expected to give their best effort in both practice and competition.
- Outside activities should not conflict with team responsibilities.
- If conflicts arise (school events, family commitments, other extracurriculars), athletes must notify their coach in advance.

Playing Time

- Playing time is not guaranteed and will be determined by the coach.

- Factors include effort, attitude, teamwork, attendance, and skill.
- At the middle school level, coaches are encouraged to provide developmental opportunities for all team members, but competitive balance may affect playing time in certain situations.

Equipment and Uniforms

- Athletes are responsible for the care and return of all school-issued equipment and uniforms.
- Lost or damaged items may result in replacement fees charged to the family.
- Athletes must follow the team's dress code for practices, travel, and competitions.

Athletic Fees

- A **\$50 participation fee per student, per sport** is required.
- Fees are due within two weeks of team selection unless alternative arrangements are approved by the Athletic Director.
- Failure to pay fees may result in loss of eligibility to participate.

Conduct and Representation

- Athletes represent Davidson Charter Academy both on and off the field.
- Respect for teammates, opponents, coaches, officials, and spectators is always required.
- Unsportsmanlike conduct may result in disciplinary action.

Section 7. Codes of Conduct

All Davidson Charter Academy student-athletes, coaches, and parents are bound by the **Code of Conduct outlined in the Parent–Student Handbook**. The expectations of respect, responsibility, and integrity apply equally in classrooms, on the playing field, and at athletic events.

In addition to the general Code of Conduct, the following athletics-specific standards apply:

Student-Athletes

- Demonstrate good sportsmanship at all times.
- Treat teammates, coaches, opponents, officials, and spectators with respect.
- Refrain from profanity, taunting, or unsportsmanlike behavior.
- Hazing, bullying, or harassment of any kind is strictly prohibited.
- Alcohol, tobacco, vaping, drugs, or performance-enhancing substances are not permitted.

Coaches

- Serve as role models for sportsmanship and integrity.
- Uphold professional standards outlined in the Employee Handbook.
- Prioritize player safety and well-being above competition.
- Communicate respectfully with athletes, parents, officials, and colleagues.

Parents & Spectators

- Support athletes, coaches, and officials in a positive manner.
- Avoid negative interactions with players, coaches, officials, or other spectators.
- Follow the “24-hour rule” for addressing concerns with coaches

- Parents or spectators who display inappropriate conduct may be asked to leave an event, and repeated violations may result in loss of attendance privileges.

Disciplinary Consequences

- Violations of the Code of Conduct may result in warnings, suspension, or removal from athletic participation.
- Consequences will be determined by the Athletic Director in consultation with school administration and consistent with the Parent–Student Handbook.

Section 8. Scheduling & Travel

Scheduling of Practices and Games

- Practice and contest schedules are set by the Athletic Director in consultation with coaches and administration.
- Practices may not exceed state guidelines:
 - **One practice per day**
 - **Maximum of 2 hours per practice**
 - **No more than 5 practices per week**
- Teams may not play more than **two contests per week per sport**, rescheduled contests excepted.
- Contests on school nights will be scheduled at times that allow students to return home at a reasonable hour.
- Postponed or canceled events will be rescheduled whenever possible, with notice provided to families.

Travel to Away Games

- Davidson Charter Academy does not currently provide bus transportation for athletic events.
- Parents/guardians are responsible for transporting their child to and from away games.
- Families may choose to arrange carpooling with other parents, but this is done **at their own discretion and responsibility**. The school requires written permission if your child will be signed out by another parent.
- The school does not coordinate, supervise, or accept liability for parent-arranged carpools.

Check-In and Check-Out

- Athletes are expected to arrive at away venues at the time designated by the coach.
- Students must remain with the team until released by the coach after the contest.
- If an athlete will be leaving an away game with someone other than their parent/guardian, written permission must be provided in advance to the coach or Athletic Director.

Supervision

- A DCA coach or staff member will be present for the duration of all practices, games, and team activities.
- Athletes may not be dropped off early or left unsupervised after an event. Families must arrange prompt pick-up.
- If an athlete is repeatedly picked up late, they may be dismissed from the team.

Section 9. Communication Protocols

Effective communication ensures that questions and concerns are addressed respectfully and efficiently. Families are expected to follow the communication process outlined below.

Chain of Command

- Step 1: **Coach** – Questions or concerns related to practices, games, or team decisions should be directed to the coach first.
- Step 2: **Athletic Director (AD)** – If an issue cannot be resolved with the coach, it should be brought to the Athletic Director.
- Step 3: **Administration** – Only if the matter remains unresolved after speaking with the AD should families contact school administration.

24-Hour Rule

- Concerns regarding a game, playing time, or coaching decisions may not be discussed immediately before, during, or directly after a contest.
- Families must wait **at least 24 hours** before requesting a conversation. This ensures cooler heads and productive dialogue.

Schedule Updates

- The **Athletic Director is responsible** for scheduling/rescheduling contests and communicating them to school administration and the coaches.
- Changes to practices or games (cancellations, delays, reschedules) will be communicated through official school channels.
- **Families are responsible for checking** the designated system (Infinite Campus Messenger, email, or official social media) for timely updates.
- Coaches may also provide reminders directly to players and families, but the official notice will always come from the school.

Social Media

- Athletes, parents, and spectators are expected to use social media responsibly when referencing Davidson Charter Academy athletics.
- Negative or disrespectful online comments directed at teammates, coaches, officials, opponents, or the school may result in disciplinary action.
- The Athletic Director and administration reserve the right to address inappropriate posts that disrupt the school community or athletics program.

Section 10. Injuries & Insurance

Injury Reporting

- All injuries that occur during practices, games, or team activities must be reported immediately to the coach.
- Coaches will notify the Health & Safety Officer (HSO), who will maintain the official injury log.
- Parents/guardians will be contacted as soon as possible following any injury.

Medical Clearance

- Athletes who receive medical care for an injury or illness must provide **written clearance** from a licensed healthcare provider before returning to practices or games.
- Clearance notes will be reviewed by the Athletic Director and HSO before participation is reinstated.

Parent Responsibility for Medical Costs

- Davidson Charter Academy does not provide primary medical insurance for student-athletes.
- Families are responsible for all costs of medical treatment resulting from athletic participation.
- The school maintains catastrophic coverage as required by state law, but this coverage applies only in rare, severe cases.

Section 11. Coaches

Selection of Coaches

- All coaches are appointed by the **Athletic Director**.
- Coaches may be school employees or approved community members. All must complete required background checks and mandated trainings.
- Volunteer or assistant coaches must be approved by the Athletic Director before working with students.

Responsibilities of Coaches

Coaches are expected to model professionalism, sportsmanship, and commitment. Their responsibilities include:

- **Commitment to the Team**
 - Prioritize all practices and games above personal activities.
 - Avoid scheduling conflicts that interfere with the athletic calendar.
- **Player Development & Safety**
 - Teach fundamentals, teamwork, and sportsmanship.
 - Enforce all health and safety protocols, including concussion, injury, and emergency procedures.
- **Communication**
 - Provide schedules, expectations, and updates to athletes and families in a timely manner.
 - Address concerns professionally and direct families to the proper chain of command (Coach → AD → Admin).
- **Conduct & Professionalism**
 - Model respect for athletes, officials, parents, and opponents at all times.
 - Refrain from profanity, unsportsmanlike behavior, or favoritism.
- **Administrative Duties**
 - Submit rosters, attendance, injury reports, and equipment requests as required.
 - Ensure uniforms and school-issued gear are maintained and turned in to AD at end of season.
- **Collaboration**
 - Work with the Athletic Director and administration to uphold the mission and values of Davidson Charter Academy.
 - Attend preseason and postseason meetings as scheduled by the Athletic Director.

Accountability

- Coaches are evaluated annually by the Athletic Director in consultation with school administration.
- Continued appointment as a coach is at the discretion of Davidson Charter Academy administration.

Compensation

- Head coaches receive a base \$1000 stipend per sport, per season.
- Assistant coaches receive a base stipend of \$500 per sport, per season.
- Any proposed adjustment to seasonal stipends must be submitted in writing by the Athletic Director with specific justification and approved by the CEO.

Section 12. Discipline & Appeals

Davidson Charter Academy expects athletes, coaches, and families to uphold the highest standards of conduct. When violations occur, disciplinary action will be taken to protect the integrity of the athletics program and the safety of all participants.

Team-Level Discipline

- Coaches may issue consequences for missed practices, tardiness, minor misconduct, or failure to meet team expectations.
- Team-level consequences may include reduced playing time or temporary suspension from practices or games.

School-Level Discipline

- Violations of the Parent–Student Handbook, Employee Handbook, or Athletics Handbook may result in suspension or removal from athletic participation.
- Any **out-of-school suspension** results in automatic suspension from athletic activities for the duration of the school suspension.
- Repeated infractions or serious misconduct (such as fighting, harassment, or use of prohibited substances) may result in removal from a team or from all athletics for the remainder of the school year.

School Discipline vs. Athletic Discipline

- Classroom teachers and administrators are solely responsible for managing student behavior during the school day. Coaches are **not responsible for enforcing academic or classroom discipline**.
- However, the Athletic Director will notify coaches if a student's in-school behavior results in suspension, loss of eligibility, or other consequences that directly affect athletic participation.
- Coaches **should not** be asked to intervene in classroom behavior matters, but they will receive the information necessary to support consistent expectations within athletics.

Ejections

- Any athlete or coach ejected from a contest will face the mandatory penalties set by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.
- At a minimum, this includes suspension from the next contest, with the possibility of additional penalties for more serious offenses.

Appeals

- Families may appeal athletic disciplinary decisions only if there is evidence of a policy violation or procedural error.
- Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Athletic Director within **48 hours** of the decision.
- The Athletic Director, in consultation with administration, will review the appeal and issue a final decision.

- Team selection decisions and coaching strategies (such as playing time) are **not subject to appeal**.

Section 13. Equity, Facilities, and Game Operations

Equity in Athletics

- Davidson Charter Academy is committed to providing equitable opportunities and resources for all student-athletes.
- Facilities, equipment, scheduling, and support services will be allocated fairly across teams and genders in compliance with Title IX.

Facility Use

- DCA athletic facilities are reserved exclusively for school-sponsored practices, games, and events.
- Outside entities, clubs, or organizations are not permitted to use DCA facilities.
- Any exceptions must be approved in-writing by the CEO.

Game Operations

- The Athletic Director is responsible for coordinating game-day operations, including scheduling officials, preparing venues, and managing admissions.
- Coaches and designated staff will assist with set-up and clean-up as assigned.
- The Health & Safety Officer (HSO) will be present at all home games to provide first responder support.
- PTO may support the athletics program through concessions or admissions volunteering.

Admissions and Security

- Admission fees for athletic events are as follows:
 - Adults: **\$5 per game**
 - Students: **\$3 per game**
 - Children under 5: free
- Season passes will be available for purchase:
 - Individual Season Pass: **\$25 per sport season**
 - Family Season Pass: **\$75 per sport season** (covers up to 5 immediate household members)
- Families who purchase season passes will receive a **laminated card** for presentation at the gate. A master list of pass holders will also be maintained by the Athletic Director.
- Spectators who fail to comply with admission, security, or conduct expectations may be removed from the venue.

Section 14. Volunteers and Boosters

Volunteers

- All athletic volunteers must be approved by the Athletic Director in advance.
- Volunteers are required to complete a background check before working directly with students if they ever have unsupervised access.
- Volunteers may assist with tasks such as scorekeeping, concessions, or team support, but must always operate under the direction of a coach or the Athletic Director.

PTO & Booster Support

- Athletic fundraising and booster support will be coordinated through the Davidson Charter Academy PTO, which operates as an independent 501(c)(3).
- The PTO may choose to provide funds or purchase items to support athletics (e.g., uniforms, equipment, spirit wear) at its discretion.
- All PTO contributions for athletics will be coordinated with the Athletic Director to ensure alignment with program needs and school policies.

Gate & Event Revenue

Two operating models may be used, depending on school leadership's decision for a given season:

Option A: School-Managed

- Admission fees and concessions revenue collected at athletic events are treated as school funds.
- Athletics funds are managed by the Athletic Director and applied toward athletic operations such as:
 - Referee and officiating fees
 - Conference dues and league fees
 - Equipment and supply needs
 - Other approved program expenses
- The PTO may partner by providing volunteers or supplemental support; in these cases, a percentage of event proceeds may be shared with PTO if arranged in writing in advance.

Option B: PTO-Managed

- The school may elect to delegate admissions and concessions operations fully to the PTO.
- In this case, the PTO retains event revenue under its independent 501(c)(3) and may choose to provide a set contribution or percentage "kickback" to the school athletics fund.
- The terms of any revenue-sharing arrangement will be agreed to in writing prior to the season

Money Handling

- A designated cash box will be maintained and managed by the Athletic Director for school-managed events.
- If PTO manages admissions/concessions, PTO follows its own accounting and handling procedures, with coordination to the Athletic Director for recordkeeping and transparency.
- Only the Athletic Director or a school administrator may access or transport school-managed athletic funds.
- Volunteers may assist with sales but are not permitted to handle deposits or remove cash from the venue.
- All school-managed funds will be reconciled after each event using school-approved accounting procedures.

Section 15. Data Privacy and Records

Davidson Charter Academy is committed to protecting the privacy of student-athletes and their families. All athletic records will be maintained in compliance with federal and state law.

Student Records

- Academic, attendance, and disciplinary records used for eligibility will be treated as confidential student information under the **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**.
- Eligibility information will only be shared with school personnel who have a legitimate educational interest.

Health Information

- Medical forms, physicals, and injury reports will be kept on file by the Health & Safety Officer (HSO) and Athletic Director.
- Access to student health records is limited to staff who require the information for the safety and well-being of the student.

Photography and Media

- Student-athletes may be photographed or recorded during athletic events.
- Families who do not wish their child's image to be used in school communications must submit a written opt-out request to administration at any time.
- Media inquiries and requests for interviews must be coordinated through school administration.

Communication and Technology

- Coaches and staff may use school-approved communication tools to share information with athletes and families.
- Personal student phone numbers or emails should not be shared outside the team or used for non-athletic purposes.

Section 16. Program Review & Appendices

Annual Review

- The Davidson Charter Academy Athletics Handbook will be reviewed annually by the Athletic Director and school administration.
- Updates or revisions will take effect at the start of each school year unless otherwise communicated.

Superseding Policy

- This handbook supplements, but does not replace, the Davidson Charter Academy Parent–Student Handbook and Employee Handbook.
- In cases of overlap, the Parent–Student Handbook and Employee Handbook remain the controlling documents.

Effective Date

- This handbook is effective beginning with the **winter season of the 2025–2026 school year** and will remain in effect until formally revised.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Pre-Participation Physical Eval (PPE) – State-issued form

https://www.nchsaa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/2025-2026_PPE-English.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Appendix 2: Concussion Information & Acknowledgement – State-issued form

https://www.nchsaa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/GW_SAPLG_ConcussionInform-Feb2021_0.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com