

# PRESEASON MEETING HANDBOOK



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#### **Foreword**

#### Introduction

Congratulations on your decision to conduct a preseason meeting. The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) sincerely hopes this handbook will be of great benefit to you in the coordination of your school's preseason meeting.

### Acknowledgement

There is a perception that all schools across the country are conducting preseason meetings. NOT true. There are many schools that are, and we believe there are others that want to but don't have the tools or the awareness that the tools exist; hence the question, "But what can I do?"

There are groups of people and individuals who really do care and they have shared their knowledge and experiences with us through this handbook. The NFHS gratefully acknowledges all who have contributed their ideas and experiences so that others could benefit.

#### **Criteria for Success**

Any successful school program must involve the entire school community.

Staff-initiated efforts need administrative support.

Administrative-initiated programs need staff support.

Programs with both administrative and staff support also need the involvement of student leadership.

Parents are a vital component.

School staff, students and parents all need to know what the goals of the program are and what each group must do to accomplish these goals.



## Facts and Findings to Support Activities Programs and Funding Efforts

#### The Case for Activities

The Washington Post in an article by Thomas Boswell, *Cutting Athletics: Save Now, Pay Later*, connects the growth of gangs to the demise of competitive sports. "One of the conclusions: weak sports programs create a vacuum in the kids' culture that strong gangs or flashy drug dealers are delighted to occupy."

"To the degree that sports flourished in a school, order was maintained."

"To the degree that interest in sports died—and with it the internal authority of coaches and athletes—schools invited every form of disorder."

#### The Case for Prevention

There are unique characteristics that place athletes at risk for tobacco, alcohol and other drug use. There is a concern in our society that participants in sports will use alcohol.

Athletics and activities, without the proper framework, do not provide a defense against tobacco, alcohol and other drug use. There is a need to assist school activities staff, student activity participants and their parents in taking advantage of existing prevention opportunities within athletics and other school activities.

### **Special Risk Factors**

- 1. are visible and vulnerable to criticism from fans, coaches, activity directors, parents and their fellow teammates or performers, all of which puts extra pressure on them.
- 2. are expected to meet the demands of fans in their social life as well as on the field or stage.
- 3. are expected to consistently improve performance.
- 4. often experience separation from family and friends.
- 5. require inconsistent and fluctuating demands on time.
- 6. receive attention from the public and the media when experiencing problems, including tobacco, alcohol and other drug-use problems.
- experience the special stress that comes from early maturing and peaking in a sport.
- 8. have superior physical ability and conditioning which may mask health problems.
- 9. have the possibility of injury.



## **Preseason Meeting Rationale**

The rationale for the preseason meeting is to involve the family and the school in a conscientious effort to be partners. Through such involvement, the opportunity for optimal growth and development of students is enhanced.

Preseason meetings provide a forum for students and their parents, school activities staff and other adult leaders to openly discuss a variety of issues, such as sportsmanship, school policy, risk of injury/failure to warn and healthy lifestyles, including the use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs. Although the term "preseason meeting" has been borrowed from athletics, these meetings have been so helpful that the idea is now being used for all school activities in an estimated 50 percent of schools.

Preseason meetings represent an extraordinary opportunity to foster a dialogue among students, their parents and school staff—a dialogue that lays the groundwork for real collaboration towards healthier youth and strong communities.



## **Preseason Meeting Goals**

- Introduce student activity participants, their parents, coaches, athletic trainers and sponsors to each other in a relaxed, cooperative atmosphere.
- Provide information about activities, insurance, physicals, district policies, program philosophy, etc.
- Provide information on state high school athletic/activity association, school and team rules.
- Provide specific guidelines, rules and consequences of rule violations.
- Express behavior expectations of parents, students and coaches at contests.
- Provide information concerning practice, game and tournament schedules.
- Explain new rules revisions for the sport.
- Warn student activity participants and their parents of the potential for physical injury
- Look at team strategies.
- Explain how playing time is determined.
- Promote importance of ongoing, honest communication.
- Create awareness about tobacco, alcohol and other drug-use issues, ethics and sportsmanship and how they relate to sports and other activities.
- Involve parents in tobacco, alcohol and other drug education and prevention efforts.
- Develop a bond of mutual respect, cooperation and shared responsibility between student-activity participants, their parents and the school.
- Involve parents in the development of student performers on and off the playing field.
- Inform students and parents how letters, numerals and other awards are determined.



## **Preseason Meeting Planning Guidelines**

### Who Should Attend the Planning Meeting?

School administrators
Athletic/activity directors
All head coaches and their assistants
Drug-Free Schools coordinator
School nurse
Team doctor
Parent representative
Student representative
Contest Officials

Sponsors of activities, such as:

- Spirit squad
- Band
- Drama/Debate/Speech
- Drill team
- Student council

### **Topics for Discussion**

#### General

- 1. What are the objectives for the preseason meeting?
  - As a result of the meeting, what do we want the participants to know or do?
- 2. How will we accomplish our objectives?
- 3. How will we know if we have accomplished our objectives?

#### **Specific**

- 1. Do we combine ail activities for one meeting or arrange for individual activity meetings or do a combination of both?
  - Consider involving the informal clubs at your school (automotive, building trades, science, etc.).
- 2. Should these meetings be held prior to the beginning of each activity season—Fall, Winter, Spring?
- 3. Is the meeting mandatory, highly recommended or encouraged? For parents? For students?
- 4. What issues are addressed through the agenda?
- 5. Does our agenda fit our objectives?
- 6. Will a make-up session be provided? If so, consider videotaping.
- 7. Do we need guest speakers to address special topic areas?
- 8. What committees do we need to plan for the preseason meeting?
  - Publicity
  - Logistics
  - Hospitality
  - Support Materials
  - Agenda



## 1. Publicity Committee Responsibilities

- Prepare letter of invitation
- Prepare newspaper article, press release, radio interviews, public-service announcements, etc.
- Release information on the school or team's Web site and consider broadcasting text messages.
- Prepare follow-up letter

**To address envelopes for mailing invitations to parents**: Hand out an envelope to each student and have them address it to their parents or guardian. School will then mail them.

## 2. Sample Invitations

### Sample 1:

You and your student are invited to a preseason meeting on Thursday, September 3, at 7:00 p.m. The meeting will be held in the school cafeteria.

Topics to be discussed include eligibility standards, liability, policy on alcohol and other drugs, citizenship standards and sportsmanship.

We hope you will join us for this informative preseason meeting.

### Sample 2:

TO: Student activities/athletic participants and their parents, coaches, sponsors FROM: Principal and Activities Director SUBJECT: Winter Preseason Meeting

The purpose of a preseason meeting is to introduce students and their parents and coaches to each other in a relaxed, non-threatening atmosphere, talk about season expectations, communicate specific information, encourage discussion and promote cooperative community action.

Attendance at this meeting is (**highly encouraged/required**) for parents of students who plan to participate in our activities program. Coaches, sponsors and other school support staff will be available to answer questions regarding specific programs. PLEASE ATTEND!!!

**WHAT: Preseason Meeting** 

WHEN: Date

WHERE: TIME: 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.



### Sample 3:

**ATTENTION FALL STUDENT PARTICIPANTS:** There will be a mandatory meeting of all athletes involved in a fall sport on Tuesday, August 11, at Helias at 7:00 p.m. in the gym. The meeting is to cover rules and regulations with the athletes and their parents. Athletes participating in field hockey, cross country, football, girls golf, soccer, volleyball and tennis need to attend this meeting. Parents are **expected** to attend.

### Sample 4:

The Bruin Boys Track and Field Team will be having its *mandatory* preseason meeting for parents and players on March 31, at 7:00 p.m., in the high school auditorium. Training rules, district policies-Metter requirements. nutrition athletic injuries and team travel policies will be discussed.

If athletes wish to compete in our track meets this season, their parents and/or guardians must attend this important meeting along with their sons. If this date conflicts with a previously scheduled event, please contact me. Thank you for your cooperation and support!

### Sample 5:

Your High School's Spring Pre-Season Parents' Meeting will take place on Tuesday, February 28, 20... The evening will begin at 7:00 PM in the auditorium.

Attending this "Meet the Coach Night" is undoubtedly the single most important thing that you as parents can do to support your son or daughter. It is during this meeting that you will hear first-hand about the team's rules, the method of selecting the squad, the criteria for earning a letter, sportsmanship expectations and much more.

Remember that each coach, team and season is different. You really need to attend even if you attended the evening in the fall, winter or the one last year. Don't miss this very important evening. Mark your calendar now and plan to attend!

See you there!



### 3. Sample Newspaper Article

**Editor's Note:** Andy Rohweder serves as the athletic director at Pine City High School. This article is a model of utilizing the local news media to share the commitment of the school to enhance the health and development of its students and encourage the support of parents and their community through cocurricular activities.

#### PARENTS PLAY KEY ROLES

by Andy Rohweder

As we approach the beginning of another school year, parents and student-athletes will be asked to attend a preseason sports meeting in which Minnesota State High School League and school rules will be reviewed.

Because our extracurricular lives seem to exist in a highly competitive environment, it is sometimes easy to forget that the real mission of our programs is to provide opportunities for all young people in our school to participate equally under the rules of an activity and enjoy playing the activity.

As parents and coaches, our roles should be compatible. We all should promote and reinforce sportsmanship, teamwork, unity, compliance with eligibility rules and the value of team membership.

Unfortunately, we have not had a chance to view many positive role models on television or at professional sporting events. In the eyes of some people, it seems to be more important to show clips of fights; penalties; negative, rather than positive, acts of good sportsmanship, and athletes violating laws with regard to alcohol or drugs.

As a school and community, it should be our position to bring our athletic and cocurricular participants into compliance with the law, the Minnesota State High School League and Pine City High School rules.

What can you do as a parent?

State your position openly and clearly. Many students report they do not know how their parents feel about sportsmanship or the use of alcohol, drugs or tobacco among their friends.

Verify your teen's whereabouts. Most drinking goes on at parties where there is no supervision.

Communicate with other parents. Most will appreciate it. A few may not.

Understand your liability. As of August 1990, you are liable for consequences occurring as a result of alcohol being served to minors at your home.

Feel free to ask for help. My door is always open, and if I can't help, you will be referred to someone who can. Often this approach can put out a small fire before it gets out of control.

Set the example for sportsmanship.

Get acquainted with your son's or daughter's friends. Praise your son's or daughter's efforts as well as their accomplishments.

Be supportive of the coaches, including their rules, principles and decisions.

Encourage law enforcement to enforce the "691 reporting law" which states that any adolescent who is apprehended by police for possession of alcohol, drugs or paraphernalia will have their police report forwarded to the school. The spirit of this new law is to get the school, community and parents working together to deliver a consistent message to our young people.

At Pine City High School, it is our goal to enhance the health and development of our young people through cocurricular activities. The true champion is the one who treats an opponent with respect, positively prepares himself or herself, plays by the rules of the game, is in compliance with Minnesota State High School League and Pine City High School rules, practices and supports sportsmanship.

Thank you for being interested in and supporting these activities at our school



## 4. Sample Public-Service Announcement

Ask your radio station if a coach, athlete or activities participant can tape these announcement for the station.

- Parental support for cocurricular activities is vital. Show your support by attending the Central High School preseason meeting (time, date, place). This is a public-service message from Central High School and KWOS.
- Parents, support your student's involvement in activities by attending the St. Joseph High School preseason meeting (time, date, place). This is a public-service message from the Loveland School District and KXOK.
- Schools have an important role to play in meeting the challenge of developing young people to
  their fullest potential. But that role must be shared by all. Parents, please get involved. Attend the
  Washington High School preseason meeting to be held (time, date, place). This public-service
  message is brought to you by the Louisville School District and KLIF.
- Our community is enhanced when parents, school personnel and youth work together. You are
  invited to join these groups at Abilene High School for a preseason meeting (time, date, place). This
  public-service message is brought to you by the Western Trails School District and KMOB.
- Support school and community efforts designed to give young people healthy lifestyle alternatives.
   We will meet at Webster Groves High School for a preseason meeting (time, date, place). This public-service message is brought to you by the Cleveland United School District and WORK.

### 5. Sample Follow-Up Letter

Dear Parent:

Thank you for taking your valuable time to participate in our fall preseason meeting. Harrison High School is actively working to create an environment where there can be mutual respect, support and cooperation between the home, the school and the community. Your willingness to be involved with the school in this effort is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Principal



## **Logistics Committee Responsibilities**

- Determine date and time of meeting
  - Ideally, the meeting would be held prior to the first practice, but at least before the season begins.
  - Use school calendars to coordinate.
  - Suggested two hours maximum (shorter if possible).
- Select meeting site
  - Take into consideration space that will provide adequate seating and lighting. Accommodate the need to break into small discussion groups. (Note: tables create a barrier.)
  - An inside location works best and accommodates the use of video equipment.
- Arrange for equipment
  - Arrange for video equipment and adequate monitors.
  - Provide sound system for large group.

Mix students, parents and activities sponsors in small groups. Have an area for small groups to converse.

## **Hospitality Committee Responsibilities**

- Meet and greet
- Provide refreshments
- Provide name tags
- Distribute materials to students and their parents
  - Determine most appropriate time for distribution of materials to students and their parents.



## **Support Materials Committee Responsibilities**

- Available support materials:
  - Obtain NFHS catalog for possible support materials
  - Access the NFHS web site at nfhs.org
- Packet for students and their parents may include:
  - Agenda
  - Game schedule
  - School code of conduct
  - Student contract (training rules, tobacco/alcohol/other drug use, etc.)
  - Acknowledgement of Risk form
  - Evaluation form
  - Physical form
  - Parental permission card
  - Communications tree
  - Parent group information
  - Insurance information
  - Coach/Parent communication guidelines
  - Athletic department or team Web site

## **Agenda Committee Responsibilities**

- Determine agenda
  - Choose items from sample agendas (see following page) that would apply to meeting. It will
    be impossible to cover all agenda items; pick and choose those appropriate to meet your
    objectives.
  - Route suggested agenda items to planning committee members for finalization.
- Arrange for guest speakers
- Provide final agenda to all planning members



### Sample Agenda - A

#### **GENERAL INFORMATION MEETING**

All parents and students hear the same general information.

#### I. OVERVIEW

Welcome by superintendent or principal Introduction of coaches/athletic trainers/sponsors and administrative staff District program philosophy

- · sportsmanship
- · citizenship
- · state and school eligibility standards (see sample script)
- · expectations of student performers, their parents and coaches
- · special concerns/responsibilities of athletes/performers

#### **II. INFORMATION**

State association and school rules

- · students participating in more than one sport at the same time
- · academic requirements
- · attendance requirements
- · parental permission card

Health and injury reduction in athletic competition

- · HIV
- · other diseases
- · disordered eating
- · equipment
- · risk of injury/failure to warn (see sample script and sample acknowledgment of risk form)
- training
- · physician physical card

#### Athletic group insurance

- provided? available? required? waived?
- procedure for reporting injuries and submitting claims

Activity tickets

Towel fee

Uniforms and equipment

- · lending and return procedures
- · lost or stolen procedures
- policy for wearing uniforms to school

College bound student-athletes (see sample script)

#### ADJOURN TO INDIVIDUAL SPORT OR ACTIVITY MEETING

Start and stop on time Stick to the agenda.



## Sample Agenda - B

#### INDIVIDUAL SPORT OR ACTIVITY MEETING

#### I. OVERVIEW

Welcome by superintendent or principal Introduction of coaches/sponsors Program coaching philosophy

#### II. INFORMATION

How teams will be chosen (varsity, junior varsity, sophomore, freshman) Criteria for lettering and other awards

Team rules

- training rules pledge card (optional)
- · final date to join squad
- quitting procedure Explain and demonstrate skills, scoring, rules Role of the referee Trainer services available Provide practice and game schedules Communications tree Travel quidelines
- · transportation—private vehicle or bus
- · departure/return via alternate method procedures
- · dress guidelines, conduct, meal money Clinics How to qualify for state competition

#### III. TOBACCO, ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG PREVENTION

Introduction (see sample script) Closing message might include:

- · seriousness about responsibility to fight alcohol and other drug use on team
- · invitation to athletes and parents to join school in the prevention effort
- follow-up possibilities: after-game drug-free parties, parent network Code of Conduct
- · policy on use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs, eligibility rules
- · Student Participant Commitment Contract (see sample)

#### IV. QUESTION AND ANSWER/DISCUSSION TOPICS

How can parents be involved? How will we celebrate our successes and handle our defeats?

#### V. EVALUATION (see sample)

#### VI. CLOSURE

Concluding remarks
Distribute parent packets

Use movable chairs in individual sports meeting



## **Sample Scripts**

#### **Eligibility Rules**

(Note to Presenter: Contact your state high school activities/athletic association for state eligibility requirements.)

#### **College-Bound Student-Athletes and their Parents**

Selecting a college and making career plans are two of the most important decisions to be made by high school players and their parents. The choices are not easy to make, and costs of a college education continue to rise. The students and their parents are the most important part of the process in that they must mitigate the efforts, assert themselves and work primarily on their own behalf.

Guidance counselors, coaches and other school officials can help. We can serve as a resource as well as a reference.

The following is a resource that can help with the process of preparing for and selection of a college or university. This booklet, entitled A Guide for College-Bound Student-Athletes and Their Parents, is not all-inclusive but does focus on the key elements as they occur from the beginning of the process in the freshmen year through the final decision in the senior year. The booklet covers NCAA and NAIA eligibility requirements, scholarships and all phases of recruiting. Sample letters, forms and checklists aid in selecting the correct college. A special section regarding Academic Survival Tips is also included. Go to www.niaaa.org to secure copies.

**CLOSING #1:** The athletic booster club has purchased a copy for each of our incoming student participants, and those will be distributed at the close of this assembly.

**CLOSING #2**: There are a limited number of copies of this guide which can be loaned for a specific period of time. If you would prefer to purchase your own copy at a very nominal cost, I will be glad to share the address where you can purchase one.

### Risk of Injury/Failure to Warn

By the very nature of athletic activity, participants are at risk of physical injury. No matter how careful the players and the coach are, no matter how many precautions are taken, the risk cannot be eliminated. It can be reduced but never eliminated. The risk of injury includes minor injuries such as broken bones, dislocations and muscle strains. The risk also includes catastrophic injuries such as permanent paralysis or even death. It is important everyone understands these risks, and that students follow all safety directions from their coaches because they are established to reduce the risk of injury.

## Sample Acknowledgement of Risk

In consideration of being allowed to participate in any way in the athletic program, and related events and activities, the undersigned:

- 1. Acknowledge and fully understand that each participant will be engaging in activities which involve risk of injury. The injury could be serious or catastrophic including permanent disability.
- 2. Assume all the foregoing risks and accept personal responsibility for damages following such injury, permanent disability or death.

Student signature	Date
Parent and Legal Guardian (signature/relationship)	Date



### **Testimonial**

### **Meet the Coaches Night**

"A positive communication opportunity before each season for parents and athletes that eliminates many problems and common misconceptions concerning your athletic program."

"Meet the Coaches Night" was a very successful part of the football program during my 22-year tenure as a varsity coach. Now, as the director of athletics, I shared the experience with my coaching staff in the hope they would consider the same strategy, but as a group, for various reasons, they were hesitant and did not move in that direction.

After a few years of dealing with problems with parents and students stemming from a lack of understanding of our coaches and the aims and objectives of interscholastic athletics, I mandated a "Meet the Coaches Night" before each season.

At our preseason coaches' meeting, I put all fears and concerns aside by telling our staff that (a) we are a fine group of professionals, and that parents meeting us as a group would feel good about th) n~ the director. I would reinforce our standards as well as our philosophy.

A memo was sent to all coaches notifying them of time, date and format. Included was an invitation for all parents and athletes.

"Meet the Coaches Night" starts with a general meeting in the auditorium. Our format includes the following:

- I. Pledge of Allegiance
- II. Invocation of Thanksgiving
- III. Introduction of our coaching staff
  - A. Our staff members are dressed formally and are seated on the stage with the principal and me
  - B. As I introduce each coach, I praise them with personal stories and list their professional qualifications.

#### IV. Director's Message

- A. Philosophy on interscholastic athletics
- B. Student expectations
- C. Parent expectations
- D. Drug and alcohol policy
- E. Cover all communication that originates from my office

#### V. Introduction of building principal

- A. Athletics' place in our high school
- B. Academic eligibility
- C. General support message

#### VI. Individual Team Meetings

- A. Individual team meetings are conducted in separate classrooms
  - 1. coaches address their individual sport and their aims and objectives for the season
  - 2. coaches reinforce message of the director and principal

#### VII. Social Hour

A. After individual team meetings, we convene in the cafeteria for refreshments

In conclusion, as I stated to our coaches at our preseason meeting, "We have nothing to hide, we are good people doing a good job for kids." Because of that, most parents and students leave with a nice feeling, a better understanding of what we are all about, a better understanding of what is expected of them, and their role. I also witnessed a sense of appreciation at the social hour where I reinforce our commitment and our openness to them if they have any problems.

Another fringe benefit, our Booster Club membership drive is helped tremendously with all the parents meeting at once. "Meet the Coaches Night is a home run with bases loaded in my book, and I recommend it to all my colleagues.

Anthony L. Cerullo, Director of Physical Education, Health, Athletics and Recreation, Elwood Union Free School District



## **Sample Student Participant Contract**

I, Charley Otto, have chosen to participate in basketball at North High School. I commit myself to continuously working toward the goal of top physical fitness. To do anything which would harm my body would not be in my best interest or the best interest of my team and school. I agree to remain free from tobacco, alcohol, steroids and other drugs during my sports season. I fully understand this pledge extends to seven days per week. If I have a problem or if I need help fulfilling this contract, I understand the coaches, the substanceabuse coordinator and school counselors will be available to help me. I have read and understand the athletic policies and the consequences for violations of these policies. I pledge to keep all rules and policies and to help all of my teammates abide by the same athletic rules and policies. Student signature As the parent/guardian of Charley Otto, I understand and support this contract and pledge my son has signed. Optimum health is the goal of our athletic program, and I support the school system nets efforts to attain this goal.

Parent/guardian signature Coach's signature

Date \_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## **Athlete Triangle**

### **Joining Forces**

#### **Parents**

Once parents have gotten involved with school activities and **feel valued and supported by the school system**, they are much more willing to be part of an overall plan that can include organization of parent networks to host events for students, chaperone parties, develop lines of communication between parents, raise money and just become involved.

Or, parents also may choose to organize around issues such as good sportsmanship, citizenship, proper and improper fan behavior, and the need for adults to provide leadership.

#### **Students**

When students recognize their role and **feel valued and supported by the school system**, they, too, are more willing to get involved. Students may choose to look at issues such as the relationships of student participants to the student body, expectations of student participants and other student leaders, or development of clubs, such as a captain's club or a group that supports not using tobacco, alcohol and other drugs.

### **Coaches and Activity Sponsors**

As coaches and activity sponsors become aware of the leadership role they occupy and begin to recognize the influence they can have on their students and **feel valued by and supported by the school system**, they tend to become more involved in the total school picture. This helps to create a positive school and community environment.

Coaches and activity sponsors can and do make a difference. They have a unique opportunity to observe, educate and influence those student performers who play and participate for them and with whom they have a special relationship.

#### School Administrators

When school administrators acknowledge their leadership position and **feel valued by and supported by the school system**, they can openly and warmly demonstrate their interest in the welfare of their students and faculty and community at large which, in turn, builds an environment conducive to a feeling of cohesiveness.



## **Evaluation**

## **Sample Evaluation Form**

Please check one: Parent Studer  1. The purpose of the presease Yes	nt on meeting was made c	and an about the secretion
		and a male day the market
	No	ear to me before the meeting.
2. The information presented by Very helpful Some	,	•
3. 1 understand the warning g  Yes No		ibility of injury.
4. The small group discussion very helpful So	was: omewhat helpful	Not helpful
5. I had an opportunity to ask Yes No	-	
Comments and suggestions fo	r future meetings:	
I would like a call from the:		
☐ Principal ☐ Activities Sponsor	☐ Athletic Director☐ Other:	☐ Coach
Your name:(ONLY IF YOU NEED A CALL	1	Phone: