



THATCHER UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

ATHLETIC HANDBOOK

Academic School Year

2026 - 2027

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THATCHER UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT ATHLETIC HANDBOOK

Mission Statement

The Thatcher Unified School District Athletic Program exists to provide student-athletes with opportunities to develop character, leadership, teamwork, sportsmanship, discipline, and personal responsibility through participation in interscholastic athletics.

Participation in athletics is a privilege, not a right. Student-athletes are expected to represent Thatcher Unified School District, their families, and their teams with integrity and pride both on and off the field of play.

ATHLETIC PHILOSOPHY

The Thatcher Unified School District believes athletics are an extension of the educational experience. The primary purpose of athletics is to promote the physical, mental, social, and emotional growth of student-athletes while fostering school pride and community involvement.

Winning is valued; however, the development of character, sportsmanship, teamwork, leadership, and perseverance takes precedence over competitive success.

ATHLETIC PROGRAMS

Thatcher Middle School

Fall	Winter	Spring	Year Round
Cross Country	Basketball	Baseball	Knowledge Bowl
Football	Soccer	Softball	Robotics
Volleyball	Wrestling	Track	

Thatcher High School

Fall	Winter	Spring	Year Round
Cross Country	Basketball	Baseball	Knowledge Bowl
Football	Soccer	Golf	Spiritline
Volleyball	Wrestling	Softball	
		Tennis	
		Track	

ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

Prior to participation, all student-athletes must:

- Complete registration through Final Forms.
 - Submit all required athletic paperwork.
 - High School NFHS Course Requirements
 - Have a current physical examination on file.
 - Meet all academic eligibility requirements.
- Pay all applicable participation fees.
 - Athletic participation fees are:
 - Thatcher Middle School: \$60 per sport
 - Thatcher High School: \$125 per sport
 - Fees must be paid prior to the athlete's first scheduled contest.
 - Students who have not paid the required fee will not be permitted to participate in contests until payment is received.
 - Participation fees may qualify for Arizona tax credit purposes or Employee Match that will donate towards your student's team.
- Comply with all school, district, conference, and AIA regulations.
- Attend seasonal parent athletic information meeting.

Participation is not permitted until all requirements have been completed. This includes tryouts and open gym.

FINAL FORMS REQUIREMENTS

All athletic participation requirements shall be completed through the district's approved athletic registration platform, Final Forms.

Required documentation includes:

- Emergency contact information
- Parent and student signatures
- Medical information
- Athletic participation forms
- Insurance information
- Physical examination documentation

Athletes who do not have completed Final Forms documentation on file shall not be permitted to participate in practices or contests.

Parents are responsible for maintaining accurate and current information throughout the school year.

ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY

Student-athletes are students first.

Thatcher Unified School District Eligibility

Athletes must maintain a minimum grade of 70% in all classes.

Eligibility is reviewed weekly.

Students who fall below 70% in any class will be considered ineligible for the following week.

Ineligible athletes may:

- Attend practices
- Participate in team meetings

Ineligible athletes may not:

- Compete in contests
- Travel with the team
- Sit or stand with the team during contests

An incomplete grade is not considered passing for eligibility purposes.

Special education students must meet eligibility standards as outlined in their Individualized Education Program (IEP).

No Pass, No Play

Eligibility checks occur weekly from Monday through Monday and determine participation eligibility for the following week.

Attending Friday school does not guarantee eligibility for the student athlete.

Deadlines set by teachers still apply even if a student is absent for a school event.

BEHAVIOR ELIGIBILITY AND SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

Student-athletes are expected to demonstrate appropriate behavior and comply with all school and district rules. Athletic participation may be affected by disciplinary consequences assigned by school administration.

In-School Suspension (ISS)

A student-athlete assigned In-School Suspension (ISS) may be required to attend practice but is not eligible to participate in athletic activities during the suspension period.

During an In-School Suspension, the student-athlete:

- May be present at scheduled practices at the direction of the coach.
- May observe practice and team activities.
- May not participate in drills, scrimmages, conditioning activities, or other practice activities.
- May not participate in contests or competitions.
- May not travel with the team.
- May not dress out for contests.
- May not sit on the team bench, sidelines, or in designated team areas during contests.

- May not participate in pregame, halftime, or postgame activities associated with competition.

Eligibility for athletic participation shall be restored upon successful completion of the In-School Suspension.

Out-of-School Suspension (OSS)

A student-athlete assigned Out-of-School Suspension (OSS) is ineligible to participate in any athletic activity for the duration of the suspension.

During an Out-of-School Suspension, the student-athlete:

- May not attend practices.
- May not participate in contests or competitions.
- May not travel with a team.
- May not attend athletic events as a participant.
- May not be present on the sidelines, bench, or in team areas.

Eligibility shall be restored upon successful completion of the suspension and return to school.

Additional Behavioral Concerns

Students who are removed from class, repeatedly referred for disciplinary reasons, or engage in behavior that violates school expectations may be subject to additional athletic consequences as determined by the coach, Athletic Director, or school administration.

Serious behavioral violations may be reviewed by the Athletic Director and administration and may result in suspension or removal from athletic participation.

ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS

Student-athletes must attend the entire day of school on the day of a contest to participate that day. Student-athletes must also be in attendance at school for the final instructional day of the school week in order to participate in any athletic contest or extracurricular activity scheduled for the weekend. Any exception must be approved by administration prior to participation.

Any exception must be approved by administration prior to participation.

Excessive absences from school, practices, or team activities may result in disciplinary action, suspension, or dismissal from the team.

PRACTICE EXPECTATIONS

Athletes are expected to attend all scheduled practices.

Absences must be communicated to the coach in advance whenever possible.

Repeated unexcused absences may result in:

- Reduced playing time
 - Suspension from competition
 - Dismissal from the team
-

TRANSPORTATION POLICY

Athletes are expected to travel to and from contests using district-provided transportation. Students participating in activity trips remain under school supervision for the duration of the trip.

Students may only be released to a parent or legal guardian who signs the student out with the coach following the event or through prior administrative approval. Only school administration has the authority to approve the release of a student to an individual other than their parent or legal guardian.

Requests for alternate transportation arrangements must be submitted in advance and approved by administration. No student will be released to alternate transportation without prior administrative approval.

TRAVEL EXPECTATIONS

Participation in athletic travel is a privilege.

Student-athletes are expected to:

- Follow all school rules and team expectations while traveling.
- Demonstrate appropriate behavior at all times.
- Remain with the team unless released to a parent or guardian according to district procedures.
- Respect hotel, restaurant, and facility property.
- Follow directions provided by coaches, drivers, and supervisors.
- Represent Thatcher Unified School District in a positive manner.

Any misconduct while traveling may result in disciplinary action and possible loss of participation privileges.

EXPECTATIONS OF PARTICIPANTS

Student-athletes shall:

- Respect coaches, teachers, officials, opponents, teammates, and spectators.
- Follow all school, district, conference, and AIA rules.
- Maintain academic eligibility.
- Demonstrate good sportsmanship in the classroom, during competition, and in everyday conduct.
- Represent Thatcher Unified School District positively at all times.
- Care for all school-issued equipment and uniforms.
- Return all equipment promptly at the conclusion of the season.
- Respect school property and the property of others.
- Follow all transportation and travel expectations.

Participation in athletics carries the responsibility of being a positive role model.

Participation in athletics/activities is a privilege, not a right.

GENERAL CONDUCT

Athletes are expected to demonstrate appropriate conduct at all times.

The following behaviors may result in disciplinary action: (List is not exhaustive)

- Insubordination
- Disrespect toward coaches, officials, staff, teammates, or opponents

- Fighting
- Bullying or harassment
- Hazing
 - JICFA
 - NFHS Course Requirement
 - See Exhibit A
- Theft
- Vandalism
- Academic dishonesty
- Unsportsmanlike conduct
- Violations of district policies

Serious violations may result in suspension or removal from athletic participation or team.

SPORTSMANSHIP

The Thatcher Unified School District Athletic Department believes that sportsmanship is essential to educational athletics.

Athletes shall:

- Respect officials and their decisions.
- Compete with integrity.
- Treat opponents with respect.
- Display self-control.
- Represent Thatcher schools with pride.

Unsportsmanlike conduct may result in immediate removal from participation and additional disciplinary action, including removal from the team.

The reputation of Thatcher Unified School District is more important than the outcome of any contest.

SOCIAL MEDIA EXPECTATIONS

Student-athletes are representatives of Thatcher Unified School District both in person and online.

Athletes are responsible for all content posted through:

- Social media

- Text messages
- Messaging applications
- Electronic communications

Posts containing inappropriate language, bullying, harassment, threats, illegal activity, or violations of school policy may result in athletic discipline.

All athletes shall sign a Social Media Agreement prior to participation.

TOBACCO, ALCOHOL, AND DRUG POLICY

Student-athletes shall not use, possess, distribute, sell, purchase, or be under the influence of:

- Tobacco products
- Vape or electronic cigarette products
- Alcohol
- Illegal drugs
- Controlled substances
- Performance-enhancing substances
- Drug paraphernalia

Athletes are expected to avoid situations where illegal substance use is occurring.

Violations may result in athletic consequences in addition to school discipline. As appropriate and in accordance with applicable law and Board policy, students may also be referred to law enforcement authorities.

ATHLETIC CODE VIOLATIONS

First Offense

The athlete shall be suspended from participation for 50% of scheduled contests.

Second Offense

The athlete shall be suspended for the remainder of the current season and a portion of the next athletic season as determined by administration.

Third Offense

The athlete shall be suspended from athletic participation for one calendar year.

Fourth Offense

The athlete shall be suspended from athletic participation for the remainder of his or her high school career.

DUE PROCESS AND APPEALS

Before athletic privileges are revoked:

1. The coach shall meet with the student-athlete.
2. The Athletic Director shall review the violation.
3. Parents shall be notified of the proposed action.
4. The student and parent may appeal the decision.

The principal shall make the final determination after considering recommendations from the coach and Athletic Director.

ATHLETIC COUNCIL

The Athletic Council serves as an advisory body regarding athletic participation, sportsmanship, and disciplinary matters.

The council shall consist of:

- Athletic Director
- Varsity Head Coaches
- Building Administration, when appropriate

The Athletic Council may review:

- Athletic Code violations
- Sportsmanship concerns
- Serious disciplinary matters
- Appeals related to athletic participation

The principal shall retain final authority regarding disciplinary decisions and athletic eligibility matters.

CONCUSSION AND HEAD INJURY PROTOCOL *NFHS Course Requirement

The health and safety of student-athletes is a priority.

Any athlete suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury during practice or competition shall be removed from participation immediately.

The athlete shall not return to participation until evaluated and cleared according to district policy, Arizona law, and applicable AIA regulations.

Athletes and parents are encouraged to report symptoms including:

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Nausea
- Difficulty concentrating

Failure to report symptoms may place the athlete at risk for serious injury.

*NFHS Course Requirement

HEAT ILLNESS PREVENTION *NFHS Course Requirement

Arizona temperatures create unique challenges for student-athletes participating in outdoor activities.

To reduce the risk of heat-related illness:

- Coaches shall follow all district and AIA heat guidelines.
- Water shall be available at all practices and contests.
- Athletes are encouraged to hydrate before, during, and after activity.
- Athletes should report symptoms of heat illness immediately.

- Activity modifications may be implemented based on environmental conditions.

Symptoms of heat illness include:

- Excessive fatigue
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Muscle cramps
- Headache
- Confusion

Any athlete displaying signs of heat illness shall be evaluated immediately.

INJURIES

All injuries need to be reported to the coach at the time of incident.

EQUIPMENT RESPONSIBILITY

Athletes are responsible for all equipment and uniforms issued to them.

Lost, stolen, or damaged equipment beyond normal wear may result in replacement costs being assessed to the student.

Students may be declared ineligible for future participation until all obligations have been satisfied.

In case of damage to uniforms or equipment, report to coach immediately.

ATHLETIC AWARDS AND LETTERING

Athletic awards recognize dedication, commitment, and achievement.

Criteria for earning awards may vary by sport and shall be established by the head coach and approved by the Athletic Director.

To be eligible for awards, athletes must:

- Complete the season in good standing.
- Meet team expectations and attendance requirements.
- Return all school-issued equipment and uniforms.
- Fulfill all financial obligations to the athletic department.

Awards may include:

- Varsity Letters
- Participation Certificates
- Team Awards
- Academic Recognition
- Conference or State Recognition

Special Awards (High School Only)

ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

This award is given at the end of every school year by the Thatcher Athletic Department to the most outstanding junior or senior boy and girl athlete for that year. This award will be an individual plaque for each winner and a lifetime Gold Pass to all athletic activities. The criteria for nominations are as follows:

The Athlete must:

1. Be in three varsity sports.
2. Have a good attitude and show respect for all school personnel, people in general, rules and policies.
3. Have a good work ethic on and off the field
4. Have no disciplinary actions. Ex. ditching or suspension

Only Thatcher High School coaches can nominate athletes for these awards.

This award may be given to a junior or senior boy and girl. A senior boy and girl may receive athletic scholarship money regardless of whether he/she is chosen "Athlete of the Year".

OUTSTANDING SENIOR ATHLETE

This award is given at the end of every school year by the Thatcher Athletic Department to the most outstanding senior boy and girl athlete that year. The award is a lifetime gold pass to all

Thatcher High School activities. The criteria for nominations are as follows:

The Athlete must:

1. Have been in two or more sports in each of four years of high school
2. Have been a major contributor in all sports
3. Have had a good attitude and shown respect for all school personnel people in general, rules, and policies.
4. Have had a good work ethic, on and off the field/court.
5. Have no disciplinary actions.

Only Thatcher High School coaches can nominate athletes for this award. A Senior boy and girl may receive athletic scholarship money regardless of whether he/she is chosen Outstanding Senior Athlete. Presentation of the above awards will take place during the senior honor assembly within the last few days of school. Recipient will be notified that they are to be present at the assembly. The Athletic Director will give the Outstanding Senior Athlete Award and Athlete of the Year award.

SENIOR NIGHT EXPECTATIONS

Senior Night is an important tradition that recognizes the dedication and accomplishments of graduating student-athletes.

The planning and organization of Senior Night shall primarily be the responsibility of underclassmen and their families, with guidance from coaches as needed.

Senior Night recognition should be meaningful, respectful, and appropriate to the occasion. Teams are encouraged to provide a reasonable gift or token of appreciation to each senior participant.

The Athletic Director reserves the right to establish additional procedures to ensure consistency among athletic programs.

NAME, IMAGE, AND LIKENESS (NIL)

High school student-athletes shall comply with all Arizona Interscholastic Association regulations regarding Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) activities.

Student-athletes are responsible for ensuring any NIL activities do not jeopardize their eligibility.

Questions regarding NIL opportunities should be directed to the Athletic Director prior to entering into agreements or promotional activities.

PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Parents and spectators play an important role in supporting educational athletics.

Parents are expected to:

- Encourage all athletes.
 - Respect coaches and officials.
 - Support positive sportsmanship.
 - Accept officiating decisions.
 - Cheer for their team rather than against opponents.
 - Model appropriate behavior for students.
 - Follow district communication procedures.
-

PARENT/COACH COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES

The Thatcher Unified School District Athletic Department values positive communication between parents, coaches, and student-athletes. Open communication promotes trust, accountability, and the overall success of our athletic programs.

Appropriate Topics for Parent-Coach Communication

Parents are encouraged to discuss:

- The treatment of their child, both mentally and physically.
- Ways to support their child's athletic and personal development.
- Concerns about their child's behavior or attitude.
- Academic concerns that may impact participation.

Topics Not Appropriate for Parent-Coach Discussion

The following matters are the responsibility of the coach and are not appropriate for parent-coach meetings:

- Playing time
- Team strategy
- Play calling
- Position assignments
- Other student-athletes
- Team discipline involving other athletes

Communication Expectations

Student-athletes are encouraged to communicate directly with their coaches regarding concerns before involving parents.

All communication with coaches shall occur through district-approved communication platforms. Personal text messages, phone calls, and social media messages should be avoided unless specifically requested by the coach.

Parents shall observe a 24-hour waiting period following a contest before requesting a meeting with a coach regarding concerns.

If a concern remains unresolved after meeting with the coach, parents may contact the Athletic Director to schedule a conference.

SPECTATOR EXPECTATIONS AND SCHOOL SPIRIT

Thatcher Unified School District encourages students, parents, and community members to create a positive and energetic atmosphere at all athletic events.

School spirit is an important part of the athletic experience and contributes to a strong sense of community and pride. Spectators are encouraged to support student-athletes through positive cheering, participation in school traditions, and respectful conduct.

Expectations for Spectators

Spectators shall:

- Cheer enthusiastically for Thatcher student-athletes.
- Demonstrate respect toward officials, opponents, coaches, players, and fellow spectators.
- Follow all facility and event rules.

- Promote a positive environment that reflects favorably on Thatcher Unified School District.
- Support the efforts of all participants regardless of the outcome of the contest.

School Spirit

Students are encouraged to:

- Stand and cheer appropriately during contests.
- Participate in school traditions and spirit activities.
- Sing the Thatcher Fight Song during designated times.
- Wear school colors and demonstrate Eagle pride.
- Support all Thatcher athletic programs.

Prohibited Conduct

The following behaviors are not permitted at athletic events:

- Profanity or vulgar language.
- Taunting, mocking, or insulting opponents.
- Negative chants directed toward players, coaches, officials, or spectators.
- Artificial noisemakers prohibited by conference, district, or AIA regulations.
- Throwing objects.
- Disruptive behavior.
- Entering the playing surface without authorization.

Away Contest Expectations

Students, parents, and spectators attending away contests represent Thatcher Unified School District and are expected to uphold the same standards of sportsmanship and conduct expected at home events.

Failure to meet these expectations may result in removal from an event, suspension from future athletic events, or other disciplinary action as deemed appropriate by school administration.

Our Commitment

We cheer FOR our team, not AGAINST our opponents.

We celebrate success with humility, accept defeat with dignity, and represent Thatcher Unified School District with pride and respect.

FAN EJECTION POLICY

Any spectator removed from an athletic contest shall be subject to AIA and district consequences.

A spectator ejected from a contest must complete any required sportsmanship training before returning to future events.

Repeated violations may result in suspension from attending district athletic events for up to one calendar year or longer as determined by district administration.

FAN EXPECTATIONS

Fans are encouraged to:

- Cheer positively.
- Support all student-athletes.
- Participate in school traditions and school spirit activities.
- Sing the school fight song.
- Demonstrate respect for officials, opponents, coaches, and spectators.

School spirit should always reflect positively on Thatcher Unified School District.

PURSUIING VICTORY WITH HONOR

Thatcher Unified School District supports the Arizona Interscholastic Association's Pursuing Victory With Honor initiative.

Student-athletes, coaches, parents, and spectators are expected to demonstrate:

- Trustworthiness
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Fairness
- Caring
- Citizenship

Success is measured not only by wins and losses but also by the manner in which individuals conduct themselves throughout competition. Athletic participation should promote character development, leadership, and integrity.

ATHLETIC CLUB

The Athletic Club is a student organization sponsored by the Athletic Director and supported by coaches, student leaders, and club members. Club officers are appointed annually in accordance with school procedures.

The primary purpose of the Athletic Club is to promote school spirit, sportsmanship, student involvement, and support for Thatcher School athletic programs. The Athletic Club strives to create a positive and energetic atmosphere at athletic events while fostering pride in Thatcher Schools and the Thatcher community.

ATHLETIC LEADERSHIP

Student athletes selected to represent our school at the AIA student leadership conference. They work closely with administration to uphold the standards and sportsmanship expectations of our school, district, and community.

FINAL STATEMENT

Participation in athletics is a privilege that provides opportunities for growth, leadership, teamwork, and school pride. Student-athletes, parents, coaches, and spectators share responsibility for maintaining the positive traditions and high standards of Thatcher Unified School District Athletics.

EXHIBIT A

JICFA © HAZING

There shall be no hazing, solicitation to engage in hazing, or aiding and abetting another who is engaged in hazing of any person enrolled, accepted for or promoted to enrollment, or intending to enroll or be promoted to District schools within twelve (12) calendar months. For purposes of this policy a person as specified above shall be considered a "student" until graduation, transfer, promotion or withdrawal from the District school.

"Hazing" means an act in violation of section §[13-1215](#) or [13-1216](#).

"Organization" means an athletic team, association, order, society, corps, cooperative, club, or similar group that is affiliated with an educational institution and whose membership consists primarily of students enrolled at that educational institution.

It is no defense to a violation of this policy if the victim consented or acquiesced to hazing. In accord with statute, violations of this policy do not include either of the following:

A. Customary athletic events, contests or competitions that are sponsored by an educational institution.

B. Any activity or conduct that furthers the goals of a legitimate educational curriculum, a legitimate extracurricular program, or a legitimate military training program.

All students, teachers and staff shall take reasonable measures within the scope of their individual authority to prevent violations of this policy.

Students and others may report hazing to any professional staff member.

Professional staff members must report the incident to the school administrator or next higher administrative supervisor, in writing, with such details as may have been provided. A failure by a staff member to timely inform the school administrator or next higher administrative supervisor of a hazing allegation or their observation of an incident of hazing may subject the staff member to disciplinary action in accord with District policies. The staff member shall preserve the confidentiality of those involved, disclosing the incident only to the appropriate school administrator or next higher administrative supervisor or as otherwise required by law. Any instance of reported or observed hazing which includes possible child abuse or violations of statutes known to the staff member shall be treated in accord with statutory requirements and be reported to a law enforcement agency.

To assure that students and staff are aware of its content and intent, a notice of this policy and procedure shall be posted conspicuously in each school building and shall be made a part of the rights and responsibilities section of the student handbook. Forms for submitting complaints are to be available to students and staff in the school offices.

Disposition of all reports/complaints shall be reported to the Superintendent. The Superintendent will determine if the policies of the District have been appropriately implemented and will make such reports and/or referrals to the Board as may be necessary.

All violations of this policy shall be treated in accord with the appropriate procedures and penalties provided for in District policies related to the conduct and discipline of students, staff, and others.

Adopted: <-- z2AdoptionDate -->

LEGAL REF.: A.R.S.

[13-1215](#)

[13-1216](#)

[15-341](#)

[15-2301](#)

CROSS REF.: [GBEB](#) - Staff Conduct [JIC](#) - Student Conduct [JII](#) - Student Concerns, Complaints and Grievances [JK](#) - Student Discipline [JKD](#) - Student Suspension [JKE](#) - Student Expulsion [JICF](#) - Secret Societies/Gang Activities [KFA](#) - Public Conduct on School Property



Student-Athlete Social Media Agreement

Social media can be a useful tool to communicate with teammates, fans, friends, coaches and more. Social media can also be dangerous if you are not careful. Every picture, link, quote, tweet, status, or post that you or your friends put online is forever part of your digital footprint. You never know when that will come back to hurt or help your reputation during the college recruiting process, a new job, or other important areas of your life.

Recognizing the above:

- _____ I take responsibility for my online profile, including my posts and any photos, videos or other recordings posted by others in which I appear.
- _____ I will not degrade my opponents before, during, or after games.
- _____ I will post only positive things about my teammates, coaches, opponents and officials.
- _____ I will use social media to purposefully promote abilities, team, community, and social values.
- _____ I will consider "Is this the me I want you to see?" before I post anything online.
- _____ I will attempt to block out any negative comments about me and will seek appropriate support if I feel harmed by them.
- _____ If I see a teammate post something potentially negative online, I will have a conversation with that teammate. If I do not feel comfortable doing so, I will talk to the team captain, or a coach.
- _____ I am aware that I represent my sport(s), school, team, family and community at all times, and will do so in a positive manner.

Student-Athlete Signature

Date



Thanks to PCA's National Student Athlete Advisory Board for helping produce this agreement.



PositiveCoach.org

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