



Student Athletics & Activities Handbook

2026-2027

**Rappahannock County High School
12576 Lee Highway
Washington, Virginia 22747
Main office: 540-227-0745
Athletic office: 540-227-0745 ext. 3471**

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Important Contact Information

Athletic Director: Courtney Atkins

- **Office: 540-227-0745 ext. 3471 cell: 540-671-1677**

RGHS Principal: Dr. Mary Jane Boynton

- **540-227-0745 ext. 3475**

RCES Principal: Dr. Jacqueline Lowe-Barton

- **540-227-0200 ext. 3025**

RGHS Assistant Principal: Dawn Phillips

- **540-227-0745 ext. 3476**

RCES Assistant Principal: Dr. Sean Slaney

- **540-227-0200 ext. 3011**

Athletic Medical Assistant: Casey Woodward

- **540-227-0745 ext. 3461**
- **540-671-0736**

The athletic department maintains communication in a variety of ways regarding activities schedules, special notices and announcements for students, parents and fans.

- Access schedules here: <https://www.arbiterlive.com/Teams?entityId=18885>
- Sign up for SportsYou App



The athletic department also uses the following social media and website:

Website: <https://rappahannockcountyhs.rschoorteams.com/>

Instagram: rappathletics

Twitter: @RappAthletics

Facebook: Rappahannock County Panthers & Rappahannock County Public Schools

Welcome to Rappahannock County Public School Athletics & Activities!

This athletic handbook, in addition to the school's student handbook, has been prepared for the purpose of familiarizing you with the procedures and expectations of our Athletic Programs. Please read this information carefully and contact your coach or athletic director if you have any questions because it is your responsibility, as a student athlete or parent, to be aware of all the rules concerning participation in our athletic programs.

Rappahannock County High School stresses the importance of a well-balanced activities program for students and realizes that many hours are given for study, practice, and participation in any athletic or activity endeavor. Rappahannock County High School encourages parent and community support of students for their achievements, as these activities are instrumental in developing great community interest and pride. Our mission is to provide an opportunity for all students to excel not only in the classroom, but on the court, field or stage.

School is more meaningful and enjoyable when a student becomes involved in an activities program. Whatever a student's skill or ability level, athletic opportunities are available. While some teams hold tryouts for positions, other sports welcome all participants. Interest and enthusiasm are the most important qualifications. It is our goal as an Athletic Department to enhance all students' skills, and to help them to become the most productive person they can be, promoting teamwork and accomplishment both in the athletic arena and in the classroom.

As an athlete, you will become a visible member of the Blue and Gold of RCHS. At every practice and contest your peers, parents, teachers, fans, and athletes from other schools will see you as representatives of our school, and this is a great responsibility. We want to see team members who share in the successes and setbacks, who are strong because they work together, and athletes who set the example of proper attitude and responsible behavior for the entire student body. Our student athletes represent not only themselves, but our school and community. It is our expectation at Rappahannock County High School that they will represent us well in every situation, on and off the playing field.

Athletics is one half of the "student-athlete" title. Developing not only the mind but also the body is a valuable part of your experience at RCHS and your dedication to your athletic development is greatly appreciated. Since athletics are part of the educational process, athletics must provide learning opportunities that value both sports and academics. You are student-athletes, with the emphasis on student! **Please remember athletic participation is a privilege, not a right.**

Participation in student activities enhances the regular school day and enriches the school experience. National studies indicate that students who participate in athletics and other activities:

- Have a higher grade point average than non-participants
- Have a higher graduation rate
- Have a better attendance record than non-participants
- Tend to be successful after college, according to the College Board.

Contributing to our athletic tradition will be a source of satisfaction to the students and the school. Encourage your student athlete to take advantage of all the opportunities offered to them in their high school experience. High School Athletics can provide you with valuable life skills and some of your most cherished memories. We hope you will take advantage of the opportunities you have to get involved, and stay involved! If you give 100% with a positive attitude, the school and the community will be there to support your every effort. But more than that, YOU will know you have done your best for yourself and your school. On behalf of the Rappahannock County Public Schools, we wish you the very best in the coming year!

RCPS Athletic Director
WE ARE RAPPAHANNOCK!

Philosophy of Athletics

Rappahannock County High School strives to be the benchmark of academic excellence in secondary education through superior teaching in a demanding curriculum. This mission is based upon the key values of individual potential, character, diversity, community, and vision. Athletics is an integral part of the Rappahannock County total educational program, and student-athletes are educated "through" athletics, as well as "in" athletics.

We consider interscholastic athletics a vital part of the total educational process. It is the purpose of the athletic program at RCPS to provide an opportunity to those students endowed with the physical ability and/or strong interest in sports to compete at a level higher than offered in the academic instructional program. The athletic program will allow the student-athlete to develop his/her skills and knowledge to a higher degree of competency on the practice field, and offer them the laboratory of the playing field to measure their accomplishments in competition with their peers.

In addition to the development of physical skills, the athletic program will offer the student-athlete the opportunity to become a more productive member of society. This is accomplished through developing a desire to achieve excellence and the willingness to work hard for the benefit of the team. Through practices and games our staff follows an education based coaching philosophy that has "athletes first, winning second" at its foundation. We work toward preparing student-athletes to succeed rather than merely to win. Win or lose, our athletes should learn lessons of a lasting and positive nature.

Close contact with teammates and coaches will develop a sense of loyalty and dedication, as well as a respect for the dignity of others. The efforts of the RCPS athletic program are based on the key concepts of TEAM BUILDING, mixed with the values of work ethic, self-discipline, sacrifice, commitment to excellence, playing and living within the rules, goal-setting, respect for authority, sense of fairness, and decision making.

We hope the athletic experience will prove to be a meaningful one and that its benefits will remain with you for the rest of your life. However, the attainment of this goal, or any other worthwhile objective, always carries with it certain traditions to be lived up to and responsibilities to be met. A great tradition is not built overnight; it takes the hard work of many men, women, coaches, parents, and administrators over many years. As a member of an interscholastic team of Rappahannock County High School, you are helping us to continue AND to establish a wonderful tradition. When you wear the Blue and Gold of Rappahannock County, we assume that you not only understand our goals but, also, are willing to assume all of the responsibilities that go along with them.

Athletes that wear OUR uniform represent Rappahannock County at venues throughout the area. *Our expectations for student athletes are high – make no mistake, we hold our student athletes to a higher standard.* In addition to academic and behavior standards that apply to student athletes, there are also a variety of rules and regulations, which govern participation in our sports programs. These guidelines come from the Virginia High School League and the Student Handbook of the Rappahannock County Public Schools. You will find the basic information included in this Athletic Handbook.

Our athletic department is dedicated to the philosophy of teaching our student athletes to be better competitors, better students and better community members. These are lessons that will resonate long after they are on the fields and in the gyms of RCHS and lessons that will pay rewards throughout their lives. We all look forward to the successes that are sure to come if we all keep to this philosophy.

Junior Panther, Junior Varsity and Varsity Policy

Competition is an important component of the pursuit of excellence and should be encouraged. Rappahannock County High School athletes play to win, but will always do so in the spirit of fair play. Coaches evaluate potential players in order to place each individual onto an appropriate skill level team that will provide the appropriate competitive situation and ensure the best experience. We seek to include all interested participants at an appropriate level of competition. Tryouts are common for different sports and a player will be evaluated to see which level of competition best suits him or her.

There are no guarantees of playing time for any player at any level, although all coaches will do their best to ensure that all players on their team get some playing time. Playing time is determined through a variety of ways – skills shown at practice and commitment to the team are but two – and playing time decisions are at the discretion of the team coaches.

At the Varsity level, emphasis is placed on being competitive within our conference, our region and the state levels. Competition gives a student-athlete a chance to measure his or her abilities against others to gain a standing of personal achievement. We strive to put our athletes into healthy competitive situations that will challenge them, stretch their boundaries, and motivate them to improve. In doing so, we hope to create a well-rounded student-athlete who contributes to our school culture in the classroom and the athletic arena. Varsity teams are the pinnacle of all our sports programs, with the primary mission of JV and JP teams being to prepare players for eventual participation at the varsity level.

The junior varsity teams are transitional teams from the junior panther (middle school) program to the varsity program. They focus on improvement of skills to move the players into varsity status. The primary goals of our junior varsity programs are to emphasize sport specific skills and prepare the athlete for varsity competition. The junior panther teams are our introductory level sports teams, competing against other public and private middle school teams and, in some sports, in a middle school conference. The purpose of the JP program is to introduce players to competitive sports and to introduce them to the regimen of a high school sports program.

The purpose of both JP and JV programs is NOT to give all students equal playing time (although coaches do strive to get everyone game time at some point), but rather to teach them the skills necessary to earn playing time and to prepare them for the eventuality of varsity team participation.

At all levels the commitment is to put the most competitive team on the track, the court, or the field. Physical skill, team attitude, dedication, and experience will be weighed more heavily than age or grade level when selecting these teams. All junior varsity and varsity teams will practice every school day, with weekend practices at the coach's discretion. JP practices are typically every day at the coach's discretion. Fall sports teams will begin their practices prior to the first day of classes, generally beginning the first week in August. The high school athlete (and parents) should anticipate competition over school holidays such as winter break, and spring break. All teams will play competitive schedules. Students in grades 8-10 are eligible for Junior Varsity competition and Varsity teams may include students from grades 9-12. JP teams can include players from grades 6 through 8.

The hierarchy of teams within the athletic programs is relatively simple. **For EVERY program- EVERY sport – Varsity is the pinnacle.** All things occurring below the varsity level are designed to build up the varsity program. The JP program should establish and build fundamentals necessary to succeed in their respective sport. JV teams should continue building on the skills necessary to be competitive in their respective sport while getting players ready when

called upon for Varsity competition. All coaches are focusing on the “program” aspect of our sports programs through skill development, practice drills, and the direction of our Varsity coaches.

RCPS Athletics & Activities Programs Overview

Rappahannock County Public Schools (RCPS) offers athletic opportunities for students in grades 6 through 8 for Middle School (Junior Panthers) and 8 through 12 on junior varsity and varsity levels. All levels of play, including the junior panther program, are a part of the same program coordinated by the varsity head coach and Athletic Director. Each level of participation has a separate game schedule from that of the varsity team. At all levels, student-athletes can earn the opportunity to play through, among other things, proper attendance, attitude and work habits.

We encourage every student at the high school to participate in the extracurricular athletic programs at either the Junior Varsity or Varsity level. Participation in athletics is a privilege earned by meeting the academic and citizenship standards set forth by RCPS. RCHS sports programs field up to 35 different interscholastic teams in 12 sports during the school year.

Colors: Navy Blue and Athletic Gold

Mascot: Panther

Fall

Competition & Sideline Cheer
Cross Country (Boys & Girls)
Football
Golf (Boys & Girls)
Volleyball (Girls)
Theatre

Winter

Basketball (Boys & Girls)
Sideline Cheer
Wrestling
Scholastic Bowl
Indoor Track (Boys & Girls)

Spring

Baseball
Soccer (Boys & Girls)
Softball
Track & Field (Boys & Girls)

Affiliations:

RCHS competes as a member of the Virginia High School League, the state governing body for interscholastic athletics and activities. Membership in the VHSL allows RCHS teams to compete for district, regional, and state championships, when available. For interscholastic athletic competition, schools are grouped by enrollment. Currently RCHS competes as a Class 1 school in Region 1B and in the district of Bull Run. A complete listing of schools can be found on the VHSL website (www.vhsl.org). Additionally, Varsity Football participates in the VISFL for 8-man football.

Bull Run District:

- Central High School (Woodstock)
- Clarke County High School
- Luray High School
- Madison County High School
- Stonewall Jackson High School (Quicksburg)
- Page County High School
- Rappahannock County
- Strasburg High School

Region 1B:

- Altavista
- Appomattox Regional Governor's School
- Buffalo Gap
- Brunswick
- Carver Academy
- Cumberland

- Franklin
- Galileo Magnet
- Luray
- Rappahannock County
- Riverheads
- Smith Mt. Lake Academy
- Surry County
- Sussex Central
- William Campbell

Athletic Requirements Virginia High School League Eligibility Rules

The Virginia High School League (VHSL) is a member of the National Federation of State High School Associations. All rules and regulations governing secondary school boys' and girls' interscholastic athletic contests and practices are established by the VHSL, the Rappahannock County School Board, and the Rappahannock County High School Administration. All rules and regulations and interpretations for the VHSL can be found in the handbook: [2026/27 VHSL Handbook](#)

To be eligible to represent Rappahannock County High School in any VHSL sponsored interscholastic contest a student shall meet the following requirements. The full review of eligibility requirements can be found in the VHSL Handbook above.

SECTION 28: INDIVIDUAL ELIGIBILITY REGULATIONS.

A. General Rules Applicable to All Students.

28A-1-1 AGE RULE-The student shall not have reached the age of 19 on or before the first day of August of the school year in which he/she wishes to compete.

28A-2-1 BONA FIDE STUDENT RULE-The student shall be a regular bona fide student in good standing of the school which he/she represents.

28A-2-3 Interpretations:

(1) A "regular" student is considered a full-time student who is in regular attendance and is carrying a schedule of subjects which, if successfully completed, will render him/her scholastically eligible for League participation the ensuing semester.

(2) Any student who is under penalty of suspension, or whose character or conduct is such as to reflect discredit upon his/her school, is not considered in good standing.

(3) Any student is permitted to take course work outside the VHSL high school building provided he/she is enrolled in the high school and is eligible in all other respects.

28A-3-1 ENROLLMENT RULE-The student shall have been regularly enrolled in the school which he/she represents not later than the fifteenth school day of the semester.

28A-4-1 GRADE RULE-The student shall be enrolled in the last four years of high school.

28A-5-1 SCHOLARSHIP RULE-The student shall:

(a) For the first semester be currently enrolled in not fewer than five subjects, or their equivalent, offered for credit and which may be used for graduation; and have passed five subjects, or their equivalent, offered for credit and which may be used for graduation the immediately preceding year or the immediately preceding semester for schools that certify credit on a semester basis; and

(b) For the second semester be currently enrolled in not fewer than five subjects, or their equivalent, offered for credit and which may be used for graduation; and have passed five subjects, or their equivalent, offered for credit and which may be used for graduation the immediately preceding semester.

Note: Credit for courses must be recognized by the State Department of Education. Such credit is to be awarded for the semester in which the work is scheduled to be completed. Credit for summer school work must be applied on the immediately preceding semester or year.

PM 28A-5-1 SCHOLARSHIP RULE/Block Scheduling (5-94)-When a school offers four classes each semester (block scheduling), students must pass three of these four classes to be eligible the following semester. There is no yearly eligibility option (combine first and second semester passing grades), since this block scheduling is on a “stand alone” semester grade basis.

28A-6-1 SEMESTER RULE-The student shall not have been enrolled in the last four years of high school for a period of more than eight consecutive semesters, beginning with the semester in which he/she was enrolled for the first time in the ninth grade. The eight consecutive semesters shall be counted continuously from that point, regardless of whether or not he/she remains continuously enrolled in school.

28A-7-1 TRANSFER RULE-The student shall not have enrolled in one high school and subsequently transferred to and enrolled in another high school without a corresponding change in the residence of his/her parents, parent, or guardian. The original residence must be abandoned as a residence, that is sold, rented or otherwise disposed of as a residence, and must not be used as a residence by any family members. The entire family must make the change and take with them the household goods and furniture appropriate to the circumstances. The change must be made with the intent that it is permanent. The sending and receiving VHSL school principals are required to complete and file the VHSL Transfer Form, acknowledging that to the best of their knowledge the student has met all aspects of the transfer rule or its exceptions. Home instruction does not constitute enrollment in a public school. Home schooling is a process through which Virginia Code compulsory education requirements may be met, as is private schooling. Home schooling is the equivalent of school enrollment for Transfer Rule purposes, and determining whether the student has met Scholarship Rule requirements of having passed five academic subjects recognized by the Virginia Department of Education in the most recent prior semester. A transfer should be for the welfare of the student and/or school system and not for athletic and/or academic activity purposes.

28B-2-1 AMATEUR RULE-A student who represents a school in an interscholastic sport shall be an amateur in that sport. An amateur athlete is one who engages in athletic competition solely for the physical, mental, social and pleasure benefits derived therefrom.

Athletic Requirements

Additional Requirements for Athletes/Managers

Participation in interscholastic athletics is a privilege, **NOT A RIGHT**, earned by the student who meets eligibility requirements set by the VHSL, the District, and the School Board. Questions pertaining to the following additional requirements should be directed to the athletic director.

The following are the guidelines for athletic participation here at Rappahannock County Public Schools. Each team will also have more specific guidelines that can be stricter than those outlined here. Please refer to the individual team's handouts at the parent's meeting each season for more details.

1. **Academics:** All participants shall exhibit good citizenship as well as maintain the VHSL scholastic requirement of “take 3 – pass 3”, in addition to any further standards prescribed by the Athletic Department. If a student is failing classes during their current season, remediation will be recommended. The athletic department reserves the right to suspend student athletes from participation if they are not in good academic standing during their season.

GRADE CHECKS

In an effort to better monitor the academic performance of our student athletes and activities participants, the following system will be implemented for checking student grades while in season.

- Students will show their grades to coaches at each interim check.
 - If a student has a failing overall grade in a class they will have a one week probation period to make progress towards a passing grade. They are still permitted to attend practices, games, etc. but the athletic director will check in with that teacher after one week to discuss their progress.
 - If the student does not make any progress such as turning in assignments, etc. in that week, then they will be put on a one week suspension where they cannot participate in practices or events.
 - If the student does not make progress after the suspension week, the student will remain on suspension, and there will be an administrative review of the student's academic performance to see what further action will be taken.
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2. **Physicals-Medical Examination:** All athletes shall have on file in the athletic office a completed VHSL Athletic Participation/Parental Consent/ Physician's Certificate Form. No student may participate in practices or games unless he/she has a physical on file. Physicals on file are valid for 14 months from the dated physical exam.
28B-3-1 ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION/PARENTAL CONSENT/PHYSICAL EXAMINATION RULE-The student shall have submitted to the school principal or designee, a signed Preparticipation Physical Evaluation form completely filled in and properly signed, attesting that he/she has received a physical examination, was found to be physically fit for athletic competition no more than 14 calendar months prior to the date on which such report was signed, and that his/her parents' consent to his/her participation. (See 30-4-3.)
 3. **Insurance:** All participants, including managers and student trainers, must be protected by insurance or have personal insurance that will cover any athletic injury. The participant's parent(s) must sign the page of the VHSL form stating that they have primary insurance coverage and that Rappahannock County is

not responsible for any X-rays, doctor, or hospital bills due to an injury to the participant while he/she is participating with a team involving Rappahannock County High School. Please see your athletic director or the athletic trainer for a form if necessary.

4. Attendance Requirement: In order for a student to participate in an extracurricular activity or athletic contest, including practice, he/she must be in attendance for the school day. **This means the student must be in attendance by the 8:15am tardy bell and be in school the remainder of the day to participate in activities unless they have permission from the administration. A student with more than three unexcused tardies in a semester will not be able to participate in their activity for that day.** Tardies will reset each semester. Exceptions include medical doctor or dentist appointments, as well as funerals and wakes. The tardies will reset on the first day of each semester. Student athletes who spend time with a teacher during athletic practices must have a note from the teacher informing the coach of the athlete's activity and advance notice is required. Any student who leaves school due to an illness may not participate in any extracurricular activity that day.
5. Out-of-School Suspension: Any participant given out-of-school suspension will be ineligible during the suspension. In addition, the Principal, Athletic Director, or the Coach may discipline them further by temporary or permanent suspension from the team. **Five** or more consecutive days of out-of-school suspension results in automatic removal from the team or squad.
6. In-School Suspension: Any student-athlete assigned in-school suspension will be ineligible for participation in practice sessions and athletic contests after school that day. An individual may be penalized by his/her coach for any amount of in-school suspension.
7. Eighth-Grade Participation: Eighth graders may participate in athletics on the junior-varsity level if:
 - They have a completed VHSL Physical Form and the Acknowledgement Form on file
 - They meet all school, Bull Run District and VHSL requirements
8. Equipment Distribution and Return: Once equipment and uniforms are issued, it becomes the total responsibility of the student. If any of these items are lost, stolen or damaged, the athlete is held financially responsible for replacing it. All payments for lost equipment must be made at the end of the season to the coach or athletic director. **Students will not be allowed to participate in the next season until all uniforms are turned in or replacement fees are paid. All school fees must be paid as well before participation will be allowed on any extracurricular activity team.**
9. Dismissal/Quitting Policy: If a student is removed from, or quits a team **without mutual release by the coach**, he/she is ineligible to try out or continue on a team during that season or for a team the next season. For spring sports this penalty will carry over into the next school year. In the event that the student is not mutually released, the coach must report within 24 hours to the athletic director that the student has quit or been removed from the team. Should the student wish to appeal, they must notify the athletic director in writing within ten days. The first appeal shall be made to the athletic director; if a second appeal is desired then it should be made to the principal, with the principal's decision being final. The objective of this rule is to inspire communication between coach and athlete and see if there is an alternate conclusion to dismissal/quitting.
10. Participation on the Varsity/JV or Middle School Grade level: Please be aware that the assigning of student athletes to the various levels of competition will be determined by the Head Coach and his or her assistants. The goal of all programs is to place each student/athlete on the team in which they can

compete at a high level while also allowing them to contribute to the success of the team and program. All head coaches have the right, without objection, to re-assign any student athlete to a different level of competition at any time they deem necessary.

11. Ineligible Athletes: Any athlete who becomes ineligible for competition due to an injury, due to academic standing, or due to any other reason is required to sit with the team during games and stay with the team at all times.

12. Athlete Admittance to Games: Each in season athlete will be issued a pass in the beginning of the season that will give them admittance to regular in season games. This is a privilege not a right and will be acted upon as that, each student/athlete is **required** to bring this pass to all games they attend in their season.

- **This is for one admittance to the sport that night. Student/athletes will not be allowed to go in and out of games or events.**

13. Social Media Policy: Inappropriate use of social media (facebook, twitter, Instagram, etc) may result in a school referral being issued. School policies on social media use will be enforced. If suspension is the result of such actions, discipline (suspension) from the team is also probable.

14. Cell Phone Use: Prior to entering the locker room/gym, cell phones must be turned off and put away. Any athlete caught with a cell phone out in the locker room will be forwarded to administration. Coaches are required to have a cell phone or radio on them for emergency communication purposes.

15. Tryouts:

The following policy shall be in effect for those teams that have to make cuts:

- Coaches will talk to each participant individually about being selected or not selected on that particular team.
- Tryouts will be scored on an objective basis.
- A list will not be posted.
- Participants will not be publicly separated as those who made the team and those who did not make the team.

16. Multi-Sport Athletes:

Rappahannock County High School encourages student-athletes to participate in multiple sports throughout their high school careers. However, student-athletes will not be permitted to participate on two athletic teams during the same athletic season. A student-athlete who chooses to participate in a sport is expected to fulfill the commitment to that team for the entirety of the season, including all regular season and postseason obligations. Participation on additional school-sponsored athletic teams may begin only after the athlete has completed the season of their current sport, as determined by the Athletic Department.

17. Practices & Games:

Practices are **MANDATORY** and necessary for all athletic teams. **Indoor and Outdoor practices are closed to parents and spectators.** The athlete is responsible for arriving to practice on time or early. Team members are expected to be present for the entire practice or game, and should make travel plans accordingly. If an athlete needs to miss a practice or a game due to an emergency or sickness or other excused reason, the coach, the school or the athletic department should be contacted, with priority given to the coach. Practices are scheduled for up to five or six days a week for at least 1.5 hours each and could potentially be over a holiday break. Games also occur during the week and occasionally on weekends and holiday break. Families and athletes are asked to make team practices and games a priority during the season. **Student athletes and parents must also realize that school sports during the season of that sport, takes precedence over any travel/little league and or showcase teams.**

Missing practices or games without informing the coach may be reason for dismissal from the team. If an athlete misses practice for an unexcused reason, that athlete must realize the other team members may get to play before he/she does. A one game or more suspension can also result from missing practices for unexcused reasons. Habitual absence from practice, excused or unexcused, can result in suspension or removal from the team. Remember that the success of the team depends upon your commitment. Students must realize that coaches will not hold positions, starting roles, or even a place on the team, for players who do not regularly attend practices or games. **Athletic participation is not a right, but a privilege.**

18. Appropriate Dress:

Each student-athlete is expected to dress appropriately while attending away competitions as well as dressing appropriately at school on the days of home competitions. Many coaches institute dress codes for game days which players are expected to follow. Wearing inappropriate attire could result in removal from the team competition on the specific day the infraction occurs, and could result in removal from the team. Please take pride in your appearance and your team.

19. Injury Procedure:

Each team is issued a first aid kit, which should be present at all home and away games and practices. Ice is available if injury occurs on school grounds. Every coach will have the emergency contact information for each of his or her athletes in case one needs to contact a parent or guardian. RCPS does employ a full time ATC/medical staff member who will be accessible to students on a daily basis. **If the student athlete is seen by a physician or an upper level provider, he/she must have a note from that provider stating reason(s) seen and when the student athlete can return to participation with approval from RCPS medical staff.**

If a minor injury occurs, first aid procedure will begin immediately. The coach will notify the athletic trainer/medical staff and student's parent/guardian as to the injury. If a major injury occurs, first aid procedures will begin immediately, and the rescue squad will be called (911) so that the student can be taken to the nearest Emergency Room. The coach or medical staff will contact the athlete's parent/guardian as soon as possible to inform them of the situation and the location of their child. The coach with the assistance of the athletic trainer/medical staff also has the responsibility of contacting the Athletic Director to update him or her of any injuries that occur (minor or major in nature).

20. Hazardous/Inclement Weather Regulations:

When there is a delayed opening of Rappahannock County Public School due to hazardous weather conditions, the school administration will make a decision as to whether or not athletic activities may be held that day. When school is closed due to inclement weather, all interscholastic contests and team practices are typically canceled for the rest of the day and evening. Any exceptions may require approval by the Superintendent. In some instances school may be in session but hazardous weather late in the day may force the cancellation of practices or games. Every effort will be made to make decisions regarding these changes by 2:00PM of the affected day, and those announcements will be posted on the athletics website and social media platforms and sent out in email blasts to those who sign up for them on the athletic website.

21. Transportation:

The school will provide transportation for athletic events. All student-athletes must travel to and from athletic contests with the team unless the parent/guardian is present to provide the transportation home from an away event. When this occurs, the head coach must be informed of the transportation change ahead of time. Under no circumstances are student-athletes allowed to drive or ride from athletic contests with anyone other than parents unless the coach has prior written permission from the parent of the student athlete. If you desire for your child to ride home with another adult a note must be submitted the day of the contest and signed by the AD, Principal, or Assistant Principal. Students will not be permitted to leave away games with other students.

All individuals involved in the away games, or meeting the bus should be punctual in order that the bus can depart as scheduled. It is recommended to be at the point of departure at least ten minutes before the bus is to leave. In addition, conduct and expectations as outlined in the school's code of conduct will be enforced while traveling to or from any event. Coaches and/or sponsors shall accompany the students to and from the place of the activity.

The transportation will depart from the school grounds, and will arrive back at the school. Upon returning to school, the vehicles must be cleaned out before anyone is dismissed from team functions. All parents are to pick their children up at the school. Prior arrangements must be made to avoid a long waiting period for pick-up at school (a call from the student before arrival at school is suggested).

On the way back from an away contest, the coach may decide to stop for food. If this is the case, the student-athlete will be responsible for providing their own money for the purchase of food items. Also, remember that you are representing Rappahannock County High School, and that excellent behavior is expected at all times. Leave all restaurants cleaner than when the team first arrived.

22. Awards:

We host an awards night at the end of the season and/or school year in order to recognize the achievements of the varsity athletes and teams. Information will be sent a few weeks prior to the date of the ceremony.

The varsity award for proficiency in athletics is a chenille letter (R) and a pin for the sport. The coaches will determine eligibility for a varsity letter award in his/her sport. The coach will inform their players and parents of the aforementioned requirements as soon as feasibly possible, prior to the first athletic contest. The

coaches have the right, as does the school administration, to withhold awards from squad members not fulfilling squad and/or school obligations.

(Varsity Letter) Student-athletes can letter in a sport their first year on a Varsity team. NO player will be presented with the actual letter more than once. A bar is given for each additional year in which the player plays. Letters will be earned at the discretion of the coach based on the following criteria:

1. Players must complete the entire season
2. Overall contribution to the team
3. Attendance at practices and games
4. Attitude and effort
5. Skill in the particular sport

Behavioral Eligibility / Code of Conduct:

The school's code of conduct applies to students at all times they are in school, or representing the school by participating in athletics or attending any school function, home or away. Team policies regarding student conduct can be stricter than the school code. Student-athletes are expected to behave at all times in a manner that will bring credit to themselves, the school or community.

RCCHS administration and coaches of athletic teams and sponsors of student activities believe that students who are selected for the privilege of membership on teams, performing groups, and clubs should conduct themselves as responsible representatives of the school. In order to assure this conduct, we strictly enforce the school's code of conduct. Furthermore, members of teams and organizations who fail to abide by the Code of Conduct are subject to disciplinary action. Members of the athletic teams must always display high moral character.

As recognized representatives of Rappahannock County High School athletics, athletes are expected to exhibit appropriate behavior during the season (activity) or out of season, in uniform or out of uniform, on campus or off campus.

A quick summary of our Behavior Expectations:

- **Rappahannock County High School has as its primary goal the academic education of all students. Therefore, we have the obligation to encourage students to perform within reasonable academic expectations.**
- **All students' use of tobacco products, alcoholic beverages, or possession or use of non-prescribed controlled substances or paraphernalia for their use will not be tolerated, and the violator will be subject to disciplinary action, as outlined in the school's code of conduct.**
- **Rule enforcement will be consistent and immediate.**
- **Every coach has the option to establish additional rules pertaining to the team's activities. The Athletic Director will approve all team rules before they're given to the team members.**
- **Athletes guilty of the following behaviors must meet with the Athletic Director: cursing, pushing and/or hitting of a referee; striking an opponent, a coach, or a spectator; flagrantly disobeying instructions of his/her coach or coaches; failure to cooperate with school staff, administration and/or regulations. A parent and the coach should be present for the meeting. If it is determined that the student-athlete violated the school's code of conduct, the Athletic Director will refer the**

student-athlete to the Principal. Any violations of the aforementioned nature may result in the athlete's removal from the team.

- **Student-athletes suspended by the school administration will not be allowed to participate in activities or athletic events while they are on suspension. Students on suspension, either ISS or OSS are only eligible to participate after their entire punishment has been completed but there is NO guarantee they will be reinstated to their team immediately (or at all) upon completion of their suspension.**
- **The school administration will be notified of all violations of the Code of Conduct that occur anywhere in the athletic program.**
- **Hazing is forbidden by the Code of Conduct. There must never be "initiations" to a team that involve physical or mental abuse.**
- **It will be the policy of RCPS to have the option of doubling any punishments/suspensions required by VHSL as a result of Unsportsmanlike Conduct.**

In light of the unique situations that may arise in the educational process, and because it is impossible to foresee all school issues that may arise, the administration reserves the right to address and to take appropriate action for any such situations not specifically referenced in this handbook. It is expressly understood that the school may take actions deemed necessary to prevent behaviors from reflecting adversely on the school.

Sportsmanship

SPORTSMANSHIP POLICY:

Good sportsmanship is the attitude and behavior that exemplifies positive support for the interscholastic programs of all schools, as well as for the individuals who participate in such programs. People involved in all facets of the interscholastic programs are expected to demonstrate respect for others and display good sportsmanship.

The Rappahannock County Athletic program aspires to conduct itself in a manner that will bring honor to the school and community. To do so, all involved with the program must practice good sportsmanship at all times. Good sportsmanship requires that:

- Play the game for game sake.
- Be generous in winning.
- Be graceful in losing.
- Be fair at all times.
- Be obedient to the rules.
- Work for the good of the team.
- Accept gracefully the decision of the officials.
- Believe in the honesty of your opponents.
- Conduct yourself, at all times, with honor and dignity.
- Shake hands with opponents after every contest.
- Recognize and applaud honestly and wholeheartedly the efforts of your teammates and opponents.

TO OUR RCHS SUPPORTERS/SPECTATORS: We appreciate your support and POSITIVE encouragement! We ask that your behavior be for and not against our coaching staff, visiting teams, officials and, of course, our own student-athletes. Should you have a concern, please be respectful enough to discuss that concern with the coach or administrator at the appropriate time and place.

The Spectator Should:

- Realize that he/she represents the school just as definitely as does the member of a team and, therefore, has an obligation to be a true sportsman, encouraging through this behavior the practice of good sportsmanship by others.
- Recognize that good sportsmanship is more important than a victory. By approving and applauding good team play, individual skills and outstanding examples of sportsmanship and fair play exhibited by either team.
- Recognize that since the primary purpose of interscholastic athletics is to promote the physical, mental, moral, social and emotional wellbeing of the players through the medium of contests, victory or defeat is in reality of secondary importance.
- Treat visiting teams and officials as guests, extending to them every courtesy.
- Be modest in victory and gracious in defeat.
- Respect the judgment and integrity of officials, realizing that their decisions are based upon game conditions as they observe them.

TO THE STUDENT-ATHLETE: As a Rappahannock student-athlete, you are expected to conduct yourself with integrity, sportsmanship, honesty, pride, and humility. Your conduct is closely scrutinized as you sit in the classroom, as you travel, and as you compete at home and on the road. You are looked upon as a role model, particularly by your peers and by younger children, and it is important that your personal conduct be above reproach at all times. Realize that you are representing yourself, your team, and Rappahannock County High School. Do so with class.

The Athlete Should:

- Be courteous to visiting teams and officials.
- Play hard and to the limit of his/her ability, regardless of discouragement. The true athlete does not give up nor does he/she quarrel, cheat, or grandstand.
- Retain his/her composure at all times, and never leave the bench or enter the playing field/court to engage in a fight.
- Be modest when successful and gracious in defeat. A true sportsman does not offer excuses for failures.
- Maintain a high degree of physical fitness by observing team and training rules conscientiously.
- Demonstrate loyalty to the school by maintaining a satisfactory scholastic standing and by participating in or supporting other school activities.
- Play for the love of the game.
- Understand and observe the rules of the game and the standards of eligibility.
- Set a high standard of personal cleanliness.
- Respect the integrity and judgment of officials, and accept their decisions.
- Respect the facilities of host schools and the trust entailed in being a guest.

THE VHSL, the Bull Run District, and the Rappahannock Athletic Department support and mandate the following:

27-11-1 SPORTSMANSHIP RULE-Member schools are required to conduct all their relations with other schools in a spirit of good sportsmanship. Acts which are prima facie evidence of failure to abide by this rule are those which are noted below and others of a similar nature which transgress the usually accepted code for good sportsmanship. All incidents of conduct relating to either athletic or academic activities that are violations of the Sportsmanship Rule must be reported to the Virginia High School League.

27-16-1 Use of Hate Speech, Ethnically or Racially Insensitive Expressions-Any coach, team personnel and/or contestant who confronts or addresses a coach, contestant or official using hate speech, ethnically or racially insensitive expressions will be disqualified for the contest and will be ineligible for the team's next three scheduled contests and/or subsequent contests until penalties and educational/restorative interventions are completed.

27-11-6 Ejection of Player and/or Coach-Players and coaches who are ejected from a contest, scrimmage, jamboree or Benefit Game for unsportsmanlike conduct and are ineligible for the team's next scheduled contest must be reported to the VHSL office on the form provided on the VHSL website. For engaging in fighting (including throwing punches as an instigator, in retaliation, or intentionally kicking or stomping an opponent), biting or aggressive physical contact shall result in a suspension from contests totaling a minimum of 30% of the total contest limitations for that sport (a player shall be ineligible for the team's scheduled contests until the suspension is completed) and a coach from contests totaling a minimum of 30% of the contest limitations. Profanity directed at a game official will result in a suspension from contests totaling a minimum of 20% of the total contest limitations for that sport. Student/athletes who leave the bench area and become actively involved in an altercation will result in a suspension from contests totaling a minimum of 20% of the total contest limitations for that sport. Coaches ejected for unsportsmanlike conduct will not be physically present or communicate in any way with the team at that next scheduled contest. (For the purposes of this rule, a basketball player who collects five personal fouls and must therefore leave the game is not considered to be ejected and is not automatically guilty of a sportsmanship violation.) Any player assessed two technical fouls is considered to have committed a sportsmanship violation and must sit out the next contest.

Fans who cannot abide by the expectations of good sportsmanship as outlined above will be asked to leave our events, without a refund, and may face the possibility of being banned from future events at our premises.

Parent and Coach Communication

Both parenting and coaching are extremely difficult roles. By establishing an understanding of each role, we are better able to accept the actions of each and together provide a greater experience for the student-athlete. When your child becomes a part of the Rappahannock County Public School Athletic Program, you have the right to understand what expectations will be placed on your child. This begins with clear communication from the coach of the specific sport.

Communication you should expect from your child's coach may include: coaching philosophy, expectations and goals for your child and the team, strength and conditioning requirements, equipment needs, game and practice schedules and updates, team rules and guidelines, lettering criteria (when appropriate), and team selection process.

Communication coaches should expect from the student-athlete and their parent/guardian includes advanced notification of scheduling conflicts with team activities; advanced notification of illness and injury (when possible), and prompt expressions of concerns DIRECTLY to the coach.

It is the goal of everyone that each student-athlete experiences some of the most rewarding moments of his or her life. It is important to understand there may be times when things do not go the way you and your child wish. When this occurs, discussion with the coach is encouraged. It is the first and most integral step to understanding and resolution.

If you have a concern to discuss with a coach, first call the coach to set up an appointment. Parents, players, and coaches are asked to follow the following chain of command:

Step 1: Individual Student – Coach Contact

The student-athlete involved is to speak to the coach about the problem as soon as possible

Step 2: Parent/Student – Coach Contact

The parent/student should set a time to meet individually with the coach. Please do not attempt to contact a coach before, during or after a game. These can be emotional times for all involved and can make a minor situation worse.

Meetings will NOT be scheduled:

- 24 hours prior to or immediately after a contest
- During active practice sessions
- During a time when other coaches, parents, or athletes are present

Step 3: Parent/Student – Athletic Director Contact

- If satisfactory resolution is not reached through direct contact with the coach, the parent/student athlete should contact the Athletic Director. If the meeting with the parent/student athlete and Athletic Director does not result in a satisfactory conclusion, the Athletic Director will schedule a meeting involving all concerned parties in an attempt to reach a satisfactory resolution.
- **Any comments, concerns, or issues brought to the attention of the Athletic Director will be addressed. While there can be no guarantee that all parties will agree with all resolutions or findings, a thorough, respectful airing of different perspectives and experiences can lead to more productive relationships and clearer understanding in the future.**

Step 4: Parent/Student Athlete – Administrator/AD/Coach contact

- If after step 3, satisfactory resolution has not been reached, the parent and student athlete should contact the building principal.

Most issues of parent dissatisfaction center on the issue of playing time. Please note that our coaches are not obligated to discuss their decisions on playing time or coaching strategy. Any discussion with a parent about playing time would necessitate a discussion about other children which is not permissible or appropriate. Parents are welcome to ask what their child can do to improve their skills or conditioning or ask for extra drills that could be done at home, but playing time is an issue that is not up for discussion. Please remember that ALL of our coaches have one overriding factor in mind when deciding who plays and who does not – they are looking to put the best possible team on the field. There is no other determining factor.

Parent/Guardian Education & Health and Safety

1. Concussion

Concussion Management and Return-to-Play Protocol

Rappahannock County Public Schools is committed to protecting the health and safety of all student-athletes. In accordance with the requirements of the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), the Virginia Code, and the Virginia High School League (VHSL), any student-athlete suspected of sustaining a concussion or other brain injury during a practice, contest, conditioning session, or other school-sponsored athletic activity shall be removed from participation immediately. A student-athlete removed for a suspected concussion shall not return to participation on the same day. ([Virginia Law](#))

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury that interferes with normal brain function. Loss of consciousness is not required for a concussion to occur. Student-athletes, parents, coaches, and school personnel should be aware of common concussion symptoms, including headache, dizziness, confusion, difficulty concentrating, memory problems, nausea, sensitivity to light or noise, balance issues, and changes in behavior or mood. ([VHSL](#))

Before a student-athlete may return to practice or competition following a suspected concussion, the student-athlete must:

1. Be evaluated by an appropriate licensed healthcare provider;
2. Receive written medical clearance from the licensed healthcare provider;
3. Successfully complete the school division's graduated Return-to-Play (RTP) protocol; and
4. Remain symptom-free throughout the progression of the Return-to-Play protocol. ([Virginia Law](#))

The determination that a student-athlete may not participate due to a suspected concussion shall not be overruled by a coach, parent, student-athlete, or any other individual. The health and safety of the student-athlete shall take precedence over all athletic considerations.

In accordance with Virginia law, all student-athletes and their parents/guardians must annually review concussion education materials and sign the required concussion information acknowledgment form prior to participation in interscholastic athletics. ([Justia](#))

The school division shall also implement a Return-to-Learn process for students recovering from a concussion. Academic accommodations may be provided as needed to support the student's gradual return to full academic participation based upon the recommendations of the student's licensed healthcare provider. ([Virginia Law](#))

Rappahannock County Public Schools follows all applicable provisions of the Virginia Code, Virginia Department of Education guidelines, and Virginia High School League concussion management requirements.

Links to Video on Concussions:

<https://nfhslearn.com/courses/concussion-in-sports-2>

What is a concussion?

A concussion is a brain injury and all brain injuries are serious. They may be caused by a bump, blow or jolt to the head, or a blow to another part of the body with the force transmitted to the head. They can range from mild to severe and can disrupt the way the brain normally works. Even though most concussions are mild, all concussions are potentially serious and may result in complications including prolonged brain damage and death if not recognized and managed properly. In other words, even a “ding” or a bump on the head can be serious. You can’t see a concussion and most sports concussions occur without loss of consciousness. Signs and symptoms of concussion may show up immediately after the injury or can take hours or days to fully appear. If your child/player reports any symptoms of a concussion, or if you notice the symptoms or signs of a concussion yourself, seek medical attention right away.

Symptoms may include: headache, nausea/vomiting, balance problems, dizziness, blurred vision, double vision, sensitivity to light, sensitivity to noise, feeling slowed down or sluggish, feeling in a fog, difficulty with concentration, loss of short-term memory, confusion, irritability, agitation, depression, anxiety, or sleep disturbance.

Signs observed by the athletic trainer, teammates, parents, teachers, and coaches include:

Appears dazed, confused, disoriented, forgetful of plays, uncertainty of spatial awareness, exhibits difficulty with balance or coordination, delayed response, inaccurately to common questions, loss of consciousness, change in behavior, change in personality, unable to recall past events prior to impact.

2. Heat Illness

1. § 1. The Department of Education shall, in conjunction with relevant stakeholders, including the Virginia High School League, the Department of Health, the Virginia Athletic Trainers' Association, representatives of the Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters and the Children's National Medical Center, the Virginia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Virginia College of Emergency Physicians, the Virginia Academy of Family Physicians, the Medical Society of Virginia, and the Virginia Association of School Nurses, develop guidelines on policies to inform and educate coaches and student athletes and their parents or guardians of the nature and risk of heat-related illness, how to recognize the signs of heat-related illness, and how to prevent heat-related illness. The guidelines shall be distributed to local school divisions by August 1, 2022.

What are heat-related illnesses?

Exposure to abnormal or prolonged amounts of heat and humidity without relief or adequate fluid intake can cause various types of heat-related illness. Children and teens adjust more slowly than adults do to changes in environmental heat. They also produce more heat with activity than adults, and sweat less. Sweating is one of the body's normal cooling mechanisms. Children and teens often do not think to rest when having fun and may not drink enough fluids when playing, exercising, or participating in sports. Children and teens with chronic health problems, or those who take certain medicines, may be more susceptible to heat-related illnesses. Children and teens who are overweight or wear heavy clothing during exertion, such as marching band or football uniforms, are also more susceptible. <https://www.nata.org/sites/default/files/heat-illness-parent-coach-guide.pdf>

3. Sudden Cardiac Arrest

What is Sudden Cardiac Arrest?

Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) is when the heart suddenly and unexpectedly stops pumping blood due to a rhythm abnormality. When this happens, blood stops flowing to the brain and other vital organs and, if left untreated, can quickly result in death. SCA does not just happen to adults; it also takes the lives of students. However, the causes of SCA in students and adults can be different. A student's SCA will likely result from an inherited condition, extreme overheating/dehydration or from trauma to the chest, while an adult's SCA is most often caused by a heart attack. SCA is NOT a heart attack. A heart attack may cause SCA, but they are not the same. A heart attack is caused by a blockage that stops the flow of blood to the heart, while SCA is a malfunction in the heart's electrical system, causing the heart to go into an unstable rapid rhythm. **SCA is a medical emergency. With fast, appropriate medical care, however, survival is possible. Administering cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) — or even just compressions to the chest — can improve the chances of survival until emergency personnel arrive.**

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/sudden-cardiac-arrest/basics/definition/con-20042982>

What are the warning signs and symptoms of Sudden Cardiac Arrest?

Although SCA happens unexpectedly, some people may have signs or symptoms, such as: fainting or seizures during exercise; unexplained shortness of breath; dizziness; extreme fatigue; chest pains; or racing heart. These symptoms can be unclear in athletes, since people often confuse these warning signs with physical exhaustion. Risks of continuing activity after experiencing warning signs and symptoms There are serious risks associated with continuing to practice or play after experiencing these symptoms. When the heart stops pumping efficiently, the brain and other vital organs are compromised. Death or permanent brain damage can occur in just a few minutes. Most people who experience SCA will die from it. Any student-athlete who shows signs or symptoms of SCA must be immediately removed from the athletic activity.

Return to Play

Before returning to play, the athlete must be evaluated by a licensed medical provider. Following the evaluation, written clearance, signed by the licensed medical provider, must be given prior to the student-athlete engaging in any athletic activity

Summary

SCA is, by definition, sudden and unexpected. SCA can happen in individuals who appear healthy and have no known heart disease. Most people who have SCA die from it, usually within minutes. Rapid treatment of SCA with CPR and an AED can be lifesaving. Training in recognition of signs of SCA, and the availability of AEDs and personnel who possess the skills to use one, may save the life of someone experiencing SCA

- **Concussion/Head Injuries**

<https://nfhslearn.com/courses/concussion-in-sports-2>

- **Heat Illness**

<https://nfhslearn.com/courses/heat-illness-prevention-2>

- **Sudden Cardiac Arrest**

<https://nfhslearn.com/courses/sudden-cardiac-arrest>

4. Energy Drinks

Based on information from the VHSL energy drink ban, RCPS prohibits all manufactured supplements that enhance energy from sports practices, competitions, team activities and during the school day while participating on a school sponsored team. These items include but are not limited to, energy shots/drinks, pre-workout powders and pills. Students are also encouraged not to consume these products at any time in an effort to promote optimal growth and development and prevention of harmful reactions.

- A warning will be issued for the first violation and the product will be discarded.
- Further violations will result in additional disciplinary consequences, which may include loss of playing time, suspension from the team, or other appropriate disciplinary measures.

PM 27-10-1 (1) SAFETY/Energy Drinks (9-10)-Athletes are prohibited from consuming energy drinks during participation in VHSL practices and competitions. VHSL will issue an official warning for the first violation.

- a. Energy drinks shall not be used for hydration.
- b. Energy drinks shall not be consumed by athletes who are dehydrated.
- c. There is no regulatory control over energy drinks, thus their content and purity cannot be ensured.
- d. This may lead to adverse side-effects, potentially harmful interactions with prescription medications (particularly stimulant medications used to treat ADHD), or positive drug tests

5. Hazing

Rappahannock County Athletics has a zero tolerance policy for Hazing - it will not be tolerated in any form. Hazing is an action taken or situation created intentionally, whether on or off the school grounds, to produce mental or physical discomfort, embarrassment, harassment, or ridicule. Hazing is against the law in the state of Virginia (VA Code Section 18.2-56 2000) and is prohibited at Rappahannock County High School. Hazing can result in lawsuits and criminal prosecutions. A coach can be held individually liable for hazing incidents. Students who engage in hazing activities will be removed from school activities and face disciplinary actions.

6. Chemical Health

Rappahannock County Public Schools will not tolerate the use of drugs, alcohol, vape or tobacco products by student-athletes. The use of these products is detrimental to one's health and is in conflict with all that is trying to be accomplished through the Rappahannock athletic program. All members of the athletic team will sign a pledge in the pre-season in support of this policy.

Students will not possess, use, be under the influence of, transmit, distribute, or sell alcoholic beverages (alcoholic beverages include any beverages with any alcohol content whatsoever); or other substances of abuse on school premises. This includes school buildings & grounds, non- school function site, on a school bus or in a school car going to or from a school function, or any school sponsored function. The inappropriate use of prescription and over-the-counter drugs shall also be prohibited. The use or possession of any type of energy drinks by our athletes is also strictly prohibited, per VHSL rules.

Any student-athlete using or possessing drugs, tobacco, Vape or alcohol during any portion of the school day/function will be subject to the consequences for such violations as outlined in the school's code of conduct as well as suspension from participation in extracurricular activities, including sports.

7. A Better Way Athletics

RCPS Athletics is excited about the opportunity to invest in you as a family. We have partnered with A Better Way Athletics to help align our coaches and parents for the sake of every kid in our athletic community. Below is a link to the informational website. The athletic director will inform parents and student athletes on the process of creating an account.

- Click on the link here: <https://abw.io/>

Reviewed June 30, 2026

Courtney Atkins, Athletic Director