

Conway Junior & Senior High School Athletic Handbook

2026-27

Index

1. INTRODUCTION
2. ACTIVITY/TEAM MEETING
3. ABSENCE FROM PRACTICE AND ATHLETIC CONTEST
4. TOBACCO AND VAPING
5. ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS
6. ISS AND OSS INFRACTIONS
7. HAZING
8. ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY
9. NO QUIT POLICY
10. PLAYING TIME POLICY
11. TRY-OUTS & CUTS
12. COMMUNICATION WITH COACHES
13. EXTRACURRICULAR CONFLICTS
14. LETTERING POLICY
15. SENATE BILL 63

Introduction

Any student who represents his or her school in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities shall be enrolled as an undergraduate student of the school (except as provided in By-Law 238.2a), and shall meet the following general standards of eligibility and the specific applicable MSHSAA standards in ByLaws 230 through 283. Eligibility to represent a school in such activities is a privilege to be attained by meeting the standards of eligibility cooperatively set by the member schools through MSHSAA and any additional standards set by the Laclede County R-1 School District. An extra-curricular or co-curricular activity shall be defined as any activity in which a recognized organization of the Laclede County R-1 Schools sponsors, attends or participates. This includes practices, banquets, performances, meetings and competitions. Recognized organizations are those included in the student activities handbook. Students who represent a school in co-curricular or extra-curricular activities must be creditable citizens and judged so by the proper school authority certifying a list of students eligible. Those students whose character or conduct is such as to reflect discredit upon themselves or their schools are not considered "creditable citizens". Conduct shall be satisfactory in accord with the standards of good discipline. A student shall not be considered eligible to participate or attend such activities while under suspension. The student who is expelled or who withdraws from school because of disciplinary measures shall not be considered eligible for 365 days from the date of expulsion or withdrawal. By your student participating in Laclede County R-1 extracurricular activities you are agreeing to the following.

Activity/Team Meeting

Prior to the start of the activity, each sponsor/coach will hold a meeting with students desiring to participate in programs sponsored by the school and the MSHSAA. The purpose of the meeting will be to clarify the rules, regulations, and consequences for violations of state, school or team policy. Student-athletes are subject to the same district-wide conduct, attendance, discipline, and eligibility standards established in the Student Handbook, with sport-specific expectations added only through an approved team contract.

Attendance at Practices and Games

If a student misses class due to an unexcused absence (an absence without proper notification or approval), the student shall not be eligible to participate in or attend extracurricular activities on that date. The student cannot be certified eligible to participate on a subsequent date until the student attends a full day of classes or has documentation for all classes missed. This requirement also applies to students attending GoCaps or LTCC on days those programs are in session. Students must be in attendance as required by the Student Handbook in order to practice or compete. Each member of a Conway High School Athletic team must assume the responsibilities associated with such a position. The athlete has an ethical obligation to the team and the school. This obligation includes regular attendance at practices and athletic contests. Commitment to Conway teams should come before any club or outside team. If a practice or competition is missed due to outside commitments, there will be consequences for missing the Conway practice or competition. It is possible that emergency situations may arise (e.g., illness, death in a family, etc.) that render it impossible for an athlete to attend a practice session or an athletic contest. Absences should be few and far between and arranged with the coach as early as possible. When athletic team practices occur on school vacation days, all varsity athletes are expected to be in attendance. If a conflict arises and the athlete may have to miss a practice it is of utmost importance that the athlete communicates this with the coach, immediately knowing that

consequences may follow. Summer and off-season activities are strongly encouraged but cannot be required by coaches. Absences from practice sessions or athletic contests will be handled in the following manner: Excused absence-are missed practices or game where parent or player has communicated in advanced of such an event and received permission from the coach and the Athletic Administrator. Unexcused Absence-are missed practices or games when the student nor parent has not communicated in advance that the student athlete will be missing from an event.

Absence From Practice

Unexcused Absence-1st Offense	Conference with coach and discipline of athlete
Unexcused Absence-2nd Offense	Suspension from the next interscholastic contest
Unexcused Absence-3rd Offense	Dismissal from team (Athlete forfeits all awards)

Absence From Athletic Contest

If a student misses class(es) without being excused by the principal or designee, the student shall not be eligible to participate or attend an athletic contest or activity on that date. Student-athletes are expected to make a commitment to their Conway team and attend all scheduled practices and contests. School-sponsored activities and academic responsibilities take priority over non-school teams, clubs, leagues, tournaments, jobs, vacations, or other outside commitments. Participation in a non-school activity may not violate MSHSAA rules or interfere with a required school activity. When conflicts occur, the school-sponsored activity comes first unless an exception is approved in advance by the coach and Athletic Administrator. Summer and off-season activities are strongly encouraged but cannot be required by coaches.

Excused Absence — An absence from a practice or contest that is communicated to the coach as early as reasonably possible and is approved by the coach. Examples may include illness or injury, medical or dental appointments, a death or emergency in the family, required school-sponsored activities, religious observances, or other circumstances approved by the coach. Whenever possible, the student-athlete or parent/guardian should communicate before the missed practice or contest. An excused absence does not automatically guarantee playing time upon return; the coach may consider missed preparation, conditioning, safety, and the needs of the team when determining participation.

Unexcused Absence — An absence from a practice or contest that is not approved by the coach, including an absence for which the student-athlete or parent/guardian fails to communicate in a timely manner when communication was reasonably possible. Non-school athletic events or other outside commitments are not automatically excused and must be approved in advance. Coaches will apply the attendance expectations and consequences in this handbook consistently within their programs.

Tobacco and Vaping,

Use or possession of tobacco will not be permitted by student participants. Offenses will be subject to the following discipline. Vapes with THC or any other drug substance will fall under the Drug and Alcohol policy. Offenses are not per school year but per Jr. High career and then again for High School career.

1st offense – 3 game suspension, plus whatever punishment the sponsor deems appropriate.

2nd offense – 6 game suspension, plus whatever punishment the sponsor deems appropriate.

3rd offense – 9 game suspension, plus whatever punishment the sponsor deems appropriate.

4th offense – Removal from all extracurricular organizations.

Use or possession of drugs or alcoholic beverages will not be permitted by student participants. Offenses will be subject to the following discipline. Offenses are not per school year but per JH/HS career.

Discipline Concerning Drugs and Alcohol

A minimum **twenty-one (21) calendar day suspension** from participation or attendance in all extracurricular and/or co-curricular activities shall be assessed for use, possession or distribution of alcohol and/or illegal drugs including all controlled substances, counterfeit drugs, and other substances purported to be drugs. Drug violations also include possession of drug paraphernalia. If the violation occurs when a student is NOT involved in an activity/sport the suspension would begin with the next activity/sport the student participates in, unless they do not participate in any activities/sports for 2 consecutive semesters. During the 21 day suspension the student will be permitted to participate in practice, but will not be allowed to compete in games or travel with teams. A suspension can overlap from one sport to another. If a student-athlete is caught violating this policy at the end of a sports season the 21 days will start with the remainder of the season and will then be continued at the start of games during the next sports season.

A second drug and/or alcohol violation would mean the student would be suspended *90 calendar days* with the option to receive counseling services to return to play sooner. The student would have to provide documentation of an assessment for substance abuse at a school approved treatment center for drug/alcohol abuse. If the student regularly attended counseling, and did not have any other discipline issues, they could be eligible to return to play after 45 days suspension. This would be under the discretion of the coach and administration. They would be able to practice with the team and attend home games but not travel or sit on the bench.

A third drug and/or alcohol violation would mean suspension for *three hundred and sixty-five (365) calendar days* starting from the date of the infraction. In the event of a fourth offense, the student would be suspended for the length of the student's enrollment in the Laclede County R-1 Schools. These offenses are cumulative over their four years of enrollment. Violations of this nature from a previous school will also fall under our handbook standards and suspension schedule.

MSHSAA Policy

A student who commits an act for which charges may be or have been filed by law enforcement authorities under any municipal ordinance, misdemeanor or felony statute shall not be eligible until all proceedings with the legal system have been concluded and any penalty (i.e. jail time, fine, court costs, etc.) or special condition of probation (i.e. restitution, community service, counseling, etc.) has been satisfied. If law enforcement authorities determine that charges will not be filed, eligibility will be contingent upon local school policies. After a student has completed all court appearances and penalties, and has satisfied all special conditions of probation and remains under general probation only, local school authorities shall determine eligibility. Moving traffic offenses shall not affect eligibility, unless they involve drugs, alcohol, or injuries to others. (Editor's Note: If a traffic offense is accompanied

by an act listed above, such as property damage, bench warrant, etc., eligibility will be delayed per letter.)

ISS Infraction

A student assigned to In-School Suspension (ISS) may continue to practice and participate in athletic contests unless the specific disciplinary consequence, the Student Handbook, or administration states otherwise. ISS does not automatically create an additional athletic suspension. Repeated or serious conduct concerns may be addressed through an approved team contract or by administration, but athletic consequences will not conflict with the Student Handbook.

OSS Infraction

A student assigned to Out-of-School Suspension (OSS) is not eligible to attend or participate in practices, contests, team travel, or other school activities during the period of suspension. Athletic eligibility will resume when the OSS period has ended and the student is otherwise eligible under the student handbook, district policy, and MSHSAA requirements. Additional consequences may apply only when supported by the student handbook, district policy, or an approved team contract.

Hazing

Hazing—Soliciting, encouraging, aiding, or engaging in hazing is prohibited. “Hazing” means any activity that a reasonable person believes would negatively impact the mental or physical health or safety of a student. This activity may put the student in a ridiculous, humiliating, stressful or disconcerting position for the purposes of initiation, affiliation, admission, membership or maintenance of membership in any group, class, organization, club or athletic team. This may include, but not limited to, a grade level, student organization, or school sponsored activity. Hazing may occur even when all students involved are willing participants.

1. Any activity which recklessly endangers the physical health or safety of the student or prospective member, including but not limited to physical brutality, whipping, beating, branding, exposure to the elements, forced consumption of any food, liquor, drug, or other substance or forced smoking or chewing of tobacco products: or
2. Any activity which recklessly endangers the mental health of the student or prospective member, including but not limited to sleep deprivation, physical confinement, or other extreme stress inducing activity: or
3. Any activity that requires the student or prospective member to perform a duty or task which involves a violation of the criminal laws of this state or any political subdivision in this state. Students engaging in hazing will be subject to one or more of the following disciplinary actions:
 - a. Conference with parent(s)/guardian(s).
 - b. Removal from the co-curricular or extra-curricular activities.
 - c. Referral to appropriate law enforcement agencies.
 - d. Suspension for up to 180 days Expulsion for the remainder of the school term.
 - e. Permanent expulsion.

Academic Eligibility

Academic eligibility for interscholastic athletics will follow current MSHSAA semester eligibility requirements. Semester eligibility is the district-wide minimum standard for athletic participation. A student who is academically ineligible under MSHSAA rules remains ineligible for the applicable semester and cannot regain MSHSAA eligibility through an interim grade check. Any additional in-season academic expectations must be established by the head coach in a written team contract approved by the Athletic Administrator before the season begins.

1. MSHSAA academic eligibility is the minimum standard for participation in Conway interscholastic athletics. The Athletic Administrator will verify semester eligibility in accordance with current MSHSAA requirements.

2. A head coach may establish additional in-season academic expectations for their individual program through a written team contract approved by the Athletic Administrator before the season. Any additional standard must be clearly communicated to student-athletes and parents/guardians and applied consistently within that sport. For example, a coach may require student-athletes to maintain a specific minimum percentage, such as 67%, during the season.

3. Team academic expectations may include grade checks, study requirements, or team-level participation consequences. These additional expectations do not replace or change MSHSAA semester eligibility; they are program expectations administered by the coach under the approved team contract.

4. Any question regarding MSHSAA academic eligibility will be resolved using the current MSHSAA Official Handbook and district policy.

No Quit Policy

Participation on a Conway athletic team is a commitment to teammates, coaches, and the school. Students are encouraged to carefully consider that commitment before deciding to leave a team. A student who is considering leaving a team should first meet with the head coach so concerns can be discussed and the student understands any effect the decision may have on future participation. Students will have a three-day grace period at the beginning of the season to determine whether they wish to continue. After that period, a student who voluntarily leaves a team is expected to complete any responsibilities related to school-issued equipment and pay for any personalized player-pack items already ordered. A decision to leave one sport will not automatically prohibit the student from participating in another sport; however, unresolved team obligations, disciplinary matters, or repeated concerns regarding commitment may be reviewed by the coach and Athletic Administrator before future participation. The purpose of this policy is to promote communication, responsibility, and commitment rather than to prevent students from participating in school activities.

Playing Time Policy

Conway coaches and administration believe it is important to broaden the experience of Conway School students and athletes. That broadening is enhanced by playing time, it is also an important goal of the Conway School athletic program to strive toward excellence. Therefore, no

minimum per game playing time provisions or minimum numbers of athletic meets, in which athletes must compete, are established. Playing time decisions are left up to the individual coaches.

Try-outs & Cuts

Conway High School has a cut policy in place allowing coaches to make cuts following a three day try-out period. Every student wishing to try-out for a sport must be given an equal opportunity to make the squad unless previous discipline problems prohibit the player from participating. All try-outs must include a minimum of three practice sessions before the squad is announced. If a program does choose to make cuts, the head coach and their staff will make cuts based on their evaluation of each athlete during the three-day tryout period. Each sport has a set number of athletes that must be met before cuts can be made. Dismissal from a team due to behavior and being cut are two different things and do not count as the same thing. Conway High School encourages students that get cut from a sport to visit with the Athletic Administrator to see what other sports and activities may be a good fit for that particular student.

Each team will keep at minimum:

Baseball/Softball-18-----cuts can be made after 21 students come out for the sport

Boys/Girls Basketball-16-----cuts can be made after 19 students come out for the sport

Volleyball-18-----cuts can be made after 21 students come out for the sport

Cheerleading-18----- cuts can be made after 21 students come out for the sport

Cross Country-There will be no cuts

Track and Field-There will be no cuts

Jr. High Sports — Cuts for the season will be discussed with the Principal and Athletic Director to determine an optimal roster size based on participation numbers, available coaches, facilities, and program needs. When sixth-grade students are permitted to participate in a junior high sport, roster decisions will be based on the best available athletes for the team and will not be determined solely by grade level. A sixth-, seventh-, or eighth-grade student may earn a roster position based on the coaching staff's evaluation. Playing time at all junior high grade levels is determined by the coaching staff and is not guaranteed.

Communication with Coaches

Conway High School is proud of the men and women who make up our coaching staff and are pleased to say that they are genuinely dedicated to not only athletic performance but emotional, mental, social, and physical growth and development of our athletes. However, we also recognize that there will be situations in which athletes are dissatisfied with their situation on a team and/or unhappy with the coach. If that occurs, our desire is to resolve the issue(s) fairly, expeditiously, and professionally. Doing so requires these steps:

1. The athlete should meet privately with the coach to express his/her concerns and to receive the coach's explanation of his/her status on the team.

2. If the athlete meeting does not result in a resolution of the problem, the parent(s) should call Conway High School to arrange an appointment to meet with the coach to express their view and listen to the coach's perspective.

3. Only after steps 1 and 2 have failed to result in resolution of the issue should the Athletic Director and/or Administrator be contacted. (Concerns regarding playing time or coaching strategies are not administrative matters and will not be discussed with coaches and not with the administration.)

Parents or athletes should not attempt to talk to a coach with a complaint or concern after a contest. We ask that athletes and parents wait to contact the Coach or Athletic Administrator until after 24 business hours of the event to discuss the issue. We appreciate your compliance with this policy. We are in the business of educating young people and the examples set by parents and coaches leave lasting impressions. Handling problems and disputes maturely and professionally is a great example for our students and a valuable experience for all concerned.

Extracurricular Conflicts

If a conflict arises involving an athletic contest and an event related to another school activity, the coach and teacher/sponsor will discuss whether accommodations can be made to allow the student to participate in both events. If an agreement cannot be reached in this manner, the student and parent(s) will decide how best to proceed, keeping the best interest of the student in mind. Teachers and coaches may assign alternative work/tasks in place of the missed event. No additional or punitive penalties may be assessed beyond the loss of benefits (e.g., grades, participation) inherent in the event itself. It is understood that postseason contests/performances will take priority over regular in-season contests/performances.

Lettering Policy

Varsity lettering requirements will be established by the head coach or sponsor for each individual activity. Because participation standards and competitive opportunities differ by sport and activity, the head coach/sponsor will determine the criteria required to earn a varsity letter. Lettering criteria must be communicated to student-athletes before or at the beginning of the season and applied consistently within the program. The Athletic Administrator may review lettering criteria when necessary to ensure they align with school and district expectations.

SENATE BILL 63

Resident Participant Students throughout MSHSAA's 100-year history, participation in interscholastic athletics and activities required that students be enrolled full-time in the member school. In recent years, non-traditional options have been added by the membership which gave more flexibility, specifically for students who attended home schools or virtual schools. Some public school districts allowed part-time enrollment (e.g., two or more classes) to grant access to athletics and activities. Effective August 28, 2025, Senate Bill 63 changes the rules.

This new law expands participation opportunities to home school, Family Paced Education (FPE) School, and full-time virtual school students with the public or charter school which serves the place they live. The law applies to a broad scope of athletics, fine arts, and integrated co-curricular activities, not just those governed by MSHSAA.

MSHSAA will refer to students who are eligible to participate under Senate Bill 63 as resident participant students. This new category of students will be eligible through a new by-law, Non-Traditional Option 3.

Key Participation Principles

- Only full-time students, who receive at least a portion of their education in home school or FPE School, or are a full-time virtual school student will be eligible through the new law.
- Participation includes interscholastic athletics, MSHSAA activities, and other co-curricular activities (e.g., FFA, Mock Trial, etc.).
- Co-curricular requirement parity: If your school requires participation in a course for participation in the activity (e.g., band, CTE programs), the same requirement applies to these new resident participant students. 16
- Students must:
 - Reside within the attendance boundary (public and charter only)
 - Adhere to eligibility standards (academic, conduct, physicals)
 - Pay applicable participation fees

Clarifications

- Schools may not require course enrollment beyond prerequisites.
- Schools may require participation in essential instructional components (e.g., band class for marching band).
- All participants, regardless of enrollment type, are expected to meet discipline, attendance, and eligibility standards connected to the applicable sport or activity.
- The academic standard will apply to all students, regardless of enrollment type. The differences will be the way in which the standard applies and the way in which a student's academic eligibility is determined. The school will be required to verify all student eligibility. For traditional, Non-Traditional Option 1, and Non-Traditional Option 2, this will be done as in the past. For Non-Traditional Option 3, the school will ask the student's parent(s) to verify if the academic standard has been met, each time the standard is verified for all students at the public or charter school.
- All students will be subject to the transfer rules. Resident participant students who are participating for the first time with a MSHSAA member school will have eligibility through a new by-law exception. Any transfer of eligibility after the first time will be just like another transfer.
- Students who leave a school to become a resident participant student due to confirmed or anticipated academic or disciplinary ineligibility must wait 365 days before becoming eligible.
- Records created to determine eligibility must be protected by the school of participation unless otherwise required by law.
- Random drug testing (if applicable) will also apply

****Updated information regarding SB 63. This information is subject to change based on legislation.**

Handbook Consistency

The Conway Junior & Senior High School Student Handbook establishes the district-wide rules for student attendance, discipline, and extracurricular eligibility. This Athletic Handbook is intended to match those requirements and provide sport-specific expectations. If wording in the two handbooks conflicts, administration will apply the current district policy and MSHSAA requirements and correct the handbook language so that a single consistent standard is used for students.