

Descriptor Term: STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS

Descriptor Code: JI

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The Guilford County Board of Education endorses athletic activities that support students' attainment of high academic achievement. The Board believes that student participation in interscholastic athletics should be contingent on student successes in school as measured by grade point average, attendance and conduct. The Board believes that all students should give priority to their academic endeavors before committing to the time and commitment required for participation in interscholastic sports, and further that good scholarship and attendance are an integral part of the Guilford County Schools Athletic Program (the "Athletic Program"). Subject to law, local rules adopted by GCS and rules established by the North Carolina High School Athletic Association (NCHSAA) and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), high school students are eligible to participate in interscholastic athletics. Eligibility of students in the programs for exceptional children will be in accordance with local, state and federal guidelines. The Guilford County Board of Education has established standards for student eligibility and developed forms and assurances for students, parents, coaches and assistant coaches.

Violations of any standards established for athletic participation by students or their parents or guardians and/or any misrepresentation of any information submitted for athletic participation may result in the loss of the student's eligibility to participate in athletics in Guilford County Schools, and, potentially, in any school sanctioned by the NCHSAA. Additionally, staff members who exercise direct or indirect influence upon prospective athletes in an attempt to influence an athlete's choice of school assignment for the purpose of athletics or who otherwise violate any part of the rules regarding athletic eligibility will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Grade Point Average and Eligibility to Participate in Athletic Activities

To be eligible to participate in interscholastic athletics, students participating in athletics must pass a minimum load as established by NCHSAA during the preceding semester and must meet GCS and State promotion standards. In addition to existing academic requirements, all students are required to earn a weighted GPA of 2.0 each semester. First semester eligibility is determined by the GPA earned during the preceding spring semester and second semester eligibility is determined using the GPA in the first semester of the same school year. First-year freshmen are required to earn a weighted 1.50 GPA for the first semester in order to be eligible during the second semester. Beyond their first semester as freshmen, all students will be required to have a weighted 2.0 GPA. If the GPA for the spring semester falls below a weighted 2.0, but the GPA for both semesters combined is at or above a weighted 2.0, the student will be eligible for participation during the first semester. Freshmen upon first entering the 9th grade are academically eligible to participate in athletic activities.

Promotion

In addition to meeting the grade point academic eligibility required by GCS described above, the State and GCS require students to be promoted from the previous grade in order to remain academically eligible to participate in athletics. Each school has established promotion standards based on that school's academic program consistent with the requirements of the State of North Carolina.

Attendance

GCS believes that regular attendance is a fundamental component of a successful educational experience and expects student athletes to meet attendance eligibility standards established for participation in interscholastic sports. Students must be present in school at least 85% of the school days each semester in order to remain eligible for the following school semester's sports. The attendance rules apply regardless of whether the absences are excused or unexcused.

Summer School

Courses taken during the formal July summer school program under guidelines established by GCS may be used to recover credit affecting athletic eligibility for the fall semester. Per NCHSAA guidelines, credits earned during summer school may be applied to the immediately preceding spring semester for athletic eligibility purposes.

Hardship Waiver of Academic Eligibility Requirements

Occasionally a student faces circumstances that are unforeseeable, unavoidable or out of the control of the student or his parent or guardian and that have the direct effect of rendering a student academically ineligible for participation in athletics. Additionally, although students with disabilities ordinarily can and will meet all eligibility criteria, occasionally students with disabilities may have circumstances that prevent them from meeting eligibility criteria. If their ineligibility has a direct relationship to the student's disability, the school may apply for a waiver.

GCS will consider whether it is appropriate to grant a waiver of the attendance or academic requirements for the semester at issue only. Hardship waivers will be considered at the request of the school administration of the school where the student is enrolled at the time of the request. The school administration shall follow the procedures established for consideration of a hardship waiver and will only be considered during the Hardship Waiver Period designated by the GCS Director of Athletics.

In order to be considered a hardship, the cause of the student's ineligibility must be directly and materially as a result of causes outside the control of the student and his family such as a serious illness or family emergency or other unforeseeable and uncontrollable condition or, if a student has a disability that the student believes directly and substantially caused the student's ineligibility, that may also be considered a hardship. The mere fact that a student has a disability, absent a direct relationship between the disability and the failure to meet the eligibility criteria, is not sufficient to establish a hardship. Consideration shall also be given to the potential effect of the commitment of time and effort required for athletic participation on the academic achievement of students for whom waivers are requested.

Students Assigned a Base School

The Board believes that students should not be allowed to transfer from school to school for the purpose of participating in athletics. To that end, students will be assigned a "base" school for the purposes of athletic participation. The "base" school will be the student's school of assignment according to the student's domicile or administrative assignment as determined by GCS in their ninth grade year or whenever they first enter GCS schools in high school.

Students who attend schools other than their base schools after the beginning of ninth grade and whose transfers were consistent with administrative procedures (JI-P), will not have a 365-day waiting period from the date of enrollment at the non-base school before they are eligible to participate in interscholastic athletics. Students who attend schools other than their base schools after the beginning of ninth grade and whose transfers are not consistent with administrative procedures (JI-P) will have a 365-day waiting period from the date of enrollment at the non-base school before they are eligible to participate in interscholastic athletics.

Proof of Domicile

Annually, prior to participation in a sport for the current school year, parents and students are required to complete a residence verification form and provide at least two documents as proof of domicile. Parents and students should be aware that they may have only one domicile at any one time. In order to establish domicile, they must be able to show that they reside at the address full time and permanently, that they have abandoned any previous domicile, and that they intend to indefinitely continue to reside at the domicile. Temporary or part-time residences will not be considered domiciles for purposes of school assignment or athletic eligibility.

Cases of alleged impropriety related to residence will be investigated by the Athletic Eligibility Committee, to be established by the District Athletic Director. If the Committee determines that the student was improperly enrolled, the student will lose athletic eligibility for a period up to 365 days and will be required to enroll in the appropriate school.

Students who apply for enrollment at any school using false information shall be prohibited from participating in any extracurricular activities, including sports, for 365 days. Students and parents who fail to timely update their domicile information may also be subject to a period of ineligibility up to and including 365 days.

Schools with No Athletic Programs

Several GCS high schools, including early colleges, middle colleges and Weaver Academy, among others, have no athletic programs. Students enrolled in these schools are permitted to participate in athletics at their base school without a waiting period.

Student Conduct

A student who is suspended from school is not eligible to practice, play, dress out, travel or attend any meeting during the time of suspension. If the suspension includes the last day of school before a vacation or weekend, the student becomes eligible at their base school the next calendar day after the last day of the suspension. Students who transfer in lieu of completing or in the midst of serving a long-term suspension at their base school are not eligible to participate in athletics at their new school for 365 days.

A student who is absent from school will not be allowed to practice, play, dress out, travel or attend any meeting of the team or group on the day of the absence. Exceptions such as funerals, field trips and college visitations must be approved by the principal in advance.

The superintendent shall develop procedures for the implementation of this policy.