

Seward Middle School

Extra-Curricular Activity Handbook

2025-26

Information for Parents and Students

Being part of an athletic team or school activity at any level requires commitment and dedication. Joining a team/activity offers countless opportunities for personal development beyond the attainment of physical skills. Participants learn self-discipline, the value of hard work and self-sacrifice, goal setting, problem solving, self-evaluation, and teamwork. Enjoyment of the activity is critical to the motivation of the participants, but they should expect to work hard, and understand that success will not come overnight. There is much to learn about yourself and others in winning, losing and performing; we hope our student athletes/participants will develop perseverance, and excellent sportsmanship and behaviors.

Seward Middle School has a no-cut policy. Our no-cut policy refers to the opportunity to join a team/group. It does not guarantee playing/performance time. However, all athletes/participants who adhere to the coach's training guidelines will participate in competitions. We will evaluate our numbers after the signup and first practices. Teams and roles will be divided by the coach/sponsors' determination of ability into different playing or performing levels. These assignments can change as the year progresses if significant growth in ability is observed, injuries occur, or disciplinary or other reasons call for a change.

With this opportunity comes a responsibility. **The athletes/participants are expected to attend all practice sessions** (typically 1 - 1.5 hours after school) **and contests**. Absences must be excused by the coach or sponsor and should be detailed in a parental note or email, preferably in advance. Some of the contests will be held at other schools, which requires that our athletes travel (by school vehicles) during the week. They often do not return to school until 7:30pm or later on these evenings. Athletes/Participants should ensure that they have appropriate clothing and especially footwear for participation in their selected activity. Any physical limitations or medical restrictions should be communicated with the coach/sponsor before the first practice. Homework schedules and healthy sleep patterns are part of the student's responsibility.

Student athletes/participants need support from their coach/sponsor, teammates and their families in order to meet the challenges that an athletic team/activity offers. They are experiencing an increased school load, and may also have many additional interests outside of school. For some of our students, participation on a school team is the first competitive team experience they have had. Juggling their many commitments is a part of their learning.

In order that Seward Middle School athletic/activity programs serve the athletes/participants during the season, and also best prepare them for potential participation in high school, the program's focus is on skill development, knowledge of the activity, basic strategies, and the rules and expectations of the sport/activity.

School Activities/Club Activities Scheduling & Priorities

Our middle school activities programs value school activities for building community, teamwork, and school pride. Students form strong bonds with classmates and share in school achievements during school activities. While club activities have their benefits, SMS athletes/participants are expected to prioritize SMS activities when Club activity scheduling conflicts arise and discuss with their coaches/sponsors any potential schedule conflicts well in advance.

These are difficult skills and mindsets to develop and practice. We hope that our middle school student-athletes will make a healthy start, so they can fully develop as athletes/participants in high school and beyond.

Attendance and Academic Eligibility

Academic Eligibility

- Any student failing (below 70%) when grades are checked is potentially ineligible to participate in extra-curricular activities. Students who are academically ineligible cannot travel with the team or suit up for any event. Activity practice is permitted however, teachers or coaches may require students to stay after school to complete missing work.
- Grades are checked every Thursday prior to the eligibility week. If a student has a failing grade they will be ineligible. They will be given an eligibility sheet identifying the class they are ineligible in and what their current grade is. They may become eligible to participate by taking the eligibility sheet to all of their teachers to sign and verify improvement in their grade and/or sufficient effort to improve in that class.
- To become eligible the athlete has to improve their grade to passing or must be “showing sufficient effort to improve” in the class(es) they are failing in. The classroom teacher will determine eligibility and the progress report will be signed on the appropriate time schedule at the discretion of the teacher.
- Once they are passing and/or showing sufficient effort they will become eligible again after turning in their signed eligibility sheet to the office.
- The students are responsible for their own eligibility sheets. The teachers or office staff will not be responsible for reminding the students to turn in their sheets.
- **Eligibility sheets need to be turned in to the office by the end of TOP Time the day of the contest to participate that day.**

Academic Detention/Practice Attendance

- Academic detentions will not affect a student’s eligibility but it can affect their playing time during contests.
- Students are expected to practice upon completion of academic detentions and it is the responsibility of the student to get to practice in a timely manner.

Unexcused/Excused Absences

- Each coach will have guidelines regarding unexcused absences.
- If an athlete needs to miss part of a practice because they need extra help from a teacher or needs to make-up work, this will be considered an excused absence. The coach needs to be made aware of the situation prior to the practice and the athlete will need to bring a note to the coach either before the practice or when they arrive to practice. Again the athlete needs to make every attempt to attend practice after meeting with the teacher. If they do not show up to practice it will become an unexcused absence.

School Attendance

- Attendance, for the full day, the day of a contest is required to be eligible for the contest that day. Arrangements in advance for extenuating circumstances, such as doctor/dentist appointments, funerals or other activities, can be made in writing. Every attempt should be made to be in attendance the day of a contest. Anyone going home ill and then returning for the contest will not be permitted to play.

Expectations and Standards

Participation in athletics in Middle School is completely voluntary. Our school has a no cut policy for all athletic teams. The school arranges transportation, provides facilities, coaching, and equipment. The school reserves the right to revoke or restrict the privilege of participation if a student fails to live up to the expectations and standards as outlined below.

1. Without exception athletic/activity participants must hand in a completed permission form, with parent's signature. No athlete/participant may compete until this form is completed and submitted. Athletes also need a current physical and the completed form is to be on file at SMS. Athletes also need to pay the activity fee and purchase an activity ticket.
2. Athletes are financially responsible for all school equipment furnished to them. Grades will not be issued until all equipment is returned. The student's family will be billed for any items not returned at the end of the season.
3. Athletes will need to provide some of their own gear in addition to school issued gear and equipment. They will be expected to wear proper gear and equipment as outlined in each sport to all games and practices.
4. School personnel will make every effort to keep the locker rooms secure: however the student-athlete is responsible for issued school equipment as well as his/her own personal belongings. The locker areas are to be kept clean and there is to be no horseplay in those areas.
5. Athletes/participants and coaches are to travel as a team to and from contests, unless special arrangements have been made with parents and the coach. If students need to ride to an activity with a parent or ride home with someone other than a parent, the parent needs to come to the middle school office and fill out the transportation liability waiver prior to that activity.
6. Athletes are expected to attend practice everyday—if an exception is required, the student should let the coach know as early as possible, and in person.
7. The no-cut policy welcomes all athletes to join a team. All athletes who regularly attend practice and follow the coach's training rules will have opportunities to compete.
8. Athletes/participants are expected to conform to the overall school's standards of behavior as outlined in the student handbook, and to demonstrate respect and good sportsmanship and behavior in all SMS situations.
9. If an athlete/participant is sent the 4-R room for a behavioral reason on the day of a contest their ability to participate in that contest will be under the discretion of the Principal and/or Activities Director.

Communication of Concerns -

If concerns arise during the season, the following steps are expected to be followed in this order:

- 1) player/participant discusses concerns with head coach
- 2) player/participant & parent arrange a meeting with the head coach
after game discussions (within 24 hours of game ending) are not appropriate
- 3) player/participant, parent, head coach & Activities Director (and/or Administration) meet if needed

Drug and Alcohol Violations Policy

- (this includes Tobacco and Vapor Products)

Any athlete/participant found using, under the influence, or in the possession of drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or vapor products shall be subject to following disciplinary action.

First Violation – Suspension from participating in the extra-curricular program and all school activities (including all organizations and special events such as dances) for 10 (ten) school days and a minimum of two activities. The first day of the suspension will be the day of the conference with the student.

Second Violation – Students may select Option A or B.

Option A: Suspension from participating in the extra-curricular program and all school activities (including all organizations and special events such as homecoming and prom) for 1 (one) calendar year. The first day of the suspension will be the day of the conference with the student.

Option B: Suspension from participating in the extra-curricular program and all school activities (including all organizations and special events such as prom) for 30 (thirty) school days. The first day of the suspension will be the day of the conference with the student. If students choose option B, students and parents also agree to participate in a school-approved program for chemical dependency. Said program must be administered by a certified alcohol and drug abuse counselor and be approved by the school authorities. The student will need to successfully complete the approved chemical dependency program. Proof of successful completion of program must be submitted in writing to school Activities Director. Failure to participate and successfully complete the approved chemical dependency program may cause the participating student to be suspended from extra-curricular activities for the remainder of the school year. All costs associated with the program are to be borne by the student/parent or guardian. Information regarding such programs may be obtained from the Counselor's and/or Activities Director's office.

Subsequent Violations: Upon finding of a subsequent violation, the student will be suspended from participating in the extra-curricular program and all school activities (including organizations and special events such as dances) for 1 (one) calendar year. The first day of the suspension will be the day of the conference with the student.

Self-Reporting - Students who self-report an infraction of the above Drug and Alcohol Policy shall have the suspension reduced by 50%.