



THE DIOCESE OF BELLEVILLE

Dear Parents,

Throughout the Diocese of Belleville, all our Catholic parishes, and all our schools, have one goal: to live out the Catholic Church's universal mission of evangelization on the local level. The parishes and schools carry out this task in a variety of ways: Mass, gospel readings, sermons, PSR, religion classes, everyday activities by priests and teachers and, yes, interscholastic athletics.

The sports program at all schools deals primarily with the athletes, teaching them respect, self-discipline, responsibility, and appreciation of the God-given talents they have worked on in their athletic contests. As coaches strive to teach and develop the above qualities in the athletes in their charge, so must the schools, principals, and athletic directors strive to reinforce these same things in the parents.

As a parent, it is only natural to want the best for your children. Hopefully, their experiences in interscholastic athletics on the elementary school level will help them develop strong character, build a solid social circle, learn how to be a part of a team, and grow in responsibility, respect, self-discipline, and accountability.

As in life, there are varying skill levels in academics, musical talent, size, athletic ability, and a variety of other areas, and there are winners and losers on the scoreboard at the end of a contest. However, everyone can and should learn valuable lessons from their participation in interscholastic sports. The benefits of participation should not be judged by playing time alone, there are many other positive experiences that will serve students well in other aspects of their adult lives.

From a parenting standpoint, you should have faith in the coaches that will put your child into situations in which they have the best chance to succeed. In team sports, the success of the team matters, but it is important to remember that there are a variety of ways to define success. One way to define success is players striving to do their best while keeping in mind the Gospel mission of the school. All players can contribute to that success, whether in practice or in games. Just as all students do not get equal grades in school, all players may not get equal playing time in games, but they can still be an important part of the team.

Remember that you as parents, represent your child, your parish, and your school when you attend athletic contests. You, too, must show self-discipline and respect. Referees and officials are human beings, just like the players are. Everyone will make mistakes. Realize that your player may miss a lay-up, or a serve, and a referee may miss a call.

At times, it will be difficult and frustrating to watch your child play in an athletic contest. The primary concern is for the athletes to do their best, and hopefully, be successful as a team. But even if they play hard, they may still be defeated. In order to help all people involved in interscholastic sports, the Diocese of Belleville has mandated that ALL parents attend a meeting to discuss their behavior and attitudes at athletic contests. Parents must sign a Code of Conduct that states they will act according to, and abide by, the written policies of the Diocese of Belleville. This Code of Conduct must be signed before a child is allowed to compete in interscholastic sports.

Any coach, player, parent, supporter, or spectator ejected from a game will receive a one game suspension and may not attend the next contest. This suspension includes any game for the rest of that day and the next scheduled game. Two ejections of a coach, player, parent, supporter, or spectator will result in an automatic suspension for the remainder of the school year from all athletic activities.

Each school should submit an Incident Report Form to the Diocesan Department of Education in the event of any unsportsmanlike conduct by coaches, players, parents, supporters, or spectators. These reports should be submitted within 72 hours and should not be based on the calls of officials or referees. A copy of the Incident Report Form will be sent to the principals of the schools involved. Every school is to adopt and follow a "24 hour" cooling off period to diffuse potential problems between coaches, parents, supporters, spectators, and officials.

Any parent, supporter, or spectator that disregards these guidelines shall be asked to leave the gym or playing field. If the parent, supporter, or spectator disregards the request to vacate the area, the game shall not continue until the person(s) leaves and could result in forfeiture of the game. The athletic director/designated representative, or coach shall see that these regulations are enforced. Any parent, supporter, or spectator that consistently violates these regulations shall not be allowed to attend games until determined by the principal or school athletic director. Any athletic director/designated representative, or coach that refuses to enforce these regulations shall be suspended temporarily or permanently as determined by the principal.

It is our hope that by following these guidelines that you, your child/children, and everyone involved will have an enjoyable and beneficial sports year.

Sincerely,



Sarah Lanham
Associate Director of Education
Diocese of Belleville