



2024-2025

Hancock
Day School
Athletic
Handbook

In keeping with our core values, Hancock Day School emphasizes teamwork, sportsmanship, leadership, and a strong work ethic in developing student athletes. Athletic practices and games (along with physical education classes) serve as vehicles for students to improve in these areas. Our dual mission is to develop individual student athletes and strive to win in a competitive arena. However, The Hancock Way is not to win at any cost but to win with our core values at the forefront. By doing so, our athletes, coaches, collective teams, and parents will set a standard in the community that winning can be accomplished without compromising our values. Athletics events are an opportunity to showcase the Hancock Way, where positive encouragement is at the forefront. By demonstrating sportsmanship toward teammates, coaches, officials, and opponents, we remain true to our principles.

The Hancock Day School Athletics Handbook is written to provide a better understanding of the opportunities and expectations for physical activity at our school. The handbook will be updated each June by the Athletics Director and then submitted to an Athletics Committee (consisting of a parent, teacher, coach, the head of school, and someone outside the HDS family) for suggestions and revisions. Once this group critiques the handbook, the Director of Athletics will submit the Handbook to the Board of Trustees for final approval. The Athletics Handbook will then be posted on the school website at the beginning of each school year, and a hard copy will be made available in the Director of Athletics's office.

Our Athletics program is a source of pride for our school and community. Through the collaborative efforts of highly qualified coaches, dedicated sports staff, and committed administrative personnel, students participate in skill development sessions, individual and team practices, and competitive events. These opportunities allow our students to explore personal areas of interest according to their individual skill sets, and they provide exposure to various recreational/lifelong sports. In addition to school and team rules, Hancock Day School follows guidelines established by the Savannah Parochial Athletics League (SPAL). See the attached link for the document.

BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND SKILLS

HDS physical education classes and sports teams collaborate to develop our student athletes. Because our students develop skills and interests at different rates, certain PE classes and team practices center around individual skill development. Practices and classes are organized and supervised to ensure safety first and learning second. Allowing each student to experience a sense of accomplishment is important, as is helping them understand that we cannot be successful at every activity/sport. We can help our students learn to deal with a lack of success and losing by seeing these opportunities as areas for growth rather than failures. Confident students know how to handle winning and losing.

Pre-K and Kindergarten

Students at this age level are exploring a variety of locomotor and non-locomotor movements as they learn to share space and equipment with others safely. They explore social interaction through physical activities. In addition to the opportunities provided in PE classes, Hancock students can attend age-appropriate summer camps. At camp, students are engaged in a specific sport as they continue to develop social and athletic skills.

First and Second Grades

Students perform more locomotor and non-locomotor movements at different speeds with and without equipment. They practice transferring body weight and maintaining balance. They learn to follow teacher directions for additional rules, protocols, and etiquette in physical education. Although many schools wait until later grades, HDS teaches rules of the game and sport-specific skills at this grade level, as students are beginning to make decisions about physical activities that bring confidence and those that are a challenge.

Third and Fourth Grades

PE classes at this grade level concentrate on skills from prior grades and introduce more basic rules of popular games. Students perform multiple combinations of locomotor and non-locomotor movements with different equipment, speeds, and skill levels. Students work cooperatively and communicate positively with others in PE, regardless of individual ability levels. Competitive skills are further developed by introducing higher-level drills and Chalk Talks about strategies. Participation is a significant component of game competition, allowing students to play and win/lose with good sportsmanship. As students become more aware of differences among classmates in physical development, maturation, and varying skill levels, they practice providing encouragement and positive feedback.

Fifth and Sixth Grades

Students apply different combinations of movement and skills in game-like situations. Lifetime sports (i.e., running) are introduced along with health topics about dealing with the whole person and how we should care for our bodies and minds. Commitment and dedication are essential in the development of fifth and sixth graders as many become more serious about sports and physical activities. Competition and athletic events are a big part of the growth process at this age level. Skills and training are more intentional and directed toward game competitions. As a result, practices are more intense, and expectations are higher. Starting in the fifth grade, students often attend summer camps and participate on club teams to improve individual skill sets.

Seventh and Eighth Grades

As students have more opportunities to participate in physical activities, they develop preferences according to interests and skills. They learn how physical activity can help with stress reduction and healthy lifestyle goals. Competition and winning become a focal point at this age, preparing students for high school athletics. Hancock athletes should be ready for the increasing demands that high school programs require. They should know how to win and lose with good sportsmanship and understand the commitment it takes to be successful. Making the team and receiving playing time are earned, not given. Students committed to a sport should work and practice tenaciously, improving their skill sets and increasing their playing time and ability to contribute to the individual/team outcome. Student athletes who excel and continue to have a strong work ethic will be given more opportunities at the high school level.

COMMUNICATION

Communication is crucial to a successful Athletics program—positive communication among coaches, parents, administrators, and athletes is vital to our success. We use a variety of communication venues, including social media* and face-to-face meetings. We share information about changing circumstances and athletic successes via TeamSnap, The Eagles' Nest, our school website, etc. Meetings (parents, sports captains, etc.) provide an opportunity to voice ideas, accomplishments, and concerns.

*Please note that negative comments on social media by parents, athletes, or coaches are inappropriate and do not support HDS's mission. Also, see our Technology Acceptable Use Policy in the Hancock Day School Handbook.

*HDS uses both Hudl and YouTube, which means some of our game films are shared outside the HDS community. Please be aware that if your child participates in HDS sports, this is a possibility.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

We encourage and need parents to be involved with HDS Athletics. Parents are responsible for ensuring student athletes have an up-to-date physical on file in the HDS nurse's office. Parents are also asked to read the Athletic Participation Agreement with their children and then sign and return it to their head coach (see attachments).

*****Parents and Students must sign a Hancock Athletics Participation Agreement before the child is allowed to participate in games!**

Whether coaching or volunteering for an event, positive parental involvement supports our Athletics goals and helps with the rising cost of maintaining a quality program. All volunteers must have a background check before working with our students. Whenever possible, we will assign parents of student athletes to workstations (e.g., concessions, ticket-taking) that allow them to watch the events while working.

COACHES

We are excited about the number of people who want to be involved as coaches at HDS. Whether the individual is a paid coach or a volunteer, this responsibility should not be taken lightly. All coaches must have a background check before working with our young people. Coaches must also sign a contract that describes their expectations and responsibilities as a coach (see attached). The Athletics Director will oversee all the coaches. Any coach dismissed from an athletic event must meet with the AD before continuing to coach. There will be preseason and postseason meetings to discuss hot topics, brainstorm, and evaluate performance each year.

HDS believes in the importance of exposure to different coaching styles and experiences as student athletes develop. This exposure becomes particularly important in preparing our athletes for high school sports. Therefore, whenever possible, our head coaches will not follow teams as they progress through the grade levels but will continue to coach a particular age group/grade. There will be a two year rotation for parent head coaches when possible to allow other parents head coaching opportunities and help athletes see different coaching styles. The former coach is allowed to stay on the staff as an assistant coach

PARENT COACHES

There are situations when parents are asked to coach their own children, but whenever possible, we prefer the parent assume the role of an assistant and not a head coach. We will have a committee evaluate players for team tryouts. (No parent coach should be involved with that committee for obvious reasons.) Additionally, we ask that parents not coach their children from the sidelines. Student athletes must remain focused on the game with their team/coaches.

MAKING THE TEAM

The lack of gym space and support personnel makes it necessary to keep squad sizes down to manageable teams. In the fifth and sixth grades, if we have an abundance of players, we may be able to create an additional team to provide more opportunities for participation.

Parent coaches who have a student on the team will not be involved in the evaluation tryouts for their team. There will be a small committee of people who will watch the tryouts and look at tryout statistics to determine the squad. The Athletics Director will be involved in some capacity at all tryouts. In some circumstances, it may appear that better athletes did not make the team. For example, if 20 students are trying out for basketball and 10 are good point guards, then some less talented point guards may have to forfeit a position on the team

to a taller player to give the team needed balance. The Athletics Director must approve any cuts made to the roster.

Before tryouts, every player and parent must sign an Athletic Participation Agreement, which includes individual and team expectations. Additionally, players will be asked to indicate how they want to be notified if they do not make the team. Notification by email will occur on the weekend following tryouts. If an athlete is not selected, they can continue to build sport-related skills by participating in intramurals, recreational leagues, and summer camps.

PLAYING TIME

Playing time is earned and not given. This is a universal concept and one of the foundations of the HDS Athletic Program. Playing time is at the coaching staff's discretion and involves factors such as commitment to practice, positive attitude, desire, and performance. If student athletes want to earn more playing time, the first step would be to evaluate their performance in the areas above and look for ways to improve. Hopefully, this helps, and no other action is needed!

Following the self-evaluation and follow-up work, if student athletes still seek to earn more playing time, the next step would be for them to have a private conversation with the coach. They should approach the coach by asking, "In what areas can I improve so that I can earn more playing time?" It is the athlete's responsibility to improve in those areas and show progress. This will not happen overnight—it takes time!

The third step should only be taken once the athletes have attempted the first two steps and given themselves time to improve. This step is for parents to ask to meet with the coach (after the 24-hour rule listed below) and, in a private conversation, ask, "Can you help me understand what (child's name) needs to work on to improve?" It is important not to compare your child to another child but to encourage them to self-reflect and continue improving their skill. The last step is to meet with the Athletic Director if questions have not been answered in prior steps.

24 HOUR RULE

HDS policy requires parents and athletes to wait until the following day before approaching the coach about a game. HDS has found this rule to be best practice because it allows coaches, parents, and players to process the game's events and make informed judgments based on reflection rather than in the heat of the moment.

PHYSICAL EXAMS

Coaches must turn in their team rosters to the school nurse before the first practice. **Before they can practice with the team, each athlete must have an up-to-date physical on file in the HDS nurse's office.**

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

All student athletes are expected to turn in classwork and homework as assigned throughout the season. Failure to do so could result in not being allowed to participate in practice and/or games. All student athletes are expected to maintain a 2.5 GPA to participate in sports.

ATTENDANCE

Student athletes should be in school for at least half of the day on game days to be eligible to play that day. If they miss the second half of the school day, they must have a doctor's excuse to participate in after-school practice or play in the game that day.

Commitment is an important value that we want our students to learn. Once students make the team, they are committed to being on time and attending every practice and game. Injured players should attend practice once they have a doctor's note to return to school (they are expected to observe practice even when they cannot participate to make the transition back to active playing time go as smoothly as possible). Multiple unexcused tardies and absences could result in a player's dismissal from the team. Parents help us reinforce this responsibility to the team effort by having students at practice and games on time and planning vacations around playing seasons (particularly avoiding trips at tournament time).

UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT

Uniforms and identifying team garments must be pre-approved by the Athletics Director and Head of Middle School before they can be worn as an acceptable part of the school uniform. All uniforms and equipment issued during the playing season will be distributed by the head coach and/or the Athletics Director. Every athlete must sign a contract acknowledging receipt of a uniform and/or equipment. When everything is returned, the player and coach will sign this uniform contract at the end of the season. Equipment/uniforms should be returned immediately after the last game. There will be a late fee for anything not returned within a week after the season ends. If a uniform is lost, the athlete must pay for its replacement.

HDS will partner with a third party to provide a team store whenever possible so players can order items for each sport played (including extra T-shirts, shorts, shoes, and playing gear).

FACILITIES

Hancock facilities are for Hancock teams only. The use of our facilities must be approved and scheduled through the Athletics Department. Outside groups are not allowed to use Hancock facilities due to liability and insurance considerations at this time.

FUNDRAISING

All fundraising activities for sports must be approved by the HDS Athletics Director and Director of Development before initiating. No commitments, publicity, or purchases should occur before approval.

AWARDS AND BANQUETS

Beginning in June 2024, the Athletics Committee will discuss how we should recognize our athletes for the upcoming season. In June each year, the HDS Board of Trustees will approve methods for recognition for the upcoming year. During the 2024-2025 sports seasons, the awards banquets will be scheduled by each individual team to occur within days of the team's last contest to allow multi-sport athletes to transition to their next sport without missing the banquet (i.e., a pizza party). Individual awards are not a priority at these celebrations. We want to support and congratulate all team members for their participation in the sport for that season.

Thank you for your participation in Hancock Day School Athletics.

