



Athletic Handbook

2024-2025

SANDHILLS VALLEY MAVERICKS

ACTIVITY HANDBOOK

Intent of Handbook:

This handbook is intended to be used by students, parents and staff as a guide to the rules and regulations as well as general information concerning the Sandhills Valley Athletic Teams and activities, as appropriate. Each student and parent is responsible for becoming familiar with the handbook and knowing the information contained in it. Participants are encouraged to use this document as a resource for following the rules contained in this handbook.

When used in this Handbook, the term “administrations” shall mean the superintendent and/or the principals of the Stapleton Public Schools and McPherson County Schools. This handbook does not create a “contract.” **The administrations reserve the right to make decisions and make rule revisions at any time to implement the athletic program and to assure the well being of all athletes.** The administrations will be responsible for interpreting the rules contained in the handbook. Although the information found in this handbook is detailed and specific on many topics, the handbook is not intended to be all encompassing so as to cover every situation and circumstance that may arise during athletic activities including games, practices, and traveling to games and practices. Should a situation or circumstance arise that is not specifically covered in this handbook, the administrations will make a decision based upon all applicable school district policies, and state and federal statutes and regulations.

Team Members of the 2024-2025 Sandhills Valley COOP:

Jeremiah Johnson	Athletic Director of Stapleton & McPherson County Schools
Kami Florea	Activities Director (McPherson County Schools)
Bridget Weems	Assistant Activities Coordinator (Stapleton Public Schools)
Brian Redinger	Superintendent of Stapleton Public Schools
Tim Vanderheiden	Superintendent of McPherson County Public Schools
Chad Fisher	McPherson County School Board Representative
Jana Gragg	McPherson County School Board Representative
Lana Watson	McPherson County School Board Representative
Rich Burnside	Stapleton School Board Representative
Frank Kramer	Stapleton School Board Representative
Kim Kramer	Stapleton School Board Representative

Sandhills Valley Mission & Philosophy

Our Mission: The Sandhills Valley mission is to provide the best opportunity for ALL student-athletes at Stapleton Public Schools and McPherson County Schools.

Our Vision: To be a successful sports cooperative and excel within high school athletics.

Our Values: Promote unity and sportsmanship among students, coaches, and fans.

Extracurricular activity programs enrich the curriculum of the school by making available a wide variety of activities in which a student can participate. Extracurricular activity programs are considered an integral part of the school's program of education that provide experiences that will help students develop physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Safety

The Sandhills Valley Mavericks philosophy is also to maintain an activities program which recognizes the importance of safety for all participants. To ensure safety, participants are required to become fully familiar with the dangers and safety measures established for the activity in which they participate, adhere to all safety instructions, and to exercise common sense.

Warning for Participants and Parents

The purpose of this warning is to bring your attention to the existence of potential dangers associated with athletic injuries. Participation in any intramural or athletic activity may involve injury of some type. The severity of such an injury can range from minor cuts, bruises, sprains and muscle strains to more serious injuries to the body's bones, joints, ligaments, tendons or muscles to catastrophic injuries to the head, neck and spinal cord. On rare occasions, injuries can be so severe as to result in total disability, paralysis or death. Even with appropriate coaching, appropriate safety of instruction, appropriate protective equipment and strict observance of the rules, injuries are still a possibility.

Team Travel

The Sandhills Valley Mavericks require that activity team members travel to and from out of town events as a unit. An athlete may be signed off the bus by his / her parents only. Any exceptions to this rule must be approved by an administrator prior to the departure to the event. Only those people involved with the activity will be allowed to travel in the school vehicle.

Parents/legal guardians will be responsible for getting their child to all home games whether they are in Stapleton or Tryon. If a parent/legal guardian is unable to do so, they must notify the

coach the day prior to the home game that their child will require a ride from school to school and a van or bus will be provided for those students by the school the game is not being held at.

Sandhills Valley Eligibility

Eligibility participation in extra-curricular school activities is encouraged and desirable for all students. At the same time, the principal mission and responsibility for each student is to establish a firm academic foundation. During the period of ineligibility, the student must meet with his/her teacher(s) to discuss those areas in which he/she needs improvement. Each teacher shall inform the respective student(s) of the area(s) in need of improvement and direct them on how to address the deficiencies in those areas beyond the regular school day.

The following eligibility requirements have been established by both schools for participation in Sandhills Valley Cooperative activity practices and competitions:

1. 9-12 grade students must be passing all classes each week to be eligible to participate in competition. If a student is failing one class, he/she may not participate in competitions of that week of eligibility.
2. All 6-8 grade students must be passing all classes with the exception of ONE in order to be eligible to participate in competition.
3. Weekly eligibility will begin the second full week of each semester and will be determined each Monday by 12:00pm through Powerschool reporting (by administration teams). In addition, each administration team will transfer an ineligibility list to the Athletic Director for that week's participation. The ineligibility window will begin on Tuesday through the completion of the following Monday.
4. Each Thursday prior, a preliminary eligibility list will be drawn to notify potentially ineligible student-athletes and coaches of academic deficiencies.
5. The Coach and/or Activities Director will notify each student of his/her ineligibility. The Administration team will be responsible for notifying parents/guardians of the ineligible student.
6. Given any student 7-12 is ineligible, he/she may NOT travel or participate that week of eligibility in any competition.

Sandhills Valley Code of Conduct & Rules

Purpose of the Code of Conduct. Participation in extracurricular activities is a privilege. The privilege carries with its responsibilities to the school, team, student body, and the community. Participants are not only representing themselves but also their school and community in all of

their actions. Others judge our school(s) on the student participants' conduct and attitudes, and how they contribute to our school spirit and community image.

Scope of Code of Conduct: Activities Subject to the Code of Conduct: The Code of Conduct applies to all NSAA athletic activities that involve students from Stapleton Public Schools and McPherson County Public Schools. Any outside non-cooperative activities are left to the discretion of each respective school district.

Student Conduct Expectations: To excel in athletics, one must be willing to commit, not only to the rules of the game but must also make commitment to training rules, the classroom, and to the team of which the athlete is a part. To meet these commitments, the athlete must develop good attitudes towards organization, orderliness, propriety, responsibility, and integrity. To that the end of the following guidelines have been developed.

1. General Conduct:

Athletes in violation of rules of student conduct are detailed in each respective district's student handbook. Violation of team rules will result in disciplinary measures at the discretion of each head coach.

2. Conduct Unbecoming a Student-athlete of Sandhills Valley:

It is expected that all student-athletes of Stapleton Public Schools and McPherson County Public Schools shall conduct themselves properly at all times when representing their respective schools while on and off of school(s) property.

3. Attendance:

Students must be in attendance the entire school day of practice and competition. If competition falls on a day without school, the student must be in attendance for the entire school day prior to the event scheduled. Failure to attend will result in the student being withheld from participation within the activity. The Administration team of the school in which the student resides retains the right to grant participation should exceptional circumstances prevail based upon individual school attendance policy. Their excused absences must be medically excused or excused by the Principal/Superintendent of the student's school.

4. Use of Alcohol, Tobacco, or Illegal Drugs

The use of alcohol, tobacco, or and illegal drugs may result in suspension from practice and play in accordance with each respective school district's student handbook.

5. When Suspensions Begin:

All suspensions begin with the next scheduled activity in which the student is a participant, after the determination by each respective school official(s) of the sanction to be imposed; provided that the school officials

shall have the discretion to establish a time period for the suspension that makes the suspension have a real consequence for the student. During a suspension, participants may be required or permitted to practice at the sole discretion of the coach or activity sponsor. Suspensions in the Spring will be carried over to the Fall when the suspension has not been fully served or when determined appropriate for the suspension to have a real consequence for the student.

6. Athletes in violation of rules of student conduct are detailed in each respective district's student handbook. Violation of team rules will result in disciplinary measures at the discretion of each head coach.

Students are not to engage in conduct which causes or which creates a reasonable likelihood that it will cause substantial disruption or material interference with any school function, activity or purpose or interfere with the health, safety, well-being or rights of other students, staff or visitors.

Student Removal from Activity/Sports

1. The coach/sponsor has the authority to remove any participant from the team for any of the following, but not limited to:
 - a. Violation of team rules
 - b. Major discipline violations
 - c. Violations of the Activity Participation Agreement
 - d. Repeated minor violations Insubordination
2. Removing a student from the team protocol
 - a. Communicate a clear rationale for the dismissal to the following:
 - i. The student-- Provide a clear explanation in person if possible.
 - ii. The parents-- Phone call, email, or visit in person giving clear rationale for their dismissal.
 - iii. Activities Director-- Phone call, email, or visit in person giving clear rationale for their dismissal.
3. Appeal Process-- The student has the right to appeal
 - a. The student or parent of the student, must contact in writing to the Activities Director or appropriate Administrator.
 - b. The timeline for this written appeal is within 48 hours of the dismissal.
 - c. A hearing may be conducted.
 - i. Attending the hearing will be the Head Coach/Sponsor or designee, the accused student, the parent(s), the Activities Director, and the building

Administrator (if needed). The Head Coach/Sponsor will be responsible for organizing this meeting as they deem necessary, or upon the request of the parents. In the event the parents or participant choose to forfeit the option of this hearing, dismissal will result.

- ii. The Activities Director or designee will conduct the hearing.
- iii. The charges against the student will be presented, as well as the rule(s) which the student has been accused of violating.
- iv. The student will then be allowed to present their side of the situation (Due Process Rights).
- v. The Activities Director and/or building Administrator will rule on the charges in a timely manner. The parents, student, and coaches will be informed of the ruling as soon as possible.
- vi. Until that ruling is delivered, the student will not practice or play in the given activity.

Parent/Fan Code of Conduct for NSAA/SVM Sponsored Events:

When attending SVM/NSAA sponsored events as a spectator:

- a. Attendees will be a positive role model for all children and encourage sportsmanship by showing respect and courtesy, and by demonstrating positive support for all players, coaches, officials and spectators at every game, practice or other sporting event.
- b. Attendees will not engage in any kind of unsportsmanlike conduct with any official, coach, player, or parent such as booing, taunting or using profane language or gestures, etc.
- c. Attendees will not encourage any behaviors or practices that would endanger the health and wellbeing of the athletes.
- d. Attendees will teach their child to play by the spirit of the rules and to resolve conflicts without resorting to hostility or violence.
- e. Attendees will demand that all children treat other players, coaches, officials and spectators with respect regardless of race, sex, or ability.
- f. Attendees will never ridicule or yell at a child or other participant for making a mistake or losing a competition.
- g. Attendees will respect the officials and their authority during games and will never question, discuss, or confront coaches or referees while in performance of their duties, and will take time to speak with coaches at an agreed upon time and place.
- h. Attendees will refrain from coaching their child or other players during games and practices, unless they are one of the official coaches of the team.

- i. Attendees will inform the coach of any physical disability or ailment that may affect the safety of their child or the safety of others.

Attendees who fail to abide by the aforementioned rules and guidelines will be subject to disciplinary action that may include, but is not limited to the following:

- a. Verbal warning by official, head coach, and/or member of league organization
- b. Written warning
- c. Single game suspension with written documentation of incident
- d. Season suspension

Team Selection, Playing Time, and Parent/Coach Conferences

“Team selection” and “playing time” decisions are the responsibility of the individual coach or sponsor of the activity. Lineup decisions are primarily the result of careful consideration about team chemistry and the opponent’s strengths and weaknesses. Playing time is earned by hard work and proven performance. Coaches take a season-long view about each player’s time on the field/court/mat.

Delegating playing time is a zero-sum exercise, meaning that one person benefits from playing while another person endures. The decision to give one player more time on the field means another player will get less. As such, all good coaches know that with each decision, however well-considered, comes the likelihood that someone will be disappointed.

Consistent, however, with the purposes of the activities program, the coaches and sponsors shall follow the following established guidelines for team selection and playing time decisions, along with such other guidelines as each individual coach and sponsor may develop which are not inconsistent with these established guidelines:

1. School Representative: Student participants must demonstrate that they can and will represent themselves and their schools in a manner which reflects the development of high ideals and appropriate values, which shall include good citizenship in the school and in the community.
2. Success: Student participants must demonstrate that they can make the activity program more successful, both from a standpoint of competitive success and success in promoting a positive school spirit. Characteristics for purposes of this criterion include the student’s: (1) talent or skill, (2) desire to improve the student’s own skills or talents as well as those of others in the activity, and (3) attitude of respect towards teammates, the coach, the school, and the community.
3. If you are concerned about a sport-related issue that requires you to speak directly with a coach, we ask that you wait at least **24 hours** after the event. Cooler heads are inevitably more productive. We always enjoy chatting with parents at the conclusion of

games, but cannot address non-emergency issues at that time. We also cannot interrupt practice sessions.

4. If a parent requests a meeting with a head or assistant coach regarding any aspect of their child's involvement in extracurricular activities, the following procedures shall apply to the conference:

- a. The parent and the student will both be present
- b. The coach will be present. If the discussion is with an assistant coach, the head coach will be present.
- c. An administrator or athletic director will be present if requested by either the coach or parent.
- d. If the administrator needs to be present, the administrator will set up the meeting at a mutually agreed time.
- e. Any variation of this policy must be approved by the administration.

Strong teams have strong benches. Players who keep focused on the game while not on the court greatly increase their chances of success once they enter the game. Spirited bench players almost always infect their teammates with optimism and extra energy.

***Parents/Family members are not to interfere with coaching duties during the scheduled contests (to include pre-game locker room visits - on field/court/sideline appearances - or post-game in/near locker room areas). Parents can wait in the spectator areas until coaches release players from team activities. *Failure to abide by these rules may result in disciplinary action (See parent/fan code of conduct section).**

Pre-Practice Requirements

All athletes must meet the following requirements before they start practice.

1. Return a signed physical to the Athletic Director

Participation on Other Teams

As per NSAA guidelines, any individual who is a member of any Sandhills Valley Mavericks interscholastic athletic squad cannot participate in any other organized sport, in school or out of school, during the period that he/she is a member of an interscholastic squad. EX: Town team basketball or an open golf tournament.

Off Season Practice Regulations

In order that we may always have a well-rounded athletic program, the following guidelines will be followed concerning off-season unorganized practices:

1. No athlete will use the school facilities without the permission of one of the coaches. That permission will be granted by the Athletic Director upon request from one of the coaches.
2. Nothing will be done by any coach or athlete to take away from the sport in season.
3. Coaches will encourage their athletes to participate in another sport/activity during the off-season.
4. If an individual is dropped from a squad because of disciplinary reasons, by the coaching staff, they may not practice for the next sports season using school facilities or under the supervision of a coach until the sport which he/she was dropped from is completed.

Drug and Alcohol Violations

The grounds for suspension from practices, participation in interscholastic competition, or other participation in extracurricular activities and competitions are set forth below. In becoming familiar with the conduct rules for extra-curricular activities, participants need to remember that they are not only representing themselves, but also their schools and communities in all of their actions. Special conduct rules exist for the reasons that:

- a) Participants in extra-curricular activities assume a responsibility for leadership and are representatives of our schools. The student bodies, the communities and other communities judge our school on the students' conduct and attitudes, and how they contribute to our school spirit and community image. The students' performance and devotion to high ideals make their schools and communities proud.
- b) Activities are a privilege. Extra-curricular activities have an important place in the educational program of the Stapleton and McPherson County Public Schools. It is a privilege for the students who choose to participate. Students who participate and are accepted into the program are expected to demonstrate cooperation, patience, pride, character, self-respect, self-discipline, teamwork, sportsmanship, and respect for authority. It is the belief that accepting responsibility for one's actions is a part of that philosophy. The rules of conduct apply to actions of the student, regardless of whether they occur on or off school grounds. (If the conduct occurs on school grounds, at a school function or event, or in a school vehicle, the student may also be subject to further discipline under the general student code of conduct adopted by each school.) These rules apply to conduct which may occur at any time during the school year beginning with the official starting day of the fall sport season established by the NSAA and extending to the

last day of the spring sport season established by the NSAA, whether or not the student is a participant in an activity at the time of such conduct.

CONSEQUENCES

The following provisions shall apply to the unlawful possession, use, or distribution of any form of tobacco, drugs (except a physician's prescription), alcohol, anabolic steroids, or drug paraphernalia by students participating in extracurricular activities during the school year, from the first day of participation in such activity as allowed by the Nebraska School Activities Association until the end of the last day of school.

If the student, or his or her parent or legal guardian, self-reported the possession, use, or distribution no later than the opening of school on the next day following such action, then the following consequences apply:

- (a) First offense: Denial of participation in all extracurricular activities for a period of ten (10) school days, beginning with the first scheduled contest in an activity; practices are not included.
- (b) Second offense: Denial of participation in all extracurricular activities for the remainder of the school year.

If the student is apprehended or cited by law enforcement officials or observed by a school district employee engaging in the possession, use, or distribution, as verified by the school district administration, but the student has not self-reported or been adjudicated in juvenile court, then the following consequences apply:

- (a) First offense: Denial of participation in all extracurricular activities for a period of four weeks (20 school days) beginning with the first scheduled contest in an activity; practices are not included.
- (b) Second offense: Denial of participation in all extracurricular activities for the remainder of the school year. Insight counseling shall be available upon request of the student or his or her parent or legal guardian.

Certified drug and alcohol abuse program must be administered by a certified alcohol and drug abuse counselor and be approved by the school authorities. The students will need to successfully complete the approved chemical dependency program.

If the student is convicted of a felony or if the matter is adjudicated in juvenile court, then the student shall be denied participation in all extracurricular activities for the remainder of the school year.

State Qualifiers Protocol

In the event that a team, or team members, qualify for state finals competition, the following guidelines will be used per sport to determine who will travel with the team. Exceptions will be made at the administration's discretion.

1. Football: The entire team will travel when qualifying for the state final game as the potential exists for every player to be able to participate.
2. Volleyball: The varsity squad only will travel to state level competition.
3. Cross Country: Only team members who qualify individually will travel to state competition, unless the entire team qualifies.
4. Wrestling: Members of the wrestling team who qualify individually will travel to the state competition.
5. Basketball (Boys & Girls): Varsity Team members only will travel to state level competition.
6. Golf: Only team members who qualify individually will travel to state competition, unless the entire team qualifies.
7. Track: Team members who qualify in individual events will travel to state competition. For relay teams who qualify, the coaches may select one alternate to travel with the team as well.

Only teams whose student managers take an active role in the game may take managers with the team when traveling to compete in state events. A limit of three to four managers will be in force for all team sports.

Lettering Requirements for Sandhills Valley Mavericks

Each time an individual letters in a sport, they will be awarded a letter certificate by the coach of that sport at the conclusion of the year. The first time an individual letters in any sport, a standard

chenille letter representing Sandhills Valley Athletics will be awarded during an awards ceremony.

All lettering requirements are based on varsity competition. To earn a letter in any varsity sport, the following factors are taken into consideration by the Head Coach.

- Completion of the sport
- Care of equipment
- Cooperation with team, coach and faculty
- Contribution, participation, attitude, and conduct displayed during the season
- Use of self-discipline
- Regular attendance of practice
- Coach's discretion

RECEIPT OF 2024-2025 PARENT/STUDENT ACTIVITY HANDBOOK OF THE SANDHILLS VALLEY MAVERICKS

Your signature on this form confirms you have received the 2024-2025 Sandhills Valley Mavericks Parent-Student Handbook and that you understand this handbook contains the conduct and discipline rules for the 2024-2025 Sandhills Valley Mavericks as adopted by the Sandhills Valley Sports Cooperative Committee. With your signature, you agree to follow these rules. It is understood that approved policies of non-discrimination and equity as well as specific complaint and grievance procedures exist in the handbook which should be used to respond to harassment or discrimination.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

*Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

***REFUSAL TO ACKNOWLEDGE AND SIGN THIS HANDBOOK CONSTITUTES AN UNWILLINGNESS TO ABIDE BY THE RULES SET FORTH AND MAY BE CAUSE FOR YOUR STUDENT TO BE DECLARED INELIGIBLE FOR PARTICIPATION IN ANY SANDHILLS VALLEY MAVERICKS EVENT (TEAM OR INDIVIDUAL COMPETITION/PRACTICE)* - SPS Board Policy 6028 - MCS Board Policy 5300**

Drug-Free Schools Statement:

Your signature on this form shall also serve to demonstrate that you, AS PARENT OR GUARDIAN OF A STUDENT PARTICIPATING IN ACTIVITIES AS A SANDHILLS VALLEY MAVERICK, have received notice of the STANDARDS OF CONDUCT of this sports coop expected of students concerning the ABSOLUTE PROHIBITION of unlawful possession, use, or distribution of illicit drugs and alcohol

on school premises or as part of ANY school activity as described in Board Policy or Administrative Regulation.

This notice is being provided to you pursuant to the SAFE AND DRUG-FREE SCHOOL LAW and 34 C.F.R. Part 86. Both are FEDERAL LEGAL REGULATIONS for the District to obtain federal financial assistance.

YOUR SIGNATURE ON THIS RECEIPT ACKNOWLEDGES THAT YOU AND YOUR CHILD OR CHILDREN WHO ARE STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN SANDHILLS VALLEY ACTIVITIES FULLY UNDERSTAND THE POSITION ABSOLUTELY PROHIBITING THE UNLAWFUL POSSESSION, USE OR DISTRIBUTION OF ALCOHOL OR TOBACCO ON SCHOOL PREMISES OR AS PART OF THE COOP'S ACTIVITIES AS HEREIN ABOVE DESCRIBED AND THAT **COMPLIANCE WITH THESE STANDARDS IS MANDATORY**. ANY NON-COMPLIANCE WITH THESE STANDARDS CAN AND WILL RESULT IN PUNITIVE MEASURES BEING TAKEN AGAINST ANY STUDENT FAILING TO COMPLY WITH THESE STANDARDS.

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____