



801 Parkwood Drive, Harrisonburg, VA 22802

Phone: 540-236-6000 • Fax: 540-236-6028

[easternmennoniteschool.org](http://easternmennoniteschool.org)

## **Eastern Mennonite School Athletic Handbook**

### **EMS Vision Statement**

Eastern Mennonite School aspires to reflect Christ's light as a learning community where every student belongs, thrives, and lives God's call.

### **EMS Mission Statement**

Eastern Mennonite School joins home and church in calling students to faith in Jesus Christ, academic excellence, personal integrity, and compassionate service in the world.

### **EMS Athletic Mission Statement**

The Eastern Mennonite School Athletic department and coaching staff, in conjunction with parents, strive to develop our student athletes' abilities in the context of a positive team experience. These experiences contribute to the development of life values that are carried beyond the high school athletic arena. Important values of teamwork, self-discipline and leadership are fostered in an experiential learning environment built on a foundation of faith and Christian values.

Eastern Mennonite School does not discriminate on the basis of any race, color, handicap, national, or ethnic origin, and admits students to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school.

The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the school's non-discrimination policies, including its Title IX policy: Debbie Katz, School Counselor, 801 Parkwood Drive, Harrisonburg, Virginia; [katzd@easternmennonite.org](mailto:katzd@easternmennonite.org) or 540-236-6022. For assistance related to Title IX or other civil rights laws, please contact OCR at [OCR@ed.gov](mailto:OCR@ed.gov) or 800-421-3481, TDD 800-877-8339.

## Athletic Department Goals

- To use sport to instill and encourage learning life lessons/values:
  - Demonstrate a high level of sportsmanship
  - Foster team unity through relationships
  - Integrate faith into programs
  - Respect for self, teammates, opponents and officials
  - Develop discipline and a strong work ethic
  - Create confidence through encouragement
  - Teach responsibility and commitment to the team through
  - Leadership
  - Handle winning or losing graciously
  - Communicate effectively
- To provide the opportunity for students to develop their athletic abilities.
- To foster safety and an awareness of fitness and health for all participants.
- To provide an environment where setting goals, quality instruction and positive communication are central components for the team experience.
- To develop opportunities for personal growth in our athletic program.

## EMS Athletics Culture

The athletic and team culture of EMS imposes the importance of academics alongside athleticism; a culture of kindness alongside competition; a serving mindset alongside leadership development.

**Academics and Athletics:** Every member of an EMS team represents their team in the classroom and EMS on the field and court. Disinterest, poor behavior, and/or negative attitudes in the classroom will impact opportunities on a team. Disrespectful words or attitudes of any sort (stated, text, or via social media) toward others, teammates, or about opponents will impact opportunities on a team.

**Kind and Competitive Culture:** Interscholastic competition can bring out the best and worst in people. EMS demands excellence in sportsmanship for employees, coaches, players, parents and fans. Sportsmanship speaks of relationships within each of these groups, relationships between these groups, and interactions with opposing teams and officials. ALL language (stated, text, or via social media) within our athletic program is expected to build-up one another and our team(s). Negative language that puts down others, carries intonations or innuendo of disrespect or discrimination toward another because of ability, age, economic situation, ethnicity, gender, identity orientation, race, etc. will impact opportunities on a team. Our cultural surroundings (movies, television, music lyrics, family/societal norms) deeply impact each of us. EMS is not about judging the variety of backgrounds from which our student athletes come; however, we will not tolerate derogatory or unkind words/actions toward others. Unkind behavior will impact opportunities on a team.

**Serving and Leadership.** Team play is about the sum of the whole being much greater than the sum of its parts. Best teams value players who rarely see playing time as much as

high ability players. Every player is expected to carry the responsibility of making other players on the team better. Each player is there to serve the team. Opportunities to serve others as a team outside of athletics may be a team-bonding experience for many teams. Teams also provide excellent opportunities for athletes to practice leadership. Leadership by positive example (work, hustle, coachability) and words of encouragement (uptalk, accountability to team values) can be provided by any student athlete and is present in every highly successful team.

EMS administration, coaches, and players are committed to seeing our student athletes develop into amazing young people with skillful talent who are dedicated to improve themselves, those around them, and their future communities because of what they learn and experience through EMS athletics!

## **Partnership with Families**

### **Parents as Promoters**

We believe that parents play a vital role in the support of our student athletes and teams. Parents can support the growth and success of our teams by modeling positive encouragement towards their student athlete, teammates and coaches. As coaches, we welcome parents to join us in creating a climate of respect for the student athletes, officials and coaches.

### **Parent/Coach Relationship**

Our goal is to create a positive relationship between parents and coaches. Coaches welcome information from parents that is helpful in understanding their student athlete. We encourage coaches, student athletes, and parents to communicate openly as differences arise throughout the season. Parental concerns are important to our coaches. Expressing those concerns through a phone call or email could be helpful in clearing the air or dispelling confusion that may have arisen from a situation. If you feel that talking directly to the coach would be beneficial please set up a time that is agreeable to both of you.

\*We ask that parents do not talk to a coach after a game or practice about matters that are emotionally charged and deal with conflict. Please arrange for a meeting time when emotions are more settled.

### **Student Athlete/Coach**

We encourage all student athletes to try and resolve conflicts by talking directly to the person(s) involved. If things cannot be resolved we encourage communication with the coach to assist in a resolution.

### **Parent/Athletic Director**

Listening to concerns parents have about our athletic programs is important to the athletic director. Parents who feel uncomfortable talking to a coach are encouraged to express their concerns to the athletic director. Efforts will be made to assist the student athletes and parents as they process concerns. If a parent feels like the situation is still not resolved they should express their concerns to the High School Principal.

## Competitive Levels Offered

### Varsity

At the varsity level, the emphasis is on fielding a team with the ability to compete at the highest level possible. This may result in unequal playing time among student athletes. Although winning is always a goal of the team, it will never be the sole purpose of why our teams play. Other factors like developing team unity, significant individual progress and team improvement are vital keys to a successful season. All varsity level teams will receive knowledgeable instruction and development of talent in striving for success as a team. Instruction will be given in the areas of skill development, team strategies, and integration of Christian and life values.

*Grades Eligible to Participate: 8-12*

- An eighth grader may participate on a varsity team under the following circumstances:
  - As a starter or regular contributor in practices and contests.
  - When numbers are necessary to keep the varsity program operating.
  - In either situation, a conversation must happen between the Coach and Athletic Director. The student's academic standing should be considered in determining eligibility for participation at the Varsity level.

### Junior Varsity

At the junior varsity level the focus of the team is on the advancement of fundamental skills and team strategies in preparation for the varsity level. This may mean unequal playing time.

*Grades Eligible to Participate: 8-10 (6th and 7th on case by base basis)*

### Middle School

Middle School Athletics at EMS are for being active, trying new things, playing alongside friends, developing sport specific skills and learning life lessons from a Christian perspective. At EMS we hope to provide opportunities for all student athletes, but recognize those opportunities will vary based on student athlete experience level, roster size and sport specific competitive levels.

We recognize that in middle school some students are exploring a sport for the first time, while others already have high hopes of competing at the JV and Varsity level, and potentially at the College level once they leave EMS. With this in mind, our Athletic Department works hard to ensure that everyone can have their desired experience. This means that some teams will be highly competitive, as the coaching staff works hard to develop players that will impact JV and Varsity programs. Other teams will feel very different in that, while working to develop skills, they will work hard to create an environment that targets their range of experience levels.

Another challenge that we face each year in Middle School Athletics is roster size and student interest. As stated above, we hope to provide opportunities for all students to

experience athletics at the Middle School level. We will have teams that have very high interest, and can accommodate all of those interested participants. We will have teams that have low interest, and can barely field a team. We will also have teams that have high interest, but can't have large rosters.

If we encounter the high interest, smaller roster situation, the Athletic Department will work to develop the best plan for all student athletes and coaches. This could mean creating two teams, encouraging student athletes to participate in our Academy programs, or working with students and families to explore other athletic or non athletic options that are provided that season. While some of these decisions might not be what students and families were hoping for, we believe that with the support of school staff, families and others, these experiences will turn into life lessons that can strengthen their character during their time at EMS and beyond.

*Grades Eligible to Participate: 6-8*

# **Athletic Trainer**

A Certified Athletic Trainer will be at all JV and Varsity games, as well as at school one day a week for an injury Clinic. EMS contracts with Sentara Orthopedics to provide this service. Updated contact information for our current Athletic Trainer can be received by contacting the EMS Athletic Director.

## **Eastern Mennonite School**

### **Head Injury and Concussion Protocol**

- I. EMS is committed to our students' health and safety, therefore this protocol will assist students, families, teachers, coaches, and administrative staff in knowing how to best assist and support a student who has a head injury or who has been diagnosed with a concussion.
  
- II. A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury that changes the way the brain normally works. It can be caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head; in which the brain bounces or twists within the skull. Effects from concussions can be serious and can cause long term sequelae if not appropriately managed. All concussions are serious and proper recognition and response should be maintained. Most young people with a concussion will recover quickly and fully; but for some, signs and symptoms can last for days, weeks, or even longer.

Observable signs (reported by adults or students):

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about events
- Answers questions slowly
- Repeats questions
- Can't recall events prior to or after the event
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows behavior or personality changes

Symptoms reported by student:

- Thinking/Remembering- difficulty thinking clearly, difficulty concentrating, feeling sluggish/hazy/foggy
- Emotional- Irritable, sad, more emotional than usual, nervous
- Physical- headache or pressure in head, nausea/vomiting, balance issues, fatigue, blurry or double vision, sensitivity to light/noise, numbness, or does not "feel right"
- Sleep- drowsy, sleeps less or more than usual, has trouble falling asleep (only ask about sleep symptoms if injury occurred day prior)

### III. Athlete Head Injury

- If a head injury occurs during a sporting event, students who present with signs and symptoms of a concussion will be assessed by a Sentara RMH Orthopedics athletic trainer at the specific sporting event. The Sentara RMH Orthopedics athletic trainer will notify the Front Office and also the Athletic Director (Andrew Gascho) of a concussion diagnosis, and proper channels of communication will be followed. The Sentara RMH Orthopedics athletic trainer will observe the athlete through the gradual return to play progression prior to clearing the athlete to full activity. Students and families may wish to be examined by additional medical personnel such as the local ED, family physician, or Sentara Concussion Clinic. Student athletes must be cleared by a medical professional who is experienced in evaluating concussions prior to progressing into the return-to-play protocol. A student athlete must be fully participating in classes without modifications prior to being allowed to begin the return to play protocol. A diagnosis of a concussion is final and the graduated return to play progression will be completed prior to returning to play. Parents and guardians are asked to notify the Front Office for concussions not diagnosed by a Sentara RMH Orthopedics athletic trainer so necessary communication and accommodations within the school can be followed.

### IV. Diagnosed Concussion

- If a student is diagnosed with a concussion, at least (1) day of rest at home is highly recommended. During this period, students should limit screen time (computer, TV, cell phone use), mental exertion, or stimulation through reading and writing. The more rest that occurs after a concussion, the quicker the recovery period. Gradually easing back into reading, screen time, and academic work is most effective. Students should work only to the point where symptoms such as headaches, blurred vision, or dizziness begin, signs that the brain is being overstimulated.
- Medical recommendations will be followed and accommodations made to academics as needed. Recommendations related to return to play will be strictly followed.

#### *Return to Play Protocol*

- Level 1: No Physical Activity
- Level 2: Low levels of physical activity such as walking, light jogging, light stationary biking, light weight lifting, (high rep, low weight short sessions). if aerobic, no more than 10–15-minute sessions.
- Level 3: Moderate levels of physical activity, including moderate jogging, brief running, moderate intensity stationary biking, moderate intensity weightlifting.
- Level 4: Heavy non-contact levels of physical activity, including sprinting/ running, high intensity stationary biking, regular weightlifting, routine, non-contact sport specific drills in all planes of motion.
- Level 5: Full contact in practice.
- Level 6: Full contact in game.

Do not progress to the next level, if symptoms return or increase

- Students are not permitted to be involved in athletics, Physical Education classes, or extra-curricular physical activity until they have obtained written permission from their healthcare provider; or in the case of Athletes, a Sentara RMH Orthopedics athletic trainer. However, they may return to school prior to physical activity.

V. How to help students ease back into academics:

- Accommodations will be made in the school setting to help support the student in returning slowly to academics. As each situation and student is different, these accommodations will be made on an as needed basis.
- Accommodations may include, but are not limited to the following:
  - Attend half-school days
  - Limit reading and screen time
  - Use a smaller, quieter space for students to work; alternate space provided for lunch if needed
  - have text read aloud to them
  - have pre-printed notes provided or taken by another student
  - modify or delay assignments or homework (limit number of problems, questions, or pages to read)
  - postpone or stagger tests (provide shortened tests, delay tests, or extend time to take tests)
  - allow time for students to visit counselor or quiet office space
  - allow students to switch classes slightly early or late to decrease noise and stimulation during busy times in the hall
  - reassurance from faculty that the student will be supported throughout the healing process
- An individual student plan for returning to school and academics will be catered to each student after a diagnosed concussion. Such plan will outline student need and necessary accommodations, and be communicated to teachers.

*For further questions: Sentara RMH Orthopedics, family PCP, or the Sentara Concussion Clinic can be contacted.*

***For more information, we encourage athletes, students, and parents to link to resources on the CDC Heads up website.***

**<https://www.cdc.gov/headsup/youthsports/training/index.html>**

**Resources:** CDC- Concussion, CDC Heads Up, Sentara Concussion Recovery Study, Sentara RMH Orthopedics, Drayer Physical Therapy, Harrisonburg City Public Schools, Rockingham County Public Schools

## **Student Athlete/Fan Code of Sportsmanship**

The Virginia Independent Schools Athletic Association is committed to establishing and developing healthy environments for competition. We ask all athletes and spectators to remember to treat the officials and participating teams with respect. Cheer the strengths and victories of your team and do not denigrate the performance of your opponents, their fans or the officials. We expect that all athletes and fans will act in an appropriate manner, and respect the opposition and the officials. Failure to do so may result in dismissal from the premises.”

## **Athletic Conference - State Membership**

Eastern Mennonite School is a member of the Virginia Independent Schools Athletic Association (VISAA).

EMS JV and Varsity teams compete in the Blue Ridge Athletic Conference (BRAC).

Member schools include:

Blue Ridge School  
Carlisle School  
The Covenant School  
Chatham Hall  
Eastern Mennonite School  
Fishburne Military School  
Hargrave Military Academy  
Miller School  
New Covenant School  
North Cross School  
Roanoke Catholic School  
Virginia Episcopal School