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<b>VERMONT PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION POLICIES</b> <b>(Updated 6/18/2014)</b>
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(Note: The policy format follows that of Vermont State Statutes)

**ARTICLE I. GENERAL**

**Section 1. Statement of Belief on Harassment and Commitment to Racial, Gender-Fair and Disability Awareness.**

The Vermont Principals' Association believes that all individuals should be treated with dignity, fairness and respect. Students must be able to participate in Association-sponsored activities in an environment that is free of sexual harassment, prejudice, and discrimination.

The Vermont Principals' Association and its member schools are committed to creating an environment in our activities and programs that promotes respect for and appreciation of racial, gender, sexual orientation, religious and ethnic differences, and is disability aware.

Preventing prejudice and discrimination begins with every individual. The Vermont Principals' Association believes that it begins with us, each and every one.

**Section 2. Vermont Principals' Association Gender Identity Policy (adopted 11/2010)**

**(a) Philosophy:**

The Vermont Principals' Association allows participation for all students regardless of their gender identity or expression. The purpose of this policy is to designate a set of criteria in which student-athletes are able to equally compete in a safe, competitive and friendly environment, free of discrimination. Fundamental fairness, as well as most local, state and federal rules and regulations, requires schools to provide intersex and transgender student-athletes with equal opportunities to participate in athletics. This policy creates a framework in which this participation may occur in a safe and healthy manner that is fair to all competitors.

**(b) Core Values:**

The Vermont Principals' Association Gender Identity policy has been developed based on the following core values:

- (1) Recognizing the value of extra-curricular athletics for all students;
- (2) Emphasizing that participation in extra-curricular athletics is not just allowed, but encouraged for all students;
- (3) Striving to create a Gender Identity and Expression policy that could be a model for other state associations;
- (4) Adhering to Vermont and federal law regarding gender equity and educational opportunity;
- (5) Operating from the presumption that all students will have access to programs and eligibility policies;
- (6) Enacting a policy that will maximize flexibility and privacy with minimal restrictions;
- (7) Creating a level playing field for all students;
- (8) Reducing economic barriers, especially for minority populations;
- (9) Addressing the concerns of parents, teachers and coaches through an educational component;
  
- (10) Acknowledging that the Vermont Principals' Association policy will likely need to be reviewed and revised to reflect increased medical understanding and evolving societal norms;
  
- (11) Grounding a policy in sound medical practice;
- (12) Preserving existing practices regarding girls' participation on boys' teams as per current Vermont Principals' Association policy;
- (13) Providing a space for intersex and transgender students to exist and thrive;
- (14) Reducing bullying and harassment of students.

**(c) Definitions:**

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

- (1) **Transgender Person:** a person whose gender identity does not match the sex assigned to him or her at birth. A transgender person who is born female-bodied but identifies as male is referred to as a transgender man. A transgender person who is born male-bodied but identifies as female is referred to as a transgender woman.
- (2) **Intersex:** a general term used to indicate a person born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy and/or chromosome pattern that does not seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. This may be the result of several different medical conditions involving chromosomal variations, hormonal variations, ambiguous genitalia, and/or an anatomy that includes both male and female characteristics. The medical term for this condition is a Disorder of Sexual Development or “DSD.” “Intersex” is not the same as “transgender,” although some people identify as both intersex and transgender. However, the two groups may face similar situations in needing to change gender designations for the purposes of participation in school activities.
- (3) **Gender Identity:** a person’s deeply felt internal sense of being male or female.
- (4) **Gender Expression:** a person’s external characteristics and behavior that are socially defined as either masculine or feminine, such as dress, mannerisms, speech patterns and social interactions.

**(d) Policy/Procedure:**

All students should have the opportunity to participate in Vermont Principals’ Association activities in a manner that is consistent with their gender identity, irrespective of the gender listed on a student’s records. Should any questions arise whether a student’s request to participate in a sex-segregated activity consistent with his or her gender identity is bona fide, a student may seek review of his or her eligibility for participation by working through the procedure set forth below: Once the student has been granted eligibility to participate in the sport consistent with his/her gender identity, the eligibility is granted for the duration of the student’s participation and does not need to be renewed every sports season or school year. All discussion and documentation will be kept confidential, and the proceedings will be sealed unless the student and family make a specific request.

**(1) Notice to the School:** The student and/or parents shall contact the school administrator or athletic director indicating that the student has a consistent gender identity different than the gender listed on the student’s school registration records, and that the student desires to participate in activities in a manner consistent with his/her gender identity.

**(2) Notice to the Vermont Principals’ Association:** The school administrator shall contact the Vermont Principals’ Association office, which will assign a facilitator who will assist the school and student in preparation and completion of the Vermont Principals’ Association Gender Identity eligibility process.

**(3) Documentation:** The petitioning student should provide the Eligibility Committee with the following documentation and information:

**(A)** Current transcript and school registration information

**(B)** Documentation of student's consistent gender identification (e.g., affirmed written statements from student and/or parent/guardian and /or health care provider)

**(C)** Any other pertinent documentation or information

**(4) Petition Level:** The student will be scheduled for a hearing before the eligibility committee. The Vermont Principals' Association shall schedule a hearing as expeditiously as possible, but in no case later than five (5) school business days of that member school prior to the first full interscholastic contest that is the subject of the petition, or within a reasonable time thereafter in cases of emergency, including, but not limited to, any unforeseeable late student enrolment. The Gender Identity Eligibility Committee will be comprised of members of the Activities Standards Committee and a minimum of two of the following persons, one of who must be from the physician or mental health profession category:

**(A)** Physician with experience in gender identity health care and the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) Standards of Care.

**(B)** Psychiatrist, psychologist or licensed mental health professional familiar with the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) Standards of Care.

**(C)** Advocate familiar with Gender Identity and Expression issues.

**(5)** If the student's petition is granted the eligibility committee/VPA Executive Director or designee will affirm the student's eligibility to participate in VPA activities consistent with the student's gender identification. The VPA will facilitate the provision of resources and training for a member school seeking assistance regarding gender identity.

**(6) Appeal Level:** In the event a student's petition is denied, the student may appeal the decision by filing a notice of appeal with the Executive Director of the VERMONT PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION or designee on or before the tenth (10th) school business day following the date of receipt of the written decision of the Gender Identity Eligibility Committee denying the petition. An appeal to the VERMONT PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION Executive Director or designee shall require the Executive Director or designee to schedule a hearing to commence on or before the tenth (10th) school business day following the date of receipt of the written notice of appeal. Written notice of the time and place of the hearing shall be delivered to the petitioned appellant in person or by certified mail, with return receipt requested, no later than five (5) school business days of that member school prior to the date of the hearing. This hearing will be conducted by the VPA's Appeals Committee, which consists of 5 VPA members, 1 member of the Vermont

Superintendent's Association, 1 member of the Vermont School Boards Association and 1 teacher representative.

## **ARTICLE II. PRINCIPAL'S RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Section 1. Control**

(a) Principals are responsible for operating all interscholastic activities within the guidelines of the Vermont Principals' Association.

(b) School that hold a voluntary membership in the Vermont Principals' Association may participate in interscholastic activities only with member schools.

(c) No school which holds a voluntary membership in the Vermont Principals' Association may participate in interscholastic activities with a school located in another state unless that school is a member in good standing of its state athletic association.

(d) It shall be the responsibility of the principal of each member school to determine that all opponents in interscholastic athletic contests are members in good standing of its state athletic association.

**Section 2. Officials.** Procedures for selection of officials will be sanctioned by the principal.

**Section 3. Changes.** No game shall be cancelled nor dates changed except by mutual consent of the principals concerned or their designees, or by procedures approved by a league.

**Section 4. Raffles.** 50/50 raffles will be allowed at any Vermont Principals' Association finals (championships) and the semi-final contests in football, ice hockey and basketball plus divisional qualifiers in wrestling and track/field when these events are held at school sites.

### **Section 5. A Policy of Religious Non-Participation By Students**

The Activities Standards Committee has been asked on many occasions to provide advice to its membership regarding the scheduling of school activities so as not to conflict with religious holidays. The ASC advises that it is not within its province to oversee the school/league calendars of the individual school districts throughout the state. In planning VPA state activities the ASC attempts to avoid conflicts with major religious holiday, SAT testing dates, or other major activities of state-wide importance. The ASC therefore, urges that the individual schools be sensitive to the social and religious mores of their individual communities and that they plan their school and student activities calendar so as not to conflict with the extra-school needs of large numbers of students, or to place them in the extreme position of having to choose between their religion and a major school activity.

The VPA strongly urges local school districts to adopt this policy.

- (a) Each participant will make for himself/herself the decision to play or not play in a game scheduled on a religious holiday. He/she will inform the coach of his/her decision well in advance of the date.
- (b) The coach will levy no penalty of any kind on the player for missing the game because of religious reasons whether psychological pressure (shaming) or practical (not permitting the player to play in subsequent games).
- (c) The school will ensure that both players and coaches know of and understand this policy well in advance of the season.

## **ARTICLE III. ELIGIBILITY**

### **Section 1. Definition**

The definition of **co-curricular activities** in this document shall include all interscholastic and extra-curricular activities sanctioned by the VPA.

### **Section 2. Certification of Eligibility**

(a) The principal of each member school shall certify to the VPA that all participants representing that school in interscholastic activities during the regular season and during VPA sponsored events shall meet all eligibility requirements of the school and the VPA. This certification shall be due two weeks after the start of the sports season.

(b) The administrator of each Recognized Independent School or parent/teacher of a student enrolled in a Home Study Program shall certify to the VPA that all participants representing the school or program meet all eligibility requirements of the VPA. This certification shall be due two weeks after the start of the sports season.

### **Section 3. Standards of Eligibility**

(a) Eligibility rules and activities policies apply to all students, both boys and girls, in grades 7-12 in affiliated schools. Eligibility rules and activities policies apply to all activities, both athletic and non-athletic, sanctioned or sponsored by the VPA.

#### **(b) Home Study Programs**

A home study student who wishes to participate in a public school co-curricular program shall be an "eligible student" under this section if:

- (1) The participating student is enrolled in a home-study program in compliance with Title 16 V.S.A, Section 166(b).

(2) The participating student must have a legal residence in the school district or is a legal resident of a district that does not maintain a school and pays tuition on behalf of its students.

(3) Participation in a school's co-curricular activities program shall not commence until a copy of the Vermont Agency of Education Enrollment Letter is presented to the principal by the parent or guardian.

(A) The participating student's academic program, as referenced in the Vermont Agency of Education Enrollment Letter, will be reviewed by the student's parent or guardian at appropriate intervals as locally determined and consistent for all students to determine academic progress. This review and determination must be certified in writing from the parent/guardian to the principal.

(B) The student may participate in co-curricular activities sponsored by a VPA member school provided the student complies with the same physical examination, insurance, age and any other requirements for participation as required of all students.

(C) Eligibility issues on all matters other than academic progress may be appealed in accordance with the bylaws of the Vermont Principals' Association.

(D) Prior to the start of a sport season or fine arts and performance activities in which a home study student wishes to participate, the parent or guardian and student must notify the principal in writing that he/she wishes to participate in a school's co-curricular activities program. Failure to provide a timely notification will not disqualify the student from participating, but may result in some delays in participation.

(E) The home study student must adhere to the same standards of behavior, responsibilities and performance as other participants of the team.

(F) Consistent with the law governing all student athletes, participation in co-curricular activities programs is a privilege, not a right, and nothing in these eligibility standards is intended to confer a right on any individual to participate in co-curricular activities.

### **(c) Student Participation Limitations**

Participation on scholastic teams is limited to enrolled students and qualified home study students. The rationale for this limitation is as follows:

(1) Co-curricular activities are supposed to be part of a scholastic program. These are school teams, not community teams.

(2) School teams promote academic progress in the classroom by requiring adherence to local academic standards. At a minimum, it is more difficult for schools to administer academic standards when some of the participants in activities are, because they are not enrolled, exempted from those requirements.

(3) School teams help promote a sense of community within the school.

(4) Participation by individuals who are not enrolled displaces enrolled students. All teams have limited playing time. Most teams have cut policies; some students do not even get to participate on their school team. We should not tell enrolled students to sit on the sidelines, or even not make the team, because someone from another school has taken the spot.

(5) Participation by individuals not enrolled places the school's administrators, teachers and coaches in the position of having responsibility for the participant without the authority they have over enrolled students.

(6) The VPA wants to nurture an environment in which all schools have proper incentives to fund and support a full range of activities for their students. To the extent that private schools can simply have their students play for other schools' teams, this diminishes their incentives to provide an appropriate range of activities for their students. It also may diminish local support for activities, in that local dollars would be diverted to support students from other schools. The net effect would likely be that students have fewer opportunities to participate in activities.

#### **Section 4. Eligibility Limitations and Amateur Status**

(a) Contestants or participants must be enrolled in their school and must meet the school's prescribed academic and eligibility rules. Students may only compete on school teams sponsored by their own school during the season, and may only compete for the one school in which he or she is officially enrolled. Students may participate in meets as individuals but may not participate as a member of another team.

(1.) The VPA Policy with regard to below grade nine participation on high school teams is based on core (main) sports with four divisions.

1) That no student-athlete below grade eight will be allowed in any VPA sanctioned sports at any level (varsity, junior varsity, freshman).

2) That grade eight participation is possible in Division 1, 2 and 3 by waiver request. Grade eight participation may be only at the lowest level of team offering at the school.

3) That division 4 schools may use a grade eight student-athlete on a sub-varsity team *provided* that the student-athlete is needed to maintain the schools sub-varsity team. If a Division 4 school does not have a sub-varsity team, the grade eight student-athlete may be used on a varsity team *provided that*: a) a waiver

has been granted by the VPA AND that b) no other student-athlete in grades 9 through 12 has been cut from the program.

- 4) That the grade eight student-athlete who will participate on in a high school sports program falls under the same academic and behavioral expectations of high school students.
- 5) That the grade eight student-athlete who participates on a high school sports team will be granted five years (10 semesters) of eligibility.
- 6) That schools must apply for a waiver from the VPA in order to use a grade eight student-athlete in any sport with less than 4 divisions,
- 7) That a determination has been made by his/her principal to ensure that the grade eight student-athlete is physically, mentally and socially prepared to participate at the high school level.

#### VPA Criteria For Granting Waivers

- 1) The use of the grade eight student-athlete is considered necessary for a school to field a team in that sport.
  - 2) The grade eight student-athlete must not displace another student-athlete in grades nine through twelve.
  - 3) The grade eight student-athlete must meet all the VPA eligibility requirements.
  - 4) The grade eight student-athlete must be a bona-fide student in the same school district as the high school.
  - 5) The use of the grade eight student-athlete cannot eliminate or unduly impact a middle school team.
  - 6) In cases where the grade eight student-athlete comes from a sending school, both the sending AND the receiving schools' administrators must agree to the usage of this grade eight student-athlete.
  - 7) The grade eight student-athlete is not eligible to participate in high school sports that have an individual component to them (track, cross-country, etc.).
- (Adopted November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014)

**(b)** A member of a school team is a student athlete who is regularly present for, and actively participates in, all team tryouts, practices and competitions. Bona fide members of a school team are prevented from missing a high school practice or competition to compete with an out-of-school team, practice or competition to include tournaments, showcases, combines or other athletic events.

Whenever a conflict arises between the high school team practice/competition and an out-of-school practice/competition on the same day, the high school team practice/competition shall be honored by the student athlete. Priority must be given at all times to the high school team, its practices, and its contest unless permission has been granted by the school. It is expressly understood that permission shall *not* be granted on a regular basis.

It is highly recommended to all schools that this information be put into all athletic handbooks and also should be presented by Athletic Directors/Coaches at pre-season meetings with athletes and parents. (Date Warned: 5-28-14, Date Adopted: 8-8-14)

**(c)** Transfer students are eligible at once provided they were bona fide students in good standing in the school from which they transferred according to the definition in (a) above and there is a bona fide change in residence. If the transfer is the result of any coercion, recruiting or inducement to move in order to participate in interscholastic activities, students will be ineligible for a period of 365 calendar days from the date of the infraction.

If there is no bona fide change in residence, students are eligible to participate immediately up to the first play date of that sports season. If a student transfers after the first play date of that sports season and does not change residence, the student must wait 20 calendar days after the transfer to be eligible, and must participate in at least 60% of the season competitions (at the new school) to be eligible for post-season competition.

If there is no bona fide change in residence, a student who transfers twice or more during a 365 day period will not be eligible at the new school(s) after his or her subsequent transfers until one calendar year after the date of the first transfer.

The VPA may grant a waiver of the 20 calendar day waiting period or the 60% eligibility requirement or the 365 calendar day waiting period for multiple transfers upon request by the school if the school establishes that the transfer was made for reasons not related to activities.

The principal of any receiving school shall check carefully to determine the reasons for the transfer. Reports of suspected violations of transfer students' eligibility rules must be made to the VPA immediately.

**(d)** A school shall be deemed in violation of the rule against recruitment for directly or indirectly supporting or sanctioning recruitment if a representative or agent of the school, or any individual or group associated with the athletic programs of that school, approaches a student athlete in another school, apart from a publicized meeting for all prospective students in that school, and directly or indirectly attempts to persuade or induce a student athlete to enroll in his/her school. A school may also violate this rule by failing to take adequate steps to control recruitment by third parties.

(e) A student who competes in any VPA sanctioned activity must be under nineteen (19) years of age, except that a student whose nineteenth (19th) birthday occurs on or after August 1 is eligible for all activities in the ensuing school year. Students who have attained the age of nineteen (19) prior to August 1 shall be ineligible for all VPA sanctioned activities.

(f) Students are ineligible if they have graduated from any course of study in a secondary school comparable to the Vermont system. The initial determination of whether the secondary school is comparable shall be made by the school's principal. If there is a question concerning the eligibility of a student under this rule, the Assoc. Executive Director of the VPA (or his/her designee) may review the principal's determination. Determining whether a secondary school is comparable, the principal, Assoc. Executive Director, Activity Standards Committee and the Board of Appeals shall give consideration to the normal number of years of the primary and secondary school program; the length of the school day and year; the curriculum; whether graduation makes the student eligible for post secondary education; and any other relevant information. If the total length of the normal primary and secondary program for the school system in question is less than twelve years, then the secondary school may be deemed less than comparable. Waivers of this eligibility rule may also be granted in accordance with these bylaws.

(g) Students have four (4) consecutive years or eight (8) consecutive semesters of eligibility for participation in school activities. Attendance of thirty (30) school days of any semester shall be regarded as a semester. Attendance is defined as being included in the official roll and attendance records of the school and not physical presence in the class. A student that is enrolled for his/her eighth and final semester of eligibility, during the fall-winter term, may complete the winter sports season as long as he/she is an eligible student and has not graduated.

(h) No student may participate in the same sport for more than four seasons.

**(i) Amateur Status Rulings and Comments:**

(1) Students are ineligible if they have lost their amateur standing under any of these qualifications.

(A) They have received remuneration, gifts or donations directly or indirectly for participation in an athletic contest or as a prize for being outstanding players.

(B) They have participated under an assumed name.

(C) They have competed on a team on which some player was paid for his participation.

(D) They have entered into a playing contract with a professional club or agent.

(2) Reference to “gifts or donations” is not intended to preclude the acceptance of playing apparel and equipment that is provided by a sponsoring organization.

(3) Students who lose amateur status in one sport do not lose it in other sports.

(4) Students who become members of a ski patrol will not jeopardize their amateur standing.

(5) Amateurs or a team of amateurs may participate against a team of professionals. Amateurs may not participate on a professional team, or on a team where members of the team are receiving remuneration for their athletic services.

(6) High school students should be advised to exercise great caution in participating in any athletic activity where there are cash prizes. Youngsters should be extremely careful in participating in adult bowling leagues where there are cash prizes. These rulings are made with two thoughts in mind:

(A) Maintaining an amateur status while participating in interscholastic activities.

(B) Protecting future athletic eligibility for activities after completion of high school.

**(j) All-Star Contests**

**(1)** For purposes of this policy, an All Star contest is defined to be one in which the participants are selected based upon their performance as a member of VPA sanctioned school athletic activity. This definition does not include Babe Ruth, American Legion, summer soccer, basketball, CYO or Shrine Football.

**(2)** The VPA does not sanction or approve of All Star contests. Students who participate in an All Star contest will lose their VPA eligibility to participate in that same sport at their high school for the succeeding season. The only exception to this policy is when the All Star contest is directly related to the activities of the U.S. Olympic Committee.

**(k)** Students who, during the regular school day, attend specialized schools or programs where the primary purpose of this instruction or program is to enhance skills in specific sports and/or activities, during the time of established VPA seasons in that particular activity, will not be permitted to participate with their home school in that activity.

**(l)** Students who have matriculated in a post-secondary academic program that grants degrees, certificates or diplomas shall be ineligible.

**Section 5. Exceptions and Waivers**

**(a) Exceptions** Schools enrolling less than fifty boys or fifty girls in grades nine to twelve inclusive may use students under sixteen years of age from affiliated grammar schools in interscholastic competition, provided the Executive Director (or his/her

designee) approves. Such approval shall be automatic if the requesting school shows an enrollment of less than fifty boys or fifty girls as of October 1 of each school year. Students granted such permission cannot compete until they have reached the eighth grade and then for only one year. Such students must meet the local academic and eligibility standards of the school they are attending.

**(b) VPA Policy Regarding Eligibility for Foreign Exchange and International Students**

**(1) Foreign exchange students**

**(A)** A foreign exchange student is an international student who attends high school in the U.S. To be eligible for interscholastic athletics in the U.S., such students must be under the auspices of and be placed with a U.S. host family by an international student exchange program that has been accepted for listing by the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET) and be recognized by the U.S. Department of State. The foreign exchange program must assign students to host families by a method that ensures that no student is placed because of his/her athletic interests or abilities.

**(B)** A foreign exchange student is considered to be placed with a host family when written notice of placement is provided by the exchange organization to the student and his/her parents, and to the host family.

No member of the school's coaching staff, paid or voluntary, shall serve as the host family.

**(C)** The foreign exchange student must possess a current J-1 visa, issued by the U.S. State Department.

**(D)** The foreign exchange student must comply with all eligibility requirements set forth by the Vermont Principals' Association in this document.

**(E)** The foreign exchange student may not be a graduate of or have received a diploma from a secondary school or its equivalent, which is comparable to a Vermont secondary school in the student's native country.

**(2) Other International Students**

An international student who is not under the auspices of and placed by a CSIET listed exchange program must meet the following requirements in order to be considered for interscholastic athletics eligibility in any state:

**(A)** The student must possess a current F-1 visa, issued by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.

**(B)** The student must provide to the principal of the school he/she attends an official un-translated transcript and a transcript that is translated into English by

an acceptable agent or agency, which indicates work taken in all grades in which the student was enrolled.

**(C)** The international student must pay tuition to the high school he/she attends as prescribed in Section 625 of U.S. Public Law 104-208.

**(D)** No member of the school's coaching staff, paid or voluntary, shall serve as the resident family for the student.

**(E)** The international student must comply with all eligibility requirements set forth by The Vermont Principals' Association in this document.

**(F)** Non-compliance with one or more of the foregoing provisions shall render the international student ineligible for interscholastic athletics at any high school that is a member of any NFHS member state high school association.

### **(c) Waivers**

#### **(1) Grounds for Waiver**

**(A)** Waivers of eligibility rules in matters of age may be granted as a matter of discretion only under extraordinary circumstances in which undue hardship (as defined in these rules) directly causes non-compliance with the eligibility rule, and if the waiver will not have an adverse impact on other participants or the fairness of competition.

**(B)** For eligibility in matters other than age, waivers may be granted or denied as an exercise of discretion by the Activities Standards Committee after considering the information that the Committee deems relevant. Schools may file for hardship waivers for their students utilizing the Hardship Application that is on the VPA website. As part of the packet, schools need to include the following; a copy of the students transcript, a letter from the school administrator supporting the waiver request, a letter from the parent and or student describing the request and any other pertinent information that the school would like to include. Once completed, the packet is to be sent to the VPA and a meeting will be arranged with the Activity Standards Committee. At this meeting, school representatives, the student and parent/guardian will be welcome to attend and may present information to the committee.

Eligibility waivers fall into one of three categories: Medical, Situational or Refugee. All eligibility waiver request must fall into one of these three categories.”

#### **(2) Hardship Waiver Policy**

The Activities Standards Committee interprets undue hardship as a situation to the student-athlete which is severe enough to prevent the normal application of VPA eligibility rules. Circumstances involving choice on the part of the student or parents/guardians does not necessarily constitute undue hardship.

Appeals from the application of VPA policies and or waivers of VPA policies may be made by a member school directly to the VPA. Appeals/waiver requests may be approved by the VPA Office or may be referred to the VPA Activity Standards Committee for consideration. Requests that are denied by the VPA Office may be appealed to the VPA Activity Standards Committee by the member schools. Requests that are denied by the Activity Standards Committee may be appealed to the VPA Appeals Committee.

Appeals of *local* school policies often follow the steps listed below. However, contact your local school to determine your school's specific process.

First step: Meet and present issues with the school's athletic director,

Second step: If unresolved, meet and present issues to the school's principal,

Third step: If unresolved, meet and present issues to district superintendent,

Fourth Step: If unresolved, meet and present issues to local school board (this is the final step).

Note – appeals of *local school policies* cannot be appealed to the VPA as these are local policies in which the VPA has no jurisdiction.”

#### **(d.) Enforcement and Appeals Procedures**

##### **(1.) Disciplinary Action**

(A.) Investigation. When alleged violations of VPA policies or rules are reported, the Executive Director shall investigate any alleged violations in person or through a designated representative.

(B.) Notice of Probable Violation. If the Executive Director or designee determines from the preliminary investigation that a probable violation has occurred, the Executive Director or designee shall give to the alleged violator written notice of the probable violation. The written notice shall contain the charges made, a recommended penalty and a copy of the preliminary investigation report, if a report has been prepared. The notice shall also advise the alleged violator of his/her/its opportunity to be heard before the Activities Standards Committee.

(C.) Opportunities to be Heard. The alleged violator may accept the notice and recommended penalty, or may file an appeal with the Activities Standards Committee. The alleged violation and penalty shall be final unless the alleged

violator submits to the Activities Standards Committee a written appeal with a written explanation of his/her version of the events within seven (7) calendar days of the date of the Notice of Probable violation.

(D.) Request for Hearing. A hearing (either in person or by electronic means) will be set, provided a request is made in writing and delivered to the Executive Director or designee within seven (7) calendar days from the date of the Notice of Probable Violation.

(E.) Evidence, Right to Counsel. If a hearing is requested, it will be set to be heard within fourteen (14) school days from the request. The alleged violator may introduce evidence and may be represented by counsel. Evidence may be in the form of testimony, affidavits, written reports, electronic recordings or other information that may assist the Committee in making its decision.

(F.) Closing of Hearings. After the presentation of evidence, the Activities Standards Committee shall declare the hearings closed.

(G.) Reopening of Hearings. The hearings may be reopened by the Activities Standards Committee or upon application in writing of any party at any time before the decision is made.

(H.) Modification of Deadline. The Activities Standards Committee may modify any period of time governing its proceedings by mutual agreement or for good cause.

(I.) Time of Decision. The decision shall be made by the Activities Standards Committee within seven school days after the closing of hearings or seven (7) school days after review of the written explanation, if no request for a hearing is made. The decision shall be mailed by the Activities Standards Committee to each party by certified mail, return receipt requested.

(J.) Decision. The findings and decision of the Activities Standards Committee shall be in writing. The Committee may assess appropriate sanctions, which may include, but are not limited to, warnings, forfeitures, prohibitions from competitions, suspension, expulsion of membership, and individual bans or suspensions.

(K.) Suspensions. The Executive Director or designee (in order to maintain the status quo or to enforce a policy that could become substantially unenforceable due to the passage of time including policies requiring immediate disqualification from contests or games) on a temporary basis, may suspend schools, students, and VPA Tournament officials from participation in athletic events prior to a final determination of any appeal. In such event, the suspension shall be continued for no longer than is reasonably necessary for the Activities Standards Committee to convene a hearing if one is requested by the affected parties.

(L.) Proper Parties. Only schools shall have the right to challenge discipline assessed against the school or the school's teams. Individuals connected with the school or the affected team may not challenge discipline that is assessed against the school or the team.

## **(2.) Appeals From Committee Action**

(A.) Any VPA Committee action or decision may be appealed directly to the Activities Standards Committee for determination. The principal of the school involved must formally notify the Executive Director or designee in writing of the appeal, the grounds of the appeal, and whether the school intends to present evidence in support of the appeal, within seven calendar days of receiving notice of the Committee action or decision. The Executive Director or designee shall then schedule a session of the Activities Standards Committee to hear the appeal. The Committee shall conduct the appeal in accordance with the procedures described in the preceding section. Actions or decisions addressing a school or a school team may only be appealed by the school. Individuals connected with the school or affected team may not challenge actions or decisions that are made concerning schools or teams.

(B.) The Executive Director or designee shall then notify the principal of the date, time and place of the hearing, which may be conducted by telephone.

(C.) The Activities Standards Committee may determine whether its decision will be effective immediately or will be stayed pending review by the Board of Appeals.

(D.) Any decision of the Activities Standards Committee may be appealed to the Appeal Committee under the same procedural rules that apply to ASC appeals.

## **(3.) Board Of Appeals**

Any decision of the Executive Council denying eligibility to an athlete or team may be appealed to the Board of Appeals.

### **(A.) Jurisdiction and Organization**

1. The Executive Council shall appoint a Board of Appeals when needed to hear an appeal.

2. The Board of Appeals shall consist of five (5) VPA members, and three appointees from other educational organizations, including one superintendent, one teacher, and one school board member. The appointments from other educational organizations would be made in consultation with the Vermont Superintendents' Association, the Vermont NEA,

and the Vermont School Boards' Association. Five duly-appointed members of the Board of Appeals must be present to hear and determine any appeals.

3. The Board of Appeals shall appoint one of its members to preside as Chair over the hearings of any appeal and the presiding member shall control the manner and presentation of the evidence presented at the hearing of the appeal.

**(B.) Procedure**

1. All appeals must be sent to the Board of Appeals through the Executive Director or designee and shall be postmarked within seven (7) calendar days after receipt of the decision from which the appeal is taken. This notice of appeal must contain (1) copy of the decision appealed from; (2) the grounds on which the appeal is based; and (3) the names of all interested parties.

2. The Board of Appeals shall give notice of the hearing to all interested parties designated as such in the notice of appeal. The hearing may be held by electronic means.

3. At the hearing on the merits, the Chair of the Board of Appeals shall preside. A board member who has a conflict of interest shall disqualify himself/herself from participation in the hearing.

4. At the hearing, the Board of Appeals shall receive evidence in the form of testimony, affidavits, written reports, electronic recordings or other information that may assist their decision. All interested parties shall have full opportunity to present evidence. The Board may recess a hearing to obtain additional information or evidence.

5. The Board of Appeals shall make a prompt decision within seven (7) school days after the closing of the hearing; written findings and decisions supported by the evidence shall be mailed to each party by certified mail, return receipt requested.

**(C.) Legal Action:**

The VPA is a voluntary association, which is democratically governed. VPA member schools agree to abide by final decisions of the VPA. VPA members agree that litigation by members against the VPA undermines the VPA governance structure and wastes valuable resources that could otherwise be devoted to students.

1. Action Against the Association by a Member School.

Any VPA member school which is a party to legal action in any court to overturn, stay, or enjoin any final decision of the VPA and is subsequently unsuccessful in seeking a verdict shall be liable for reasonable costs and attorney's fees incurred by the Association in defending against such action.

2. Should the Association be forced to initiate legal action to collect the aforementioned costs and attorney's fees, the member school shall be additionally liable for the Association's reasonable costs and attorney's fees resulting from the collection action.

## **Section 6. Penalties**

**(a) Schools.** Schools are expected to comport with and enforce the eligibility standards as set out in the VPA bylaws and policies.

**(b)** Violations of the eligibility standards by schools shall result in one or more of the following penalties:

- (1)** A warning in writing to the principal.
- (2)** Forfeiture of game will result
- (3)** Prohibition from post-season competition or state wide nonathletic activity
- (4)** Suspension or exclusion of institutional membership in the VPA.

**(c) Students.** A student who has violated one of the eligibility rules becomes immediately ineligible. This includes: academic eligibility (sections (a), (e), (f), (g), (l) transfer or amateur status (section (k)); or enrollment in a specialized school/program where the primary purpose is to enhance athletic skills in a particular sport, resulting in ineligibility for that sport (section (l). becomes ineligible immediately.

**(d)** Violations of VPA Standards of Eligibility, Article II, will result in automatic forfeitures, by the school, of any competitions in which the students have participated.

### **(e) Tournament Play - Ineligibility**

(1) If a player or team in any VPA-sponsored tournament or championship is found to be ineligible following any rules in Article III, the Executive Director (or his/her designee), in consultation with the VPA Activities Standards Committee representative(s) and member(s) of the sport/activity committee in question, will make an ad hoc decision in consideration of the best interests of the tournament and the VPA membership as a whole.

(2) In cases where a team is declared ineligible at any level of the tournament and therefore disqualified from further competition, the ad hoc committee will correct the error at the lowest level of the tournament possible without causing a disruption of the tournament time lines. For example: When a team is disqualified from a tournament and it is impossible to correct the problem at its origin since it will disrupt the flow of the tournament for other teams, the problem is corrected at the next possible level by

allowing the team defeated by the ineligible team to assume the position of the disqualified team and continue the tournament competition at that level.

(3) The decision made will aim to be the most reasonable and fair for all concerned while producing the least interruption of tournament structure and tournament time lines, maintaining all previously agreed to contractual commitments for facilities and personnel and promoting fair and equitable enforcement of tournament and VPA bylaws and rules.

## **ARTICLE IV. RULES FOR ORGANIZED GIRLS AND BOYS SPORTS**

### **Section 1. Preamble**

(a) State wide interscholastic sports are organized, supervised and regulated by Principals/Headmasters and advisers. The best interests of Vermont school age children are the uppermost goals for providing wholesome amateur athletic experiences.

(b) Competitors are expected to display a high standard of sportsmanship at all times. Fighting and unsportsmanlike acts cannot be tolerated. It is the responsibility of the school authorities, and especially the coaches and their staffs, to see that unsportsmanlike conduct is not condoned. Coaches can do much by precept and example.

(c) The Executive Director (or his/her designee) will investigate any act of unsportsmanlike conduct, crowd control, or any other actions detrimental to the health and/or safety of any participant, supervisor, chaperone, official, spectator and/or property; or acts detrimental to sound educational practices and a good interscholastic program, and take action deemed proper according to penalties defined in **Article III, Section 6** to prevent reoccurrence. This relates to interscholastic activities between or among member schools, or schools holding membership in another state association, or activity sponsored by the VPA.

### **Section 2. General Rules**

(a) Schools will organize formal practices for each athletic activity in accordance with the definition of the appropriate season.

(b) No school will schedule more than two (2) games per week, Monday through Friday, exclusive of the need to reschedule postponed games or compete in sanctioned tournaments. A third game may be scheduled on Saturday.

(c) In all sports, with the exception of baseball and softball, schools shall schedule no more than one contest per day per team. In baseball and softball, schools may schedule double headers, provided that all other policies and bylaws are followed.

(d) The Vermont Principals' Association will allow the scheduling of VPA Sunday tournament play only under all the following circumstances:

(1) Weather conditions resulted in a postponed Saturday game.

(2) Both principals agree to such Sunday participation.

(3) Any game must be scheduled no earlier than 1 p.m.

(e) When schools schedule interscholastic games or contests with schools in other states, each school shall observe its own state regulations in eligibility.

(f) No member school will host or participate in an interstate tournament or meet involving more than two (2) schools unless such contest has been approved by all interested state associations. Application for sanction must be initiated at least thirty (30) days prior to the date of the meet.

(g) The playing rules for interscholastic athletic contests shall be prescribed by the committee having the responsibility for that activity.

(h) No member school while involved in interscholastic competition with a team at the varsity, junior varsity and/or organized school unit level shall compete in a tournament not sanctioned by the VPA.

(i) Participants in all interscholastic athletic activities must have a minimum of ten (10) practice sessions before competing in interscholastic contests. No more than two practice sessions in a day shall count toward the minimum of ten practice sessions. Participants in unavoidably delayed state tournaments or authorized regional athletic activities are exempt from this rule if such participation prevents compliance. Participants must be allowed one day without any practice or game in each calendar week.

(j) Participants must have a minimum seven (7) days rest period before starting practice for the succeeding sports season. Participants in unavoidably delayed state tournaments or authorized regional athletic activities are exempt from this rule if such participation prevents compliance.

(k) No student may participate in any VPA-sanctioned activity without providing evidence to the student's school administration or designee prior to participation in an activity showing that the participant is covered under some private or public health insurance program for the medical care for injuries that may be suffered on account of participation in an activity. Member institutions are encouraged to work with their student participants and parents to help make available individual insurance policies at affordable cost to students who wish to participate in VPA-sanctioned activities.

**(l) Unsportsmanlike behaviour.**

**(1) Taunting**

Taunting is considered any action(s) or comment(s) by coaches, players or spectators which are intended to bait, anger, embarrass, ridicule or demean others, whether or not the deeds or words are vulgar or racist. Included is contact that

berates, needles, intimidates or threatens based on race, gender, ethnic origin or background, and conduct that attacks religious beliefs, size, economic status, speech, family, special needs or personal matters.

Taunting in all sports is a flagrant unsportsmanlike foul that will result in a game ejection as outlined in the student/coach ejection policy (Article IV, Section 2: General Rules (1)(2) of this document.

Each school is encouraged to have procedures in regard to taunting by spectators.

## **(2) Student/Coach Ejection Policy.**

Any student/coach ejected for unsportsmanlike conduct or a flagrant foul shall be suspended from the next two contests, (with the exception of football, skiing and gymnastics, for which the suspension shall be one contest) in the sport from which the student/coach was ejected. If the ejection occurs in the last contest of the season, the student shall be ineligible for the same period of time in the next sport in which the student participates. If the ejection occurs in the last contest of the coach's or student's last sport season, the school shall take appropriate disciplinary action to impose a sanction proportionate to the penalties imposed by these rules, and shall report that discipline to the VPA. The suspended student may not be in uniform. A student who is ejected a second time shall be suspended for the remainder of the season in that sport.

A coach ejected for unsportsmanlike conduct shall receive the same suspension given to student-athletes. If suspended, a coach may attend the contest, but must be seated in the spectator area and may not give instructions to the players or to the individual who has been assigned to coach the team any time prior to or during the contest. A suspended coach may not travel with the squad to an away contest. A student or coach who has been ejected for unsportsmanlike conduct for the second time in a season shall be suspended for the remainder of the season in that sport.

## **(3) Assault Upon Officials by Coaches.**

A coach who intentionally strikes, shoves, kicks, or makes other aggressive physical contact with an official before, during, or after an interscholastic contest, shall be disqualified immediately and his/her coach's eligibility may be suspended for up to one full calendar year. A coach who is disqualified under this provision shall not coach in any contest, pending a hearing before the Activities Standards Committee. The Activities Standards Committee shall determine the length of the suspension, giving due consideration to all relevant factors, including the seriousness of the offense. At the end of any suspension the coach may request the reinstatement of his/her eligibility. At this time, the Activities Standards Committee will place the request on their next meeting agenda, at which meeting the coach and principal are required to attend. The Activities Standards

Committee will make the determination whether or not to reinstate the coach's eligibility.

**(4) Assault Upon Officials by Students.**

Any member of the team who intentionally strikes, shoves, kicks, or makes other aggressive physical contact with an official before, during, or after an interscholastic contest, shall be disqualified immediately and may be ineligible to participate in all sports for up to one full calendar year. A student who is disqualified under this provision shall not play in any contest, pending a hearing before the Activities Standards Committee. The Activities Standards Committee shall determine the length of the suspension, giving due consideration to all relevant factors, including the seriousness of the offense. NOTE: "Member of the team" is defined to include players, manager, scorekeepers, timers, and statisticians.

**(5) Assault Upon Coaches by Coaches.**

A coach who intentionally strikes, shoves or kicks, or makes other aggressive physical contact with another coach before, during, or after an interscholastic contest shall be disqualified immediately and his/her coach's eligibility may be suspended for up to one calendar year. A coach who is disqualified under this provision shall not coach in any contest, pending a hearing before the Activities Standards Committee. The Activities Standards Committee shall determine the length of the suspension, giving due consideration to all relevant factors, including the seriousness of the offense. At the end of the suspension the coach may request the reinstatement of his/her eligibility. At this time, the Activities Standards Committee will place the request on their next meeting agenda, at which meeting the coach and Principal are required to attend. The Activities Standards Committee will make the determination whether or not to reinstate the coach's eligibility.

**(6) Enforcement.** It is the responsibility of the local school to ensure this regulation is enforced. When a suspended student or coach is allowed to participate, forfeiture of the contest is mandatory. This regulation shall apply to all regular season and tournament contests.

**(7) Appeal of ejection orders.** Judgment calls by officials ordering ejection shall be final. The only grounds for appeal from a suspension under this section shall be that the ejection was caused by gross misconduct by the official, or that the official has filed a written report stating that the ejection was clearly erroneous. Unless a stay of the suspension is granted, by the Assoc. Executive Director in his/her sole discretion, the suspension shall be immediately effective.

**(m) Sanctioning a New Activity/Sport**

The VPA is open to the development of new sports/activities initiatives that would benefit students in VPA member schools. Listed below are the steps that are necessary to present a new sport/activity and the timeline involved.

(1) If a school(s) or interested party, would like to present the possibility of a new sport or activity, a petition shall be brought to the VPA Activity Standards Committee. This petition will have evidence of a minimum of 9 schools that have indicated they would be willing to offer the sport/activity for two years on an “exhibition” basis.

(2) A meeting will be set with the VPA Activity Standards Committee at which the interested school(s) or parties will conduct a presentation concerning the proposed sport/activity. Written evidence from the schools interested in participating in this sport/activity will be provided. A general description of the sport/activity shall also be provided. Additional supporting documents/statements may also be presented. Members of the interested schools must be at the ASC meeting to answer questions.

(3) If approved, a committee will be formed to write the guide for the new sport/activity that will contain the rules and any other necessary information. This committee will also serve as the “official VPA committee” for that sport/activity for the next two years.

(4) At the end of the two year “exhibition” time, the sport/activity committee will meet again with ASC to summarize the progress that has been made over the two years. ASC will then vote as to whether the sport/activity is to be sanctioned.

#### **(n) Coach Replacement During a Contest**

(1) Prior to the start of any athletic contest the head coach must identify the adult who is designated to replace him/her in the event he/she is unable to complete the contest, due to illness, ejection, etc.

(2) When a coach is unable to continue, his/her team shall forfeit the contest if a replacement was not named prior to the start of the contest.

#### **(o) Individual Student Participation Limits**

The present VPA policies relating to individual participation limitation per season are (team sports):

(1) Baseball - maximum 16 games (16 x 7 innings = 112 innings)

(2) Basketball - maximum 20 games (20 x 4 quarters = 80 quarters) “No basketball player shall play more than four (4) quarters in any day, exclusive of the need of overtime play. An overtime in a junior varsity or freshman game shall be considered a quarter. Participation in a quarter constitutes a quarter of play.”

(3) Field Hockey - maximum 14 games (14 x 2 halves = 28 halves)

(4) Football - maximum 9 games (9 x 4 quarters = 36 quarters)

(5) Ice Hockey - maximum 20 games (20 x 3 periods = 60 periods)

(6) Soccer - maximum 14 games (14 x 2 halves = 28 halves)

(7) Softball - maximum 16 games (16 x 7 innings = 112 innings)

(8) Lacrosse - maximum 16 games (16 x 4 periods = 64 periods)

**(p) Fine Policy for Submitting Late/Inaccurate Pairings (Effective August 1, 2004.)**

Member VPA schools who submit inaccurate pairing forms shall be subject to the following fine system:

(1) 1st Submission: Warning in writing to the principal of the school and no fine.

(2) 2nd Submission and beyond: \$200.00 per occurrence for activities that require applications.

(3) \$100 per occurrence for required non-application materials (participation surveys, etc.)

(4) The member school principal shall be notified each time an inaccurate pairing form is submitted.

**(q) Lightning Policy (Revised August 2001)**

The VPA policy on lightning procedures for outdoor interscholastic activities is the following:

(1) When thunder is heard or lightning is seen, students and spectators must leave the field and go inside.

(2) Once lightning has been recognized or thunder heard, teams must wait at least thirty minutes (thirty minute rule) before resuming activities. Any subsequent lightning or thunder after the beginning of the 30-minute count should reset the clock and another count should begin.

- (3) When in doubt ... use good common sense -- the safety of students is your most important responsibility.
- (4) Stay away from tall or individual trees, lone objects, standing pools of water, and open fields. Avoid tallest object in field. Do not take shelter under a single tall tree.
- (5) If there is no safe shelter within a reasonable distance, crouch in a thick grove of small trees surrounded by taller trees or in a dry ditch. Crouching with only your feet touching the ground and keeping your feet close together, wrap your arms around your knees and lower your head to minimize your body's surface area. DO NOT LIE FLAT.
- (6) Pay more attention to the lightning threat than the rain. It need not be raining for lightning to strike; lightning can strike far from the rain shaft.

**(r) Policy Governing Participation in Individual Competitions**

**(1)** The VPA sponsors several activities in which there are both individual and team competitions. These activities are: golf, gymnastics, skiing, snowboarding, tennis, cross-country, track (indoor and outdoor), and wrestling.

Traditionally, the VPA has allowed student athletes who wanted to participate in these sports as individuals but attended schools that did not sponsor teams to practice with and participate through schools with teams. These student athletes would only participate as individuals. They could win individual awards, but their scoring would not count for any team.

The purpose of this policy is to formalize this practice and establish regulations that are consistent with the VPA's regulations.

**(2) Participation Standards**

**(A)** To participate under this policy, a student athlete must be enrolled in a school that is a member of the VPA or be enrolled in a home study program in compliance with Title 16 V.S.A.

**(B)** Participation in this program is limited to the following sports: golf, gymnastics, skiing, snowboarding, tennis, cross-country, track (indoor and outdoor), and wrestling.

**(C)** Student athletes under this program may practice and travel with the school team.

**(D)** Student athletes under this program only participate as individuals. They may win individual awards, but their scoring will not count for any team.

- (E) A student is ineligible for this program if his or her school maintains a team in the sport. A home study student is ineligible for this program if the school district in which he or she has a legal residence (or a school that the home study student's town pays tuition to) has a team. Enrolled students and home study students should first be placed on their home school or hometown teams as participants.
- (F) This program does not allow student athletes to select the school team at which they will participate. **If the school district in which he or she has a legal residence does not have a team,** the student athletes must participate on a team that is geographically closest to the student's residence.
- (G) The participating student must comply with all VPA regulations to be eligible to participate.
- (H) The school where the student is enrolled and the school that is sponsoring the team must consent to the student athlete's participation.
- (I) The participating student must adhere to the same standards of behavior, responsibility and performance as the participants on the team. The participating student may be subject to the same discipline and sanctions as are applied to team members.

### **Section 3: Rules for Specific Sports**

Each interscholastic sport activity has a maximum number of games limit exclusive of playoffs or tournaments. No school, individual, and/or individuals may participate on the combined freshman, junior varsity and varsity level or equivalent that exceeds the maximum number of games limit within that sport.

**(a) Baseball:** No school shall schedule more than sixteen (16) games exclusive of playoffs or tournaments sanctioned by the VPA.

#### **(b) Basketball**

**(1)** No school shall schedule more than twenty (20) games exclusive of playoffs and tournament games sanctioned by the VPA.

**(2)** No basketball player shall play more than four (4) quarters in any day, exclusive of the need of overtime play. An overtime in a junior varsity or freshman game shall be considered a quarter. Participation in a quarter constitutes a quarter of play.

**(c) Bowling (Exhibition Sport) -** No more than (20) matches in any one season.

**(d) Cheerleading:** No squad shall cheer in more than twenty (20) games exclusive of playoffs sanctioned by the VPA.

**(e) Field Hockey:** No school shall schedule more than fourteen (14) games exclusive of playoffs sanctioned by the VPA.

**(f) Football**

(1) No school shall schedule a game after the first Saturday in November.

(2) No school shall schedule more than nine (9) games in any one (1) season exclusive of possible playoffs or championship games sanctioned by the VPA.

**(g) Golf:** No school shall schedule more than sixteen (16) matches in any one (1) season exclusive of possible playoffs or championship matches sanctioned by the VPA.

**(h) Gymnastics:** No school shall schedule more than twenty (20) meets in any one season exclusive of possible playoffs or championship meets sanctioned by the VPA.

**(i) Ice Hockey:** No school shall schedule more than twenty (20) games exclusive of playoffs sanctioned by the VPA.

**(j) Lacrosse:** No school shall schedule more than sixteen (16) games exclusive of playoffs sanctioned by the VPA.

**(k) Skiing:** No school shall schedule more than twenty (20) meets exclusive of playoffs and championship meets sanctioned by the VPA.

**(l) Soccer:** No school shall schedule more than fourteen (14) games exclusive of playoffs sanctioned by the VPA.

**(m) Softball:** No school shall schedule more than sixteen (16) games exclusive of playoffs sanctioned by the VPA.

**(n) Tennis:** No school shall schedule more than sixteen (16) matches exclusive of playoffs sanctioned by the VPA.

**(o) Cross Country:** No school shall schedule more than fourteen (14) matches exclusive of playoffs sanctioned by the VPA.

**(p) Track (Indoor and Outdoor):** No school shall schedule more than sixteen (16) meets exclusive of playoffs sanctioned by the VPA.

**(q) Wrestling:** No school shall schedule more than twenty (20) matches exclusive of playoffs sanctioned by the VPA.

## **Section 4: Sports Seasons**

(a) The following is a list of sports and the seasons to which they have been assigned:

(1) Fall Sports Season — cross-country, field hockey, football and soccer.

(2) Winter Sports Season — basketball, cheerleading, dance, ice hockey, wrestling, gymnastics, skiing, snowboarding and indoor track.

(3) Spring Sports Season — baseball, golf, softball, track and field, tennis and lacrosse.

(b) Scheduling of Sports Seasons: The Activities Standards Committee shall establish the starting and ending dates for each of the sports seasons in accordance with this bylaw. The Activities Standards Committee shall also establish the length of the sports season for each activity. Should state tournaments or authorized regional tournaments be scheduled after the official close of any sports season, a team that is otherwise eligible may participate. The Activities Standards Committee shall schedule the seasons to maximize gender equity, the availability of appropriate sites and officials, and support for all competitions and tournaments.

(1) Fall: All fall sports for boys and girls shall start on the same date unless otherwise approved by the Activities Standards Committee. Tournament competition in any sport may be staggered, so that one gender starts and completes its tournament before the other gender.

(2) Winter: There shall be at least a one week break between the scheduled end of the Fall Sports Season, and the start of the Winter Sports Season. Tournament competition in any sport may be staggered, so that one gender starts and completes its tournament before the other gender.

(3) Spring: There shall be at least a one week break between the scheduled end of the Winter Sports Season and the start of the Spring Sports Season if possible. All spring sports shall start on the same date unless otherwise approved by the Activities Standards Committee. Tournament competition in any sport may be staggered, so that one gender starts and completes its tournament before the other gender. The Spring Sports Season shall end no later than the second Saturday in June, inclusive of all scheduled tournament dates.

(c) No school shall permit students to enroll in the winter activity until the fall activity in which they are participating is concluded and they have had the required rest period between sports seasons. No student shall enroll in the spring activity until the winter activity in which they are participating is concluded and they have had the required seven-day rest period between sports seasons. Students participating in state tournaments or authorized regional athletic activities are exempt from this rule if such participation prevents compliance.

## **Section 5. Out of Season Coaching of Sports Activities (adopted 5/2011)**

(a) **Definitions**

**(1) Out-of-season:** all days during the school year, except for the season of the sport in question.

**(2) Summer recess:** from the last day of school to 10 calendar days prior to the start of the Fall season.

**(3) Practice:** formal meeting or direct instruction/training designed for the sport (this does not include organizational pre-season meetings).

**(4) Coach:** defined as a “paid” coach by either the school or a related organization (Boosters Club, etc.). Coaches who receive \$1 contracts are not included in this definition.

**(b)** Out-of season (including, for all purposes in this section, to also encompass the time between sport seasons during the school year) practice is not permitted under the direction of a school's paid instructor or coach, or student leaders. There shall be absolutely no practice during the school year out-of-season period for a particular sport (football and baseball currently have exemptions to this rule). Open gyms are allowed as long as an invitation is given to every student in the school and there is no instruction (coaching) of any kind).

**(c)** During the summer recess, all restrictions are rescinded. Local schools may determine to what extent the school, the coaches, and the students are to be involved in the "summer recess" program.

**(d)** Exception to out-of-season coaching restriction.

**(1)** Students should have the opportunity to voluntarily participate in out-of-season scholastic competition that does not interfere with educational development. The choice to participate in such activities should be truly voluntary. There should be no pressure placed on student athletes. Student athletes should have the opportunity to pursue a variety of activities. Student athletes who pursue a variety of activities should be protected from an unfair competitive disadvantage against those who may concentrate in one particular sport. This rule is intended to balance these important interests.

**(2)** A coach from a VPA member school may not coach athletes from his or her own high school or middle school program in the same sport out-of-season. The only exception to this restriction is the following: A coach from a VPA member school may instruct his or her child without any restriction.

**(e)** Student participation in out-of-season/summer sports activities should be truly voluntary. No student should be pressured, either directly or indirectly, to participate in out-of-season/summer sports activities. Any coach, instructor, or administrator who directly or indirectly pressures a student athlete to participate in out-of-season/summer sports activities shall be subject to sanctions, including suspension from coaching in any VPA sanctioned activities.

## **Section 6. Scrimmages and Jamborees (or Round Robins) (adopted 5/2010)**

(a) Scrimmage: A scrimmage is defined as and intended to be a learning situation, not a competitive event. A scrimmage is a practice and shall be treated as such. Scrimmages have unlimited timeouts during which coaches are allowed to provide instruction. Scrimmage can be conducted under the following regulations:

(1) A team cannot play more than 20% of the maximum number of regular season games as scrimmages with other teams (schools) up to the conclusion of the regular season. Scrimmages are allowed in the post season and are not a part of the 20%.

(2) No admission shall be charged. While the public need not be denied admittance to a scrimmage, it shall not be played as a regular game.

(3) Scrimmages are not bound by length of game regulations, however individual players cannot exceed the playing time of a regular season game.

(4) A score is only to be kept by the quarter/period/inning/half and not as a regular game.

(b) Jamboree (or Round Robin): A jamboree is defined as a scrimmage in which a team engages two or more other teams. Schools are allowed to use the equivalent of 2 scrimmages at a jamboree/round robin.

### **Section 7. Cancelled Season Policy**

A school which cancels a sport after the official schedule has been established must forfeit wins to its remaining scheduled opponents unless this action takes place ninety (90) days prior to the start of the activity.

## **ARTICLE V. DIVISIONAL ALIGNMENT CLASSIFICATIONS**

### **Section 1. Introduction:**

The Association may establish divisional alignments within the various activities. When a divisional alignment is being reviewed, the Assoc. Executive Director will send a notice to its member schools. The notice shall require that the member school submit to the VPA the count of its enrolled students as of October 15. The count shall be submitted on a form attached to the notice, in accordance with the directions set forth on the form.

The Activities Standards Committee may solicit and consider advice from any source on the classifications, including committees for the various activities. It shall be the goal of the Activities Standards Committee to establish divisional classifications by February 1 for use in the following school year.

Notice of the divisional classifications shall be sent by the VPA to the member institutions. Ordinarily, the notice will be sent by December or immediately after divisional classifications have been determined. Within fifteen days of the receipt of notice of the new divisional

alignments, the member institutions may submit a request for adjusting the divisional alignment of the school. Requests to compete in a higher classification may be granted by the Assoc. Executive Director of the VPA. If the request to compete in a higher classification is denied by the Assoc. Executive Director, the request may be reviewed by the Activities Standards Committee or sports specific committee. The Activities Standards Committee or sports specific committee shall consider all requests to reduce the classification of any member school for any activity. Requests to reduce the classification will be granted only in extraordinary circumstances. The Assoc. Executive Director, the Activities Standards Committee and the sports specific committee shall endeavour to decide all requests for waivers or changes in a timely manner. Following such decision, the final classifications shall be provided to the member schools. It shall be the goal of the VPA to provide the final classification in as timely a manner as possible. The final classifications shall be employed in the following two school years.

## **ARTICLE VI. PROTEST PROCEDURES**

### **Section 1. School Sponsored Activities**

**(a)** Unfortunate circumstances and misunderstandings can and should be resolved between the Principals/Headmasters of the schools involved.

**(b)** If the Principals/Headmasters of the schools involved are unable to arrive at a resolution to the problem, a principal will:

**(1)** Notify the President of the league in writing, filing a copy with the Executive Director of the VPA.

**(2)** If the dispute is not league related, the Executive Director (or his/her designee) will be available to mediate the disagreement.

### **Section 2. VPA Sponsored Activities**

**(a)** In all activities sponsored by the VPA, athletic and non-athletic, the following will be the procedure for handling protests and grievances:

**(1)** Any protest relative to any aspect, other than the actual activity, will be settled by the observer. Should there be no observer assigned or present the host administrator will make the necessary decisions.

**(2)** Any protest relative to the activity, will be settled by the chief official. If no official has been designated as chief official by the Council, the referee or the official so designated by the playing rules will be considered the chief official. In any athletic activity where protest procedures are provided in the playing rules these procedures will be followed. Only playing rules of the rule book/guide governing that activity being played are protestable.

**(3)** The director of any activity or the coach of any team desiring to lodge a protest during the actual activity or game must notify the chief official, referee, umpire, and the

opposing coach that the contest is going on under protest. If a protest has not been as set forth in the rulebook or guide, no protest may be lodged.

(4) Should the principal of any school wish to appeal the ruling, based on the misapplication of a rule made by the chief official, observer or host principal, the Principal must contact the VPA office within 24 hours. The Executive Director/Associate Executive Director will conduct an investigation requiring written reports, if deemed necessary, and will render a decision.

(5) Any protest to be made of a decision by the VPA office shall be by telephone communication within twenty-four (24) hours. It will be the Executive Director/Associate Executive Director's responsibility to contact the other members of the protest committee and to obtain statements from all concerned.

(6) The following will constitute the protest committee:

(A) The President of the Association

(B) The President-elect of the Association

(C) The Executive Director of the Association or his/her designee

(D) The Chairman of the Activities Standards Committee

(E) The Chair of the Sports Specific Committee involved

(F) Alternates shall be appointed by the President to serve in place of any of the principals listed above whose school is involved in the protest or grievance or who have any conflict of interest.

(7) The decision of the protest committee shall be final.

## **ARTICLE VII. COACHES' ELIGIBILITY AND TRAINING PROGRAM**

**Section 1.** The VPA believes that coaches should obtain proper training. Coaches play a critical role in the overall quality of the interscholastic activity program, the safety of student athletes, and the education of our children.

**Section 2.** A person shall be eligible to be employed as a coach in any interscholastic high school and/or middle level activity if the person satisfies all of the following conditions:

(a) The person's appointment as coach must be approved by the local school district responsible for the member school in which the person coaches.

(b) The coach must be at least 18 years of age or a high school graduate at the commencement of the sport season for which the person has been appointed to coach.

(c) The coach must sign a statement acknowledging that he or she has read, understood and agrees to comply with and abide by all VPA bylaws and policies.

(d) The coach must successfully complete a NFHS Interscholastic Coaching Principles course, the NFHS Sports First Aid course and the NFHS Concussion Education course (this course must be completed immediately once a coach is hired and before the beginning of their first practice) or other comparable courses that must be approved by the VPA.

**Section 3.** A coach must complete training within one year (as determined by the start of that sports season) of his or her employment as a coach (with the exception on the concussion education course which must be completed immediately) (Required under 16 V.S.A. sec. 1431 (b)(3)(B)). Coaches who have previously completed approved training but are not currently certified may continue in their positions; they must complete the approved training within seven years from the adoption of this bylaw.

**Section 4.** This by-law only applies to coaches who are under contract with a school or school district. It does not apply to volunteer assistants.

**Section 5.** The Activities Standards Committee may adopt a program requiring coaches who have completed the initial Coaching Education Program to periodically update their training in other courses that are approved by the Activity Standards Committee.

## **ARTICLE VIII. ALLOWING MEMBER SCHOOL STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE ON OTHER MEMBER SCHOOL TEAMS (revised 2/2011)**

**Rationale – The Member to Member Program is designed to either provide a short-term fix for a school with low participation and/or provide an opportunity for a student/athlete from another school(s) to participate on a team.**

**Section 1:** Member high school students may participate on another member high school's team provided that the following criteria are met:

(a) Member high schools that are interested in developing a program must submit a written request for participation on another member school's team to the VPA Associate Executive Director sixty days prior to the start of each sports season to allow adequate time for reviewing the application. The VPA will only approve requests that satisfy all of the criteria of this experimental program. Requests submitted with less than a sixty-day notice will be considered and acted on as soon as possible.

(b) As part of the application, there must be a written agreement between each participating school that has been approved by the respective principals and athletic directors. Receiving (or host) schools may enter into multiple agreements in a sport season, as long the total number of students does not exceed the 20% allocation of students from other member schools. **Sending schools may enter into only one agreement per sport.** The

agreement must specifically authorize the participation **in this program**. (*Changes in bold approved by VPA Activity Standards Committee 2/6/2015*).

- (c) The agreement must state that the schools have considered compensation from the sending school(s). Compensation could be in the form of an exchange of opportunities in other programs, or any other form that the schools agree to. If compensation is agreed to, the agreement shall describe the compensation. Financial compensation, if any, shall come from the school.

## **Section 2. Substantive Requirements:**

- (a) This program only applies to team sports (i.e., Baseball, Basketball, Field Hockey, Football, Ice Hockey, Lacrosse, Soccer, Softball and Tennis). Students can continue to participate as individual competitors in all other sports under existing standards. Schools may enter into an agreement provided that no student/athletes have been cut at any level in that sport (cut meaning out of the program).
- (b) The athlete(s) must meet all eligibility and student conduct requirements otherwise established by VPA rules and the involved schools.
- (c) There must be no athletic recruitment of the student athlete. No coach, booster, or persons involved with the athletic department should directly or indirectly solicit students from other schools for this program. This means that a coach or school employee who receives a direct inquiry must immediately refer the inquiry to the appropriate school administrator.
- (d) The sending school(s) may not offer the team sport in which the student wishes to participate. If a sending school has previously offered this team sport, they are ineligible to participate in this program for **two** years from the date the team was dropped.
- (e) In sports which the VPA sanctions separate championships for boys and girls (Basketball, Ice Hockey, Lacrosse and Soccer), a student may request participation if the student's school does not offer the sport to his or her gender. (All schools should provide athletic programs that provide appropriate opportunities to both genders)
- (f) In order to assure that the sending school(s) is generally meeting its responsibilities to provide activities for student athletes, the sending school(s) must be a member of the VPA and offer at least one-half of the team sports activities sanctioned by the VPA. The sole exception to this rule is if a school has less than 50 boys or 50 girls in grades 9 through 12. These schools would be eligible for entering into a Member-to-Member Program. Boys and girls teams in the following sports shall be counted separately as single sports in both the calculation of the sports offered and the potential sports to be offered: Basketball, Ice Hockey, Lacrosse and Soccer.
- (g) There must be no displacement of student athletes from the receiving (host) school sponsoring the activity from spots on the team. Thus, the receiving school sponsoring the

team must maintain a no-cut policy for the team in question, or have less than the normal complement of players required for a team who are enrolled in the sponsoring school. Students accepted under a member to member program may participate at any level of team that the receiving school offers.

**(h)** Two schools may reach an agreement for a particular sport, however the agreement will not take effect until tryouts have been completed and it is determined there are available slots.

**(i)** Schools may enter into a Member-to-Member Program for sub-varsity teams as long as there is no displacement at the JV or freshman level.

**(j)** For purposes of this rule, the normal complement of players required for a team shall be the following for each of the listed sports:

- (1)** Baseball - 18
- (2)** Basketball - 12
- (3)** Cheerleading (Winter) - 24
- (4)** Dance - 20
- (5)** Field Hockey - 20
- (6)** Football - 38
- (7)** Ice Hockey - 24
- (8)** Lacrosse - 20
- (9)** Soccer - 20
- (10)** Softball - 18
- (11)** Tennis - 10

**(k)** Students from sending schools shall comprise no more than 20% of the normal complement or team roster (if the school does not have the normal complement) for each team listed above. The maximum numbers are listed below. (Note - A team must go with the normal complement or team roster, whichever number is lower.)

- (1)** Baseball - 4
- (2)** Basketball - 2
- (3)** Cheerleading (Winter) - 4
- (4)** Dance - 4
- (5)** Field Hockey - 4
- (6)** Football - 7
- (7)** Ice Hockey - 5
- (8)** Lacrosse - 4
- (9)** Soccer - 4
- (10)** Softball - 4
- (11)** Tennis - 2

**(l)** In the event that a sponsoring school receives more requests for placement on a particular team than are slots available, the sponsoring school will arrange a meeting with the sending

schools for the purpose of conducting a random lottery. A school may not award the slots based on ability or peer pressure. Returning players are allocated one of the open slots if a new agreement is implemented. There is no guaranteed level of playing time in a sponsoring school program.

(m) The sending school(s) and receiving school shall define all legal liabilities for student participants in the program agreement. This is including but not limited to: insurance, transportation and supervision.

### **Section 3. Evaluation & Divisional Alignment**

(a) All agreements are one year in length and must be renewed annually.

(b) In establishing divisional alignments, the appropriate VPA committee shall consider any existing programs and their impact on fair competition. The VPA shall review the application with the appropriate sports committee and may revise the divisional alignment as a condition of approval if appropriate to preserve fair competition.

## **ARTICLE IX. VPA COOPERATIVE TEAM POLICY (Revised 2009)**

### **Rationale**

Over the past several years the VPA has been asked on a number of occasions to revise its current Cooperative Team Policy. Schools felt that this policy was too restrictive and in fact, a true “cooperative team” has never existed in Vermont. With a significant decline in student enrolment being predicted in Vermont, the membership of the VPA felt that current policies governing student participation needed to be examined and perhaps modified to meet the needs of today’s schools and their students. As a result, a sub-committee was established to examine current VPA policies and recommendations were made to the VPA Activities Standards Committee. The following is a modified Cooperative Team Policy that has been developed by the Activities Standards Committee.

**Section 1.** Any proposal to form a new cooperative team must be in complete form and submitted to the VPA Activities Standards Committee at least six (6) months in advance of the beginning practice date for that sport.

**Section 2.** The Activities Standards Committee will examine all applications with the following foci:

- (a) respect the goals of the petitioning schools.
- (b) protect competing schools from competitive disadvantage.
- (c) guarantee increased student participation.
- (d) ensure that no displacement of athletes occurs.

- (e) rest on a firm financial commitment by the schools involved to support a viable team.

**Section 3.** The Activities Standards Committee must then approve this application before action can be taken on the formation of this team.

#### **Section 4. Specific Policy Requirements**

- (a) All cooperative team applications must contain a letter of acknowledgement from the league (or the scheduled opponents in the case of independent schools) they belong to (NVAC, MVL or CVL) that states that they are aware of the application being submitted.

(b) A proposal should demonstrate that the cumulative student participation in the combining schools will be greater under the cooperative program than it was during each of the previous two years. This requirement protects against cooperative programs being formed because of the withdrawal of financial support by any of the schools involved.

(c) The proposal should demonstrate that students who participated in the program during the previous year are guaranteed the opportunity to continue that participation under the cooperative proposal. If each school has a sufficient number of athletes trying out for a given sport to field a team, then a request for a cooperative team will be denied.

(d) No consideration will be given to cooperative proposals that result from the elimination of the sport due to financial cuts during the two years immediately prior to the request.

- (e) Cooperative team proposals will only be considered if they increase the number of student participants, and will not be considered if they are driven by desire to “save money” at the risk of decreasing the number of potential student participants.

(f) The division to which the cooperative team is assigned will be determined by the combined student enrollment of the schools involved.

(g) A school may not send students to two (2) different cooperative programs in a single sport.

(h) One school will be identified as the host for the cooperative team, however a waiver for playing games at additional sites (with another school(s) in the cooperative team) will be considered as long as the games at the additional site are identified when the cooperative team application is submitted for approval

- (i) Cooperative team proposals must be limited to VPA member schools.

- (j) Cooperative proposals will be granted for a two-year period.

(k) All liability associated with the formation and conduct of approved cooperative teams rests with the host school that exempts the VPA and its agents from all liability and responsibility.

## **Section 5. Process**

(a) The school involved in the development of a cooperative team must submit the following packet of information for consideration.

- (1) Complete and submit the VPA Cooperative Team Letter of Application
- (2) A description of the proposed cooperative team. This description needs to include information from items (b), (c), (e) and (h) from the Policy Requirements listed above and should reflect information on items to be considered in Section 6. **Guidelines** (below).
- (3) A letter of acknowledgement from the league that the schools are currently in.
- (4) A statement from each school involved in the proposal indicating that this proposal is not the result of withdrawal of financial support over the past two years.

(b) Once submitted, the cooperative team application will be heard at the next VPA Activities Standards Committee meeting. Schools will be required to attend this meeting in order to answer any questions the committee may have. Final approval or denial by the Activities Standards Committee will be done at this meeting.

## **Section 6. Guidelines (things to consider when developing a proposal)**

The principals of the schools involved in the proposed cooperative team need to assure the Activities Standards Committee that the following items were considered and have been resolved:

- (a) A sufficient reason(s) for sponsoring a cooperative team.
- (b) An appropriate name for the cooperative team.
- (c) Suitable practice arrangements.
- (d) Fair competitive arrangements.
- (e) Safe and adequate transportation arrangements.
- (f) Provisions for physical exams and medical coverage.
- (g) Insurance provisions (required by the VPA)
- (h) The setting and monitoring of academic standards for purposes of eligibility.

- (i) The purchase, repair and maintenance of equipment.
- (j) Source and control of finances.
- (k) Guidelines for termination of the program.
- (l) Use and maintenance of facilities.
- (m) Selection, supervision and payment of coaches.
- (n) Coordination of class/school schedules.
- (o) Ticket prices and sales, disbursement of proceeds.
- (p) Student spectator and fan control and supervision.
- (q) Cooperative team identity (mascot, colors, uniform, etc.)
- (r) Award policies (determining letters, etc.)
- (s) Governance for the resolution of disputes.
- (t) Identification of and rationale for, programs eliminated  
Within the past two (2) years.

## **ARTICLE X. MIDDLE SCHOOL ATHLETICS AND ACTIVITIES**

### **PREAMBLE**

The Vermont Principals' Association defines middle school as students who are enrolled in grades 5 – 8. The VPA believes that an understanding of the unique physical, psychological, emotional, and educational needs of all middle school children should drive all aspects of middle school education.

The VPA believes that middle school sports should be kept in perspective. To that end, we concur with the National Middle School Association research summary on sports in middle school, which states: *"Many positive benefits for young adolescents may result from participation in sports which can enhance their self esteem and increase their interest in sports. However, when young adolescents' needs and interests become secondary to pressures and unreasonable expectations from coaches, parents and even themselves, sports often have the opposite effect. Young adolescent's psychological well being should be a priority in developing middle school sports programs."*

The VPA believes that every interested student be afforded the opportunity to participate in athletics and activities at the middle school level. Member institutions are encouraged to find

creative ways and means for every middle school student to experience the personal growth and development that comes through active participation.

The VPA has developed the following standards in order that our middle school athletic/activity programs may consistently apply the best of what we know to this centrally important part of the larger middle grade program.

### **Section 1. Standards**

- (a) Student activities, intramural, and interscholastic sports are an integral part of the Middle School educational program.
- (b) The emphasis of a Middle School activities program is on teaching, participation, and progression without the competitive pressures, which are part of the Senior High School athletic program. No single phase of the educational program shall be promoted at the expense of other equally important programs.
- (c) Participants, coaches, parents, officials, and fans shall model and uphold the highest ideals of sportsmanship.
- (d) The supervision of activities should be in the hands of trained school personnel. The selection of this leadership should be based on their knowledge of teaching activities to this age group, understanding of the modified sports/activities program, training, and safety procedures.
- (e) The programs should operate with minimal loss of school time, limited publicity, competent officiating, and limited awards.
- (f) All participants are required to have health insurance.
- (g) All participants should receive appropriate medical screening in accordance with school district policies.
- (h) All participants should be selected, equipped, instructed, and supervised in accordance with school district policies.

### **Section 2. Policies**

#### **(a) Principal's Responsibilities**

Principals are responsible for operating all middle school activities in accordance with existing state laws and within the guidelines established by the Vermont Principals' Association.

**(b)** VPA Member schools shall compete with other member schools. Member schools may also compete with teams from schools and programs that are not members if the

schools agree to substantially follow the VPA Middle School Standards, rules, and regulations. These schools may be in or out-of-state.

(c) A home school student who wishes to participate in a public school co-curricular program shall be an “eligible student” under this section if:

(1) The participating student is enrolled in a home-study program in compliance with V.S.A. Title 16, Section 166(b).

(2) The participating student must have a legal residence in the school district or is a legal resident of a district that does not maintain a school and pays tuition on behalf of its students.

(3) Participation in a school’s co-curricular program shall not commence until a copy of the Vermont State Agency of Education Enrollment Letter is presented to the principal by the parent or guardian. See Article III. Eligibility: Section 3 Home Study Programs in this document for additional information.

**(d) Eligibility of Eighth Grade Students:** Schools enrolling less than fifty boys or fifty girls in grades nine to twelve inclusive may use students under sixteen years of age from affiliated grammar schools in interscholastic competition, provided the Executive Director approves.

(1) Such approval shall be automatic if the requesting school shows an enrollment of less than fifty boys or fifty girls as of October 1, of each school year.

(2) Students granted such permission cannot compete until they have reached the eighth grade and then for only one year.

(3) Such students must meet the local academic and eligibility standards of the school they are attending.

(e) Only VPA Member schools may participate in VPA sponsored activities. Examples: Spelling Bee, Geo Bee, Service Learning & Leadership Project grants and other activities.

**(f) Cooperative Sponsorship** (Adapted from Section IV (Article XI) - Cooperative interscholastic athletic teams for middle school competition)  
Cooperative sponsorship of an interscholastic athletic activity by member schools will be considered under the following conditions:

(1) The schools must be located in the same geographic area.

(2) Cooperative sponsorship agreements must be reviewed on an annual basis, and be for a minimum of two years.

(3) The principal of each member school must jointly make the application to the Vermont Principals' Association's Executive Director or designee for approval.

### **Section 3. General Rules**

(a) Participants must be enrolled in their school or state approved school and must meet the VPA member school's prescribed academic and eligibility rules.

(b) Contest rules shall be governed by NFHS rules as adopted by the Vermont Principals' Association.

(c) Participants in all interscholastic athletic activities must have a minimum of seven (7) days of practice before competing in interscholastic contests.

(d) Practice time shall be limited to one and one-half hours during any calendar day.

(e) Member schools shall not participate in more than a combination of five (5) games and practices within a seven (7) day period.

(f) Member schools shall not play more than three (3) games per seven (7) day period. This includes both scheduled and make-up contests.

(g) Member schools shall not play more than two (2) contests on back-to-back days. This includes both scheduled and make-up contests.

(h) **Scrimmage:** A scrimmage is defined as, and intended to be, a learning situation, not a competitive event. A scrimmage is a practice and shall be treated as such. Scrimmages have unlimited timeouts during which coaches are allowed to provide instruction. Scrimmage can be conducted under the following regulations:

(1) A team may participate in one (1) scrimmage per season, up to the end of the season.

(2) No admission shall be charged. While the public need not be denied admittance to a scrimmage, it shall not be played as a regular game.

(3) Scrimmages are not bound by length of game regulations, however individual players cannot exceed the playing time of a regular season game.

(4) A score is only to be kept by the quarter/period/inning/half and not as a regular game.

**Section 4. Waivers:** A waiver is required for any deviation from existing rules and regulations. Waivers must be in writing to the VPA Executive Director or Designee and must be provided sufficiently in advance of the event.

## **Section 5. Seasons & Sports Definitions & Regulations**

The VPA supports and encourages middle schools to provide young adolescents opportunities to participate in developmentally appropriate sports and activities (music, drama, dance, etc.). With this in mind, the VPA has developed sports specific regulations for the middle school that reflect a season that is 80% of an allowable high school sports program.

### **(a) Definitions**

- (1) The **beginning of a sports season** is defined as the first day a participant is eligible to begin practice for the season. See Table I for additional information.
- (2) The **end of a sports season** is defined as the day of the last scheduled contest, including make-up games.

**(b) Fall Sports:** The fall sports season includes cross-country running, field hockey and soccer. The Fall Sports Season shall commence no earlier than the first scheduled student day of school as determined by the local school calendar, and shall run for a period of nine (9) weeks.

**(1) Cross Country Running (Boys and Girls) (NFHS Rules apply except as follows):** No school shall schedule more than twelve (12) meets including tournaments.

**(2) Field Hockey (NFHS Rules apply except as follows):**

- (A) No school shall schedule more than twelve (12) games including tournaments.
- (B) Games shall consist of a maximum of thirty (30) minute halves.
- (C) In the event of a tie, there will be no overtime.

**(3) Soccer (Boys and Girls) (NFHS Rules apply except as follows):**

- (A) No school shall schedule more than twelve (12) games including tournaments.
- (B) The halves shall be limited to a maximum of thirty (30) minutes.
- (C) No player shall participate in more than two (2) halves in any day.
- (D) In the event of a tie, there will be no overtime.

**(c) Winter Sports:** Winter sports include basketball, cheerleading, Nordic skiing, dance, gymnastics, and wrestling. The Winter Sports Season may commence two (2) weeks after the conclusion of the Fall Sports Season, and shall run for a period of thirteen (13)

weeks. Vacation weeks, where no contests, scrimmages, or practices are held do not count toward the season total.

**(1) Basketball (Boys and Girls) (NFHS Rules apply except as follows):**

**(A)** No school shall schedule more than sixteen (16) games, including tournaments.

**(B)** A basketball game shall consist of a maximum of four (4) six-minute quarters, plus overtime, as defined by NFHS rules.

**(C)** No basketball player shall play more than four (4) quarters in any day exclusive of the need for overtime. Participation in a quarter constitutes a quarter of play.

**(D)** Overtime periods are a continuation of the fourth quarter. The time is one-half of a regulation period as defined by NFHS rules.

**(2) Cheerleading (NFHS and UCA Rules apply):**

1 No squad shall cheer in more than sixteen (16) games as sanctioned by the VPA.

**(3) Cross Country Skiing**

1. No school shall schedule more than sixteen (16) meets, including invitational tournaments.

**(4) Dance (UDA Rules Apply):**

1. No school shall schedule more than thirteen (13) contests, including invitational tournaments

**(5) Gymnastics (USGA Gymnastics, FIG):**

1. Gymnastics - No school shall schedule more than sixteen (16) meets.

**(6) Wrestling (NFHS Rules apply except as follows):**

1. No school shall schedule more than twelve (12) matches including invitational tournaments.

**(d) Spring Sports:** Spring sports include baseball, golf, lacrosse, softball, tennis, and track. The Spring Sports Season may commence two (2) weeks after the conclusion of the Winter Sports Season, and shall run for a period of ten (10) weeks.

**(1) Baseball (NFHS Rules apply except as follows):**

**(A)** No school shall schedule more than twelve (12) games including tournaments.

**(B)** Games may consist of either five innings or seven innings as agreed upon prior to the start of the game. In a five-inning game, no new inning may begin ninety (90) minutes after the first pitch of the game is thrown. In a seven-inning game, no new inning may begin one hundred-twenty (120) minutes after the first pitch of the game is thrown.

**(C)** Pitch Count Limits: All pitches thrown after the first pitch count toward pitching limits, excluding warm up pitches. See Table 2 for pitching limitations and rest requirements.

**(D)** In the event of a tie, there will be no extra innings.

**(2) Lacrosse (Boys and Girls) (NFHS & US Lacrosse Rules apply. Consult NFHS and US Lacrosse Rule Books under Youth Lacrosse sections):**

**(A)** No school shall schedule more than twelve (12) games including tournaments.

**(B)** Total game or jamboree-playing time shall not exceed the limit of one game (48 minutes).

**(C)** No body checking shall be allowed. (Boys, per NFHS youth rules. Never allowed under girls' rules)

**(D)** In the event of a tie, there will be no overtime.

**(3) Softball (NFHS Rules apply except as follows):**

**(A)** No school shall schedule more than twelve (12) games including tournaments.

**(B)** Games may consist of either five innings or seven innings as agreed upon prior to the start of the game. In a five-inning game, no new inning may begin ninety (90) minutes after the first pitch of the game is thrown. In a seven-inning game, no new inning may begin one hundred-twenty (120) minutes after the first pitch of the game is thrown.

**(C)** In the event of a tie, there will be no extra innings.

**(4) Tennis (USTA Rules apply):**

1. No school shall schedule more than twelve (12) matches, including invitational tournaments.

**(5) Track (NFHS Rules apply except as follows):**

1. Spring Track - No school shall schedule more than twelve (12) meets, including invitational tournaments.

## **Section 6. Coaching Requirements**

The VPA believes that coaches should obtain proper training. Coaches play a critical role in the overall quality of the interscholastic activity program, the safety of student athletes, and the education of our children.

**(a)** A person shall be eligible to be employed or appointed as a coach in any interscholastic high school and/or middle level activity if the person satisfies all of the following conditions:

- (1)** The person's appointment as coach must be approved by the local school district responsible for the member school in which the person coaches.
- (2)** The coach must be at least 18 years of age or a high school graduate at the commencement of the sport season for which the person has been appointed to coach.
- (3)** The coach must sign a statement acknowledging that he or she has read, understood and agrees to comply with and abide by all VPA bylaws and policies.
- (4)** The coach must successfully complete the NFHS Concussion Education course. This course (or another approved by the VPA) must be completed immediately once a coach is hired and before the beginning of their first practice (Required under 16 V.S.A. sec. 1431 (b)(3)(B)).
- (5)** This policy applies to coaches who volunteer or are under contract with a school district.

### **(b) Guidelines for Coaching Education**

**(1)** The VPA highly recommends that all coaches and advisors of middle school students successfully complete training through an appropriate coaching program as defined by the local administration. Recommended professional development courses include on-line NFHS courses such as *Fundamentals of Coaching*; *First Aid, Health, and Safety for Coaches*; and *Coaching Sports in the Middle School*.

**(2)** Examples of available programs include:

**(A)** National Federation of High Schools: [www.nfhslearn.com](http://www.nfhslearn.com)

**(B)** The Association of Allied Health, Physical Education, Recreation & Dance Association training:  
<http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/standards/upload/Co-Curricular-PA-Sport-Programs-for-Middle-School-Students-2002.pdf>

**ARTICLE XI. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**TABLE 1  
Middle School Sports Seasons**

All dates are defined by the local school district official calendar.

<i>Season</i>	<i>Start of Season</i>	<i>Length of Season</i>	<i>Comments</i>
FALL	May begin no earlier than the first day of student classes for the grades represented.	Nine (9) Weeks	
WINTER	May start two (2) weeks after the end of the Fall Sports Season.	Thirteen (13) Weeks.	Weeks when schools are closed and no practices or games are held <u>do not count</u> toward the length of season.
SPRING	May start two (2) weeks after the end of the Winter Sports Season.	Ten (10) Weeks	Weeks when schools are closed and no practices or games are held <u>do not count</u> toward the length of season.

**TABLE 2  
Vermont Principals' Association  
Pitch Count Table  
2013-2014**

<i>Level</i>	<i>3 Days of Rest</i>	<i>2 Days of Rest</i>	<i>1 Day of Rest</i>	<i>0 Days of Rest</i>
VARSITY	76 – 120 pitches	51 – 75 pitches	26 – 50 pitches	1 – 25 pitches
JV/FROSH	66 – 110 pitches	41 – 65 pitches	26 – 30 pitches	1 – 25 pitches
MIDDLE SCHOOL	56 – 85 pitches	36 – 55 pitches	20 – 35 pitches	1 – 19 pitches

## **Addendum A: A Coach's Code of Ethics**

### **Section 6. A Coach's Ethics: A Statement of Belief**

The responsibility of a coach is to teach attitudes, proper habits, knowledge and skills. The athletic program is designed to enhance academic achievement and should never interfere with opportunities for academic success. Each student athlete should be treated as an individual whose welfare shall be primary at all times. The coach must be aware that he or she serves as a model in the education of the student athlete and, therefore, shall never place the value of winning above the value of character building.

- The coach must constantly uphold the honor and dignity of the teaching profession. In all personal contact with the student athlete, officials, athletic directors, school administrators, the state high school athletic association, the media and the public, the coach shall strive to set an example of the highest ethical and moral conduct.
- The coach shall support and enforce school rules for the prevention of drug, alcohol and tobacco use and abuse, and under no circumstances shall authorize the use of these substances.
- The coach shall promote the entire interscholastic program of the school and direct his or her program in harmony with the total school program.
- The coach shall be thoroughly acquainted with contest, state, league and local rules, and is responsible for their interpretation to team members. The coach shall abide by the letter and spirit of these rules at all times.
- Coaches shall actively use their influence to enhance sportsmanship by their spectators, working closely with cheerleaders, booster clubs, and administrators.
- Contest officials shall have the respect and support of the coach. The coach shall not indulge in conduct that incites players or spectators against the officials or against each other. Public criticism of officials or players is unethical.
- Before and after contests, rival coaches should meet and exchange friendly greetings to set the correct tone for the event.
- A coach shall not exert pressure on faculty members to give student athletes special consideration.

- It is unethical for coaches to scout opponents by any other means than those adopted by the state high school athletic association and the league.

## **Addendum B**

### **VERMONT PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION STATEMENT OF BELIEF ON CHEMICALS AND HEALTH**

#### **ARTICLE I. PHILOSOPHY AND PURPOSE**

The VPA recognized the use of chemicals as a significant health problem for many adolescents, resulting in negative effects on behaviour, learning and the total development of each individual. The misuse and abuse of chemicals for some adolescents affects extracurricular participation and development of related skills. Others are affected by the misuse and abuse by family, team members and other significant persons in their lives.

The close contact in VPA activities of advisors and coaches and other athletic department personnel provides them with a unique opportunity to observe, confront and assist young people. The VPA, therefore, supports education and awareness training in adolescent chemical use problems including the symptomatology of chemical dependency and special issues affecting athletic activities for administrators, athletic directors, coaches, advisors, participants and their families.

#### **ARTICLE II. CHEMICAL AWARENESS**

1. Put the training and conduct rules of your coaches and school in writing.
2. Have your school attorney review the rules.
3. Have your School Board review and adopt your rules.
4. Have the rules printed in the student handbook.
5. Print the rules in the school paper.
6. Post the rules in the locker rooms and on bulletin boards.
7. Give your athletic participants a copy of eligibility rules.
8. Send the rules home to parents.
9. If possible, have your local newspaper publish your rules.
10. Sponsor a Chemical Awareness evening with parents, coaches and student athlete candidates.

*On May 2, 2014, the Vermont Principals' Association Executive Council unanimously approved the reformatting of the Vermont Principals' Association policies.*

**Vermont Principals' Association 2 Prospect Street, Suite 3 Montpelier, VT 05602**  
**Phone: (802) 229-0547 Fax: (802) 229-4801**  
**<http://www.vpaonline.org>**  
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