

NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Policy Manual

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STUDENT PARTICIPATION RULES

This policy sets forth the rules and requirements for students to participate in interscholastic athletics.

- (a) A student in grades 6 through 12 shall not participate in interscholastic athletics on behalf of a North Carolina public school unless the student has satisfied the requirements set forth in this Policy.
- (b) Public school units are authorized to determine whether and to what extent students in grades 6 through 12 under their jurisdiction may participate in interscholastic athletics, not inconsistent with the requirements of this Policy, provided that students in grade 6 are not eligible to participate in tackle football.
- (c) Each PSU shall require the principal of a participating school to sign and date a list of eligible students for each sport. The PSU shall maintain a copy of the most current list in the principal's office and the office of the superintendent.
- (d) Residency Requirements
 - (1) For purposes of this Policy, a student's primary residence shall be determined as follows:
 - (A) If the student lives with both parents, the residence of both parents.
 - (B) If the student lives with a single parent, the residence of that parent.
 - (C) If the student's parents are separated or divorced, the residence of the parent to whom a court of competent jurisdiction has awarded primary custody of the student. If no custody order has been entered, the student's primary residence

shall be deemed to be that at which the student is residing more than half-time at the beginning of the school year.

- (D) If a student lives with an individual to whom a court of competent jurisdiction has awarded legal guardianship of the student, the residence of that individual.
- (E) If a student has been emancipated in accordance with Chapter 7B, Article 35 of the General Statutes, the student's residence at the time of emancipation.
- (F) If a student is a foreign national participating in a foreign exchange program authorized by federal and state law, the residence to which the student is assigned by the program or host PSU.

- (2) A student shall not participate in interscholastic athletics following a change in primary residence unless it is made for a bona fide purpose. A bona fide purpose means that the change in primary residence was made with the intent that it be permanent and not primarily for athletic purposes.
- (3) An administering organization shall resolve, by a preponderance of the evidence, any disputes regarding a student's primary residence or whether a change in a student's primary residence was for a bona fide purpose.

(e) Enrollment Requirements

- (1) A student who attends a school supervised by a local board of education shall only participate in interscholastic athletics on behalf of the school to which the student is assigned under G.S. 115C-366.
- (2) A student enrolled in a charter, regional statewide public school, or school operated by the University of North Carolina shall meet all the enrollment criteria for that school and attend that school. A student who attends a school described in this Subparagraph shall not participate in interscholastic athletics on behalf of that school unless the student's primary residence is within either:
 - (A) the county in which the school is located, or
 - (B) twenty-five (25) miles of the school as determined by an administering organization.
- (3) Each local board of education shall adopt a policy addressing the participation in interscholastic athletics of students whose primary residence is within the local board's jurisdiction and who are enrolled in a home school, as defined in G.S. 115C-563(a), provided that the PSU either agrees to cover any home school student whom it allows to participate under its catastrophic athletic accident insurance policy or verifies that the student is independently covered by catastrophic accident insurance.

(f) Transfer Requirements for High School Interscholastic Athletics

- (1) After a student's initial entry into grade 9, and absent a change in residence for a bona fide purpose as provided in Paragraph (d) of this Policy:

- (A) a student who transfers from one school to another school within the same PSU shall not participate in interscholastic athletics for 365 calendar days following the student's enrollment in the new school, unless the governing authority of the PSU has adopted a policy allowing immediate eligibility for students who are assigned by the PSU to a different school within the same PSU.
 - (B) a student who transfers from a school in one PSU to a school in a different PSU shall not participate in interscholastic athletics for 365 calendar days following the student's enrollment in the new school, except by mutual agreement of the governing authorities of each PSU.
- (2) If a student transfers to a new school within 365 calendar days of the hiring by that school of a coach for an interscholastic athletics team who was previously employed as a coach for an equivalent sport by the school from which the student is transferring, the student shall be ineligible to participate in interscholastic athletics for that sport. An administering organization may waive this requirement upon petition by the student's PSU if it determines by a preponderance of the evidence that the student's transfer was not primarily for athletic purposes.
 - (3) For purposes of this Paragraph, if a student transfers from a public school to a nonpublic school, including a home school as defined in G.S. 115C-563(a), and within 365 calendar days transfers to a different public school, the transfer from the nonpublic school shall be treated as a transfer from a public school.
 - (4) A student who transfers to the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics is exempt from the requirements of this Paragraph upon initial entry into that school.
 - (5) No student shall participate in more than one season of interscholastic athletics per year in the same sport, regardless of the school on behalf of which the student participated.

(g) Age Requirements

- (1) Each PSU shall determine the age of a student participating in interscholastic athletics based on a preponderance of the evidence known to the PSU.
- (2) A student who is ineligible to participate at one grade level due to age shall be eligible to participate at the next higher grade level only, subject to the following restrictions:
 - (A) A student shall not be eligible to participate at the middle school level for a period lasting longer than six (6) consecutive semesters, beginning with the student's initial entry into grade 6.
 - (B) A student shall not be eligible to participate at the high school level for more than eight (8) consecutive semesters, beginning with the student's initial entry into grade 9.
 - (C) A student shall not participate on a grade 6, 7, or 8 team if the student becomes 15 years of age before August 31 of that school year.
 - (D) A student shall not participate on a grade 7, 8, and 9 team if the student becomes 16 years of age on or before August 31 of that school year.

(E) A student shall not participate on any grade 9, 10, 11, or 12 team if the student becomes 19 years of age on or before August 31 of that school year.

(h) Scholastic Requirements

(1) To be eligible to participate in interscholastic athletics, a student must be in good academic standing. For purposes of this Policy, a student shall be deemed to be in good academic standing under the following circumstances:

(A) The student passed at least seventy (70) percent of the courses taken in the preceding semester; and

(B) The student is on track to advance to the next grade level or graduate within the next calendar year.

(2) A student who is promoted from grade 5 to grade 6 shall be deemed to have satisfied the requirements set forth in this Paragraph to participate in the first semester of grade 6.

(3) A student who is promoted from grade 8 to grade 9 shall be deemed to have satisfied the requirements set forth in this Paragraph to participate in the first semester of grade 9.

(i) To be eligible to participate in interscholastic athletics, a student shall receive a medical examination every 395 days by a licensed physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant, subject to the provisions of G.S. 90-9.1, G.S. 90-9.2, G.S. 90-9.3, G.S. 90-18.1, and G.S. 90-18.2.

(j) A student shall not participate in interscholastic athletics after pleading guilty or “no contest” to, or being finally convicted of, a felony under the laws of North Carolina, the United States, or any other state. Prior to deeming the student ineligible, an administering organization shall receive a certified copy of a criminal record reflecting the conviction and verify that the student is the same individual identified in the criminal record.

(k) Amateur Status Requirements

(1) A student shall not participate in interscholastic athletics after any of the following:

(A) graduation, except that the student may continue to participate in playoff and state championship contests in spring sports after graduation;

(B) signing a professional athletic contract, except that the student may continue to participate in any sport for which the student has not signed a professional contract.

(C) receiving remuneration as a participant in an athletic contest, except that the student may accept a gift, merchandise, or other thing of value, provided that:

(i) the value does not exceed two hundred-fifty dollars (\$250.00) per student per season;

(ii) the item is totally consumable and nontransferable, or labeled in a permanent manner (e.g., an engraved or monogrammed item); and

(iii) the item is approved by the student's principal and local superintendent or head of school.

(D) participating on an all-star team or in all-star game or bowl game that is not sanctioned by the administering organization of which the student's school is a member, provided that the student shall be ineligible only for that sport.

- (2) A student shall not be deemed ineligible under this Paragraph for payment by an administering organization, PSU, or athletic booster club affiliated with the student's school or PSU for "essential expenses" arising from a specific interscholastic athletic contest in which the student participates. "Essential expenses" shall include the reasonable cost of meals, lodging, and transportation.
 - (3) A student shall not be deemed ineligible under this Paragraph for receipt of a nominal, standard fee or salary for instructing, supervising, or officiating an organized youth sports program, recreational activities, playground, or camp, whether or not affiliated with a North Carolina public school.
- (1) An administering organization shall, in an individual student's case, waive any eligibility requirement contained in this Policy upon a petition by the student's PSU and a finding by the administering organization that enforcing the requirement:
- (1) fails to promote academic progress, health, safety, and fair play;
 - (2) works an undue hardship on a student who has lost eligibility due to circumstances that made participation impossible, such as prolonged illness or injury; or
 - (3) prevents the reasonable accommodation of a student's disability, as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq.