



Portland St. Patrick Catholic School Board

We Pray! We Learn! We Achieve!

Policy for Extracurricular Activities - Athletics Eligibility

June 3, 2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the request of one family with the written support of another family, St. Patrick Catholic School Board conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the benefits and risks regarding non-students, specifically homeschool students, being allowed to participate in Shamrock athletics.

On behalf of St. Patrick Catholic School Board, we respect and support each family's decision to choose the best education options for their students. This includes the choice to homeschool. Whether public, private, or home school, families choose to take advantage of many unique opportunities and forgo other opportunities available in each of these educational options.

The goal and responsibility of the school board is to determine the best policy for the school and its programs. It is important to remember that policies must be written with a broad potential for application and the logistics to apply them. How these policies impact athletics and the greater school community also needs to be considered.

We have determined that the commonly implemented league and organization norms will serve as the base of the policy for eligibility to participate in Shamrock athletics. This recommendation, as described below and provided on the following page, was approved at the May 14 school board meeting with clarifying adjustments made on June 3.

St. Patrick parish members have the opportunity to participate in Shamrock athletics in elementary through grade 6 for basketball (boys and girls), volleyball, and football. For grades 5 and 6 basketball and volleyball, the Lansing Catholic Youth Activities Conference (CYAC) – Lansing Catholic Youth League (CYL) is open to parish members. Note that the CYAC-CYL is similar to the Grand Rapids Area Catholic Elementary Athletic Council (GRACEAC) offered in the Grand Rapids Diocese. The current program for grades 5 and 6 football is community-based and open to parish members. This program becomes formalized with school/league affiliation starting in grade 7.

Michigan Trap Shooting Association, Michigan State High School Clay Target League allows for community-wide eligibility for grades 6-12.

Activities under the umbrella of the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) and/or related conferences are available to students that are enrolled full-time at St. Patrick Catholic School. MHSAA develops common rules for athletic eligibility and competition with the educational philosophy of going to school for academics first and athletics second. MHSAA defined the characteristics of rules for school-based sports are to assure that students are enrolled in and attending school, are making regular progress through school, and are amateur athletes of a proper age.

MHSAA is based on school affiliation and enrollment. This organization is diligent in enforcing eligibility standards for academics, attendance, and transfers. Stepping outside of the commonly implemented guidelines would put St. Patrick School at risk for recruiting and other potential violations along with related reputational scrutiny.

MHSAA represents over 1500 public and private schools. St. Patrick Catholic School would be the first or one of the very few schools that would allow exceptions for non-full-time enrolled students. While we recognize the potential of this as a marketing tool and an opportunity to evangelize, our small school is not prepared to be a trailblazer in this area at this time. In addition, there would be significant administrative demands that we cannot currently support.

As expressed in our meetings, the school board has taken this proposal seriously. There is an on-going concern that St. Patrick is too focused on athletics. The priority must be school and academics over athletics. St. Patrick athletics are an extension of the school day, and these relationships are reflected in the Shamrock Pride of the teams and student body. Students and their families are fully engaged in the culture of St. Patrick Catholic School.

Families have a wide variety of organized, competitive, community-based sports that are not affiliated with MHSAA, such as Junior Pro, Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), Red Cedar, Wagon Wheel, and Capital Homeschool Athletic Program (CHAP) leagues. Many local families, including St. Patrick students, participate in these available programs outside of school affiliation. This allows the families to be part of the greater community and provide additional team-camaraderie.

POLICY

The development of well-rounded, faith-centered individuals, as well as the safety and welfare of our student-athletes, is the primary focus of the athletic programs in St. Patrick Catholic School. These programs complement the academic and spiritual focus of the school and strive to assist students in reaching their full potential as witnesses to Christ's teachings.

Participation in athletics is allowed using the organization/league norms as described in the chart below. Many of the athletic programs are open to full-time enrolled students with some availability to non-students. This allows for a bridge to non-student families while maintaining the continuity of the St. Patrick Catholic School student body.

Grades	Athletic/Program	Organization, League	Eligibility
Elementary through grade 6	Basketball: Boys & Girls Volleyball	CYAC-CYL	Parish Students
Elementary through grade 6	Football	Community-based program	Parish Students
Grades 6-12	Trap Clay Target Shooting	Michigan Trap Shooting Association, Michigan State High School Clay Target League	Community-wide Students
Grades 9-12	Bowling: Boys & Girls	MHSAA	Students enrolled full-time at St. Patrick School
Grades 7-12	Football	MHSAA Central Michigan 8-Man Football League	Students enrolled full-time at St. Patrick School
Grades 9-12	Quiz Bowl	Central Michigan Athletic Conference (CMAC)	Students enrolled full-time at St. Patrick School
Grades 6-12	Cross Country: Boys & Girls Track & Field: Boys & Girls	MHSAA CMAC	Students enrolled full-time at St. Patrick School
Grades 7-12	Baseball Basketball: Boys & Girls Cheer Golf: Boys Softball Volleyball	MHSAA CMAC	Students enrolled full-time at St. Patrick School