FITCH HIGH SCHOOL

ATHLETIC HANDBOOK

2026-2027

Revised: 5/26

FITCH HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT MISSION STATEMENT

The Fitch High School Athletic Department is dedicated to developing student-athletes who embody the values of **RISE—Resilience**, **Innovative Learning**, **Social Awareness**, and **Engaged Learning**. Through high standards in athletics, academics, and character, we challenge our Falcons to rise above adversity, think creatively, act with compassion and integrity, and stay actively involved in their growth. We believe that participation in sports builds the foundation for lifelong success, teamwork, and responsible citizenship, both within our school and beyond.

FITCH HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC PHILOSOPHY AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

At Fitch High School, we believe that a comprehensive and balanced interscholastic athletic program is an essential component of the total educational experience. Athletics provide a meaningful arena for student-athletes to develop and display their talents while reinforcing the values of RISE—Resilience, Innovative Learning, Social Awareness, and Engaged Learning.

Participation in athletics challenges student-athletes to take responsibility for themselves, their teammates, and their school. It cultivates self-discipline, emotional control, perseverance, and a commitment to the ideals of good sportsmanship. Athletics serve as a powerful educational tool by supporting the mastery of foundational learning expectations and the development of lifelong competencies.

Fitch High School's athletic program is designed to foster not only physical excellence, but also character, leadership, and the skills needed to thrive in a diverse and dynamic world.

Our Expectations for Student-Athletes

Student-Athletes at Fitch High School will:

- Accept and understand the responsibility and privilege of representing their school and community
- Demonstrate active involvement in their sport and acquire the basic athletic skills and essentials of teamwork necessary for competition.
- Demonstrate**:**

1. Sportsmanship at all levels of competition
2. Leadership
3. Respect for others
4. Understanding and tolerance
5. Hard work
6. Commitment
7. Discipline
8. Personal integrity

9. Self-control
10. Responsibility
11. Good citizenship
    - Develop self-knowledge (e.g., awareness of strengths, areas in need of further development, and strategies for success)
    - Demonstrate pride in themselves, their community, their school, and their team
    - Recognize the importance of a healthy lifestyle
    - Maintain athletic eligibility in accordance with the CIAC and Fitch High School requirements
    - Demonstrate a willingness to place the good of the team above themselves

Our Expectations for Parents

It is our hope that all parents of Fitch High School student athletes will:

- Foster in their children those attitudes and habits most conducive to positive participation as articulated in “Our Expectations for Student-Athletes”
- Support Fitch Athletics in its efforts to acquire necessary funding
- Be attentive to the performance of the coaching staffs and the administration of Fitch Athletics
- Support Fitch Athletics whenever possible through volunteer efforts, attendance at athletic contests, and participation in booster clubs
- Help us to foster a spirit of cooperation between Fitch Athletics and local businesses, community groups, the Groton Town and City Parks and Recreation Department, and other town agencies.

Program Development

The Fitch High School Department of Athletics strives for excellence by providing opportunities to student-athletes to participate in programs that are designed to develop meaningful standards of athletic performance, leadership, scholarship, community service and appropriate conduct within the educational and social environments of Fitch High School.

VARSITY ATHLETICS

Varsity athletes are those athletes that exhibit the most skill of those that have tried out for the team. They will have the opportunity to compete against equally talented athletes from opposing schools. A purpose of Varsity athletics is to refine the skills of the team in an attempt to provide the high school with the best win-loss record possible.

JUNIOR VARSITY ATHLETICS

Junior Varsity athletic programs offer those students who do not yet possess the

skills required of Varsity athletes an opportunity to participate in a competitive setting. Junior Varsity athletes are in the process of gaining valuable knowledge, skill and experience required for Varsity competition. Occasionally, Junior Varsity athletes may participate in Varsity contests based on the decision by the coaching staff that the athlete has made sufficient progress. This should not be misinterpreted as an absolute move to the Varsity level.

FRESHMAN ATHLETICS
Ninth grade athletes may participate in all sport programs offered at the high school level. Freshman athletic programs are offered to those ninth-grade students who do not yet possess the skills necessary to participate on the Junior Varsity level. Freshman teams are designed to provide a competitive setting in which to gain valuable knowledge, skill, and experience required for promotion to the Junior Varsity team.

Occasionally, ninth grade athletes may participate in Junior Varsity or Varsity contests based on the decision by the coaching staff that the athlete has made sufficient progress. This promotion should not be misinterpreted as an absolute move to the next levels of competition.

Drug, Alcohol, and Tobacco Policy

The Athletic Department drug, alcohol and tobacco policy is governed by the Groton Board of Education's Alcohol, Drugs, and Tobacco Products policy 5131.6. As with many aspects of high school athletics in Connecticut, our programs are also required to adhere to the rules of the CIAC. Fitch High School strongly believes that participation in high school athletics is a privilege and not a right. The following policies and procedures apply to all CIAC controlled activities sponsored by the school.

It is the policy of the schools to take positive action through education, counseling, parental involvement, medical referral, and police referral in the handling of incidents in the schools involving the possession, sale, and/or use of behavior affecting substances.

Furthermore, any student-athlete charged with using, possessing, or aiding in the obtaining of controlled substances, alcohol or drug paraphernalia by law enforcement at any time during the season and during or beyond the school day will be subject to the following regulations:

A. The affected student-athlete will be suspended from all sports participation for up to ten (10) school days and any weekend practice or contest during that time. Any student-athlete that is found to be using or in possession of any tobacco product will be suspended for a period of up to five (5) school days and any weekend practice or contest during that time.

B. Any student-athlete charged a second time will be removed from the team for the remainder of that sport season.
C. If the student wishes to participate in a sport in the next season, he/she must satisfy the requirements under letter A and letter B of this policy.
D. Any student-athlete charged with using, possession, or aiding in the obtaining of controlled substances, alcohol or drug paraphernalia by law enforcement prior to the start of their athletic season, must perform 10 hours of community service approved by the Athletic Department before their sport season begins.
E. Anabolic steroids, hormones and analogues, diuretics, and other performance enhancing substances are addressed by the policy and procedures and the CIAC may impose sanctions beyond those applied in this document for use of these substances by athletes.

CIAC Policy 4.15.l Performance Enhancing Drugs Minimum Penalty

A student-athlete who has been determined to have used, in or out of season, androgenic/anabolic steroids or other performance enhancing substances shall be declared ineligible for all CIAC controlled activities for one hundred eighty (180) school days on each occurrence. The one hundred eighty (180) school day period of ineligibility commences on the day the CIAC Board of Control makes such determination.

All CIAC contests/games/tournaments/championships in which an offending athlete participated while under the influence of performance enhancing substances shall be declared forfeitures and all records will be expunged

CIAC Policy 4.15j

A member school may apply to the CIAC Board of Control for reinstatement of the athlete's eligibility to participate in CIAC controlled activities. Any such application must include:

A. The results of a CIAC approved medically validated drug test which confirms that the student-athlete is chemical free. The test must have been completed within 30 days prior to application. The CIAC shall not be responsible for any expenses related to this testing.
B. A statement of compelling circumstances on which the member school bases its application for reinstatement of the athletes' eligibility.

Performance enhancing substances and practices subject to this policy include but are not limited to, the following:

A. Anabolic Agents, Diuretics, Peptide Hormones and Analogues.

B. Blood doping (intravenous injection of whole blood, packed red blood cells, or blood substitutes).
C. Substances and practices identified as banned by the NCAA and the USOC.

The CIAC allows member schools to make exceptions for student-athletes with a documented medical history demonstrating the need for regular use of substances that are banned in this policy. These identified substances shall be medically prescribed by the student-athlete's doctor for therapeutic purposes. The documentation should contain information as to the diagnosis, medical history and dosage prescribed.

CIAC and Groton Board of Education Rules for Participation in CIAC Sports

Fitch High School acknowledges, supports, and adheres strictly to the rules of academic eligibility prescribed by the CIAC and Groton Board of Education.

To be eligible for participation students must:

1. Be a full-time student at Fitch High School.
2. The student shall not have reached his or her twentieth (20^{th}) birthday or start a season in which their 20^{th} birthday falls.
3. Not participate in the same branch of athletics more than four (4) seasons in grades 9-12. A student has eight (8) semesters or (4) consecutive years of eligibility from the date of entry into the ninth grade to be eligible.
4. Not play or practice with an outside team in the same sport while a member of the school team, unless that sport is exempted by the CIAC and the athletic director gives permission.
5. Meet Groton Board of Education requirements**.**

The CIAC is the governing body for high school athletics and has established Rules of Eligibility and Control for Boys and Girls High School Athletics in Connecticut. These rules may be found on the internet at https://www.casciac.org/pdfs/eligrules070122.pdf or from the Fitch High School Athletic Director.

Eligibility to Participate

Any students enrolled at Fitch High School shall be eligible to participate in after-school extracurricular activities including the interscholastic athletics program provided the student meets the criteria established by the CIAC and has not been enrolled for more than eight semesters in grades nine through twelve, inclusive, and meets the criteria established by Fitch High School for eligibility.

1. CIAC Eligibility –A student-athlete who has passed at least four (4) credits during the previous quarter or earned 4 credits the previous year (for fall sports) is CIAC eligible. A student-athlete who has not met these criteria is CIAC ineligible and is ineligible immediately upon publication of the CIAC eligibility list. A student who is CIAC ineligible cannot participate in any school sponsored athletic events or practices. Marking period grades (not semester grades) will be used to determine scholastic eligibility to participate in interscholastic athletics during any given marking period. Year- end failures may be made up through successful completion of school approved summer work in courses failed.
2. Fitch High School Eligibility-A student-athlete who has met the CIAC criteria and earned a minimum of 5 credits or more is Fitch High School eligible.
3. Any student-athlete meeting the criteria above but has earned a D or an F in any course must adhere to the following:
    A. If a student-athlete has earned a D or an F in **one course** the student-athlete must attend Falcon Academy at a minimum of **one session** per week, with CTL support during the day, until the bi-weekly grade report indicates the student-athlete is no longer earning a D or an F.
    B. If a student has earned a D or an F in **two or more courses** the student-athlete must attend Falcon Academy at a minimum of **two sessions** per week, with CTL support during the day. Student-athlete's academic performance will be monitored and supported during this time.
4. An "I" counts as a failing grade however, since it is an incomplete it will count until the "I" changes to a grade of an A-D which is 10 days after the marking period ends until made-up. After the 10th day, the "I" becomes a permanent F.
5. Fitch High School also offers routine academic support for our student-athletes to help maintain passing grades.

    - one to one student-athlete support
    - student-athlete to teacher support
    - National Honor Society Tutoring Program
    - CTL Block for student-athletes to meet with teachers during the school day.

Note: Eligibility for fall activities shall be determined by the student-athlete's grades for the fourth quarter of the previous year for FHS policy. CIAC eligibility is determined by the final grades. Ninth graders are exempt until the end of the first quarter of their freshman year.

Regulation Adopted: October 24, 2022

Athletic Physicals

All student-athletes must have a physical exam at least once every 13 months. If the 13 months for the physical has expired and the new sport season has not begun, the student will need to have a physical.

All physical forms must be uploaded on Family ID. Students will not be allowed to participate until all medical requirements have been met. Specific forms are available from the school nurse or located on Family ID.

All students participating in interscholastic athletics are expected to have an up-to-date physical examination on file with the school nurse.

NCAA Clearinghouse

In order to be eligible to participate in NCAA Division 1 or Division 2 athletics as a college freshman, a student-athlete must register with and be certified by the NCAA Initial-Eligibility Clearinghouse. More information can be obtained by logging onto https://web3.ncaa.org/ecwr3/ or by meeting with your guidance counselor. It is recommended that any student-athlete who wishes to continue their athletic career on the Division 1 or Division 2 level register with the clearinghouse by spring of their junior year. Athletes do not need to register with the Clearinghouse for Division 3 athletics.

Athlete School Attendance/ Suspension

1. Athletes will be allowed to participate in practice or contests only if they are in school for a minimum of three out of the four blocks (CTL is not included in that). Students who are absent from school may not participate in any athletic event during that afternoon or evening. When arranged in advance the Athletic Director may approve individual exceptions.
2. Unexcused single period absences during a given day may cause an athlete to be withheld from practice or contests on that day.
3. Any student who has been placed on suspension (in-school or out of school) may not participate in any school related activity while suspended, including athletic practice or competition, until the student has completed a full school day not under suspension.

Transportation

All students are required to use transportation provided by Fitch High School when traveling to and from all contests. Exceptions may be made only after parent/guardian contacts the athletic director. Team members are not allowed to drive to or from away

athletic contests. In some cases, students may provide their own transportation to practices not on campus, but may not transport other students if they do not meet state driving regulations for transporting others. If any parent or guardian has concerns, please contact the athletic director.

Trying out and Participation

Some of our athletic teams may be able to accommodate all of the athletes interested in participating. Others, for a variety of reasons, must limit the number of team members. Coaches will conduct tryout sessions to determine the make-up of teams with limited rosters. Tryouts can be highly competitive and the selection process is often difficult. Coaches will outline the process and explain the criteria to be used in selecting team members during our team nights. Under some circumstances, students who do not make the team may be given the opportunity to try out with another program in the school. However, once a season begins and teams have been selected, students may not leave one team for another. Students who have completed and submitted the proper forms are eligible to try out. A minimum of 2 sessions will be given for candidates to try out for an athletic team. ***Note- Seniors with a minimum of three years of participation in the program will be exempt from the cut process and will be guaranteed a roster spot, provided they remain in good academic and disciplinary standing. (This does not guarantee playing time, which remains at the discretion of the coaching staff.)***

Participation Guidelines

1. Missing practice and games: Athletes are expected to attend all practices and competitions. However, the Fitch High School athletic department realizes that there are certain times when students need to miss practices or competitions. Athletes are encouraged to give coaches as much advance notice as possible. Coaches make policies concerning missing practices for their teams.

2. **Unexcused Practice Absences**
If an athlete misses practice without an approved excuse, they must make up the practice even if a game is scheduled the next day. Failure to do so may affect game participation. Repeated unexcused absences may result in reduced playing time or removal from the team.

3. Conflicts in extracurricular activities: The athletic department recognizes that each student should have the opportunity to participate in a multitude of extracurricular activities. Students have the responsibility to do everything they can to avoid continuous conflicts, but these conflicts do occur. Every effort will be made to schedule events in a manner to minimize conflicts.

In the event of a conflict, sponsors/coaches, parents, and the student will work out a solution. If a solution cannot be made, a decision will be made by the principal and athletic director based on the following:

A. The relative importance of each event.
B. The importance of each event to the student.
C. The relative contribution the student can make to each event.
D. How long each event has been scheduled.
E. Parental and student input.

Once a decision has been made by the principal and athletic director, the student will not be penalized in any way by the faculty member or coach.

4. Release from class: Especially during the postseason, student-athletes may need to be released from classes in order to get to a contest on time. These absences do not count towards the absence cap. Students must see teachers for assignments in advance. Students have the responsibility of making up all missed work as directed by the teacher.

5. Vacations: Vacations during an athletic team member's sports season are discouraged at the high school level. In the event that an absence due to a vacation is unavoidable, parents and athletes must

A. Inform the coach with as much advance notice as possible
B. Be willing to assume the consequences related to the vacation's effect on the athlete's status on the team (For every practice/game missed the student-athlete must make up the number of days missed).

Reporting Injuries/Insurance Coverage

Athletic activity involves the potential for injury. The Groton Board of Education carries an accident policy to cover accidental bodily injuries received from the practice and play of high school interscholastic sports. The policy agrees to pay many of the medical costs not covered by your own insurance. Even with the best coaching, use of the most advanced equipment, and strict observance of rules, injuries are still a possibility. Certain injuries may be so severe as to result in paralysis and or total disability. All injuries that occur while participating in Fitch High School Athletics must be reported to the coach, athletic director and athletic trainer. The coach will be given accident form with a section to be completed by parents and returned to the main office at FHS. Bills should be submitted to the family's insurance company first. Remaining balances can be forwarded to the school's insurance company.

Bullying/Harassment

(per Groton Board of Education Policy 5131.911)

Hazing, bullying, menacing and abuse of students, in any form or format, is not acceptable behavior and is prohibited in the Groton Public Schools.

Any student in the Groton school district who engages in a repeated act against another student in the district that causes physical or emotional harm to a student or such student's property, places a student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property, creates a hostile environment at school for such students, infringes on the rights of such student at school, or substantially disrupts the educational process shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

Bullying is prohibited on school grounds, at any school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program, whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by a local or regional board of education, or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used by the local or regional board of education.

Bullying occurring outside of the school setting is also prohibited and will not be tolerated if such bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the targeted student, infringes on the targeted student's rights at school, or substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of school.

Appropriate disciplinary action in response to bullying may include suspension or expulsion. In addition, it is the policy of the Groton Board of Education that school principals or a principal's designee will notify the appropriate law enforcement agency when the principal or designee believes that any acts of bullying constitute criminal conduct.

The Act also defines several new important terms, including “cyberbullying”. Cyberbullying is “any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone or other mobile electronic devices, or any electronic communications.”

Uniforms and Equipment

Athletes are responsible for all uniforms and equipment issued to them. Uniforms and all other equipment used by the team are property of Fitch High School and must be taken care of and returned promptly in good condition at the conclusion of the season. Students are responsible to pay for the equipment not returned.

> ***Note: Athletes who do not return equipment/uniforms are ineligible to participate on additional FHS athletic teams. Graduating seniors will not receive their caps and gowns until they too have met the above responsibilities.***

Gymnasium/Fitness Center Procedures

At no time is it permissible for individuals or groups to work out in the gymnasium or weight room, unless under direct supervision of their coach or other qualified personnel. Respect and care for the equipment is a must. The gymnasium and weight room must be kept in an orderly fashion.

Awards

The criteria for earning awards are established by the coaches for each of our programs. Coaches will explain the sport specific requirements to team members at the start of each season. In order to be eligible for any award an athlete must complete a season in good standing. Award sequence:

1. Certificate of Participation (V/JV/Fr)
2. Varsity Letter w/Pin
3. Bar

Head coaches are responsible for conducting formal gatherings (banquets, picnics) at the end of the season for the purpose of presenting awards to team members. All athletes on all levels (V/JV/FR) are expected to participate and parents are urged to attend.

Parent/Coach Relations

Your child, as a member of a Fitch athletic team, will experience some very rewarding moments. It is important to understand that there also may be times when things do not go the way you or your child wish. It is at these times that discussion with the coach is encouraged. Situations such as ways to help your child improve, concerns about your child's attitude, and academic support and college opportunities would be appropriate. It is very difficult to accept your child's not playing as much or where you may hope. Coaches are professionals. They make judgments based on what they believe to be best for all of the students involved. While certain things can be discussed with your son's/daughter's coach, other things should be left to the discretion of the coach. Team strategy and other athletes are examples. It is also important to remember that playing time is determined by only the coach. We encourage athletes to bring their questions about such things directly to the coach. If you would like a conference with the coach, please follow these guidelines:

1. Contact the coach for an appointment.

2. If the coach cannot be reached, call the athletic director. A meeting will be set up for you. Please do not attempt to confront a coach with your concerns

immediately before, during, or immediately after a contest. These can be emotional times for both the parent and the coach. If the meeting with the coach does not provide a satisfactory resolution; the next step is to set up an appointment with the athletic director.

Summary

The purpose of this handbook is to acquaint student athletes and their parents or guardians with interscholastic athletics at Fitch High School. Hopefully, the information presented will provide answers to the questions most often asked about our programs. We hope you have a wonderful and rewarding experience. Final key points:

In order to participate, a student must:

1. Be academically eligible
2. Have parental permission
3. Have medical clearance

Team members are required to:

1. Maintain academic eligibility
2. Attend all scheduled practices and contests
3. Adhere to all team rules and regulations
4. Exhibit good sportsmanship at all times

If you have any concerns, please contact:
Marc Romano, Groton Public Schools Athletic Director, at 860-449-7200.