



**PELHAM HIGH SCHOOL  
INTERSCHOLASTICS ATHLETIC  
HANDBOOK  
2026-2027**

## **Contents**

|                                                                           |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| PRINCIPLES OF INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS PROGRAMS .....                    | 5  |
| SPORTS OFFERED & ATHLETIC REGISTRATION.....                               | 6  |
| Available Sport Offerings.....                                            | 6  |
| Athletic Registration Procedure .....                                     | 6  |
| SPORTSMANSHIP.....                                                        | 7  |
| Guidelines for Spectators .....                                           | 7  |
| Guidelines for Student-Athletes.....                                      | 7  |
| CODE OF CONDUCT .....                                                     | 8  |
| Expectations for Student-Athlete Behavior.....                            | 8  |
| DAILY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE.....                                              | 9  |
| Absences.....                                                             | 9  |
| Excused Tardies and Dismissals for Appointments .....                     | 9  |
| Unexcused Tardies .....                                                   | 9  |
| ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY .....                                                | 10 |
| Conditional Eligibility.....                                              | 10 |
| Academic Eligibility to Begin a New Season .....                          | 10 |
| Academic Eligibility During a Season.....                                 | 11 |
| INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC GUIDELINES .....                                 | 12 |
| Athletic Codes.....                                                       | 12 |
| Sport Tryouts .....                                                       | 12 |
| Philosophy by Sport Level.....                                            | 12 |
| Dual Sport Athletes (2 sports in the same season) .....                   | 13 |
| Unified Athletics .....                                                   | 13 |
| School/Family Vacations, Extended Absences .....                          | 13 |
| Attendance at Practices and Competitions .....                            | 14 |
| School Athletic Equipment .....                                           | 14 |
| Transportation to and from Contests.....                                  | 14 |
| Communication .....                                                       | 14 |
| SPORTS PHYSICALS & RISK FACTORS IN SPORTS .....                           | 15 |
| Sports physicals .....                                                    | 15 |
| Injuries .....                                                            | 15 |
| Injury Treatment & Evaluation .....                                       | 15 |
| Return to Play (RTP) Protocol from Injury (Non-Concussion Injuries) ..... | 16 |
| Treatment of Head Injuries .....                                          | 17 |
| Return to Play (RTP) Protocol from Concussion.....                        | 17 |

|                                                                 |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| COLLEGE & NCAA GUIDANCE .....                                   | 20 |
| National Letter of Intent Signings.....                         | 21 |
| NHIAA POLICIES FOR HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETICS .....                  | 22 |
| Age (NHIAA By-Law Article II Section 1) .....                   | 22 |
| Eight Semester Rule (NHIAA By-Law Article II Section 3) .....   | 22 |
| Transfer Students (NHIAA By-Law Article II Section 4).....      | 22 |
| Non-School Competition (NHIAA By-Law Article II Section 7)..... | 22 |

Dear Parents and Student Athletes,

Welcome to the new year of Pelham High School Athletics! We are very excited about the prospect of another successful year. My appreciation to the coaches, players, staff, and student-body for their commitment to excellence, positive influence in the community, and dedication to academic achievement.

As a student-athlete you have a tremendous responsibility to the Pelham community for being successful both in and out of the competitive environment. Let's succeed on all fronts: In the classroom, in competition, through our conduct, and being great role models in our community. Student-athletes are clearly under a high level of pressure to meet a wide array of important team and personal goals. That comes as part of your commitment to represent this school at the highest levels as you proudly wear the Pelham Blue & White.

As fans let's remember, good sportsmanship begins with an understanding that athletics are an integral part of the educational process, presenting innumerable opportunities for self-expression, mental alertness, and physical growth. Let's be loud! Let's be boisterous! And let's support our team in the most positive way.

Wishing everyone a great season!!

Sincerely,

Michael Soucy  
Director of Athletics

# **PRINCIPLES OF INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS PROGRAMS**

In sports, winning games is often considered the only measure of success, but not at Pelham High School. Interscholastic athletics serve as a miniature model of life, providing opportunities for students to learn responsibility, fair play, cooperation, concern for others, leadership, respect for authority, good citizenship, loyalty and tolerance. This is not to say that the will to win is not important. It is very much a part of an individual's personal development and provides opportunities to fulfill one's potential. Thus, the athletics program, which is centered on the welfare of students, is a vital part of Pelham High School education.

## **To fully realize its potential for educational enrichment, the interscholastic athletic program:**

- Is an integral part of the district's educational program and conducted so that it is worthy of such regard.
- Supplements rather than serve as a substitute for basic physical education and intramural athletic programs.
- Is subject to the same administrative control as the educational program.
- Is conducted by adults who have adequate training in physical education or through coaching certification programs.
- Fosters the physical welfare and safety of participants.
- Is conducted in accordance with the letter and spirit of the rules and regulations of the league, state and national athletic associations.

Participation in interscholastic athletics at Pelham High School is a privilege. This participation should elicit great pride among all school community members. Part of the responsibility that goes with participation in school sports is the need to maintain satisfactory standards of behavior. This Interscholastic Athletics Handbook clearly defines the standards for student athlete behavior. It is the responsibility of each student athlete and his/her parents/guardian to be familiar with the contents of this handbook. Before a student is permitted to participate on an athletic team, both the student and parent must sign off on the Interscholastic Athletics Handbook (online through FinalForms) acknowledging an agreement to respect and abide by these rules and behavior expectations to participate in interscholastic athletics at Pelham High School.

# **SPORTS OFFERED & ATHLETIC REGISTRATION**

Tryouts for programs are open to all students provided they meet the standards of academic eligibility, school citizenship, completed permission, liability information and basic physical/health qualifications. Participation in the program, therefore, is a privilege earned by students who meet and maintain these standards.

## **Available Sport Offerings**

| <b>Fall</b>           | <b>Winter</b>         | <b>Spring</b>         |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Cross Country         | Basketball            | Baseball              |
| Field Hockey          | Gymnastics            | Lacrosse              |
| Football              | Ice Hockey (Co-Op)    | Outdoor Track & Field |
| Golf                  | Indoor Track & Field  | Softball              |
| Soccer                | Spirit (Cheerleading) | Tennis                |
| Spirit (Cheerleading) | Swimming & Diving     |                       |
| Volleyball            | Wrestling             |                       |

## **Athletic Registration Procedure**

**Before any student athlete can participate in tryouts the following requirements must be met:**

- The parents/guardians are responsible for completing an online registration through FinalForms and ensuring that all medical information concerning your child's health, medical concerns, injuries, medications and allergies are reported to the Athletic Department & Coaches.
- The parents/guardians and student athletes must read and agree to the Code of Conduct and Athletic Policies on the FinalForms registration page.
- All students must have a copy of a valid physical on file in the athletic office.
- All students must be academically eligible. Academic eligibility information will be covered in detail in this document.
- All student athletes are encouraged to take the ImPACT test prior to participating in school athletics. This is a cognitive baseline test that will aid our athletic training staff in the event of a concussion. Impact test is good for two years. (Non-contact sports are excluded).
- If you transferred to PHS over the summer or during the current school year (incoming 9th graders excluded), please complete the Transfer Affidavit and turn it into the Athletic Office prior to the first day of tryouts/practice.
- If you are homeschooled or attend a charter or non-public school, please complete the Other Than Public School Student Form and turn it into the Athletic Office along with proof of residency and proof of academic eligibility prior to the first day of tryouts/practice.

# **SPORTSMANSHIP**

## **Guidelines for Spectators**

- Spectators are an important part of the games and are encouraged to conform to accepted standards of good sportsmanship and behavior.
- Spectators should always respect officials, visiting coaches, players, and cheerleaders as guests in the community and extend all courtesies to them.
- Enthusiastic cheering for one's own team is encouraged.
- Booing, whistling, calling out individual names, and disrespectful remarks shall be avoided.
- There will be no noisemakers at indoor contests during play. Anyone who does not abide by this rule will be asked to leave the premises.
- Pep bands or school bands, under the supervision of the school personnel, may play during timeouts, between periods, or at halftime. Bands must coordinate their play so as not to interfere with a cheerleading squad on the floor or field.
- The throwing of debris, confetti, or other objects from the stands is prohibited. Offending individuals will be asked to leave the premises.
- Spectators should encourage each other to observe courteous behavior. Improper behavior should be reported to the school authorities.
- Spectators will observe the rules of the local school concerning food and drinking consumption, littering, and parking procedures.
- Spectators will respect and obey all school officials and supervisors at athletic contests.

**Anyone who does not abide by these rules will be asked to leave the premises.**

## **Guidelines for Student-Athletes**

- Learn and understand the rules of your sport. Play hard, play to win, but play fairly within the rules.
- Be an example for your school, teammates and opponents. A player who is disqualified from a contest for unsportsmanlike behavior by an official is prohibited from playing in the next regularly scheduled contest game and must view the NFHS Sportsmanship video on the NFHS website prior to returning to game action.
- Student-athletes will be respectful and courteous of opposing teams and officials.
- Student-athletes will always refrain from taunting, intimidating, fighting or using profanities or slurs towards the opposing team.
- Student-athletes will respect the integrity and judgment of game officials and accept their decisions with grace and without confrontation.
- Student-athletes will be modest when successful and gracious in defeat.
- Consequences for unsportsmanlike behavior will be handled on a case-by-case basis, by either the Athletic Director and/or the Coach. The PHS Athletic Department will match all NHIAA suspensions.

# **CODE OF CONDUCT**

Pelham High School holds all its student-athletes to a high standard regarding behavior on and off the playing field. Student-athletes are expected to always represent themselves and their school in an exemplary manner. Infractions to these expectations, in or out of school, will be handled accordingly.

## **Expectations for Student-Athlete Behavior**

- **Detentions:** Students issued a detention are required to serve the detention on the day it is assigned. A student-athlete who is assigned a detention is ineligible to participate in any athletic practices or competitions on that day. This includes all team activities, games, and events. Failure to serve an assigned detention may result in additional disciplinary consequences and continued ineligibility for athletic participation until the detention obligation is fulfilled.
- **In School Suspensions:** Will result in a one game/event suspension for each infraction. There will be no participation allowed on the day the suspension is served.
- **Out of School Suspensions:**
  - First offense will result in a two-game suspension from the date of the infraction. The student-athlete will need to serve five hours of community service before returning to competition. Only the Athletic Director or School Administration can approve these hours.
  - Second offense will result in removal from the student-athletes current team. Five hours of community service will be required before the student-athlete can join any team in the future season.
  - Third offense in the same school year will result in suspension from participating in all athletic programs for one (1) calendar year. Any student wishing to participate in athletic activities in subsequent school years must meet with administration, school counselor and parents/legal guardians to develop a long-term remediation plan before returning to activities or athletics.
- Any student-athlete involved in taking, dispersing or possessing drugs, tobacco products, vapes, or drug paraphernalia (RSA 179-10 and RSA 318:B) on or off school property will be ineligible to participate in games/events for 90 days from the date of the infraction. The student-athlete may apply for reinstatement after 30 days if they have successfully completed their Action Plan developed by both PHS Administration and their School Counselor. Participation in team activities, like sports, can be a protective factor for substance abuse; it is highly recommended that the student-athlete continue to practice with their team once the school suspension is completed.



# **DAILY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE**

A student's attendance record is final once daily attendance reports are published (based upon the PSD student database PowerSchool). It is the responsibility of the student-athlete to be sure to follow proper school procedures for absences and tardies at the beginning of each school day. The Athletic Office cannot override the official school attendance. There will be no changes once the report has been sent to coaches (exceptions to this will only be made if the absence was recorded in error).

## **Absences**

- All students are expected to be in attendance for the entire school day to participate in practice or event.
- If a student-athlete is dismissed by the School Nurse due to illness; he/she is ineligible to participate in athletics that day.
- If a practice or contest is scheduled for a weekend or over a school vacation, the student must be in attendance the preceding Friday (or last school day prior) to participate, regardless if the absence is excused or unexcused.
- A suspension (in-school or out) is considered an absence from school. Once notified of the suspension the student is ineligible for extracurricular activities until returning to a full day of school.
- Exceptions, such as school field trips, college visits, family emergencies, funerals, religious holidays, and scheduled appointments, must be cleared through the Athletic Office in advance.
- Unique or extenuating circumstances not listed above may be excused at the discretion of the Athletic Director.

## **Excused Tardies and Dismissals for Appointments**

- If a student has a legitimate appointment (for example: doctor, dentist, orthodontist), it is expected that the student will attend school for as much of the day as possible.
- Even if the tardy or dismissal is excused, a student will not be eligible to participate in practice or an event on a given day if he/she is not in school for a minimum of three and a half (3.5) hours of their academic time (lunch is excluded). Exceptions to this policy must be cleared through the Athletic Office prior to the date.
- For athletic purposes, School tardies will only be excused for legitimate appointments, family emergencies, and academic reasons (i.e. College visit). A note is required upon return to school.

## **Unexcused Tardies**

- Student-athletes will be allowed three (3) unexcused tardies without athletic consequence (we understand that "life happens").
- On the 4th unexcused tardy: the student-athlete will not be permitted to practice or compete that day. The student is expected to attend practice or event but may not be in uniform or participate.
- On the 5th through 9th unexcused tardy: the student-athlete will not be permitted to practice or compete that day AND will not be permitted to participate in the next scheduled contest (if the 5th through 9th unexcused tardy occurs on a game day, the student sits that game and the next).
- On the 10th unexcused tardy, the student will be excused from the team.
- The unexcused tardy count begins on the first day of the season and continues for the duration.

## **ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY**

All Pelham High School student-athletes must maintain academic eligibility standards as determined by the New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association (NHIAA). To participate on a PHS sports team, student-athletes must be passing at least two thirds of their current classes at the time of an eligibility grade check. Grade checks will be conducted at the end of each quarter. Fall sports eligibility will be determined by the student-athlete's final grades from the previous quarter (4<sup>th</sup>).

### **EVERY REPORT CARD MATTERS**

| <b>Season</b>                | <b>Initial Eligibility to begin the season is based on</b> | <b>Eligibility to complete the season is based on</b> |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Fall (begins in August)      | Q4 (June the previous year)                                | Q1                                                    |
| Winter (begins in Nov./Dec.) | Q1                                                         | Q2                                                    |
| Spring (begins in March)     | Q2                                                         | Q3                                                    |

An Incomplete is not considered a passing grade for eligibility purposes.

### **Conditional Eligibility**

Conditional Eligibility may be granted to some students who have not met the academic eligibility requirements as set forth by Pelham High School but meet the eligibility requirements adopted by the NHIAA. To meet the NHIAA eligibility requirements, students must have passed at least fifty percent (50%) of their classes during the previous marking period (see above). If granted conditional eligibility, the student and their parents/guardians must sign the Conditional Eligibility Contract. Students will be required to submit weekly progress reports to the Athletic Office.

### **Academic Eligibility to Begin a New Season**

The following students are NOT eligible to apply for conditional eligibility:

- A student who has passed fewer than two (2) academic classes – unless the student is receiving services through Special Education or under a 504 Plan. This violates not only the Pelham School District Policy but also the NHIAA policy (Article II section 2, part A).
- A student who has been previously granted conditional eligibility in high school and is not making adequate progress toward graduation. Typically, only one (1) waiver is granted during high school.
- Adequate progress toward graduation is defined as follows:
  - A minimum of 6 earned credits at the conclusion of freshman year.
  - A minimum of 12 earned credits at the conclusion of sophomore year.
  - A minimum of 18 earned credits at the conclusion of junior year.

If a student is granted Conditional Eligibility:

- The Contract must be submitted to the athletic office no later than 2:00 p.m. on fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) day of tryouts/practice. Contracts submitted after this deadline will not be considered.
- The student athlete may participate in a maximum of 3 days of tryouts in a cut sport but then may not participate until a signed Conditional Eligibility Contract is received by the Athletic Office.

## **Academic Eligibility During a Season**

Conditional Eligibility (or extensions) may be granted after a season has begun under the following circumstances:

- The student fulfilled the obligations of the academic contract signed when the waiver was originally approved.
- The student has demonstrated effort in each class by consistently completing all required work when it's due and by seeking regular extra help from the teacher as needed – There can be no missed assignments.
- The student is making adequate progress toward graduation as defined above.

# **INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC GUIDELINES**

## **Athletic Codes**

An athlete may not quit one sport and try out for another sport after the season has begun without the mutual consent of both coaches. "After the season has begun" is defined as the first scrimmage or game, whichever comes first.

An athlete who has been injured and has received medical treatment must receive written clearance from the treating physician or designee to return to participation.

Any person who participates in a sport is subject to injury. These injuries may occur despite proper training, safe practice and game environments.

Parents agree to be supportive and encouraging of all participants, coaches and officials at all athletic events. Good sportsmanship will be displayed by all spectators.

All NHIAA rules and policies will take precedence as the minimum level of expectation.

All athletes must travel to and from events with the team. Requests must be submitted in writing and approved by administration.

## **Sport Tryouts**

- All athletes will be guaranteed a minimum of three (3) days of tryouts for those particular sports that must cut.
- Some sports do require cuts due to the number of athletes that are interested in participating on that team.
- Every student is evaluated in a fair and impartial manner.
- Attendance is mandatory during the tryout period. The only exceptions are:
  - Medical reasons
  - Family emergencies – does not include vacations

## **Philosophy by Sport Level**

### **Junior Varsity (JV), Reserve, Freshman:**

These programs are intended for those who display the potential of continued development into productive varsity level performers. Team membership varies according to the structure of each sport, but sophomores and freshmen occupy the majority of the roster positions. In certain situations, juniors who are expected to make contributions at the varsity level will be considered for JV participation. Also, 9th and 10th graders may combine to form a reserve team instead of having a freshman only team.

At these levels increased emphasis is placed upon elements and strategies of team play, physical conditioning, refinement of fundamental skills and social-emotional development. The JV program works towards achieving a balance between continued team and player development and striving for victory. The outcome of the contest becomes a consideration at this level. An attempt will be made to play all participants; however, equal playing time is never guaranteed nor is it required.

With the goal of becoming a varsity athlete clearly in sight, a high level of dedication and commitment is expected at the junior varsity, reserve, and freshman level.

### **Varsity:**

The varsity level of interscholastic athletic competition is the culmination of the high school athletic program. Normally, seniors and juniors make up the majority of the roster, however, gifted sophomores and sometimes freshmen may be included. Team play, sportsmanship, individual physical ability, motivation, and mental attitude are very important aspects of competition at this level. While contest participation over the course of the season is desirable, a specified amount of playing time is never guaranteed. It is vital that each team member have a role and know its importance. Preparing to win and striving for victory in each contest are worthy goals of a varsity level team. The varsity coach is the leader of his/her sport program and is responsible for communication and system development among each level.

### **Dual Sport Athletes (2 sports in the same season)**

In rare occasions students may wish to participate in two sports during the same season (for example: swimming and indoor track). Students may do so only with the approval of both head coaches and the Athletic Director. There is an application that must be completed prior to the season.

### **Unified Athletics**

The Unified Sports programs provide an opportunity for students with and without intellectual challenges to participate on an athletic team together. The student with intellectual challenges is considered a unified “athlete.” The student without such challenges is considered the unified “partner.” The unified sports offered by the NHIAA include soccer, basketball, track & field, and volleyball. Currently Pelham High School does not offer unified sport.

### **School/Family Vacations, Extended Absences**

Every student-athlete is expected to be present for all team practices and contests. Because of scheduling demands set by the NHIAA, many of our high school teams practice and/or play during scheduled school vacations.

Student-athletes who take school sponsored trips during the scheduled season should not be penalized. However, it must be understood that time away from practice and games will impact an athlete’s ability to immediately return to competition. Student-athletes will be evaluated upon their return from an extended time away. If participation in a game or practice could be considered a health or safety concern, the head coach will not allow them to compete. This is to make certain they are not putting the student-athlete at risk for injury or that they are a detriment to the team.

**If the student-athlete takes any other type of vacation, the student-athlete will be suspended for the same number of contests he or she missed while on vacation.** Additional consequences may be imposed for missed practices at the coach’s discretion. Any issues or problems arising from this policy should be addressed to the Athletic Director.

## **Attendance at Practices and Competitions**

For students to participate in Pelham High School athletics at all levels, it is necessary for student athletes to attend all practices and contests. Dedicated participation on the part of each student athlete is essential to the morale and performance of the entire team. Athletes and their families are expected to plan trips and other foreseeable family obligations around the athletic calendar. If student athletes are unable to fulfill their obligations to the team, they may choose not to participate in the season. Should extenuating circumstances be known prior to the season beginning, the student should communicate this information to the coach or the Athletic Director before the first day of tryouts. Student athletes who miss a scheduled contest(s) during the season shall be deemed ineligible for an equal number of contest(s). The Athletic Director shall determine all matters of student eligibility. Appeals for special circumstances may be submitted to the Athletic Director and the High School Principal.

## **School Athletic Equipment**

Students have an obligation and responsibility for all equipment and uniforms issued to them. Proper care, retention, and return of all equipment and uniform parts is a requirement. Students failing to turn in all issued equipment, uniforms, or returning equipment damaged through misuse, are responsible for meeting the current replacement cost for such equipment or uniforms. Payment is required at the time of the loss, prior to the next season of athletic involvement, or graduation, whichever comes first. If the equipment or uniform is found and/or returned after payment, a refund will be made. Students will not be issued an athletic uniform if there are any fees owed to the school. Once the fees are paid, the student will receive his/her uniform.

Students are to wear the school issued uniform at all interscholastic events.

## **Transportation to and from Contests**

The school provides bus transportation, or a suitable substitute, to and from most “away” contests. All team members are expected to travel to these contests using the school provided transportation to compete in the event. Exceptions are made to this rule in only the most extreme cases. A student-athlete who does not ride the bus with the team without prior approval will not participate in the event.

Parents wishing to transport their child home from an away event must notify the athletic office before the end of school (2:00 p.m.) the previous school day. For example – for a Friday game notification must be given by 2:00 p.m. on Thursday. For a Saturday, Sunday or Monday event, notification must be given by 2:00 p.m. on Friday. Please understand that coaches are permitted to require all team members to be on the bus on the way home.

## **Communication**

While interscholastic athletics can provide some of the most rewarding and inspiring moments in students’ lives, there can also be times when things may not go the way a parent or child wishes. If a conflict or issue arises during a season, it is imperative that it be addressed in a timely and appropriate manner so that the concern can be resolved promptly. Both parenting and coaching are extremely difficult jobs. Open communication and clear expectations will enable both groups to work together to provide greater benefit to the student-athletes.

In many instances, a conversation between a parent and the student-athlete can resolve most questions or concerns. The student-athlete who is in attendance daily at practices and games should be able to address rules and roles of the program.

If this conversation does not resolve the problem or answer the question, the next step is for the student-athlete and coach to discuss the concern. Many times, a misunderstanding can easily be resolved with this direct conversation.

If it is necessary for a parent and coach to meet to discuss a concern, the parent should contact the coach to schedule a meeting. Please do not attempt to confront a coach before, after, or during practice or game. These can be emotional times for both the parent and the coach and would not promote a positive resolution. It should be understood that playing time, team strategy, play calling, and other student-athletes are not topics of discussion.

If none of the above avenues resolve the concern, then a meeting between the student, parent, coach, and Athletic Director will be scheduled.

**Contact the Athletic Director immediately at any time in the case of an emergency or a severe violation of safety or any rules or regulations.**

## **SPORTS PHYSICALS & RISK FACTORS IN SPORTS**

Participation in sports involves a certain degree of risk for injury. Such physical injury can occur in any type of sports activity and can vary in nature. Athletic injuries can run from minor injuries, such as bruises and scrapes, to more serious injuries such as fractures, dislocations, concussions, paralysis and even death.

### **Sports physicals**

All student-athletes must have a current sports physical on file with the Athletic Office. Physicals are required annually for athletic participation. Physicals can be uploaded directly on the registration page in FinalForms or dropped off at the athletic office.

### **Injuries**

The Athletic Director, in consultation with the Athletic Trainer, reserves the right to withhold any student from participating in any school sponsored practices and/or contests, if it is determined that student is not in full health.

### **Injury Treatment & Evaluation**

The Pelham School District contracts the services of Northeast Rehabilitation Hospital Network to provide Athletic Trainer services for each of the high school athletic programs. The Athletic Trainers are trained and certified to provide the very best care for our student-athletes. All high school student-athletes who suffer an injury or who feel discomfort must be evaluated by the Athletic Trainer prior to returning to their sport. Any time a student-athlete visits the emergency room or a doctor due to potential injury, that student must provide documentation from the doctor they visited, or their primary care physician stating they are safe to return to said sport or activity.

## **Return to Play (RTP) Protocol from Injury (Non-Concussion Injuries)**

To ensure a safe, medically supervised, and criteria-based return to athletic participation following injury.

### **Guiding Principles**

- RTP is **criterion-based, not time-based**
- Medical clearance is required but **does not equal full return**
- Progression is **supervised by the Athletic Trainer (AT)**
- Athlete must demonstrate **functional readiness and sport-specific capacity**
- Athlete must remain **symptom-free at each stage**

### **Medical Clearance Requirements**

- Written clearance from a licensed medical provider (MD, DO, PA, NP)
- Clearance must specify:
  - Injury diagnosis
  - Activity limitations (if any)
  - Clearance status (full vs. partial)

### **Return-to-Play Progression**

#### **Phase 1: Recovery & Mobility**

- Pain control, ROM restoration
- Light activation exercises

##### **Criteria to advance:**

- Minimal pain
- Functional ROM

#### **Phase 2: Strength Development**

- Progressive resistance training
- Core stabilization

##### **Criteria:**

- $\geq 80\%$  strength symmetry
- No compensatory movement

#### **Phase 3: Neuromuscular Control**

- Balance, proprioception, controlled movement

##### **Criteria:**

- Stable joint control
- No pain with multi-plane movement

#### **Phase 4: Sport-Specific (Non-Contact)**

- Position-specific drills
- Progressive speed and intensity

##### **Criteria:**

- Full-speed execution without symptoms

#### **Phase 5: Limited Practice / Contact**



- Controlled practice participation
- Criteria:**
- Tolerates practice load without symptoms

### **Phase 6: Full Return to Play**

- Unrestricted participation
- Criteria:**
- Cleared by AT
- Demonstrates full functional readiness

### **Regression Policy**

- Any pain, swelling, instability, or dysfunction:
  - Athlete returns to prior phase
  - Re-evaluation by AT required

## **Treatment of Head Injuries**

Pelham High School follows the NFHS Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion in Sport. Even if a family doctor clears an athlete from a concussion, that athlete must still go through the Pelham High School concussion protocol. The clearance from the doctor begins the return to play protocol. Our goal is to keep each athlete healthy and get them back to competition as safely and quickly as possible.

All athletes participating in contact sports will have the option to take a pre-concussion cognitive assessment test (ImPACT) before the team's sports season begins.

## **Return to Play (RTP) Protocol from Concussion**

### **Guiding Principles**

- **When in doubt, sit them out**
- **No same-day return** for any athlete with a suspected concussion
- Return is **stepwise and symptom-limited**
- The athlete must receive **written medical clearance**
- Return-to-learn and return-to-sport may progress in parallel, but the student-athlete should complete **full return-to-learn before unrestricted return-to-sport**
- Later stages of return-to-sport should be monitored by a health-care provider.

### **Immediate Action Plan**

If a concussion is suspected:

1. Remove the athlete from sport immediately
2. Ensure evaluation by an appropriate health-care professional
3. Inform the parent/guardian
4. Prohibit the athlete from driving
5. Keep the athlete out of sport the day of injury and until written clearance is provided consistent with applicable law.

## **Early Recovery**

NFHS no longer recommends strict rest until all symptoms resolve. Instead, the athlete should have **24-48 hours of relative rest**, including activities of daily living and reduced screen time, followed by gradual increases in cognitive and physical activity as tolerated. Light walking may begin during that initial period if it does not more than mildly exacerbate symptoms.

## **Return-to-Learn Requirement**

Return-to-learn is a core part of concussion management. NFHS states that the process should be individualized, may require temporary academic adjustments, and that student-athletes should complete **full return-to-learn before unrestricted return-to-sport**.

## **Return-to-Sport Progression**

*Each step typically takes a minimum of 24 hours.*

### **Step 1: Symptom-Limited Activity**

- Daily activities that do not exacerbate symptoms, such as walking
- Goal:** gradual reintroduction of school/work and normal daily function.

### **Step 2: Aerobic Exercise**

- 2A: Light aerobic activity, up to about **55% max heart rate**
- 2B: Moderate aerobic activity, up to about **70% max heart rate**
- Examples: stationary cycling or walking at slow to medium pace
- May begin light resistance training if it does not cause more than a mild, brief symptom exacerbation.

### **Step 3: Individual Sport-Specific Exercise**

- Sport-specific training away from the team environment
- Examples: running, change of direction, individual skill work
- No activities with risk of head impact
- If sport-specific activity carries risk of inadvertent head impact, medical clearance should occur before this step.

### **Step 4: Non-Contact Training Drills**

- Higher-intensity exercise
- More challenging drills
- Passing drills, multiplayer drills, more complex coordination and thinking demands
- Athlete may reintegrate into the team environment at this stage.

### **Step 5: Full Contact Practice**

- Participate in normal training activities after medical clearance and symptom resolution
- Used to restore confidence and assess functional skills by coaching staff.

### **Step 6: Return to Sport**

- Normal game play
- Unrestricted participation.

### **Symptom-Limited Progression / Regression Rule**

NFHS defines progression as symptom-limited, allowing no more than a **mild and brief exacerbation** of symptoms. If symptoms are more than mild, or persist, progression should stop. If symptoms occur during **Steps 1-3**, the athlete should stop and try again the next day. If symptoms occur during **Steps 4-6**, the athlete should return to **Step 3** until full symptom resolution with exertion is re-established.

### **Concussion Resources:**

- NFHS Guidelines for Management of Concussions in Sports
  - [Parents Guide to Concussions in Sports](#)
- NFHS Learn Courses
  - [Concussion in Sports](#)
  - [Concussion for Students](#)
- [REAPsm the Benefits of Good Concussion Management](#)
- [Parent Guide to Concussion Fact Sheet](#)
- [Student Guide to Concussion Fact Sheet](#)

## **COLLEGE & NCAA GUIDANCE**

One of the most important decisions facing high school students is what to do with their lives after high school. The Pelham High School Athletic Department and coaching staff are willing and eager to assist all students with this extremely important decision.

Prospective student-athletes who plan to participate in intercollegiate athletics at an NCAA Division I or Division II institution must register on-line with the NCAA Eligibility Center. You may access information by visiting the Eligibility website at [www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org). It is extremely important that prospective student-athletes understand the NCAA Freshman-Eligibility Standards.

### **Eligibility Timeline:**

- **Grade 9**
  - Register for a free Profile Page account at [www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org) for information on NCAA initial-eligibility requirements.
  - Meet with your high school counselor to ensure they are aware of your plans to compete in NCAA sports.
  - Find your high school's list of NCAA-approved core courses at [www.eligibilitycenter.org/courselist](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org/courselist) to ensure you are taking the right courses and earn the best grades possible!
  - Use NCAA Research's interactive map to locate NCAA schools you're interested in attending.
- **Grade 10**
  - If you're being recruited by an NCAA Division I or II school, transition your Profile Page account to an Academic and Athletics Certification account.
  - Monitor the task list and sign up for text alerts in your Eligibility Center account for next steps.
  - Research the admission requirements for NCAA schools you're interested in attending.
  - Ask your high school counselor from each school you attended to upload your official high school transcript at the end of the school year.
  - If you fall behind academically, ask your high school counselor for help finding approved courses you can take.
- **Grade 11**
  - Ensure your sports participation information is correct in your Eligibility Center account.
  - Check with your high school counselor to make sure you are on track to complete the required number of NCAA-approved core courses and graduate on time with your class.
  - Share your NCAA ID with NCAA schools recruiting you so each school can place you on its institutional request list.
  - Take unofficial and official visits to NCAA schools you're interested in attending and start applying early.
  - Ask your high school counselor from each school you attended to upload your official high school transcript at the end of the school year.
- **Grade 12**
  - Apply to and be accepted by your chosen NCAA school.
  - Ensure your sports participation information is correct and request your final amateurism certification beginning April 1 (fall enrollees) or Oct. 1 (winter/spring enrollees) in your Eligibility Center account.

- Complete your final NCAA-approved core courses as you prepare for graduation.  
Ask your high school counselor to upload your final official high school transcript with proof of graduation after you graduate.

Students should consult the most current list of Pelham High School courses approved by the NCAA. To access the current version of our high school's list, you may visit [www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org). You will need our High School code, **300482**, to access the list of approved courses. You are encouraged to check to see if you qualify for participation in Division I or II athletics.

Please note that Summer School courses may not meet the eligibility requirements for the NCAA regardless of the level they are taken at. Please refer to the NCAA Guide for the College Bound Student-Athlete for information regarding credit recovery programs.

**It is the responsibility of the students and parents/guardians to meet the NCAA guidelines for athletic participation. The Pelham High School Counseling and Athletic Departments are available to answer any questions you might have during the process.**

## **National Letter of Intent Signings**

As we encourage students to be multi-sport athletes in high school, we also encourage them to pursue athletics at the collegiate level. There are many opportunities at a variety of different levels of play for all student-athletes. A National Letter of Intent (NLI) is a binding agreement between a student-athlete and a Division I or II four-year institution. By signing the NLI, the student-athlete agrees to attend the institution full-time for one academic year and the institution agrees to provide athletic financial aid for one academic year. Students receiving NLIs who wish to be recognized at their high school must contact the athletic department and provide a copy of the NLI to be signed. Pelham High School will offer two signing days each year – one in the fall and one in the spring.

# **NHIAA POLICIES FOR HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETICS**

In addition to Pelham High School policies stated above, there are other NHIAA rules which have been summarized below in an attempt to highlight the most important rules and regulations. If the following information does not answer specific questions, or if there is a concern, please refer to the NHIAA Handbook (which can be viewed at [www.nhiaa.org](http://www.nhiaa.org)) or contact the Pelham High School Athletic Office.

## **Age (NHIAA By-Law Article II Section 1)**

A student must be less than 19 years of age prior to September 1 of the current school year.

## **Eight Semester Rule (NHIAA By-Law Article II Section 3)**

A student shall be eligible for interscholastic high school competition for no more than eight consecutive semesters beyond the eighth grade. This rule applies regardless of participation in athletics during that time.

## **Transfer Students (NHIAA By-Law Article II Section 4)**

The rules governing transfer students entering the Pelham School District from another school are governed by the NHIAA. Students who transfer into the Pelham School District must be declared eligible prior to participating in a contest. Information regarding the athletic eligibility of all students transferring to the Pelham School District should be requested from the Athletic Department Office.

## **Non-School Competition (NHIAA By-Law Article II Section 7)**

Members of a school team are prevented from missing any portion of a high school practice or competition to practice or compete with an out-of-school team. This includes non-school 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 must be honored by the student-athlete. Priority must be given at all times to the high school team, its practices, and its contests unless a waiver has been granted by the principal and athletic director. It is expressly understood that waivers shall not be granted on a regular basis and shall only be granted in extraordinary circumstances.

**Penalties:** Any student-athlete who violates this rule, unless a waiver has been granted, for the first time shall be declared ineligible for the next four (4) consecutive interscholastic events or three (3) weeks of a season in which the student-athlete is a participant, whichever is greater. This Penalty is effective from the date of his or her last participation in a high school sport. Any student-athlete who violates this rule a second or subsequent time shall be declared ineligible for participation in any high school sport for the balance of the school year.