

550 STUDENT ACCELERATION TO HIGHER-LEVEL ATHLETIC-ACTIVITIES POLICY**I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for the promotion of middle school athletes to compete at a high school level.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

As a general rule, Pipestone Area School District does not promote the acceleration of middle school students (grades 7–8) into high school (grades 9–12) athletic programs. Participation in athletic teams representing Pipestone Area High School is typically reserved for students who are regularly enrolled in high school classes. These teams are considered an essential component of the high school educational experience and are primarily intended to meet the developmental and competitive needs of high school students.

This policy serves as a foundational guideline for athletic participation within our district. However, in rare circumstances, a middle school student may demonstrate exceptional physical ability that warrants consideration for participation at the high school level. In such cases, a careful and deliberate evaluation must be conducted, taking into account the following factors:

1. The needs of the student-athlete, with particular attention to their physical, mental, and emotional well-being.
2. The impact on the student-athlete's current middle school team.
3. The potential displacement of current high school athletes as a result of the proposed acceleration.

At the middle school level, the emphasis is placed on participation and skill development. This differs from the high school level, where the philosophy shifts toward increased competitiveness and a stronger focus on performance and playing to win.

III. DEFINITIONS

- Grades 9-12 shall be considered as the high school program.
- Grades 7-8 shall be considered the middle school program considered for acceleration.

IV. EXCEPTION

In certain situations, 9th grade or junior varsity teams may experience a shortage of participants. When this occurs, middle school athletes may be temporarily accelerated to participate at the high school level on an as-needed basis to ensure a team can be fielded.

To initiate this process, the varsity coach must submit a written request to the Activities Director or High School Principal. In the absence of both, the request should be directed to the Superintendent. This request must outline the specific need for temporarily accelerating middle school participants (e.g., due to injury, illness, or insufficient roster numbers).

It is important to note that any middle school students approved for temporary acceleration will continue to participate with their middle school teams. The purpose of this exception is to address short-term roster gaps, not to permanently move athletes to the high school program.

Final approval rests with the designated administrator, who will determine whether temporary acceleration is warranted. Additionally, a parent or guardian permission form must be completed and submitted to the Activities Director before the athlete participates in any high school-level practices or competitions.

It is the coach's responsibility to ensure this form is completed and submitted before participation occurs.

V. PROCEDURE

1. The head coach must submit a formal, written request to the Activities Director to initiate the acceleration process.
2. A meeting will be held among the head coach, Activities Director, and Principal to discuss all relevant factors, including academic performance, social/emotional readiness, eligibility status, and physical ability. A consensus decision will be made.
3. A meeting will then be scheduled with both parents/guardians (if available) to review the decision:
 - a. If the decision is **not to accelerate** the athlete, the rationale for the decision will be explained to the parents.
 - b. If the decision is **to accelerate** the athlete, the advantages and potential drawbacks of acceleration will be reviewed with the parents.
4. The coach is responsible for obtaining signatures from both custodial parents/guardians on all required documentation. These signatures confirm that the meeting occurred and the parents agreed to the student-athlete's acceleration.
5. The documentation shall be held by the Activities Director for six (6) years or upon graduation of the student athlete, whichever comes first.

~~VI. PROBLEM CLAUSE~~

~~Within the course of the season, if the move is not working for the student, a meeting can be initiated by either the parent or the coach, with the activities director and the principal to discuss any problems. If it is deemed the move has not been the correct thing for the student, the student can be assigned to return back to their original team. However, the student cannot play on their original team and a higher level team at the same time.~~

VI. REFERENCES

MSHSL Bylaws – 105, 302, 109, 303.4 and 105.00 Interpretations

Advantages of Acceleration:

1. Need to challenge the athletes by placing with and against better competition.
2. Opportunity to participate in increased number of contests.
3. The athlete may experience frustrations due to the disparity in skill level if they continue to play at present level.
4. More opportunities will exist for the athletes from the team the player left. A non-starter now may become a starter.
5. The competition for positions on the team they are moved to may be increased, which may improve intensity and skill development for everyone.
6. Athletes will be given an opportunity to advance their skill level in a team sport just as they can in an individual sport.

Disadvantages of Acceleration:

1. The parents and athletes of members of the team the athlete is moving to will feel they or their child is being displaced.
2. The athletes/parents from the team they are leaving and the team they are going to could disagree with the promotion causing socialization issues in school and the community for the accelerated athlete.
3. Athletes will sometimes feel they are not connected to any team.
4. The team the athlete is moving from loses a role model and an extra peer teacher to help that team develop better skills.
5. Expectations for the accelerated athlete may be greater by the coaches, parents, and fans. These expectations may not be realized and thus a sense of failure may emerge.
6. An increased time commitment, longer season, split shifts at practice, transportation issues, etc., may negatively impact school work and home responsibilities.
7. The continuity of the grade level team and the team accelerated to could be highly disrupted.
8. Acceleration may open the athlete up to scrutiny by parents, classmates, and community members.
9. The injury and risk factor is increased due to participation against bigger, faster, and stronger athletes.
10. Once the athlete is accelerated the move is permanent and they are ineligible to return to their previous level.

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STUDENT ACCELERATION TO HIGHER-LEVEL ATHLETIC-ACTIVITIES FORM

I _____, agree that my child, _____
(Name of Parent) (Name of Student)

may be accelerated in _____ in accordance with the Pipestone Area School's Athletic
(Sport)

Acceleration Policy. I also realize this acceleration is permanent. I have read the policy and realize that I
can say no to this suggested action.

_____ I want my child to be accelerated on a permanent basis.

_____ I do not wish my child to be accelerated on a permanent basis.

(Parent)

(Date)

(Parent)

(Date)

(Head Varsity Coach)

(Date)

(Activities Director)

(Date)