

## **Memorial Lutheran Athletic Handbook**

Dear Parents and Student-Athletes,

We would like to welcome you to the Memorial Lutheran Athletic Program! We believe that participation in sports provides a wealth of opportunities and experiences that assist students in personal growth and development. Memorial Lutheran believes in the development of young men and women through athletics. We feel that a properly structured, well-organized sports program meets student's needs for self-expression, mental alertness, and physical growth. It is our pledge to maintain a program that is sound in purpose and will further each student's educational maturity. Likewise, we believe that parents have committed themselves to certain responsibilities and obligations to the student-athlete. We would like to take this opportunity to acquaint you with specific policies that are necessary for a well-organized athletic program.

It is the role of the Athletic Department to make rules governing interscholastic competition. These rules need broad-based community support to be fully effective. This is best achieved through mutual communication between the Athletic Department, the student-athletes and the parents of each of our student-athletes. One way that we have committed to accomplishing this objective is through this athletic handbook for students, parents and coaches. The most important reason that our department exists is to ensure that students have an opportunity to partake in and enjoy sports during their time at Memorial Lutheran. As an athletic department, we can assure you that students and the teams in which they are a part of are the guiding force in everything we do and every decision that we make. Our focus and primary objective—in making this handbook and in all that we do—will always be to do what is in the best interest of the student and their team. This combination shall ensure a promising and successful future for Memorial Lutheran Athletics.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read the athletic handbook. It will not only allow you to become familiar with our policies and procedures, it will also allow for a smooth transition for you as a new or continued member of the Memorial Lutheran athletic program. Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact any member of the Memorial Lutheran Athletic Department.

**GO MUSTANGS!**

Sam Akaweih

Athletic Director

## DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

### Philosophy

The athletic department at Memorial Lutheran School is an important part of our school's educational program. We want to ensure that each student-athlete reaches their maximum potential. It is our mission to develop the whole student, not just the athlete, in mind, body and spirit. Specifically, the Athletic Department seeks to provide interested students with the opportunity to participate in its program of interscholastic athletics and is committed to the following:

- To offer a well-balanced and varied program of interscholastic athletics (based on numbers and the best interest of our student-athletes)
- To teach the value of competition
- To foster the development of athletic skills
- To encourage the development of a strong work ethic, self-discipline and self-sacrifice
- To teach the value of commitment, teamwork and cooperation
- To encourage the development of judgment, character, and leadership
- To teach the value of ethical conduct, sportsmanship, and fair play
- To encourage the development of loyalty and pride in one's self, their team, and the school community

The Athletic Department expects the following of each participant in the school athletic program:

- To be a worthy representative of teammates, coaches, and the school community, abiding by school and community expectations
- To maintain health and fitness levels by following the training rules prescribed by the coach
- To reflect the knowledge that commitment to victory is nothing without commitment to hard work in practice
- To understand that athletics is just one part in the big picture with the cornerstone being that a MLS student strives to achieve excellence in all areas
- To learn to deal with adversity in an honorable way and to capitalize on growth opportunities
- To express feelings intelligently and appropriately
- To accept the responsibilities of team membership: support of teammates, cooperation, positive interaction, and mutual respect

- To help student-athlete learn how to balance a demanding academic schedule with an arduous athletic training schedule

### **Definition of Excellence**

First let's define winning. Winning on the scoreboard is not always in our control. We cannot always control our level of talent. Certainly it is important that through a strong work ethic we maximize what we have, but everyone is born with a certain amount of God-given ability. Injuries can also play a major role in whether or not a team is successful on the scoreboard. If we base our criteria for success on "winning them all", we will be needlessly disappointed most of the time. Winning must be defined in such a way that we maintain a level of control. If success is not achieved, positive steps can be taken to assure positive results. There should never be a feeling of helplessness or despair, only a continual examination of attitudes and practices that brings about improvement. How is this to be done? Our criterion for success on the field or court is the achievement of excellence. Unlike victory over an opponent, we have control of our standards of excellence. What is excellence? Excellence is the ongoing process of becoming better than we once were, particularly in the below list areas.

### **EXCELLENCE**

- ✓ Superior Work Ethic
- ✓ Personal Humility
- ✓ Team-ness Oriented
- ✓ Determination
- ✓ Mental Toughness
- ✓ Actions Deserving of Victory
- ✓ Loving One Another
- ✓ Belief, Faith and Trust
- ✓ Sacrifice

All of these areas must be present to achieve excellence. The success of our teams will be a reflection on the degree to which the individuals on our teams develop these areas as fundamental components of who we are as a team and as individuals.

**Roles:****Athletic Director:**

The Athletic Director is responsible for administering the Athletic Program at MLS. His/her duties include but are not limited to: hiring and training coaches, coordinating the athletic budget, scheduling games and coordinate practice schedules with the head coach of each sport, approving and scheduling transportation and officials, conflict resolution, and overseeing all aspects of the Department of Athletics. He/she will advise the Administration, staff, teams, coaches, and parents of any changes and communicate the needs of the Athletic Department to the administration, booster club, and Memorial Lutheran School.

The Athletic Director is expected to provide appropriate instruction and support to all part-time and full-time coaches. He/she must also be a positive representative of MLS and the Athletic Department.

**Coaches:**

The coach is responsible for creating a fun, safe, and challenging environment in which his/her student-athletes will receive a high level of instruction and competition. The coach is also responsible for confirming game and bus schedules, turning in a roster prior to the season, distributing and collecting uniforms and equipment, completing game, injury and/or incident reports, and communicating with parents. The coach must also ensure that student-athletes are exhibiting good behavior on and off the court/field.

The coach is expected to be a positive representative of MLS and the Athletic Department. This includes ensuring that the coach conducts himself/herself in a manner that will bring honor and respect to our teams and school. He/she is expected to make decisions based on the collective interest of the team, while also developing each student-athlete to his/her fullest potential.

The coach must be clear in expectations and available to student-athletes for positive mentorship on and off the field/court. He/she is expected to maintain high personal standards, motivate the players, and promote sportsmanship at all times.

**Student-Athlete:**

The student-athlete is expected to be a positive addition to the MLS Athletic Department. If a student-athlete must discuss an issue with the coach, he/she must communicate in a respectful manner to try and find a solution. If a situation cannot be reached, the Athletic Director may assist.

Student-Athletes will be representing MLS on and off the playing court/field and are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that will reflect positively upon our program and school. Student-Athletes are expected to be respectful and exhibit good behavior in class, practice, games and the community. If a student-athlete fails to conduct himself/herself in a manner that will bring honor and respect to our teams and school, he/she may be subject to penalties which may include game suspensions, ineligibility, or dismissal from the team.

**Parents:**

Parents play a vital role in the MLS Athletics Program. Parents model attitudes and behavior for their children. We invite all parents to attend home and away games, support the team, and encourage their children to practice and play hard.

We are so appreciative of the assistance parents provide for their children in their athletic endeavors, whether driving them to an athletic event, volunteering to serve athletics as a member of the Booster Club, and sacrificing family time to accommodate athletic schedules. We also appreciate the support parents provide our coaches in their efforts to create a valuable athletic experience for all participants. It is important for parents to be mindful of and respect what the coaches is trying to do by avoiding interference or public criticism, especially in front of their children, other teammates, or community members.

In regards to games, parents are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that will bring honor and respect to our teams and school. At no time should a parent display inappropriate behavior toward an official, coach, administrator or student-athlete.

**Athletic Opportunities:**

**Fall**

Volleyball (Girls Grades 4-8)

Soccer (Boys & Girls Grades 4-8)

**Winter**

Basketball (Boys & Girls Grades 4-8)

Cheerleading (Girls Grades 5-8)

**Spring**

Track & Field (Boys & Girls Grades 5-8)

Softball (Girls Grades 5-8)

### **Conference Affiliations:**

Our JV and Varsity athletic teams compete in the Houston Lutheran Athletic Conference (HLAC).

The purpose of the Houston Lutheran Athletic Conference is glorifying God through athletics.

The objectives of the league are:

- 1.) To promote opportunity for Christian Wellness.
- 2.) To promote fellowship between conference schools.
- 3.) To encourage sportsmanship.
- 4.) To encourage schools to develop the following character traits: leadership, teamwork, self-control, and responsibility.
- 5.) To provide and promote opportunity for quality athletic competition.
- 6.) To prepare our youth for high school athletic competition.
- 7.) To provide an opportunity for students and coaches to glorify God with their gifts and talents.

HLAC offers JV and Varsity Soccer, JV and Varsity Volleyball, JV and Varsity Basketball, Varsity Softball & Baseball, and Cross Country. The HLAC Conference is made up of 10 schools, which include:

Abiding Word

Epiphany

Lutheran South Academy

Memorial Lutheran

Our Savior

Pilgrim Lutheran

St. Mark

Salem

Trinity Klein

Westlake Prep

### **MLS Athletic Booster Club**

The MLS Athletic Booster Club is a volunteer organization made up of dedicated and service-oriented parents who are committed to offering their time and energy to promote school and athletic spirit, support MLS sports teams and ensure that every athletic event is a success. In addition to volunteering time, the Booster Club also provides funds

to enhance all MLS sports teams. The Memorial Lutheran student-athletes and coaches directly benefit from the volunteer and financial support of the Booster Club and we encourage ALL parents of Memorial Lutheran student-athletes to join. Concessions at our home games and basketball tournaments we host play a big role in funding our Booster Club for our Physical Education and Athletic Program. If you would like to join or would like more information on the MLS Booster Club, please contact Sam Akaweih at [sakaweih@mlchouston.org](mailto:sakaweih@mlchouston.org).

### **Volunteer Requirements**

As members of the Memorial Lutheran athletic community, all parents will be required to volunteer during at least three MLS Booster Club supported events. This directly benefits all student-athletes. Please do not feel limited to just one service opportunity. A sign-up sheet will be available online and sent out in an email which you may sign-up using the signup genius. It will be first come, first choice. We would not be successful without our parents and truly appreciate your support and enthusiasm!

### **Athletic Department:**

Office (713)-782-4022 ext. 331

- Sam Akaweih-Athletic Director

[sakaweih@mlchouston.org](mailto:sakaweih@mlchouston.org)

### **Head Coaches:**

Sport/Coach

Volleyball – Hilda Kunz – [hkunz@mlchouston.org](mailto:hkunz@mlchouston.org)

Varsity Soccer – Keith Brda – [kbrda@mlchouston.org](mailto:kbrda@mlchouston.org)

Cheerleading - Elizabeth Taylor - [etaylor@mlchouston.org](mailto:etaylor@mlchouston.org)

Basketball (Boys) - Sam Akaweih – [sakaweih@mlchouston.org](mailto:sakaweih@mlchouston.org)

Basketball (Girls) -

Track & Field – Hilda Kunz – [hkunz@mlchouston.org](mailto:hkunz@mlchouston.org)

Softball (Girls) - Richard Gaub - [rgaub@mlchouston.org](mailto:rgaub@mlchouston.org)

### **Team Membership:**

MLS is committed to providing all middle school students interested including 4<sup>th</sup> graders in competitive athletics the opportunity to participate in athletics. Failure to attend practice or abusing their privilege of participation, can lead to disqualification of being on the team. We recognize that middle school athletics provides the introduction to

competitive sports at MLS. Because it is important to have players learn the fundamentals correctly from the beginning, the emphasis of the middle school program will be developing skills and habits. The level of success achieved in high school athletics is directly related to the skills developed through the middle school program.

### **Team Selection/Playing Time:**

It is our goal in team selection to find opportunities not only for participation, but more importantly, for success. Placing each student-athlete at the level where he/she can contribute physically and gain positive feelings from his/her efforts is important to the coaching staff. Disappointments are inevitable when teams are selected, and it is very important that student-athletes feel the support of teammates, parents, and coaches.

We believe in our coaches. Their job is to manage and direct a specific sport. Their responsibilities include evaluating and selecting students for teams, as well as determining the degree to which each student-athlete will participate and they do this with considerable thought and sensitivity. During the selection process, coaches will evaluate skill level, athleticism, physical conditioning, positional play, trainability, punctuality, and various other attributes.

We want our student-athletes to learn the value of being on a team and the contribution each must make. Team members have a responsibility to themselves, their teammates, and their coaches to learn and perform their role on the team. Teamwork requires the development of many interpersonal skills such as listening, following directions, accepting constructive criticism, being respectful, and supporting teammates and coaches. Student-athletes have an obligation to participate in practice sessions and games with full commitment and enthusiasm.

MLS believes that at all levels—fourth grade through varsity—playing time in competition is earned in practice and is not an entitlement. Regardless of the subjective nature of the process and the potential for disagreement, the coach is the only one in a position to make team selections and decisions about playing time. Coaches WILL NOT discuss playing time with parents. Also members of a junior varsity and varsity team are not guaranteed playing time. Student-athletes should fully understand that by joining a team they are accepting the pleasures and benefits of participating as well as the responsibility and commitment to that team.

### **Eligibility:**

Participation in athletics is a privilege, NOT a right. Students can earn the privilege through hard work, dedication, desire, and self-discipline. All students that are currently enrolled in fourth-eighth grade and attend MLS are eligible to participate in athletics. All students in fourth-eighth grade are eligible to participate in middle school sports. We



generally play 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> on Junior Varsity and 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> on Varsity. Based on enrollment we may choose to play 4<sup>th</sup> grade up to JV and 6<sup>th</sup> grade up to Varsity.

**Academic Eligibility:**

Student-Athletes are expected to maintain passing grades in all classes. In accordance to the HLAC Constitution (May 2016) a student will be considered ineligible for athletic involvement if he/she receives 2 or more failing grades (F's) in core subjects in a midterm/progress report, or 1 or more failing grades (F's) in core subjects on a report card. Core subjects include Religion, Math, Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies. The student will remain ineligible until the next midterm/progress or report card is issued. If the student has improved his/her grades in this report, and meets eligibility standards, he/she will be reinstated on the team. If not, the student will remain ineligible until the next report is issued or until the current sports season ends. They will also be expected to seek tutoring from the appropriate teacher.

**Conduct Eligibility:**

Student-athletes are expected to maintain satisfactory conduct in all classes. Any student-athlete who does not maintain satisfactory conduct in a class will be subject to a behavioral probation that will follow the same three week guidelines as the academic probation.

**Club/Select Teams:**

Memorial Lutheran Athletics will take precedence over club or league competitions and practice sessions. Student-athletes will not be excused from MLS athletic practices or games in order to attend game or practice sessions for club or league teams. It is the responsibility of the student-athlete to communicate his/her participation on club or league teams prior to the start of the season so that any potential conflicts may be worked out. Failure to communicate before the season may result in the removal of a student-athlete from the team.

**Required Forms for Participation:**

Prior to the start of each season, all parents and student-athletes must complete the following forms:

- Athletic Physician's Report/Sports Physical
- Athlete/Parent Ethics Policy
- Player's Contract Agreement Form (as provided)

Failure to complete all forms required for participation will result in the student-athlete being declared ineligible to participate.

**Practice Times:**

Coaches for each sport will designate times for practice in the form of a schedule which will be emailed in advance. Volleyball and Soccer will have practice twice a week on Mondays and Wednesdays with games falling on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Basketball (Boys) will practice on Mondays and Thursdays and Basketball (Girls) will practice on Tuesdays and Fridays. Games will also be on Tuesdays and Thursdays with an occasional Friday. Track will practice twice a week depending on the availability and the agreement with the YMCA-Trotter. Wednesdays for all sports will generally remain open and used if additional practice is needed. Practices will either be from 3:45-5:00pm. Please plan on picking up your child no later than 5:15pm. If your child has not been picked up within 15 minutes after practice they will be sent to aftercare and are subject to fees for extended care.

**Attendance:**

Attendance at all games and practice sessions is mandatory for all team members. If a student-athlete will not be attending a practice, meeting, or athlete contest, the coach must be notified at least one day prior to the event being missed. Any student-athlete who has more than three absences (excused or unexcused) may result in limited playing time or removal from the team. Practice is held rain or shine unless otherwise noted by the coach. Any student-athlete who leaves an athletic event without the permission of the Head Coach will be subject to suspension from the team.

**Illness & Injury:**

All injuries should be reported to the coach and/or athletic director at the time they occur so further injury can be avoided. If you are injured, remember the following:

1. Tell the coach and/or athletic director that you are injured before leaving the court/floor.
2. No matter how small the injury, get treatment.
3. No one shall miss practice without a doctor's permission.
4. Student-athletes are expected to attend team practices each day they attend school.
5. A second notice from the doctor should be given to the coach to end physical restrictions.
6. Anyone who becomes sick, nauseated, dizzy, and/or very hot should notify the coach and/or athletic director immediately.

**Classwork:**

On occasion when student-athletes must miss class to participate in scheduled athletic events, they are responsible for turning in class work that is due that day and they are responsible for making up any missed work in a timely fashion. If a student-athlete arrives home late from an athletic contest or misses class the day before a test due to an athletic contest, it is at the teacher's discretion to allow the student-athlete to test at an alternative time. If the student-athlete must leave class early on a testing day due to an athletic contest, it is the responsibility of the student-athlete to reschedule the test for a date that is agreed upon by the student-athlete and teacher.

**Practice Gear:**

Student-athletes may be expected to purchase and wear sports-specific or school-specific practice gear for all practices. The coach will communicate this to the players prior to the beginning of the season. All game safety equipment must be worn during practices and games. This is a shared responsibility of the coach and student-athlete. Failure to bring ones equipment or uniform may result in the student-athlete not participating in the practice or game. The coach of each team will give further instructions regarding required practice gear.

**Uniforms/Warm-Ups:**

Memorial Lutheran athletic uniforms or warm-ups are to be worn only during interscholastic competition, practice, and on approved home game days with approval by school administration. Launder uniforms in warm water, not hot, and never use bleach. Ironing may cause damage, as will very hot dryers. Student-athletes are responsible for all items issued to him/her. Any lost, damaged or stolen items must be paid for by the student-athlete before another is issued.

**All uniforms and warm-ups are due the day after the final game of the season or on the date set by the coach.**

**Dropping/Dismissal from a Sport:**

There will be times when some student-athletes make the decision to leave a sport before, during or after the season, although we highly discourage it. Whatever the reason, a student-athlete must follow the steps listed below:

1. The student-athlete must talk to the coach to see if a solution can be reached. A conference with the parents, student-athlete, coach, and athletic director or any combination thereof, may be required and is highly recommended before a student-athlete leaves the sport.
2. All equipment must be turned in clean and undamaged. The student-athlete must pay for any equipment not turned in.

**Travel:**

In some cases, MLS will provide transportation to away contests. All players are expected to travel with their team to the competition site. If a student-athlete will not be returning to the MLS campus with the team, written permission must be granted by parents and given to the coach before leaving the MLS campus. Other times, carpooling will be required. Please let the coaches know if you would like to assist or help in transporting students to any of the games.

**STUDENT ATHLETES WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO LEAVE THE GROUP WITH ANYONE OTHER THAN A PARENT UNLESS PARENTAL PERMISSION IS RECEIVED.**

**Season Awards/Banquet**

All season ending awards will be voted upon by the coaches and will include season stats, practice habits, game performance and overall contribution to the team. Team specific awards will be handed out at the end of each season.

End of year awards will be handed out at the end of year sport banquet. The sports banquet will be a formal recognition of the accomplishments of each team and overall success of our athletics program. Most Valuable Player and Most Improved Player awards will also be given and all sport specific awards will once again be announced.

**Practice and Game Cancellation:**

In the event that the coach must cancel a practice, it is the responsibility of the coach and/or Athletic Director to notify the team and parents. Inclement weather does not determine whether practice will be held—the coach makes the determination. When available, indoor facilities may be used to hold practice in these circumstances. If a change is made in the practice schedule, parents and student-athletes will be notified as soon as possible.

In most cases, it is the responsibility of the host school to make decisions regarding game cancellations. When hosting an event, MLS will make every effort to make cancellation decisions by 2:00pm on the day of the event. When a game is cancelled, the coach may choose to hold a practice in its place. If the coach chooses to hold a practice in place of the cancelled game, he/she will communicate this information to the parents and student-athletes as soon as possible.

**Gym/Locker Rooms:**

All MLS students, grades 4-8 (Physical Education and Student-athletes) will be using the locker rooms. The student-athletes are encouraged to put all valuables and personal items in the school lockers for safe keeping. The Athletic

Department, coaches, or Athletic Director are not responsible for lost or stolen items (cell phones, uniforms, equipment, school issued materials, or personal items) that in the locker room or surrounding athletic facilities. A combination lock is highly recommended with parents keeping a backup if the combination is forgotten or misplaced.

**Parent/Coach Communication:**

**Communication Tools:**

Coaches will communicate regularly with parents and student-athletes in person, via email or by phone. The coach will provide a contact number for parents and student-athletes to use in the case of an emergency ONLY.

**Concerns or Issues:**

Step1: One of the greatest opportunities for student-athletes is learning skills for effective conflict resolution. When there is a concern, student-athletes are encouraged to speak with their coach directly. It can be very satisfying for all parties involved when student-athletes and coach are able to find mutually agreeable solutions for an issue that they are preempting to resolve.

Step 2: If the coach and student-athlete are unable to resolve the issue together, then parents may contact the coach. If a parent has a concern to discuss with the coach, the parent should contact the coach at an appropriate time for both parties. An upset parent should wait at least 24 hours before approaching a coach or parent after an athletic event. Under no circumstances should a parent approach a coach or another parent in a harsh manner or immediately before, during, or after a practice or a game. Taking this time to reflect on the situation, as well as honest and respectful communication should allow for more effective dialogue ensuring a more successful experience for everyone.

**It is not appropriate for a parent to request feedback from the coach about team strategy (including playing time), play calling, or other student-athletes. It is appropriate for a parent to contact the coach with concerns about their son/daughter's behavior, their skill development, and for physical treatment advice.**

Step 3: If the discussion with the coach does not resolve the issue, parents and coaches may contact the Athletic Director to discuss the situation.

Step 4: if the Athletic Director is unable to provide a satisfactory resolution, the parent may contact the appropriate administrator (Pastor Paul – Head of School).

**Athletic Website:**

All athletic information will be posted on the athletic page of the Memorial Lutheran website at <http://www.memoriallutherschool.org/>. The information found on the website will include: sports schedules, sports physicals, ethics policies, summer sports camps, coaches information, and other Athletic Department information pertinent to athletics at Memorial Lutheran.

All directions and addresses to the game locations will be emailed to prior to the first game of the season.