**FOUNDERS CHRISTIAN SCHOOL ATHLETIC HANDBOOK**

**2025-2026**

1. **INTRODUCTION AND PHILOSOPHY**

The mission of Founders Christian School is to equip future Christian leaders with the spiritual and academic tools for life-long learning, and to enable them to think, reason, and communicate well from a biblical worldview. **Athletics can be an integral part of this process.** Today, much of the emphasis in athletics is on the importance of winning. At FCS, our perspective is based on the following biblical principles:

* *And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.* (Colossians 3:17)
* *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men.* (Colossians 3:23)

The commands found in these verses put winning in proper perspective and yet do not diminish the importance of the outcome. We expect coaches and athletes to give their best, and to try to win each contest they are involved in. Individual and team success is the desire of all coaches and athletes, and we hope that all FCS athletes will experience the thrill of winning. Yet, the highest goal is to prepare and compete in a way that honors Christ. Maintaining this balanced perspective will allow athletes to compete in an environment that is God glorifying and enriching.

The FCS athletic department, in conjunction with school administration and the Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools (TAPPS), makes rules that govern athletic competition at FCS; this handbook is written to establish the policies of the FCS athletic programs. (Reference to TAPPS applies only to high school athletics because it does not regulate middle school programs.)

1. **A WORD TO PARENTS**

We believe that parents play an essential role in the overall experience of their child’s participation in athletics at FCS. Here are some ways that you can support your child and the school while cultivating positive atmosphere in and around the athletics program:

* Attend as many games/events as possible. Your presence is meaningful to your child and shows support for the team/school.
* Be positive and supportive without adding undue pressure or unrealistic expectations upon your child or the team in general. Try to be objective regarding your child’s skill level and role on the team.
* Express support for the coach whether or not you agree with the decisions that are made.
* Be flexible. Despite careful planning, schedule changes will sometimes need to be made regarding games, practices, and events.
* Volunteer to help the athletic department/booster club with tournaments, admissions, gym/field setup and teardown, concessions, etc.
* If you have a question or concern, express it to the right person at the appropriate time.

1. **PARENT AND SPECTATOR SPORTSMANSHIP**

FCS athletic events are, in many ways, the public “face” of our school. The character and testimony of FCS and our employees, parents, and students are on display at athletic events, and we aim to exemplify Christ-likeness in all aspects of athletics, including spectator participation. FCS parents/guardians, students, employees, and spectators are expected to cheer for and support the school’s athletes, teams, and coaches in a way that is positive, constructive, and gives honor to Christ. The same is expected toward opponents, opposing fans, and officials. **The following behaviors are not acceptable at an athletic contest which FCS is hosting or in which FCS is participating: jeering, cursing, mocking, taunting, and harsh comments aimed at officials, coaches, athletes or opposing fans.** Game officials and school administrators have the authority to remove a person from an athletic contest for unsportsmanlike behavior. In the event of violation of this policy, FCS school administration may deny the person the right to attend future athletic contests.

1. **GOVERNANCE**

Founders Christian School: The Athletic Director (AD) oversees program direction and makes hiring recommendations to the Head of School. Student participants are responsible to coaches, who report to the AD, who in turn reports to the Head of School.

Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools (TAPPS): Member high schools voluntarily join TAPPS with other member high schools in Texas to compete for state championships. As a member school, FCS agrees to abide by and enforce all TAPPS rules and regulations, including those regarding athlete eligibility, attendance, grades, age, awards, school representation, and transfers between schools. The primary role of TAPPS is to ensure equity in competition for the student-athletes and a balance with other athletic/educational programs. TAPPS is also responsible for setting-up and/or regulating all district, playoff, and state championship competitions. A complete summary of all TAPPS rules can be found at tapps.biz by clicking on the “by-laws” tab.

Middle School Sports: Middle school sports are regulated by FCS administration. Grades that may be involved in middle school sports are 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. On occasion, a 5th grader or home school athlete may be allowed to participate in middle school athletics at the discretion of the AD.

1. **REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION**
2. High School (9th-12th)

Each Athlete:

1. Must be enrolled in at least four for-credit, on campus academic classes at FCS.
2. Must not have turned 19 prior to September 1st of the current academic year.
3. Must not have graduated high school from any other institution or have competed on the varsity level in TAPPS regulated activities in excess of four continuous academic years.
4. Must follow all other TAPPS regulations for eligibility (transfer, recruitment, etc.)
5. May be failing (below 70) in only one course at the end of each nine-week grading period. Eligibility may be regained after two weeks if the athlete’s grade in that course is 70 or above. If the athlete is still academically ineligible after two weeks grades will be checked each week after that, at which time eligibility can be regained. Academic ineligibility pertains only to athletic contests - not practices, meetings, team gatherings, etc.
6. Middle School (6th-8th)
7. As stated above, grades that may be involved in middle school athletics are 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. On occasion, a 5th grader or home school athlete may be allowed to participate in middle school athletics at the discretion of the AD.
8. Academic ineligibility will be determined by a combination of the athlete’s parents, teachers, coach and the AD. Generally speaking, if a student is, by all accounts, working hard in the classroom he/she will be eligible for middle school athletic competition. If that is not the case and the athlete’s grades are below 70 at the conclusion of the nine-week grading period, then academic ineligibility can be discussed as a means of motivation by the above individuals.
9. Attendance
10. Students are required to be in attendance at school at least half the day (before lunch or after lunch) to be eligible to compete in a contest that day. This does not pertain to practices, meetings, team gatherings, etc.
11. Exceptions to the above rule can only be granted by the AD or Head of School (ex. family emergency, funeral attendance, etc.).
12. Conduct

A student who is suspended from school may not participate athletic contests or practices the day of his suspension.

1. Physical Examination

All 6th-12th grade athletes must annually submit a physical examination report performed by a licensed medical professional.

1. Sports Fees
2. High School Sports: $300 per sport
3. Middle School Sports: $150 per sport
4. There may be additional fees for some individual sports like golf.
5. There may at times be additional costs for travel, hotels, meals, etc. for those teams attending away games, tournaments, playoffs, and championships.
6. Fees will be charged to each student’s FACTS account.
7. Drug Testing

All 9th-12th grade athletes will be required to take a drug test in August prior to the beginning of interscholastic competition. Additional tests may be required of individual students if FCS administration deems it necessary.

1. **ATHLETIC CODE OF CONDUCT**
2. Sportsmanship: Athletes shall display good sportsmanship and shall not engage in conduct that is deemed by FCS administration as disrespectful towards team members, opponents, spectators, officials, or coaches.
3. Hazing/Harassment/Bullying: Hazing, harassment, and bullying are not to be a part of the FCS athletics program. Hazing includes an initiation process conducted against a team member. Any behavior directed toward another student that denigrates or endangers the health or safety of a student for the purpose of initiation or admission into or continued membership on any such team is not acceptable behavior and will be disciplined by FCS administration.
4. Game Behavior:If a high school athlete is ejected from a contest the AD will notify TAPPS the following day. The athlete will face a suspension as well as other possible disciplinary actions deemed appropriate by FCS/TAPPS.
5. Student Handbook Application: In all aspects of participation in athletics, whether during or outside of school hours, including practices, games, events, travel, and the entirety of any team-related trip/function, the FCS student handbook will apply to participating students.
6. **MISSING PRACTICES/CONTESTS**

When an athlete joins a team, a commitment to attend the entire season of practices and contests is made by the athlete as well as the parents, with understandable exceptions (illness, family emergencies, etc.). If an athlete will miss a practice or contest, the coach should be consulted as soon as possible. Missing a practice or contest will generally result in some type of extra work/disciplinary action deemed appropriate by the head coach.

Athletes should finish each season they begin. In the unusual case where an athlete and parent agree that dripping a sport mid-season is necessary, the athlete needs to consult with the coach. An athlete who drops a sport may not begin practicing another sport unless both head coaches and the AD agree it is in the best interest of the student and the athletics program (ex. a student drops basketball and wants to go work out with distance runners in preparation for track and field).

1. **EQUIPMENT AND UNIFORMS**

School equipment is the responsibility of the athlete to whom it has been issued. The athlete is expected to keep it clean and in good condition. Equipment and uniforms are to be used only in practice or contests or as directed by the coach, and not used/worn outside of those parameters. Loss/careless destruction of equipment/uniforms is the financial responsibility of the athlete up to full replacement value. Fees may be charged for late return of equipment/uniforms.

1. **TRAVEL**

Transportation to and from away games/contests will ultimately be the responsibility of the parents. There will be times that FCS will be able to provide transportation in vans, though this will not always be an option. If a student rides to a game with a team and desires to ride home with their parent they must communicate that with the coach. Athletes may not ride to or from away contests with other athletes.

While traveling for FCS athletic events, including transport and during stops, the student handbook is to be adhered to. Athletes are expected to obey the directives of coaches, chaperones. Driver should adhere to all applicable laws. FCS athletes will keep vehicles clean, remain seated and belted when applicable, and maintain a suitable level of volume.

It is the responsibility of parents to be timely in picking up athletes when FCS has provided transportation back to the school following an away contest.

It is the responsibility of the student to pre-arrange with the teacher(s) make-up work for the class(es) to be missed when the team is away from school.

1. **TEAM SELECTION/PLAYING TIME**

The head coach of each team, with input from the AD, will make the final decision regarding the most effective team size for a team in a given season.

Students who make a team will not see equal playing time. No amount of participation time is guaranteed to any athlete. Playing time depends on the skill and experience of the athlete and the philosophy of the head coach. All teams will consist of who the head coach deems will make the team the most competitive, while also taking into account the future of the program.

1. **HEAD COACH POLICIES**

In addition to this handbook, each coach may establish rules or standards for the team. Head coach policies will be consistent with this handbook and the student handbook.

1. **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

If a conflict or concern arises between an athlete/parent and a coach, the first step is for the athlete/parent to discuss the matter with the head coach. If no resolution is reached, the next step is a meeting with the AD and coach. If there is still no resolution reached concerning the matter a meeting may be scheduled with the Head of School.

Parents should not address a concern with a coach immediately after a game. The parent should instead schedule an appointment the next day or at another suitable time. At the high school level, if an athlete has a concern it is the responsibility of the athlete, not the parents, to address the issue with the coach.

1. **INJURIES**

All injuries, whether sustained in a school sanctioned practice/contest or otherwise, must be reported to the head coach as soon as possible. If it is determined by the parent that medical attention should be given to the injury, FCS highly recommends that, when possible/appropriate, a sports injury physician be consulted rather than a general practitioner. Sports injury physicians typically understand the desire of the athlete to get back to competition as quickly as possible while still appropriately caring for the injury and avoiding re-injury.

When a physician has made a determination concerning the care of an athlete that results in limited or no activity, that athlete cannot return to practices/contests until a doctor has cleared the athlete.

1. **PERSONAL BELONGINGS/VALUABLES**

It is the athlete’s responsibility to secure personal belongings at FCS or when traveling to other schools. Money and valuables should not be left unprotected. The school is not responsible for any loss that may occur.

1. **SEASONS/PRACTICES**

Lifetime Sports: Cross country, track, wrestling, and golf and any other individual sports that TAPPS regulates are considered lifetime sports and can be school-coached year-round, even outside of the TAPPS competition season for that sport.

Team Sports: Basketball, football, volleyball and any other team sports that TAPPS regulates may only be school-coached during the season designated by the TAPPS calendar. The only exception to this rule out of season is during the school day athletic period. FCS has determined, specifically concerning team sports, not to allow school coaches to instruct their athletes during another team’s season. For example, there will be no school-coach basketball instruction during football season for the boys and vice-versa. Likewise, there will be no school-coach basketball instruction during volleyball season for the girls and vice-versa. Athletes that do not participate in a certain season’s team sport may receive coach instruction, practice, and play in leagues outside of FCS as desired as long as the school coach(es) is/are not involved.

Practices: All practices are required attendance for all athletes. Any time an athlete must miss a practice that athlete must communicate with the head coach as soon as the athlete knows they will miss. Practices are typically held Monday through Friday, though there are times when a head coach may choose to practice or meet on a Saturday. After school practices will end no later than 6:00 PM, unless approval is granted by the AD for a special circumstance. Practices will sometimes be held during school vacation or days when school is not in session. These practices are required unless the head coach has given an athlete permission to miss. There will be no practice on Sunday.

Weather-Related Problems: Weather sometimes causes delays or cancellations of practices/contests. When school is canceled due to weather, contests are automatically canceled unless agreed upon by all schools involved. Sometimes changing conditions allow practices to occur, with the approval of the Head of School. If school is canceled for other reasons, case-by-case decisions will be made regarding practices/contests.

1. **VARSITY LETTERS AND CREDITS**

An athlete will letter in a varsity sport if that athlete practices, competes in contests when called upon by the head coach, and completes the season with a team. If a season-ending injury occurred, the head coach will have the final say on whether an athlete met the requirements to letter.

One-half academic credit will be given for each sport season an athlete competes in and completes. One full credit is required for graduation and two full credits are required to graduate with a distinguished diploma.

1. **FCS HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS (9th-12th GRADES)**

Fall: Boys and Girls Cross Country; Boys 6-Man Football; Girls Volleyball

Winter: Boys and Girls Basketball

Spring: Boys and Girls Track and Field; Golf

If there are high school athletes that are interested in receiving outside coaching for a season in a lifetime sport and would like to compete in TAPPS sanctioned regional and state events in that sport the options are as follows: Swimming; Tennis; Wrestling (boys only)

Please contact the AD prior to September if you are interested.

1. **FCS MIDDLE SCHOOL SPORTS (6th-8th GRADES)**

Fall: Boys and Girls Cross Country; Boys Flag Football; Girls Volleyball

Winter: Boys and Girls Basketball

Spring: Boys and Girls Track and Field