

Organizing Goals/Program Principles for Athletics in Edmonton Christian School

- 1. The program must operate within the mission statement of Edmonton Christian School: *Believing Jesus Christ is Lord over all of life, Edmonton Christian School educates students for joyful and responsible service to God and society.***

Everything we do as a school community falls under the umbrella and the scrutiny of the mission statement. Athletics must contribute to the central purpose of education in our school – the development of each student to meaningfully serve God and others as a member of a Christian community. We believe that Christ has put his claim on athletics and that we are called to transform and renew it so that it too is evidence of Christ's rule over all.

We believe that each human being is created to praise and serve God with their whole being – body, soul and mind. Athletics fits into this belief. Under the right leadership, an athletics program can educate students in expressive play, responsible action and, through the team experience, cooperation. Expressive play is a celebration of God's gift of sport play. It is creative, joyful, exciting, satisfying, exuberant, spontaneous and, if developed early in a child's life, a lifelong hobby. Expressive play can be experienced through participation in a well-structured athletics program.

Physical activity in an athletics program, while joyful and expressive, can also be education for responsible action. This is not an easy task to accomplish but the personal decisions, knowledge, perseverance, integrity, cooperation, responsibility, fairness and respect for others required in a well-developed athletics program will contribute to the fulfillment of the mission of Edmonton Christian School.

- 2. The program must develop and maintain the participants' physical skills and fitness levels and must not endanger the long-term well being of participants.**

Athletics at Edmonton Christian School must enhance, not endanger the well being of participants. If an activity is inherently dangerous or is likely to lead to long or short-term damage to an athlete, it must either be modified or left out of the athletic program.

Coaches and other leaders in the athletic program must have sufficient knowledge and ability to structure activities to be safe and to ensure there is growth in the athlete's skill and fitness levels. This requires knowledge of the game, of human physiology and of how to structure practices. Care must be taken in appointing coaches. Where qualified coaches cannot be found for an activity, that activity cannot be included in the program.

- 3. The program must make responsible use of the resources of the school and of the program participants (money, time, facilities).**

Time Guidelines for Coaches

- Students should be encouraged to participate in at least one major sport. They should also be encouraged to participate in other school activities such as yearbook, drama, band or choir.
- Saturdays and holidays are generally not for school activities. Practices should be avoided on these days and must be truly optional (no hidden penalties such as being benched during games, etc.)
- The academic program of the participating student is a priority and should not be compromised. Athletes are responsible for maintaining their schoolwork they risk being asked to leave the team.
- Students who are not maintaining a passing average or who are under discipline will be asked to miss games and/or practices or be asked to leave the team.

Time Guidelines for Schedules/Games

- Junior High A teams may be involved in league play (EPS league, Christian Schools).
- Junior High B team playing times should not exceed three games and/or two tournaments.
- Junior High team play should not exceed three tournaments. Travelling tournaments should be discouraged.
- Senior High A and B teams may be involved in league play (EPS league).
- Senior High team play should not exceed two out-of-town tournaments.
- Participation in games/tournaments should be scheduled to minimize the amount of class time missed by students/teachers.

Financial Support for Sports Program

- At the junior high and senior high level, the cost of the sports program should be borne by the players through fees and/or fundraisers.
- The school may contribute to the program but it must have prior approval of the administration committee.
- Students who cannot afford the sports fee may apply to the school campus for relief.
- School campus expenses such as supply teachers must receive input from administration team and staff to determine the viability of the sports event and its place in the educational plan of the school.
- Part of the sports fee will go towards the purchase of uniforms. This money will be forwarded to the Society Office and purchases made in consultation with all three campuses and as per ESCE Board policy for uniforms.

4. Program participants must follow a well-defined code of conduct of athletes, coach and fans.

Parents and spectators are very positive influences on sports teams and are encouraged to attend as many games as possible to support their teams. Cheers of support from the sideline will inspire the players to perform well and enhance the enjoyment of the game for all. Being a spectator carries with it the responsibility of behaving in an appropriate and Christian manner. The following points provide guidance to parents and spectators in this regard:

- Treat all players, parents, coaches and referees with respect and promote good sportsmanship at all times.
- Do not criticize referees nor place blame on the referees for any reason.
- Do not give up on the team; encourage players and coaches in a positive manner.
- Discuss any problems or concerns privately with the coaches rather than voicing such concerns aloud at games/practices. Concerns will be handled in a Christian manner with respect to all involved.
- Do not tell coaches how to coach or criticize coaches or players unless willing to offer a constructive solution.
- The best example that parents and spectators can set is to generously applaud skilled performances and play by both teams.

5. The program in its structure and in its operation must treat competition as “striving together” with all participants.

Competition is one of the basic ingredients of any athletic program. It is also a contentious issue because of the many experiences of competition in our culture. At times, the call to serve and love others is conspicuously absent in athletic pursuits, especially in the professional leagues. Edmonton Christian School must be conscious of this fact and must work to be counter-cultural in this area. This begins with coaches who recognize that their actions are directed not only towards the athletes on their own team, but also towards the athletes on the other team. Competition is not about ‘beating’ the other team, but is about joyfully challenging them and bringing out the best in both teams. Athletic competitions are not about athletes playing against each other; they are about athletes striving together and playing with each other. An athletic program that promotes winning at all costs or that promotes the idea that ‘losers are nobodies’ has no place in our school. Pressure from a culture that loves ‘winners’ must not be allowed to take the joy and celebration out of our play. Humble winning and gracious losing will be evidence of this principle. Coaches play a key role in how this principle shapes some practical decision such as playing time for players. Every coaching decision must be made to provide fair competition and to challenge all teams and team members to excel and to play joyfully.

- 6. The program must provide activities that meet the needs and interests of the participants. The criteria for selecting participants must be clearly defined and must be communicated. The program will always seek to maximize the number of participants taking part within limits defined by the activities chosen.**

Each campus will select the sports activities and teams they wish to field based on the interest of the student body. The number of teams and the level of competition will be decided by the number of interested students and their abilities. For example, if there are enough girls interested in playing volleyball to make two teams, attempts should be made to accommodate the demand to enter them in the appropriate program.

Each sport requires a different number of participants. Coaches must decide how many players they will carry before tryouts begin and make that number known to the students. The amount of time a player gets during a game is based on the level of competition and the discretion of the coach; keeping in mind that students will learn and improve only through exposure to play.

- Coaches of junior teams, which are generally viewed as development teams, will strive for equal playing time where every player receives approximately the same amount of court/field time.
- Coaches of senior teams will strive to field the most competitive team based on their opponent's ability. This means that if our team is winning handily, the playing time of the bench will be increased to allow all players the most exposure possible. In a close match, the starters will be given more time thus providing an appropriate level of competition. Substitutions will be made at the coaches' discretion. The PE department head will evaluate a coach's performance and provide appropriate feedback should there be a problem.
- All players will be provided the schedule and the code of conduct at the commencement of each sport.
- Parents of all teams will be invited to a meeting at the beginning of each school year to review the sports program, code of conduct and financial responsibility.