

RICHARDS MIDDLE SCHOOL

ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT



STUDENT-ATHLETE & FAMILY HANDBOOK

2026-2027 SCHOOL YEAR

"Student-athletes are students first."

ADMINISTRATION & ATHLETIC LEADERSHIP

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This handbook supplements current Muscogee County School District policies and procedures.

Welcome to Richards Athletics

A shared commitment to safety, learning, character, and competitive excellence

Welcome to the Richards Middle School Athletic Department. Our highest priority is the safety and well-being of every student-athlete. We strive to provide a secure, structured, and encouraging environment in which students can grow academically, athletically, and personally.

Participation in athletics is a privilege. Student-athletes are expected to maintain acceptable grades, demonstrate respectful behavior, attend school and team activities regularly, arrive on time, follow coaching directions, and represent Richards Middle School with pride. Families are essential partners in this work.

This handbook explains schoolwide expectations for eligibility, conduct, health and safety, communication, transportation, equipment, and family involvement. Sport-specific information—including schedules, fees, tryout dates, and team procedures—will be communicated by the head coach or Athletic Director.

Joshua Browning

Athletic Director, Richards Middle School

Quick Participation Checklist

Before a student may try out, practice, or compete, the family must confirm a current physical, submit all required athletic forms, meet academic and behavior expectations, and follow any sport-specific registration or fee requirements.

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Policy Alignment

This handbook does not replace the MCSD Student Handbook, Student Code of Conduct, Athletic Handbook, or applicable state requirements. When a school procedure conflicts with a current district requirement, the district requirement will govern.

1. Athletic Program and Sports Offered

Opportunities may vary based on staffing, participation, facilities, and district scheduling

Richards Middle School offers a range of interscholastic and club athletic opportunities. The following list reflects anticipated offerings and coaching assignments for the 2026-2027 school year. Assignments, seasons, locations, and schedules are subject to change. Club sports may involve shared district teams, off-campus practices, or additional district procedures.

Season	Sport	Coach(es)	Program Type
Fall	Soccer - Girls	Dominic Stuckey	School Team
Fall	Soccer - Boys	Robert Rosa	School Team
Fall	Cross Country	Monika Bishop-McElwee	School Team
Fall	Spirit Cheerleading	Latoya Bryant	School Team
Fall	Football	Joshua Browning	School Team
Fall	Volleyball	Gwendolyn Ingram	School Team
Winter	Basketball - Girls	Marcus Arnold	School Team
Winter	Basketball - Boys	Greg Jenkins	School Team
Winter	Wrestling	Dominic Stuckey	MCSD Club Sport
Winter	Swimming	To Be Announced	MCSD Club Sport
Spring	Flag Football	Dominic Stuckey	School Team
Spring	Track	Gwendolyn Ingram	School Team
Spring	Golf	Eric Mitchell	Club Sport

Core Program Commitments

Safety: Coaches and administrators will prioritize physical and emotional safety.

Academics: Athletic participation will support—not replace—the student’s responsibilities as a learner.

Character: Student-athletes will demonstrate integrity, effort, respect, teamwork, and sportsmanship.

Equity: Expectations will be applied consistently, with individual circumstances reviewed by the Athletic Director and administration.

Growth: Coaches will provide clear feedback and age-appropriate opportunities for students to improve.

Important

Team membership and playing time are not guaranteed. Selection and participation decisions may consider skill, effort, readiness, coachability, teamwork, attendance, academics, behavior, safety, and the needs of the team.

2. Tryouts, Forms, Fees, and Eligibility

No student may participate until all required clearances are complete

A. Athletic Forms and Medical Clearance

A current athletic physical is required before tryouts, practice, or competition. A physical is valid for one calendar year from the date of the examination. For example, a physical dated April 8, 2026, expires April 7, 2027.

A parent or legal guardian must complete and sign all required district forms, including Assumption of Risks, Concussion Awareness, and Sudden Cardiac Arrest Awareness forms.

Families are responsible for monitoring expiration dates and submitting updated documentation before a student's clearance expires.

A student may not participate while required documents are missing, incomplete, expired, or awaiting approval.

Athletic forms are available through the [MCSD Athletics webpage](#) under Documents and Resources.

B. Tryouts and Team Selection

Students must meet medical, academic, attendance, and behavior requirements before participating in tryouts.

Students are expected to attend all scheduled tryout sessions unless an absence is approved in advance by the head coach.

Coaches will communicate selection criteria, roster decisions, and next steps. Team selection is based on the professional judgment of the coaching staff and the needs of the program.

Being selected for a team does not guarantee a starting position or a specific amount of playing time.

A student who quits or is dismissed must return all school-issued equipment before participating in another athletic program.

Participation in another sport during the same season requires approval from the Athletic Director.

C. Athletic Fees

Athletic fees support transportation, officials, equipment, and other program needs. The amount, due date, and approved payment method will be communicated for each sport.

Unless otherwise required by MCSD policy, fees are nonrefundable after a student is placed on the roster and payment is submitted, including voluntary withdrawal or removal for academic, attendance, or disciplinary reasons.

Injury, team cancellation, or other exceptional circumstances will be reviewed under current MCSD financial procedures and require administrative approval.

Families experiencing a financial hardship should contact the Athletic Director before the payment deadline to discuss available options, if any.

D. Academic Eligibility and Grade Monitoring

The official transcript is the primary record used to determine academic eligibility.

Promotion to the next grade establishes eligibility for the first semester. All subsequent eligibility determinations will follow the current MCSD Athletic Handbook.

Richards requirement: A student who fails more than one class during the first semester is not eligible to try out or participate until eligibility is restored under district procedures.

Students who are failing one or more classes during a season must attend tutoring or another assigned academic support in each failing subject and follow the improvement plan established by the coach, Athletic Director, teacher, or administrator.

Coaches and the Athletic Director will review grades at regular checkpoints, generally at least twice each month during the season. Failure to attend required support or make a reasonable academic effort may result in limited practice, game suspension, or removal from the team.

E. Daily Attendance and Participation

Student-athletes are expected to attend the full school day in order to practice or compete. Exceptions for an excused medical appointment, school-sponsored activity, family emergency, or other approved circumstance must be authorized by school administration.

An unexcused absence, skipping class, repeated tardiness, or leaving school without authorization may result in loss of participation for that day and additional team consequences.

Students must arrive on time for practices, meetings, transportation departures, and competitions.

3. Student-Athlete Conduct and Discipline

Athletes represent Richards Middle School during school, competition, travel, and online interaction

Student-athletes are expected to model exemplary behavior. Team membership may be limited, suspended, or ended when a student's conduct interferes with safety, learning, team operations, or the reputation of the school. Consequences will consider the seriousness, frequency, context, and impact of the behavior. Serious conduct may result in immediate removal without following every progressive step.

Concern	Examples	Possible Response
Minor concern	Teacher or coach concern that does not result in a formal referral; off-task behavior; minor disrespect; failure to follow a routine	Conference, correction, restitution, team service, or Discipline After Practice (DAP)
Repeated/chronic concern	A pattern of minor concerns, repeated late arrival, continued failure to follow directions, or repeated academic support noncompliance	Partial-game restriction, full-game suspension, behavior plan, or parent conference
Continued or serious concern	Ongoing misconduct after intervention; major disruption; conduct that threatens safety or seriously damages trust	Team suspension, dismissal, administrative referral, or other school/district consequence

Detention and School Discipline

Student-athletes may not skip detention, intervention, or another school-assigned consequence to attend a practice or game. Based on the level and frequency of the concern, the athletic response may include:

Level 1 response: Discipline After Practice (DAP) or another coach-directed corrective activity.

Level 2 response: Suspension from the first half or equivalent portion of the next competition.

Level 3 response: Suspension from the next competition.

Level 4 response: Team suspension or possible dismissal, with review by the head coach and Athletic Director.

ISS, OSS, and Major Referrals

A student assigned in-school suspension (ISS) or out-of-school suspension (OSS) may not practice or compete during the suspension period. Dress-code matters may be reviewed individually unless the conduct is repeated or disruptive.

After a first suspension offense, the student may receive a coach conference, parent contact, and corrective action before returning to full participation.

A second suspension offense may result in dismissal from the team. A third suspension offense will normally result in dismissal.

A Tier III suspension under the Richards Middle School discipline framework makes a student ineligible to try out or participate.

Multiple Level II incidents may also affect eligibility after administrative review.

Serious conduct—including fighting, threats, weapons, drugs or alcohol, bullying, harassment, hazing, theft, vandalism, or intentional safety violations—may result in immediate suspension or dismissal and will be addressed under school and district policy.

Digital Conduct and Locker-Room Privacy

Student-athletes must not use social media, group chats, text messages, or other digital tools to threaten, harass, embarrass, target, or demean teammates, coaches, opponents, officials, or school personnel.

Photography, audio recording, or video recording in locker rooms, changing areas, restrooms, or other private spaces is strictly prohibited.

Online conduct that disrupts school or team operations may result in athletic and school consequences.

Due Process and Review

Team dismissal decisions will be reviewed by the Athletic Director and, when appropriate, school administration. Families may request an explanation of the decision and the applicable policy; however, participation remains a privilege rather than a guaranteed right.

4. Health, Safety, and Medical Procedures

Student-athletes must report symptoms, injuries, and safety concerns immediately

Injuries and Return to Participation

Students must immediately report pain, injury, dizziness, breathing difficulty, chest discomfort, or other unusual symptoms to a coach or supervising adult.

A student who is injured or shows concerning symptoms may be removed from activity. Return to practice or competition may require written clearance under current MCSD procedures.

Families must promptly provide the school with updated medical information and emergency contact information.

Coaches and school employees do not diagnose injuries. Families should seek evaluation from a qualified healthcare professional when directed or when symptoms persist.

Concussion and Sudden Cardiac Concerns

Any student suspected of sustaining a concussion or experiencing a cardiac warning sign will be removed from activity and may not return until current district clearance requirements are satisfied.

Students and families must provide complete and accurate information on required awareness forms and follow all return-to-learn and return-to-play instructions.

Heat, Hydration, Weather, and Facilities

Coaches will follow current MCSD procedures for heat, lightning, severe weather, field conditions, hydration, and emergency response.

Student-athletes should bring a labeled, non-glass water bottle and should never share water bottles.

Practices, games, or travel may be delayed, relocated, shortened, or canceled when conditions are unsafe.

Medication and Medical Supports

All medication must be handled according to school and district medication procedures. Students may not share medication.

Families should communicate approved access needs for inhalers, EpiPens, diabetes supplies, or other emergency supports to the school nurse, coach, and Athletic Director before participation.

A current emergency action plan or medical plan should be provided when required.

Emotional and Psychological Safety

Coaches and teammates are expected to communicate respectfully. Bullying, humiliation, retaliation, hazing, and intimidation are not acceptable forms of motivation.

Students should report concerns to a coach, counselor, Athletic Director, assistant principal, or principal. Reports will be reviewed and addressed as promptly as possible.

Emergency Information

Families must ensure that the school has current phone numbers for parents/guardians and at least one additional emergency contact. In an emergency, school personnel may contact emergency medical services before a parent is reached.

5. Practices, Transportation, Equipment, and Pickup

Reliable routines protect students and help teams operate safely

Practice and Competition Attendance

Student-athletes are expected to attend all scheduled practices, meetings, and competitions unless excused by the head coach. Students or families should notify the coach as soon as possible when an absence or late arrival is unavoidable. Repeated unexcused absences or tardiness may affect playing time, team role, or continued membership. Students may not be dropped off before adult supervision begins or remain on campus after supervision ends.

Transportation

Student-athletes must follow all school bus, activity bus, and district transportation expectations. Unless an approved exception is granted, students are expected to travel with the team to and from away events when school transportation is provided. A parent or legal guardian who wishes to transport a student from an away event must follow the coach's sign-out procedure and any current MCSD written authorization requirements. Students may not leave an event with another adult unless the required authorization has been approved.

Uniforms, Equipment, and Facilities

Students are responsible for school-issued uniforms, equipment, and other materials. Items must be used properly, kept in reasonable condition, and returned by the announced deadline. Families may be responsible for the repair or replacement cost of lost, intentionally damaged, or unreturned property. Uniforms may not be permanently altered without coach approval. School-issued items may not be loaned to another person. Students should secure personal belongings and avoid bringing valuables. The school is not responsible for unsecured personal items. Locker rooms, fields, gyms, buses, and opposing facilities must be left clean and treated respectfully.

Pickup and Supervision

Families are responsible for knowing practice and game end times and arranging dependable transportation. Coaches will communicate schedule changes when possible. Repeated late pickup places students and staff in an unsafe and unreasonable situation.

Late-Pickup Pattern	School Response
First occurrence	Documented reminder to the family and review of the pickup expectation.
Second occurrence	Parent/guardian conference and written transportation plan.
Third occurrence	Possible temporary suspension from practice or competition.
Continued occurrences	Possible removal from the athletic program after review by the Athletic Director and administration.

Unexpected Delay

When an emergency delay occurs, the parent or guardian should contact the coach immediately and provide an updated arrival time and alternate pickup plan.

6. Family Communication and Spectator Expectations

Families are valued partners in supporting student growth and positive competition

The 24-Hour Communication Process

Emotions can be high immediately after a competition. Except for an urgent safety matter, families should wait approximately 24 hours before contacting a coach about a concern. Do not confront coaches, officials, students, or other families during or immediately after a game or practice.

Contact the head coach by email or phone and request an appropriate time to speak.

If the concern is not resolved, contact the Athletic Director.

If the concern remains unresolved, contact the supervising assistant principal and then the principal.

Appropriate Topics for a Coach Conference

A student's physical or emotional safety.

Team expectations, schedules, attendance, or communication procedures.

Ways the student can improve skills, effort, teamwork, conduct, or readiness.

Concerns about the student's academic or behavioral progress.

Clarification of a policy or consequence involving the student.

Topics That Will Not Be Discussed

Private information or consequences involving another student.

Demands for a specific position, starting role, or guaranteed playing time.

Requests to change strategy, play-calling, or another coach's professional decisions during a competition.

Comparisons intended to criticize another student-athlete.

Spectator Sportsmanship

Support all student-athletes and allow coaches to coach and officials to officiate.

Use respectful language and avoid taunting, threats, profanity, harassment, or disruptive behavior.

Remain in designated spectator areas and follow staff directions.

Do not enter the playing area, bench, locker room, or team meeting space without permission.

Follow all facility rules, ticket procedures, security requirements, and district expectations.

A parent or spectator who engages in threatening, disruptive, or unsportsmanlike conduct may receive a warning, be removed from the event, be restricted from future events, or be referred to district administration or law enforcement when appropriate. A family member's behavior will not automatically result in a student's removal from a team; any effect on the student-athlete will be determined individually, with consideration of safety, disruption, and current school or district policy.

Volunteering and Program Support

Families interested in supporting athletic events may contact Coach Joshua Browning at

Browning.Joshua@muscogee.k12.ga.us. Volunteers must follow all school and district approval, safety, and supervision requirements.

When students, families, coaches, and school personnel communicate respectfully and follow clear procedures, athletics can remain a positive extension of the school day.

7. Student-Athlete and Family Acknowledgment

Please return the signed acknowledgment to the head coach or Athletic Director

We acknowledge that we have received or accessed the Richards Middle School Student-Athlete & Family Handbook for the 2026-2027 school year. We understand that this handbook supplements current MCSD policies and that district policy governs when requirements differ.

By signing below, the student-athlete and parent/legal guardian acknowledge the following:

Athletic participation is a privilege, and team membership or playing time is not guaranteed.

The student must maintain required academic, attendance, behavior, and medical eligibility.

The student will follow coaching directions, safety procedures, school rules, team expectations, and sportsmanship standards.

The family will use the 24-hour communication process and will model respectful spectator behavior.

The family is responsible for timely transportation, required forms, announced fees, and the return of school-issued equipment.

The family will immediately report changes in medical information, emergency contacts, or other information that may affect safe participation.

Violations may result in corrective action, game suspension, team suspension, or dismissal, depending on the seriousness and frequency of the conduct.

Student-Athlete Name	
Grade	
Sport(s)	
Student Signature	
Date	
Parent/Guardian Name	
Parent/Guardian Signature	
Primary Phone Number	
Emergency Contact / Phone	

Optional Family Notes for the Coach

Families are encouraged to retain a copy of this handbook for reference throughout the athletic season.