

Model Athletic Handbook III

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Bishop Lloyd Middle School Athletic Handbook 2016–2017



Bishop Lloyd Middle School (BLMS) has been in existence for over 40 years. I transferred to BLMS in 2007 and immediately began embracing the athletic endeavors of the students. An athletic handbook had not been in existence at BLMS or the other two middle schools within Lloydminster Public School Division, E.S. Laird and College Park, since I moved to Lloydminster in 2005. BLMS offers Grade 7 to 9 students a wide spectrum of sports in which to participate throughout the school year. In the fall, the school offers volleyball, cross-country running, soccer, and golf. The winter months bring basketball and curling into the culture of the school and the spring season concludes with badminton, rugby, track and field,

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and golf again. Some teams are designed for top caliber athletes and those who take competition and the impact of sport seriously, and other teams are more for developmental purposes and give students a chance to be part of a team in a recreational setting. In this paper, I will explain the process used to develop the athletic handbook, motivating factors for the need of this document, and other athletic handbooks that served as guides and motivation when compiling the handbook for BLMS.

Extracurricular programs are necessary in the school and athletic culture within an educational institute. Participation in extracurriculars enhances students' athletic and academic endeavors while they are attending school. "Participation of both male and female high school students in competitive sport significantly contributes to a strengthening of personality traits . . . promotes the enhancement of self-efficacy, self-control and internal attribution style" (Shachaf & Katz, 2014, p. 41). BLMS students are often multisport athletes. Many students compete from the fall to the winter and conclude in the spring with their school sport. It may seem the athletics program at BLMS is running smoothly, but coaches and teachers face many challenges. A number of the student athletes in the school have chosen to be sport-specific athletes and only play one sport and train 10 to 12 months of the year for that sport. Getting those students to pick up a volleyball in the fall, try out for basketball in the spring, or give badminton a chance in the gym is difficult because they are more committed to their community sport groups. Hockey and football are competing factors in the fall and winter, and softball and baseball are the hurdles that teachers face in the spring. Students playing these community sports are paying massive fees to participate, and they are also doing off-season training in preparation for the season, which interferes with the opportunity to participate in other sports. According to Brent Sutter, owner of the Red Deer Rebels, a Western Hockey League junior ice hockey team,

It is so noticeable on a hockey team that the kids who have played other sports and experienced different things are always the smarter players on your team, and they are able to handle adversity better. They deal with adversity better because they are thrown into different environments and

they trust their skills that they may have learned elsewhere to get them through certain things. (Gregor, 2014, para. 8)

Hockey is only one sport, but Sutter's words encapsulate a number of educators' thoughts and opinions.

School Goals

The structure of the *BLMS Athletic Handbook* reflects the school goals for students, teachers, and parents. Parents are a vital cog in the athletic department at BLMS. The parents are supporting athletes during competitions, providing transportation to many students because of budgetary cuts, and supporting coaches in their decision-making process. Some parents do not support the decisions of the coaches, and protocols have been established at BLMS and other schools within Lloydminster Public School Division to handle these issues. Some coaches have started to have closed practices during which parents are not allowed in the gym until the conclusion of practice. Mandatory preseason meetings have been introduced with some teams to outline coaching philosophies, playing time, tournament and league play schedules, and budgetary constraints. Parents have also supported the teams by providing sponsorships for team uniforms or team clothing.

It is important for coaches to act as role models to the student athletes attending BLMS. The coaches are the leaders of their teams; it is important for them to exhibit positive behavior and maintain control when dealing with opposing teams, players, and officials while accentuating that the students are student athletes. Academics and being a student need to come first and this starts in the classroom. Staff members hold students accountable and make sure that athletes who are participating on school sports teams are in good academic standing with their respective teachers. There is also money available for coaching development for staff members in the school division, including BLMS. Last year, two coaches from another school completed their coaching certification courses for volleyball and have continued to take courses to improve their coaching abilities and learn new drills and techniques.

Seasons of Play

The *BLMS Athletic Handbook* also includes the seasons of play so that staff are aware of the time commitments necessary when signing up to coach a team. Within the seasons of play, coaches need to make sure students are on time for practices, conduct themselves in an appropriate manner while representing the school in competition in Lloydminster and surrounding areas, and adhere to team travel and team uniform protocols. Most coaches take attendance at practice and deal with absences and lates on an individual basis. Teams come up with individual rules if their team members are late for games, practices, or tournaments. These range from sitting out a quarter, to not dressing for the next game, to doing extra cardiovascular running at the beginning or end of practices.

Students are representing BLMS and the City of Lloydminster. It is imperative that they conduct themselves with class, dignity, and respect not only when dealing with opposing players, coaches, and officials, but also when visiting other schools. Teachers and coaches at BLMS expect student athletes to leave dressing rooms neat and tidy, to clean up classrooms, and to be gracious to tournament hosts, among other traits. Team travel includes riding the bus with the team and taking the bus home with the team, whether the team wins or loses.

Making sure athletes take care of their jerseys has been a problem at the school. Some players are respectful and hand in their jerseys promptly at the conclusion of a season's play. One observational change I hope to make within the athletic department at BLMS is implementing a physical education fee or athletic team fee. Right now, student athletes at the school do not pay a fee for either. Money garnered from fundraising ventures helps support the athletic programs, transportation costs, and officiating invoices that continue to rise because of a shortage of trained and carded officials in Lloydminster. By having a pool of funds available, the athletic department could pay for busing, transportation, or new jerseys from this newly created source of revenue instead of having to dip into fundraising dollars to offset costs.

Activities and Injuries

Injuries are another major part of any athletic program. The Lloydminster Public School Division's (2014) Administrative Procedure 214 (AP 214) outlines necessary precautions that students and staff should take when participating in various physical education activities and in competitive sports when representing their school at games and tournaments. It is important to highlight that the AP 214 does not go into significant detail breaking down each sport. It notes key sports that pertain to students in the division, risks involved in playing the sport or activity, and necessary precautions of which teachers need to be aware. The Chinook School Division (CSD) in southwest Saskatchewan has two physical education safety documents (see CSD, 2013a, 2013b) that I use frequently when the AP 214 does not answer specific sports-related questions that come up in day-to-day dealings with colleagues. There are many close correlations between the CSD documents and the AP 214. The most important part of the CSD (2013a) *Physical Education Safety Guidelines at a Glance* is the list of approved activities, not approved activities, and high-risk activities requiring board approval.

The CSD (2013b) lists for each activity recommendations for clothing and footwear. For example, for basic aquatic activities, this document lists simple points such as wearing suitable swimwear, not wearing jewelry, tying back hair, and wearing sunscreen when swimming outdoors. The CSD (2013b) also lists supervision rules such as a ratio of 1:25 for qualified instructors to students and suggests teaching skills in proper progression. Further, the CSD (2013b) recommends for which grade levels the activities are suitable. For example, archery is recommended for students in Grades 9 to 12. Within Lloydminster, a number of schools have purchased archery equipment for staff and students to use in elementary, middle, and high school settings. This documents recommends equipment and facility guidelines, including checking bows for proper security, using a properly installed safety net, and maintaining proper boundary lines around the shooting area. The CSD (2013b) also lists basketball among the many activities, recommending footwear and facility guidelines, such as having protective padding near walls and stages, wearing suitable footwear for indoor and outdoor game play, and locating the winch for raising and lowering backboards away from

the area of play. Further, the CSD (2013b) outlines that “only trained adults or students under supervision use motorized or hand winches to raise and lower baskets” (p. 3, Facilities column, para. 4).

Conclusion

I also used a number of athletic handbooks from throughout Alberta and Saskatchewan as references, when writing the BLMS handbook (see Ardrossan Jr/Sr High School, n.d.; Bert Church High School, n.d.; Campbell Collegiate, n.d.; Canmore Collegiate High School, n.d.; Catholic Central High School, n.d.; Lethbridge Collegiate Institute, n.d.; Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, n.d.; R.F. Staples Secondary School, n.d.; Sunwest School Division, n.d.). These handbooks describe vital components for the programming of a school or have affected the blueprint of the BLMS handbook.

BLMS presents a number of unique challenges that other schools have and do not have when it comes to their athletic programs. Not every athletic program is perfect and flaws exist within each program. The purpose of the athletic handbook is to give new teachers, experienced teachers, and administration the guidance and direction when questions come up from parents, colleagues, or school division personnel. BLMS operates as a small microcosm compared to much bigger facilities in Alberta and Saskatchewan. The framework of the handbook can be easily edited or replaced should a new athletic director take my place, and it can also be utilized with the other two middle schools. I have had a chance to scan over the athletic handbook for Lloydminster Comprehensive High School (LCHS). The handbook the high school uses is more thorough and comprehensive because LCHS has more sports, more coaches, and longer seasons of play in which the athletes have the opportunity to compete. The athletes at LCHS can advance to district, zone, and provincial playdowns for a number of sports, whereas the athletes at BLMS operate up to district play. The tournaments that LCHS athletes get invited to and attend are more prosperous and require more travel, more money for hotels and meals, and increased costs. It is hoped that the direction and planning put in place for the athletic handbook for BLMS coaches, athletes, and parents clear up any misconceptions about the teams and alleviate any stresses that teachers may have when offered the chance to lead one of the sports teams.

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