

COMPETE WITH CLASS

Curriculum for the New Mexico Activities Association's Sportsmanship Initiative

- **Mission:**

The New Mexico Activities Association's sportsmanship mission is: *"To develop champions for the future by utilizing athletics and activities to learn and practice the character traits necessary to live a positive, productive and caring lifestyle."*

- **Sportsmanship Defined:**

The NMAA defines sportsmanship as: *"The act of treating others in a respectful manner, taking personal responsibility for your actions and responding with integrity while engaged in competition."*

Fundamentals of Sportsmanship:

- Know the rules of the game and follow them.
- Recognize good play by both teams.
- Respect your opponents – coaches, players and spectators.
- Respect contest officials and their decisions.
- Represent yourself, your family, your school and your community in a positive manner.
- Take full accountability for your part in the sportsmanship process, based on the roles described in "stay in your lane."

- **"Compete with Class" Defined:**

"To compete in a manner where your attitudes, actions and reactions are synonymous with the ideals of good sportsmanship."

- **Core Values of "Compete with Class"**

Respect

- Respect means treating people the way you would like to be treated.
- A person who is respectful understands that his/her actions and behaviors affect those around them.
- Respect includes valuing your opponent's personal worth and not just viewing him/her as an adversary.
- A person who understands respect knows that everyone deserves respect.
- A person who understands respect knows that to earn respect one must give respect.
- "There is no degree or percentage to being respectful, either you are or you aren't!"

Integrity

- A person of integrity honors his/her word.
- A person of integrity is honest and truthful.
- A person of integrity has a highly developed conscience. He/she listens to it and lets it serve as a guide.
- Integrity is doing what is right even when no one is watching.
- A person of integrity knows there are no shortcuts to victory.

- People of integrity are whole and cannot be divided. They adhere to a strict ethical code and cannot be swayed.
- Integrity is measured by what you do, not by what you say.
- Integrity is doing the right thing, all of the time, regardless of the situation or the circumstances.

Responsibility

- A responsible person takes accountability for his/her actions.
- Responsible people take ownership of their mistakes.
- Responsible people are dependable, reliable and trustworthy.
- When given a task, a responsible person makes sure it gets done.
- A responsible person thinks before acting and possesses self-control.
- A responsible competitor understands that negative actions have consequences.
- Responsible competitors understand that they are role models and have a responsibility to represent themselves, their schools and communities in a positive manner.
- A responsible competitor learns to deal with adversity by controlling his/her response and focusing on the next play.

• **THE ROLE OF INDIVIDUALS IN “COMPETE WITH CLASS”**

“Stay In Your Lane” – To even begin to have an interscholastic competition there are roles that must be filled. Each role has a specific purpose. They start with the competitors and end with the fans; however there are a variety of roles in-between that are necessary for the existence of sports and competition. Without these specific roles interscholastic athletics and activities can’t exist and the values learned and the joy experienced through competition disappears. Take a look at the following roles crucial to the existence of competition:

- ❖ Competitors – Each competition begins and ends with those competing. An individual or team needs an opponent to compete against otherwise there can be no “competition.” Without the competitors there are no other roles.
- ❖ Officials – Competition must have an official to officiate each contest to ensure safe and fair play while ultimately verifying a winner.
- ❖ Coaches – Each team must have a coach who can teach the specific skills and techniques necessary to better prepare them for competition.
- ❖ Fans – Without fans there would be no one to acknowledge or appreciate a team’s ability and effort. They help inspire great competition through their support and applause of good play.

We each have a role but all too often in interscholastic athletics and activities people forget their roles and begin crossing over into roles either already occupied or roles that take away from the true value of interscholastic competition – to educate and prepare our youth for the future. Turn on the television and this crossover can be witnessed time and again during any number of professional sporting events; a player trash talking their opponent, a coach arguing with an official or a fan booing or heckling the opponent. This type of behavior is so prevalent in today’s sporting society that it filters down into the interscholastic arena. People forget to “stay in their lane” and remember that each competition is an educational opportunity, not an arena to vent their frustrations or ridicule and demean another player, person or coach.

“Stay in your Lane” is about understanding your role in interscholastic competition and doing your part to help make each competition a positive, educational and enjoyable experience.

Here is a look at some of the different roles people play in interscholastic competition and how you can help create a more positive competitive environment:

- **The New Mexico Activities Association (NMAA):**

Through the development of the “Compete with Class” program, the NMAA is providing a sportsmanship curriculum to all stakeholders in interscholastic athletics and activities in New Mexico. This curriculum provides information to school administrators, athletic directors, coaches, officials, spectators and participants about their roles and expectations in the interscholastic sport setting. The NMAA is committed to:

- ✓ Serving as the leader for the “Compete with Class” sportsmanship initiative and providing resources to all stakeholders of interscholastic athletics in New Mexico.
- ✓ Sponsoring educational workshops, seminars, conferences and publications designed to inform about the “Compete with Class” program and positively influence students, parents, educators, community members and contest officials.
- ✓ Engaging in constant communication with its constituency about the sportsmanship initiative.
- ✓ Providing first class state championships with “Compete with Class” as a guiding principle of state tournament events.

- **School Administration**

To cultivate a culture of good sportsmanship it is necessary that all executive school personnel take a leadership role in establishing and communicating its importance. They must be actively engaged in the movement and make it a priority in their school. Good sportsmanship starts at the top and the leadership they provide is reflected by their athletic directors, coaches, athletes, and spectators. Here are some guidelines to make “Compete with Class” a guiding principle in your school:

- ✓ Understand that good sportsmanship starts at the top. The principal has the ultimate responsibility to facilitate a culture of good sportsmanship.
- ✓ Explain what good sportsmanship is and provide expectations to all staff, students and faculty.
- ✓ Be actively engaged in the sportsmanship movement and be visible during athletic and activity contests and events.
- ✓ Recognize and honor exemplary behavior in your school and actively discourage undesirable conduct.
- ✓ Create policies and procedures with the goals of good sportsmanship in mind. Make sure these policies are enforced.
- ✓ Meet regularly with all personnel to discuss good sportsmanship and the expectations of the administration.

- **Athletic Directors/Coordinators**

The athletic director serves as the primary standard-bearer of the sportsmanship movement and is directly responsible for the conduct of coaches and fans. The athletic director sets the standard by which student-participants, coaches and fans will be measured. All individuals involved in a purposeful, educational contest should value and embody the ideals of good sportsmanship. The policies and procedures should reflect the goals established by the administration. The following are some guidelines to help create a tradition of good sportsmanship at your school and to make “Compete with Class” a priority:

- ✓ Understand that you are a leader for your school and community and that your behavior and the behavior of your coaches, fans and athletes is your responsibility.
- ✓ Implement a program for teaching and promoting “Compete with Class.” Let each group know your sportsmanship expectations; set the foundation.
- ✓ Meet regularly with personnel to discuss sportsmanship and behavior expectations.
- ✓ Create a monitoring process for each contest to ensure good sportsmanship is being displayed at your events.
- ✓ Provide your coaches, student-participants, parents, and fans with ample and appropriate sportsmanship educational opportunities.
- ✓ Make sure your coaches and student-participants are familiar with NMAA policies and procedures.
- ✓ Make use of promotional materials to further the message of good sportsmanship and to create a positive competition environment.
- ✓ Have someone greet and escort visiting teams and officials to their dressing rooms. Help create an accommodating environment that will leave a positive impression of your school.
- ✓ Provide appropriate supervisory personnel for each interscholastic event. Develop a crowd control plan for home and away games.
- ✓ Recognize exemplary behavior and actively discourage undesirable conduct by participants, coaches, and fans.
- ✓ Serve as a role model for your school.
- ✓ Ensure that game officials are treated with the utmost respect and hospitality.
- ✓ Provide a clean and hospitable competition environment.
- ✓ Be your school’s number one supporter. Sing the praises of positive behavior loudly and demand that negative behavior will not be tolerated, regardless of the situation or the circumstances.

- **Coaches**

Coaches are entrusted with our most precious commodity – our youth. They serve as not only coaches but teachers, mentors, role models, and sometimes substitute as parents. The impact a coach can have on a student is often greater than anything else that student will experience during their scholastic years.

Coaches should not forget the importance of their roles when guiding our youth. The values and behaviors a coach displays inherently trickle down to their team and their spectators. Coaches must understand that being a good example to participants and fans is a serious responsibility. They are a critical part of the educational process and while winning is important in the short-term, teaching the values of good sportsmanship and moral and ethical play lasts for a lifetime.

Coaches should understand what interscholastic athletics and activities are about – working with young people and instilling strong values through their leadership. The following are some guidelines to promote “Compete with Class” on your team:

- ✓ Set the example. Take responsibility for being a good role model and understand the seriousness of your role and the privilege it is to lead young people. Do not use profanity, obscene language, offensive gestures or improper actions that negatively incite your fans or your team.
- ✓ Refrain from utilizing intimidation tactics and instilling fear in your team as methods of motivating them.

- ✓ Discuss what respect is with your athletes. They should understand that disrespectful behavior such as trash talking, taunting or intimidation will not be tolerated.
- ✓ Refrain from arguing with officials. Respect the integrity and judgment of the official and realize they are also fallible.
- ✓ Display humility in victory and grace in defeat.
- ✓ Abide by the rules of the game and compete with integrity.
- ✓ Focus on leading your team in a positive manner, win or lose. Do not let outside factors interfere with that focus. Control what you can control.
- ✓ Teach sportsmanship and reward/acknowledge participants who display good sportsmanship. Reward effort and behavior, not outcome.
- ✓ Coach for the love of the game.
- ✓ Put the welfare of your team above winning.
- ✓ Lead with character and by example.

- **Student-Participants**

Student-participants are the integral part of competition. They are the reason for the contest. They spend all week training, practicing, balancing school work and other activities for the opportunity and privilege to compete. Their opponents have made the same sacrifice. Treating your opponent with respect, dignity and courtesy honors their commitment and sacrifice and reflects positively upon you, your teammates and your community. Competition is designed to bring out the best in you but you must have an opponent in order for this to happen.

A student-participant's focus should remain on competing with integrity and vigor, striving to perform at your best. The opportunity to compete is a chance to showcase your individual skills while seeking victory as a team. It is also an opportunity to learn to handle adversity and to respect an opponent for their individual skills and attributes.

It is important to understand and remember that it is a privilege to be able to compete and represent your school. Student-participants have an essential role in the development and maintenance of sportsmanship and a responsibility to represent themselves and their institutions in a positive light. Because of the admiration and respect communities have for student-participants, their behavior plays a significant role in the behavior of fans and spectators. They serve as role models for the community and are a key component to sportsmanship.

Below are some guidelines for participants to follow to help make "Compete with Class" a priority during any interscholastic competition:

- ✓ Take responsibility for being a good role model and understand the seriousness of your role and what a privilege it is to represent your school.
- ✓ Treat your opponents the way you would like to be treated. Treat them with respect and acknowledge their personal skills, attributes and worth.
- ✓ Respect the integrity and judgment of officials. Calls will not always go your way. Be prepared to deal with it and move on to the next play.
- ✓ Keep your composure and maintain self-control.
- ✓ Focus on competing at your best and within the rules of the game.
- ✓ Refrain from disrespectful behavior such as taunting, trash-talking, name-calling, or profane language.
- ✓ Win with humility and lose with grace.
- ✓ Show respect for public property and equipment.

- ✓ Play the game for fun.
- ✓ Put the team ahead of yourself in every situation.
- ✓ Demonstrate respect for your opponents, coaches, officials, spectators and teammates.
- ✓ Be accountable for your own actions.

- **Parents**

The role of the parent in education and interscholastic athletics and activities is an important one. Parents help set the foundation for good morals and ethical behavior and the support they provide at home is often evident in the opportunities their children pursue either in the classroom or in interscholastic competition.

However, sometimes parents lose perspective of their role and make it difficult for their child to enjoy the game. Parents have a substantial investment in the success of their child and often expect the investment to be rewarded by playing time, success on the field, state recognition, or scholarships. When parents do not see their investment paying off they can become frustrated, venting at their child, the coaches and the officials. This behavior embarrasses the child, distracts the participants and coaches, and takes attention away from the contest.

Some parents also have a tendency to attach their own self-worth to the success of their child. This loss of perspective puts undue pressure on the child. Instead of enjoying the game and competing at their best, they are more concerned with pleasing mom or dad and their own self-worth becomes defined by whether or not they are successful on the field.

Parents must remember that interscholastic athletics and activities are part of the educational learning process; they are an extension of the classroom. It is about having fun and learning. The values gained through interscholastic competition cannot be learned anywhere else and they will last your child a lifetime. If you as a parent are looking for a return on your investment, try measuring your return by whether or not your child is having fun, is developing life skills and is learning the value of sportsmanship. Interscholastic athletics and activities are about your child, not you.

Here are a few guidelines to help parents keep perspective of their role in “Compete with Class” and to be a more supportive parent and fan:

- ✓ Remember the purpose and value of interscholastic, education-based athletics and activities.
- ✓ Emphasize effort and learning over winning and losing.
- ✓ Learn, understand, and respect the rules of the game as well as the officials who administer them.
- ✓ Refrain from venting at contest officials. Respect their judgment and integrity.
- ✓ Support and encourage your child, win or lose.
- ✓ Respect the role of the coach and their decision making. Refrain from coaching from the stands.
- ✓ Realize that athletics are part of the educational experience, and the benefits of involvement go beyond the final score of a game.
- ✓ Encourage students to perform their best, just as we would urge them on with their classwork.
- ✓ Participate in positive cheers that encourage our student-participants and discourage any cheers that would redirect that focus – including those that taunt and intimidate opponents, their fans and officials.

- ✓ Respect opponents and acknowledge them for striving to do their best. View opponents as friends involved in the same experience. Develop a sense of dignity and civility under all circumstances.
- ✓ Be a model, not a critic; model appropriate behavior, poise and confidence.
- ✓ Attend pre-season parent-team meetings.
- ✓ Do everything you can to make interscholastic competition positive for your child and others.
- ✓ View the game with team goals in mind.
- ✓ Attempt to relieve competitive pressure, not increase it.
- ✓ You will not always win. Accept losses and do not make excuses.
- ✓ Demonstrate winning and losing with dignity.
- ✓ Encourage your child to keep their perspective in both victory and defeat.
- ✓ Accept the goals, roles and achievements of your son/daughter.

- **Fans**

The role of the fan during interscholastic competition has evolved over time into something that more closely resembles a collegiate or professional sporting event with fans feeling entitled to “boo” and ridicule opposing players, heckle opposing coaches and harass game officials. The prevalence of this behavior at the collegiate and professional levels, where winning takes precedence, has spilled over into the interscholastic arena where education and the student-participant is priority number one. Spectators need to understand that this type of behavior is extremely hurtful and should not be displayed in education-based athletics or activities.

High school athletics and activities were not developed to provide fans with a sounding board to vent frustrations and harass opposing players, coaches, fans or officials. Admission to an interscholastic contest offers spectators only the opportunity to view and root on the best high school competitors New Mexico has to offer. It takes an incredible amount of courage for each student-participant to suit up and put their best on the line with the realization that they will make mistakes that will be seen by an entire stadium or gymnasium. To compound that mistake with jeering does nothing to add to the educational experience that high school athletics and activities are supposed to offer.

To ensure that interscholastic competition continues to be a valuable and enjoyable learning experience for student-participants, fans need to realize the necessity for good sporting behavior in addition to the need to think before acting and the need to control their emotions. Fans need to remember the purpose of interscholastic competition and to help perpetuate a positive environment conducive to good sportsmanship. Here are some tips to protect participants and better enable fans to enjoy the contest under “Compete with Class:”

- ✓ Acknowledge good play regardless of team.
- ✓ Refrain from “booing” or heckling players, coaches, fans, or officials.
- ✓ Avoid criticism of coaches, officials and players.
- ✓ Focus on supporting your team’s coaches and players.
- ✓ Know the rules of the game so that you better understand why certain situations take place.
- ✓ Respect and obey facility supervisors who are responsible for maintaining order.
- ✓ Respect the integrity and judgment of game officials.
- ✓ Treat individuals the way you would like to be treated. Remember to put yourself in the other person’s shoes before acting.
- ✓ Take part in cheers with the cheerleaders and applaud good performance.

- ✓ Avoid sideline coaching which may sidetrack participants from their performance.
- ✓ Refrain from foul language or obscene gestures.
- ✓ Stay off the playing area at all times.
- ✓ Show respect for public property.

- **Officials**

Serving as a contest official in an interscholastic setting means that you are part of the educational process for the participants, the schools and the communities you serve. You have the responsibility of enforcing and applying rules in a fair and equitable manner. While a contest cannot exist without you, the contest is not about you. You are there to provide an equal playing field for kids to play the games they love.

Working as an official is a difficult task. You are expected to be perfect when you get to the game and to improve as the game goes on. Great calls are unnoticed and perceived “bad calls” are jeered. Officials must have thick skin and must not have “rabbit ears” when working contests. You, as an official, will make mistakes. No one has ever officiated a perfect game, just as no player has played a perfect game and no coach has coached a perfect game. You are human. If you miss a call, it is okay to admit it to a coach, especially in the interscholastic setting. The key is to keep officiating the game and to turn the page when you do make a mistake.

Serve as a role model to the student-participants, the coaches and the spectators. You are the only neutral party in the gym or on the field and your behavior and demeanor must reflect that. When everyone else is emotional about a play or a call, you must remain calm. You must be a “diffuser” rather than an “inciter.” Communicate with student-athletes and coaches in a positive way and explain calls to them if they ask questions. This is education-based competition and you are an educator. Here are some key responsibilities that you have as an official in “Compete with Class:”

- ✓ Accept your role in an unassuming manner.
- ✓ Maintain confidence and poise by controlling the contest from start to finish.
- ✓ Recognize the difference between being confident and being arrogant and avoid crossing the fine line that exists between the two. Remember that YOU are not the show.
- ✓ Communicate positively with coaches and players. Questions require a response when asked in a respectful manner.
- ✓ Do not display inappropriate gestures or negative body language; do not use obscenities.
- ✓ Know the rules, apply them equitably at all times and keep the game moving.
- ✓ Make sure to present yourself professionally – your appearance (uniform, physical fitness), your deportment and your attitude must be a positive reflection of you and your association.
- ✓ Continuously strive to master your craft through rulebook review, film review, attendance at clinics and camps and participation in local group meetings.
- ✓ Always work hard and hustle. Treat every game, every participant and every coach with an equal amount of respect. Remember that the game that night is the most important game you have.
- ✓ Don't worry about the games that other officials have. Only worry about your schedule and give every game 100% focus and effort. The kids deserve it.

- ✓ Respect and be loyal to your group leader, assignor and state association. Follow the chain of command if you are aggrieved and seek resolution through the proper channels.
- ✓ Publicly shake hands with coaches of both teams before the contest.
- ✓ Never show emotions or argue with a player, coach, or fan.
- ✓ When watching a game as a spectator, give the officials the same respect you expect to receive when working a contest.