

# **John Stark Fall Sports Handbook**

**A plan to ensure a safe and successful fall sports season.**

## **Mission Statement**

**The purpose of this document is to ensure that Fall Sports can take place here at John Stark successfully and safely for all stakeholders. This includes the entire school community and the residence of Weare and Henniker. Failure by even one person to follow the procedures and protocols in this document could lead to the termination of the fall season and jeopardize the winter and spring season as well. Everyone's cooperation is expected and appreciated.**

## **Mask/Face Covering**

Student- Athletes are expected to wear a mask or face covering anytime they are not involved in physical activity during practices and games. This would include the following:

- In the locker room getting ready for practice or games
- When waiting to be screened before going to practices or contests on school grounds. This especially includes those students who are in school that day and need to wait on school grounds for the start of their practice or competition.
- Upon arriving at school, once a student-athlete leave their vehicle
- During water or rest breaks during practice
- Anytime activity in practice stops so coaches can give instructions to a large group of athletes or the whole team
- When on the sidelines during games. Once an athlete comes off the field during a contest they will be given the opportunity to catch their breath and get a drink of water while socially distant from everyone else before putting on their mask/face covering

If a student fails to wear his/her mask/face covering as required, they will be warned once. After that, a suspension from the athletic program could be enforced up to the 14 day normal quarantine period.

The athletic department will provide gaiters to any athlete that would like to have one to make it easy to put on and take off their face covering. We hope they will arrive prior to the first week of games.

Coaches are required to wear mask/face coverings from the moment they enter campus for their athletic responsibilities until they leave campus except for the following times:

- During practices when they are running drills and activities where proper social distance is possible
- During contests when social distance to all athletes is possible

Mask/face coverings will be worn when addressing a large group of athletes or the whole team even if social distance is possible. Mask/face coverings will also be worn anytime there is a break in practice for rest, water or any other activities where physical activity stops.

### **Social Distance**

Athletes must utilize proper social distance whenever possible while on campus or attending an away contest. This requirement especially must be strictly followed while in the locker room and waiting on school grounds for the required COVID Screening before practices, contests and boarding buses. Social distance guidelines also must be followed at practices and games when students are not taking part in activities directed by coaches. This includes getting ready for practice, water and rest breaks and after practices or contests have ended.

For teams practicing outside, many of our fields will have dots on the sideline 6 feet apart for athletes to use for placing their bags, water bottles and personal items. In the absence of dots, any items an athlete brings to practice must be 6 feet apart from those of their teammates.

No hugging, high-fiving, shaking hands or fist bumping allowed

If a student fails to adhere to proper social distance as required, they will be warned once. After that, a suspension from the athletic program could be enforced up to the 14 day normal quarantine period.

### **Locker Rooms**

Locker Rooms at John Stark can only be used by students who attend in-person classes. Students that are working remotely must come to school dressed for practices or contests. Students that are in school will need to change immediately after the school day even if their practice is later in the afternoon. There is a 10 person limit in the locker room. If an athlete enters the locker room and finds 10 people already in there, he/she needs to wait out in the hallway until someone comes out.

Nothing including bookbags or equipment bags may be left overnight in the locker room. Any items left may be discarded by the night time cleaning crew. Gym lockers will not be assigned to student-athletes.

Teams that practice outside will need to use the port-a-potties and will not be allowed to enter the building for any reason once they arrive on campus or leave the school building at the end of the day. If an emergency occurs that requires an athlete to enter the school building after the end of the school day, it must be cleared by the athletic director or the athletic trainer if he can't be reached by a coach.

## **Waiting for Practices and Contests after School**

While it is not ideal to have athletes waiting on campus after school for the start of practices or contests, it is understandable that some athletes will need to stay as transportation back to school is not possible. There will be one location that athletes may wait on school property for the start of practices and contests. Athletes will wait in the back area of the school between the building and the driveway that goes past the gate leading to the soccer field. There will be dots painted on the asphalt for athletes to stand/or sit on to ensure social distance. As stated before, mask/face coverings will be required as well.

**Student-athletes may not wait inside the school building for practices and games unless inclement weather requires the athletic department to secure a location to wait.**

## **COVID Screening**

Before an athlete can attend practices, contests or board a bus to travel to an away contest, they must be screened by someone from the athletic department. This screening will include a temperature check.

Coaches will need to be screened as well by the Athletic Director or Athletic Trainer prior to practices, contests or boarding of the bus. In their absence, coaches must conduct their own screening including a temperature check

If there are any health concerns that occur during the screening process, the athlete will be immediately sent home. Parents will be notified as well as the school administration and health office.

For athletes that have home contests, screenings will be done right after school. For weekend contests a screening time will be determined, and athletes will be informed the day before by coaches.

For athletes that have practices, they will not be screened until 15 minutes prior to the start of their practice.

During school days both remote and hybrid days screening will be done for all athletes by the gate leading up to the soccer field.

On weekends, coaches will inform athletes where to go to have their screening done.

Athletes may not enter the gym or go to the practice or game fields until they have been screened. If a student arrives late to practice or a contest and there's nobody at the screening location, they may proceed to the practice or game location but must keep at least 15 feet away from everyone until someone can conduct a screening.

## Hand Sanitizing

Frequent Hand Sanitizing is an important tool to prevent the spread of COVID 19 as well as other common viruses. So we will be requiring athletes to use hand sanitizer during the following times:

- After their COVID screening before practices, contests and boarding a bus
- During water or rest breaks during practice
- After a drill or activity which requires athletes to share equipment such as balls or tackling dummies. For activities involving the sharing of balls, if the ball does not touch hands, arms or heads then hand sanitizing will not be required. Also if the shared ball only makes contact with the hand or arm for under a second such as setting, bumping or serving hand sanitizer is not required.
- Before leaving practice, contest or boarding a bus to return to school
- Departing the bus when arriving back to John Stark

## Transportation

**To practices or home contests:** While it would be preferred that transportation to athletic events involves only family members, we understand that when students are home due to remote learning it may be a challenge for some to get to John Stark. So we will allow non-family members to transport student-athletes to John Stark for athletic events. But to ensure our ability to perform contact tracing if needed, parents must pre-register their student for non-family transportation at the following Google sheet:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Qjmv0OQWtzKF1ePnzZ4MqUTMATxagsqotgcqT8bhIDA/edit?usp=sharing>

If any athlete arrives on campus via transportation from a non-family member that has not pre-registered, they will be sent home; and if the driver or any other passenger in that vehicle is a student-athlete, they will be sent home as well.

In addition, we ask that everyone in the vehicle wears a mask when transportation by non-family members is necessary.

**To away contests:** While we strongly prefer all athletes to ride the bus to away contests, parents may contact the athletic director at least one day in advance to request to transport their child to an away contest. That request can be made by emailing him at [mark.searles@sau24.org](mailto:mark.searles@sau24.org).

We will not allow non-family members to transport an athlete to an away contest. Also student-athletes may not drive themselves to away contests.

If a parent transports their child to an away contest, the student-athlete will still need to be screened prior to joining his/her teams at the contest location. There are two options to accomplish the required screening.

1. Drive to John Stark at the time the bus is scheduled to depart for the contest.
2. Upon arriving at the away location, the student-athlete will need to remain in the vehicle until the bus arrives, then they will need to see the coach so they can perform the required screening.

Please inform the athletic director which option you plan on doing when you request to transport your child.

**After Away Contests:** We are only allowing parents to take their child home after an away contest. Parents will need to sign out their child with the coach after the game, as is our normal procedure.

Other family members or parents of other athletes will not be approved to transport your child after the contest.

### **Bus Transportation**

There will be assigned seating on the bus for all athletic trips. Coaches will provide a seating chart to the athletic director. The seating chart will not change unless an athlete is added to the roster after the initial seating chart is developed. There will be one student per seat. All coaches and athletes must wear a mask/face covering while on the bus. There will be no eating on the bus at any time.

### **Hydration**

Athletes are required to have their own water bottle as well as extra water in order to refill their bottle. There will be no containers or hoses to refill water bottles at any venue, home or away. It is suggested that athletes bring a gallon jug of water with them to refill their water bottle. Water bottles must be labeled with the athlete's name. There will be no sharing of water bottles under any circumstances. The school can provide a water bottle to any athlete. They can connect with the athletic director to get one.

### **After Practices and Home Contests**

It is expected that immediately after practices and home contests athletes leave school grounds. There is to be no hangout at the field, gym or parking lot. Also, students may not enter the school building. Students waiting for rides should make sure they are keeping social distance from others waiting for rides.

## **Capital Area Cohort Agreement**

Several schools in the capital area have teamed in many of the fall sports to come up with a schedule to minimize travel and limit the number of schools we compete against. In addition, we agreed to some guidelines and protocols that all schools in the group agreed to follow. Here are those guideline and protocols:

1. Schools will be responsible for screening their own teams prior to arriving at the “home” school. (State / NHIAA / Away team school district protocols).
2. As schools depart the bus at the home school fields, the athletes and coaches will have face coverings on.
3. All athletes and coaches will wear face coverings during “warm ups.”
4. All athletes that are on the “sideline” (not in the game/contest) will adhere to 6 foot spacing and wear face coverings
5. Teams will have athletes only use individual water bottles (no team water jugs).
6. There will be no team benches (the only bench allowed will be for AT off to the side of play).
7. Teams will come ready to play (example: taped at their own school). AT will address any injuries for both teams during the contest.
8. No “handshakes” before or after the contest. No “loitering” or mixing of teams at the conclusion of the game.
9. No overtimes will be played.
10. No scrimmages
11. All spectators must wear a mask (Governors orders: Any gathering over 100 must wear a mask).
12. Since Hopkinton is requiring all of their athletes to wear a mask or face covering even when playing games, our schools will also wear a mask when playing Hopkinton.

### **Athletes’ personal Hygiene, Clothing and Equipment**

It is suggested that all athletes take a shower immediately upon arriving home after a practice or contest. We also ask that parents disinfect their child’s personal equipment, practice clothing and uniforms after every use.

### **Typical Mouth Based Activities and Mouthguards**

Athletes are not allowed to spit, chew gum or chew and spit sunflower seeds.

The NHIAA has suspended the mouthguard requirement for soccer. But mouthguards will still be required for field hockey and football. We ask that athletes refrain from taking their mouthguard in and out of their mouths. For football, we are requiring all players to utilize a mouthguard strapped to their helmet.

## **Athletic Training Services**

If an athlete needs to see the athletic trainer before practices or contest, the procedure is as follows:

- For home contests and practices- any athlete who has in-person classes that day can go to the athletic trainer's office right after school. All other athletes must wait until the athletic trainer comes outside to get treatment. Volleyball players who had remote learning may go see the trainer after completing the required COVID screening if the trainer has not come outside before the start of their practice.
- For away contests- all athletes that need to see the athletic trainer may go to the athletic trainer's office. Those that had remote learning that day must do the COVID screening prior to entering the school building. They may only enter the school building from the back door near the gym and bus pickup location.

Athletes that are allowed to go to the athletic trainer's office are to wait outside the hallway near her office with proper social distance and wearing a mask or face covering until she is ready to see you.

## **Team Pictures**

We will still have Geskus Photography coming in to do team pictures. But it will be a little different this year. They will be taking individual pictures of all athletes and then make a virtual team photo putting all the individual pictures on a background. They will still have packages that can be purchased. The packet envelopes will be given to student-athletes when they arrive at school. The company will be here on September 15 and 16 to take the individual photos.

## **Parent-Athlete Meeting**

We will not hold the typical Fall Parent-Athlete meeting this year. The athletic director will post a video sometime during the first week of the season that will provide important information for parents. Coaches will pick a date to have either an in-person or zoom meeting with all parents. Parents are expected to attend.

## **Spectators**

We are limiting the number of spectators that can attend our home games. The policy approved by the school board says each athlete is allowed two family members from their household to attend home contests. Parents may bring school age children beyond the 2 person limit that need to attend for child care reasons. But children must be directly supervised and remain with their parent at all times. In the case with a split household both parents and a second household member may attend.

Mask and social distance between family groups are required.

For soccer and field hockey games there will be no bleachers available.

In cases where a JV game follows a varsity game we ask that JV parents not come up to the field until the varsity game is over and that varsity parents leave the field area immediately after their game. For our home volleyball games, varsity parents will not be allowed in the gym until after the JV parents have left the bleachers so we are asking JV parents to leave the gym immediately after their game ends.

For the contest when our seniors are being honored, the number of family members for the senior athletes that can attend that game will be increased to 6.