



VARSITY ESPORTS

STUDENT-ATHLETE HANDBOOK

& PARTICIPATION POLICY

MIDDLE SCHOOL + HIGH SCHOOL | 2026-
2027 SCHOOL YEAR

EDUCATION FIRST.

Compete with integrity. Represent your school well.

APPLIES TO All students participating in Activate Varsity Esports League	POLICY OWNER Activate CTE / Activate Varsity Esports League
REVIEW CYCLE Annually, before each school year	CORE PRINCIPLE Education first. Compete with integrity. Represent your school well.

Participation in Activate Varsity Esports is a privilege and carries the same expectations of academics, sportsmanship, integrity, and school representation associated with varsity athletics.

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01

CHAPTER

Start Here

Purpose, governing standards, and how League rules work with school requirements.

IN THIS CHAPTER

1. Purpose

2. Governing Standards

1. Purpose

The Activate Varsity Esports League ("Activate Varsity Esports" or "the League") provides students with a structured, educational, competitive esports experience designed to reflect the standards expected of traditional high-school athletics.

Participation is a privilege, not a right. Students participating in the League are treated as student-athletes and are expected to demonstrate:

- Academic responsibility
- Regular school attendance
- Sportsmanship and integrity
- Teamwork and respect
- Digital citizenship
- Competitive fairness
- Appropriate behavior at school and online
- Responsible representation of their school and the League

The League applies North Carolina interscholastic-athletics principles to esports competition while recognizing that individual schools and their applicable administering organizations remain responsible for formal student eligibility determinations.

2. Governing Standards

Activate Varsity Esports will operate in accordance with applicable North Carolina requirements and the policies of each participating school. When requirements differ, the stricter applicable requirement controls.

1. North Carolina State Board of Education rules governing interscholastic athletics;
2. North Carolina Department of Public Instruction guidance;
3. Rules applicable to the student's Public School Unit (PSU), charter school, or other participating school;
4. Local board of education and individual school policies;
5. Applicable requirements of the school's administering organization, when relevant;
6. The school's student code of conduct;
7. This Student-Athlete Handbook;
8. Activate Varsity Esports game-specific competition rules; and
9. The official rules and terms of the game title or competition platform.

Participating schools are responsible for determining and certifying student eligibility. Activate Varsity Esports may rely on a school's certification and should not require transcripts, detailed attendance records, or other protected educational records unless necessary and properly authorized.

02

CHAPTER

Eligibility & School Participation

Enrollment, academics, attendance, age limits, residency, and transfer requirements.

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5. School-Day Attendance and Match-Day Participation	6. Age and Semester Limitations
7. Residency, Assignment, and Transfer Students	

3. Student-Athlete Eligibility

A student must be certified as eligible by the participating school before representing the school in an official Activate Varsity Esports contest or being placed on an active competition roster.

3.1 Enrollment

- Be properly enrolled in, assigned to, or otherwise legally eligible to represent the school;
- Meet applicable North Carolina enrollment, residency, assignment, transfer, and participation requirements;
- Meet any additional eligibility rules established by the school or district; and
- Be listed on the school's certified Activate Varsity Esports roster.

A student may not represent a school solely because the student lives nearby, previously attended the school, has friends on the team, or participates in another activity at the school. Home school, transfer, early college, charter, virtual, and other nontraditional students may participate only when permitted under applicable rules and school policy.

4. Academic Eligibility

ACADEMICS COME FIRST: A student must remain in good academic standing under the eligibility standards applied by the student's school.

4.1 Attendance Requirement

Unless an applicable rule provides otherwise, the student must have attended at least 85% of the total instructional days in the PSU during the previous semester, calculated under applicable North Carolina and local attendance rules.

4.2 Course-Passing Requirement

Unless an applicable rule provides otherwise, the student must have passed at least 70% of the courses taken during the preceding semester.

4.3 Progress Toward Promotion or Graduation

The student must be making satisfactory progress toward promotion to the next grade level or graduation, as determined by the school under applicable requirements.

4.4 First-Semester Ninth Grade Students

Students entering Grade 9 who were properly promoted from Grade 8 will be evaluated under the applicable North Carolina eligibility rules for first-semester ninth-grade students.

4.5 Loss of Academic Eligibility

If the school determines that a student is academically ineligible, the student may not participate in official League competition until the school certifies that eligibility has been restored. Schools may establish academic requirements that are higher than the state minimum and are encouraged to conduct regular progress checks during the season.

5. School-Day Attendance and Match-Day Participation

Each participating school may establish daily attendance requirements for practices and competitions. Unless the school authorizes otherwise, students are expected to attend school on the day of competition.

A student who is suspended from school, serving an out-of-school disciplinary consequence, absent in violation of school attendance policy, or otherwise prohibited from extracurricular participation may not participate during the applicable period of restriction. The school administrator has final authority regarding whether a student may represent the school on a particular day.

6. Age and Semester Limitations

- A high-school student may participate for no more than eight consecutive semesters beginning with the student's initial entry into Grade 9, unless an applicable exception or waiver applies.
- A student who becomes 19 years old on or before August 31 of the applicable school year is not eligible to participate on a high-school team under the general state athletic eligibility rule, unless an applicable waiver or exception has been formally approved.

The participating school is responsible for verifying compliance with these requirements.

7. Residency, Assignment, and Transfer Students

Students must satisfy applicable North Carolina residency, school-assignment, enrollment, and transfer requirements before participating. Transfer students may be subject to additional restrictions.

Activate Varsity Esports does not independently approve transfer eligibility. The participating school must certify eligibility before the student competes.

No student, coach, school representative, League employee, or person acting on behalf of a team may use esports participation to improperly recruit, pressure, induce, or influence a student to transfer schools.

03

CHAPTER

Health, Team Culture & Conduct

Wellness, rosters, conduct, sportsmanship, harassment, digital citizenship, and profiles.

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8. Esports Health and Wellness

Esports competition should promote healthy, sustainable participation. The following are League wellness expectations and are not medical eligibility requirements.

8.1 Breaks and Screen Use

Students should take reasonable breaks from continuous screen use during long practices, tournaments, and competition sessions.

8.2 Ergonomics

Students should use appropriate seating, desk height, monitor placement, keyboard and mouse positioning, controller positioning, and posture.

8.3 Hearing Safety

Headset volume should be kept at a reasonable and safe level.

8.4 Hydration, Nutrition, and Sleep

Students should maintain appropriate hydration and nutrition during extended competition days. Coaches may not require practice schedules that unreasonably interfere with school attendance, academic performance, or adequate sleep.

8.5 Reporting Discomfort

Students experiencing persistent hand, wrist, neck, back, hearing, vision, headache, or other discomfort associated with participation should inform a parent/guardian, coach, or appropriate school official.

9. Team Membership and Rosters

Only students appearing on an approved school roster may participate in official League competition. Students may not:

- Compete under another student's name;
- Allow another individual to use their League identity;

- Substitute for another player without authorization;
- Participate for multiple schools during the same League season unless specifically authorized;
- Falsify enrollment or eligibility information; or
- Conceal information that could affect eligibility.

Schools must notify the League of roster changes through the designated League process.

10. Student-Athlete Code of Conduct

Every Activate Varsity Esports student-athlete represents the student's school, teammates, coaches, family, community, and the League. Students shall:

- Treat teammates, opponents, coaches, officials, administrators, and spectators with respect;
- Follow reasonable instructions from coaches and League officials;
- Compete honestly;
- Accept wins and losses appropriately;
- Demonstrate self-control;
- Avoid disruptive or abusive behavior;
- Respect competition rulings;
- Protect school and League equipment;
- Follow the school's student code of conduct; and
- Demonstrate responsible digital citizenship.

Conduct that would be unacceptable in a school gymnasium, athletic field, classroom, or school-sponsored event is also unacceptable in an esports lobby, voice channel, text chat, team server, livestream, or other digital environment.

11. Sportsmanship

**Humble in victory. Respectful in defeat.
Competitive during play. Professional after play.**

Prohibited unsportsmanlike conduct includes excessive taunting, insulting opponents, rage behavior, threats, harassment, intentionally humiliating another player, abusive voice or text chat, refusing required post-match procedures, deliberately delaying competition, repeated disruptive behavior, disrespect toward officials or coaches, throwing or damaging equipment, or encouraging others to harass another student or team.

Friendly competitive communication may be permitted when appropriate, but harassment and degrading behavior are never acceptable competitive banter.

12. Harassment, Bullying, and Discrimination

Activate Varsity Esports does not permit harassment, bullying, hazing, discriminatory conduct, or targeted abuse. Students may not direct degrading, threatening, or harassing communications toward another person based on a protected status under applicable law or school policy.

This standard applies to in-game communications, voice chat, text chat, social media, livestream chats, direct messages, team servers, school networks, League platforms, and in-person interactions. Students should report serious harassment, threats, discrimination, or safety concerns to a coach or school administrator promptly.

13. Digital Citizenship

Esports student-athletes are expected to demonstrate the same standards of citizenship online that are expected at school. Students may not use League-related digital spaces to cyberbully, harass, threaten, dox, impersonate another person, share inappropriate content, spread intentionally harmful rumors, circumvent school technology protections, access unauthorized systems, or encourage illegal activity.

Students should assume that anything communicated during competition may become public.

14. Usernames, Gamertags, Avatars, and Profiles

Any account used for League competition must be school-appropriate. Usernames, gamertags, team names, avatars, profile images, banners, and other visible account information may not contain profanity, sexual content, drug/alcohol/tobacco references, hate speech, discriminatory language, threats, gang references, harassment, obscene imagery, or other content prohibited by the student's school.

League officials may require a student to change an inappropriate identifier before participating.

04

CHAPTER

Competitive Integrity & Match Participation

Cheating, communication, account security, equipment, practice, and match-day expectations.

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15. Competitive Integrity

Competitive integrity is fundamental to varsity esports. Students must compete using only authorized game clients, hardware, software, accounts, settings, and peripherals.

15.1 Cheating

Cheating is prohibited, including aimbots, wallhacks, unauthorized macros or scripts, automation tools, unauthorized overlays, modified game clients, exploits used to gain an unfair advantage, unauthorized third-party software, stream sniping, ghosting, prohibited outside information, or any other method designed to create an unfair advantage.

15.2 Account Sharing and Alternate Accounts

A student may not allow another person to compete using the student's account. Students may not use alternate accounts to misrepresent identity, ranking, eligibility, or competitive ability when prohibited by League or game rules.

15.3 Unauthorized Substitutions

Only approved rostered substitutes may enter a competition.

15.4 Exploits and Bugs

A student who discovers a game-breaking exploit, bug, or unintended mechanic that could create an unfair advantage must report it to the coach or League official. Knowingly abusing a significant exploit may be treated as cheating even when the game client technically allows the action.

16. Match Communication

Students must use approved communication channels during official competition. When League rules restrict communication, students may not receive competitive information from spectators, friends, other students, livestream viewers, coaches when coach communication is prohibited, or other outside sources. Teams may be required to enter League-monitored communication channels during official matches.

17. Game Accounts and Account Security

- Use secure passwords;

- Enable multi-factor authentication when available;
- Never share passwords;
- Protect recovery information;
- Report suspected account compromise promptly; and
- Follow school technology security requirements.

Students may not attempt to access another player's account. Account theft, credential theft, phishing, hacking, or unauthorized access may result in immediate suspension from League activities and referral to school administration.

18. Equipment and Facilities

Students must properly use and care for school, League, and venue equipment. Students may not intentionally damage computers, consoles, monitors, controllers, keyboards, mice, headsets, networking equipment, furniture, or other technology.

Food and beverages must comply with local facility rules. Students may not modify, disconnect, relocate, or install hardware or software without authorization. Students may be held responsible under school policy for intentional or reckless damage.

19. Practice Expectations

Student-athletes are expected to attend scheduled practices, team meetings, competitions, and required League activities. Coaches should recognize the following order of priority:

1. Student health and safety
2. Academics
3. Family and school responsibilities
4. Esports participation

Practice expectations must not encourage students to skip class, ignore academic responsibilities, or participate during inappropriate late-night hours. Schools may establish additional attendance requirements for maintaining a starting or roster position.

20. Match-Day Expectations

1. Report at the time established by the coach;
2. Be prepared with required equipment and accounts;
3. Complete required game and software updates before competition when possible;
4. Follow uniform or dress requirements established by the school or League;
5. Enter the correct competition lobby;
6. Use only approved accounts;
7. Follow League administrator instructions;
8. Remain professional throughout competition;
9. Complete required score-reporting or verification procedures; and
10. Remain with the team until dismissed by the coach.

05

CHAPTER

Discipline, Integrity & Public Conduct

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21. School Discipline

Students remain subject to their school's student code of conduct while participating in Activate Varsity Esports. School disciplinary action may affect esports participation.

A student receiving an out-of-school suspension, expulsion, athletic or extracurricular suspension, or another disciplinary restriction may be declared unavailable or ineligible for League participation for the applicable period. Schools may impose additional consequences beyond League penalties.

22. Criminal Conduct and State Eligibility

Students must comply with applicable North Carolina eligibility requirements concerning criminal conduct or convictions that affect participation in interscholastic athletics. When an applicable state eligibility rule makes a student ineligible, the student is also ineligible for Activate Varsity Esports competition unless an authorized waiver, reversal, or other official determination applies. The school is responsible for making and communicating the eligibility determination.

23. Gambling and Wagering

Students may not gamble or place wagers on Activate Varsity Esports competitions in which they participate or for which they possess nonpublic competitive information. Students may not bet on or against their own team, ask another person to place a wager for them, intentionally influence a match for wagering purposes, accept payment to alter performance, share confidential team information for gambling purposes, or participate in match fixing.

Match fixing may result in permanent removal from the League.

24. Name, Image, and Likeness

Students engaging in Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) activities must comply with all applicable North Carolina State Board of Education, school, school district, and administering-organization requirements.

Participation in Activate Varsity Esports does not authorize a student to use school intellectual property, school logos, League logos, team uniforms, League broadcasts, school facilities, or other protected property for commercial purposes without authorization.

25. Recruiting and Undue Influence

Activate Varsity Esports supports students competing for schools they are properly eligible to represent. Students, coaches, school personnel, League personnel, and individuals acting on behalf of a team may not improperly recruit a student to change schools for the purpose of joining an esports team.

Prohibited conduct may include targeted efforts to persuade a student to transfer for esports, offer special benefits tied to enrollment, arrange benefits intended to induce a transfer, promise starting positions or other competitive advantages in exchange for transferring, or use students to recruit competitors from another school. Ordinary public promotion of school programs is not necessarily recruiting, but targeted conduct must comply with applicable rules.

26. Social Media

Students may participate in social media, but varsity esports participation carries additional responsibility. League-related activity must remain consistent with sportsmanship and school conduct expectations.

- Publicly attack or harass opponents or officials;
- Target another team;
- Post confidential team information;
- Publish private communications without authorization;
- Encourage online harassment;
- Post discriminatory or threatening content; or
- Misrepresent themselves as speaking officially for Activate Varsity Esports.

Conduct outside school hours may still result in League action when it directly affects League safety, sportsmanship, competitive integrity, or another participant.

27. Streaming, Recording, and Content Creation

Official competitions may be livestreamed, recorded, photographed, or otherwise shared when authorized. Students must comply with applicable school and League media requirements.

Students may not independently livestream an official match when doing so violates competition rules, creates a stream-sniping risk, exposes confidential communications, violates student privacy requirements, or conflicts with an official League broadcast. League officials may establish stream delays or other safeguards.

06

CHAPTER

Competition Administration & Enforcement

Coach authority, protests, League discipline, team consequences, eligibility enforcement, and reporting.

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28. Coach Authority

The school-designated coach or esports advisor is responsible for supervising the team. Students must follow reasonable instructions from coaches, school administrators, tournament administrators, and authorized League officials. A disagreement with a ruling does not authorize a student to ignore the ruling. Questions or protests should be submitted through the appropriate coach or school representative.

29. Protests and Competition Disputes

1. The student notifies the coach;
2. The coach preserves available evidence;
3. Play continues or pauses according to League rules;
4. The coach submits the matter through the designated League process; and
5. Students comply with the final competition ruling.

Screenshots, match recordings, game logs, platform data, communications, and other reliable evidence may be considered when resolving a dispute.

30. League Discipline

Violations may result in League discipline. Consequences should consider severity, frequency, intent, prior conduct, competitive impact, and student safety.

Level 1 - Corrective Action

Minor first-time sportsmanship or procedural violations.

Possible consequences: Verbal or written warning, educational assignment, required apology, coach conference, or removal from a portion of a match.

Level 2 - Competition Penalty

Repeated misconduct, significant unsportsmanlike behavior, unauthorized account use, or repeated refusal to follow procedures.

Possible consequences: Round/map loss, match forfeiture, temporary suspension, removal from the starting lineup, probation, or administrator conference.

Level 3 - Serious Misconduct

Cheating, hacking, severe harassment, threats, deliberate match manipulation, repeated major misconduct, or intentional false eligibility information.

Possible consequences: Match forfeiture, multiple-match or season suspension, removal from the team, team penalties, or referral to school administration.

Level 4 - Extraordinary Misconduct

Severe safety threats, serious cyber misconduct, match fixing, intentional attacks on League systems, or conduct creating substantial harm.

Possible consequences: Season removal, extended or permanent League suspension, referral to school administration, platform providers, or appropriate authorities when required.

31. Team Consequences

When a violation gives a team an unfair competitive advantage, the League may impose a team consequence even when only one student committed the violation. Consequences may include replay, round loss, map loss, match forfeiture, removal of an ineligible player, standings adjustment, postseason disqualification, or another corrective action necessary to protect competitive fairness.

32. Ineligible Players

A student who is not properly eligible may not compete. If an ineligible student participates, the League may remove the student, forfeit the match, adjust standings, impose postseason consequences, or take additional action when eligibility information was intentionally falsified.

The League may distinguish between a good-faith administrative mistake and intentional fraud when determining additional penalties, but competitive results may still require correction.

33. Reporting A Concern

Students should report concerns involving harassment, bullying, threats, discrimination, cheating, match fixing, account theft, hacking, safety issues, inappropriate adult conduct, or other serious misconduct to a coach, school administrator, or designated League official.

Retaliation against a person who makes a good-faith report is prohibited. Knowingly making a false report for the purpose of harming another participant may also result in discipline.

07

CHAPTER

Families, Schools & League Operations

Family expectations, school responsibilities, varsity culture, game rules, rule changes, and authority.

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34. Parent/Guardian Expectations

- Support academic priorities;
- Encourage good sportsmanship;
- Communicate appropriately with coaches;
- Avoid interfering with live competition;
- Refrain from harassing opposing students, coaches, or officials;
- Follow school and League spectator expectations;
- Help students maintain healthy gaming habits; and
- Support compliance with eligibility requirements.

Parents and guardians should raise concerns through coaches and school administrators rather than directly confronting another student.

35. Coach and School Responsibilities

Each participating school should designate an authorized adult responsible for the esports program. The school is responsible for:

- Verifying enrollment;
- Verifying and certifying student eligibility;
- Confirming academic and attendance eligibility;
- Confirming age and semester eligibility;
- Evaluating residency and transfer eligibility;
- Maintaining required school and student forms;
- Supervising students;
- Enforcing school policies;
- Maintaining accurate rosters;
- Communicating eligibility changes to the League; and
- Providing appropriate adult oversight during competitions.

Activate Varsity Esports should receive eligibility certification rather than unnecessary confidential student records whenever possible.

36. Varsity Culture

Your classroom performance matters. Your attendance matters. Your teammates depend on you. Your behavior online matters. Your school name matters. Competitive integrity matters.

Being skilled at a game does not excuse poor academics, misconduct, cheating, disrespect, or failure to meet eligibility requirements.

37. Additional Game-Specific Rules

Each game title may have a separate competition ruleset addressing team size, substitutions, platforms, server regions, match format, maps, character or hero restrictions, pauses, disconnects, technical failures, equipment, spectator settings, communication, tiebreakers, playoffs, competitive patches, and tournament administration.

Game-specific rules supplement this handbook. If a game rule conflicts with student safety, school policy, applicable law, or this handbook's eligibility requirements, the higher governing requirement controls.

38. Rule Changes

North Carolina athletic rules, school policies, game software, publisher rules, and competition platforms may change. Activate Varsity Esports may revise League rules when necessary to maintain compliance, protect students, preserve competitive integrity, respond to game updates, or improve League operations.

Material changes should be communicated to participating schools. This handbook should be reviewed before each school year against current North Carolina State Board of Education athletics policies and other applicable requirements.

39. Order of Authority

1. Federal or North Carolina law;
2. North Carolina State Board of Education requirements;
3. Applicable administering-organization requirements;
4. Local school board, charter board, or PSU policy;
5. Individual school policy;
6. Activate Varsity Esports Student-Athlete Handbook;
7. Activate Varsity Esports game-specific competition rules; and
8. Team rules established by the coach.

A lower-level rule may establish a stricter standard when legally permitted but may not authorize conduct prohibited by a higher authority.

08

CHAPTER

Pledge, Forms & References

Student pledge, acknowledgment, school certification, reference authorities, and interpretation.

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40. Student-Athlete Pledge

As an Activate Varsity Esports student-athlete, I pledge to:

- Put education first;
- Attend school and maintain academic eligibility;
- Represent my school with integrity;
- Treat teammates, opponents, coaches, officials, and spectators with respect;
- Compete fairly and honestly;
- Never use cheats or unauthorized competitive advantages;
- Protect my accounts and school equipment;
- Communicate appropriately online;
- Accept victory with humility and defeat with respect;
- Follow the rules of my school and the Activate Varsity Esports League; and
- Ask for help when I am unsure of a rule or expectation.

41. Student and Parent/Guardian Acknowledgement

By signing below, the student and parent/guardian acknowledge that they received or were provided access to this handbook; understand that participation is a privilege; understand that academic and school eligibility requirements must be maintained; agree to comply with League, school, and applicable state requirements; understand that violations may result in suspension or removal; understand that the student's school makes applicable eligibility determinations; and agree to demonstrate appropriate sportsmanship and digital citizenship.

Student Name	
School	
Student Signature	
Date	
Parent/Guardian Name	
Parent/Guardian Signature	
Date	
Coach/School Representative	
Signature	
Date	

42. School Eligibility Certification

The undersigned school representative certifies that, to the best of the school's knowledge, each student submitted on the school's active Activate Varsity Esports roster has been reviewed under the eligibility requirements applicable to the school and is eligible to represent the school in interscholastic competition. The school agrees to notify Activate Varsity Esports promptly if a student's eligibility changes.

School	
Principal / Athletic Director / Authorized Designee	
Title	
Signature	
Date	

43. Reference Authorities

This handbook is intended to operate consistently with current North Carolina interscholastic-athletics requirements, including, as applicable:

- North Carolina State Board of Education Policy ATHL-001 - Interscholastic Athletics
- ATHL-002 - Administration of Interscholastic Athletics
- ATHL-005 - Student Participation Rules
- ATHL-007 - Amateur Rules
- ATHL-008 - Name, Image, and Likeness
- ATHL-009 - Limitations on Recruiting and Undue Influence
- ATHL-012 - Penalty Rules
- ATHL-013 - Appeals
- Applicable North Carolina Administrative Code provisions
- Applicable administering-organization requirements
- Participating school and PSU policies

Current public reference pages include the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction Interscholastic Athletics page and the NCHSAA Student-Athlete Eligibility page. This handbook should be reviewed annually because state and local requirements may change.

44. Policy Interpretation

This handbook establishes League participation standards and is not a substitute for legal advice or a participating school's official eligibility determination. If an eligibility issue is unclear, the school should resolve it under the current rules that govern that school before allowing the student to compete.

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