

# 30<sup>TH</sup> Annual MIAA Sportsmanship Summit

## Feedback Summary

### November 7, 2024

#### Fostering a Positive and Respectful Athletic Environment: Key Feedback Themes

The feedback from students, parents, and coaches consistently highlights the importance of creating a positive, respectful, and controlled environment for school athletics. Several core themes emerged, emphasizing both what to avoid and what to promote.

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#### Zero Tolerance for Negative & Offensive Behavior

There is an **absolute and non-negotiable rejection** of all forms of negative and offensive behavior. This includes:

- **Profanity, racial slurs, sexist/homophobic comments, taunting, and personal attacks** directed at players, coaches, officials, or other fans.
  - **Physical aggression and unsafe behaviors**, such as throwing objects.
  - **Negative conduct** like yelling at officials, coaches, or players, trash-talking, and engaging in physical altercations. This applies to everyone involved in the athletic event.
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#### Universal Respect & Professionalism

A critical and pervasive theme is the demand for **respect towards everyone**. This means:

- **No direct comments, yelling, arguing, or challenging of officials or coaches** by parents, student fans, or student-athletes. Coaches are also expected to model this respect and handle disagreements privately and professionally.
- **Respecting calls, avoiding negative comments, and showing empathy** for all participants, including teammates, opponents, coaches, officials, and fellow spectators.
- **Maintaining composure and acting professionally**, especially when faced with challenging situations. This includes controlling emotions and representing the school positively.

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## Coaches as Leaders & Role Models

Coaches are central to upholding these standards. They are expected to:

- **Maintain control** of their teams, stay within boundaries, and be the primary **role models for sportsmanship**.
- **Manage their own emotions, language, and actions**, and actively set and enforce behavioral standards for their team both on and off the field.
- **All adults (parents and coaches) and older students (upperclassmen and captains)** are expected to act as role models and demonstrate strong leadership through their actions, attitudes, and adherence to sportsmanship principles.

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## Clear Boundaries and Non-Interference

There's a strong emphasis on clearly defined roles and non-interference during games:

- Parents are explicitly told to **"let the coach coach"** and not interfere with the game or yell instructions to players.
- Parents and fans should **not enter the field of play** unless invited.

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## Emphasis on Positive Support & Engagement

Promoting a positive atmosphere is crucial:

- A strong emphasis on **positive cheering, encouragement, and support** for one's own team and athletes. This includes positive messages, uplifting feedback, and focusing on good plays rather than mistakes.
- Strategies to create an enjoyable game-day experience include **themed games, pep rallies, halftime activities, music, and promoting school spirit**. Encouraging student sections to organize positive cheers and supporting various sports events are also highlighted.
- **Active support and presence** are encouraged, with parents attending games and volunteering, students creating vibrant student sections, and fans actively engaging to create an energetic home atmosphere.

- Suggestions also revolve around fostering **community and team cohesion** through team dinners, bonding activities, and events that bring together players, parents, and the broader school community (e.g., Senior Nights, youth nights, alumni events).
  - Organizing **fundraisers and charitable initiatives** not only supports athletic programs but also instills values of giving back (e.g., charity games, food drives).
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## Clear Communication & Accountability

Effective communication and consistent accountability are vital:

- **Pre-season meetings** for parents, student-athletes, and student leaders are crucial to clearly communicate expectations (e.g., through PowerPoints, team contracts, athletic codes of conduct). Consistent reminders via PA announcements and posted signage are also key.
  - The importance of **staff and administration being present at games** to monitor and address behavior is frequently mentioned.
  - There's a call for **accountability, including the removal of individuals exhibiting poor behavior and follow-through with discipline**, possibly involving parents in the process.
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## School & MIAA Support

Schools are seeking support from the MIAA, suggesting:

- The committee update and send out clear **sportsmanship guidelines**.
  - Provide **common expectation posters/banners**.
  - Potentially create **videos for fans and parents** on positive sportsmanship.
  - **Consistency in rules across schools** is also desired.
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## Student-Athlete Responsibility & Inclusivity

Student-athletes have specific responsibilities, and inclusivity is paramount:

- Student-athletes are expected to exhibit **positive body language, avoid taunting or targeting opponents, refrain from arguing with officials, and uphold the reputation of their school.**
- This also extends to **off-field behavior**, such as avoiding hazing, bullying, and chemical health violations.
- The feedback consistently stresses the importance of **inclusivity, treating everyone equally regardless of skill level or role, and avoiding cliques or biases.** This applies to coaches giving equal attention and students including all classmates in activities.

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This comprehensive feedback underscores a collective desire for a positive, respectful, and well-managed athletic environment that prioritizes sportsmanship and community.