

## **9<sup>TH</sup> GRADE PARENT TIPS FOR SUPPORTING YOUR STUDENT-ATHLETES**

- **The biggest challenge for a 9<sup>th</sup> grader in sports is learning how to juggle sports with academics or sports with academics and performances and/or other outside interests.**
- **Participating in a sport forces students to practice managing their time. Check your assumptions that students might be doing well at this; don't leave it to chance.**
- **Watch for signs of over-emphasis on sports. Some kids put all their priority on the sport and will even exaggerate or amplify what the coach says she or he expects. They get trapped in some pretty bad patterns, such as sleeping overmuch. Athletes need support in problem-solving to set boundaries.**
- **Sports equates to self-esteem for many students, but there are academic standards. According to the Education Code in California, students must earn a 2.0 GPA each quarter to participate in athletics. There is no probation for academic problems. When the sports/academic conflict gets too far along, it is impossible to pull it back academically. Parents and coaches need to work with athletes on the front end of the season to establish reasonable participation patterns.**
- **Sports can be very emotional and personal to adolescents. Somehow they need reinforcement for the concept that academics are the reason for high school and that athletics is enrichment and part of being the well-rounded student...not the reverse.**
- **Sportsmanship is guided by good modeling from the coaches but also by league codes, North Coast Section codes (Ejection Policy) and state codes (Pursuing Victory with Honor.) Athletes may be suspended from play or lose their place on a team for poor sportsmanship, infraction of school rules or poor attendance. School consequences are outlined in the Activities Code in the PHS Student and Parent Handbook. PHS athletes are held to high standards because they represent our school culture and they are acting as school leaders in their athletic role.**
- **Coaches are the heart of our program. Most PHS coaches are off-campus coaches, which means they do not teach or work in the district. Coaches are guided by the school, by the Bay Shore Athletic League, by North Coast Section and by the California Interscholastic Scholarship Federation.**
- **Coaches spend a tremendous amount of time with athletes and generally become highly regarded by their players. They are passionate about their sports and committed to working with PHS athletes...they have full-time jobs in addition to coaching and they are human!**
- **Coaches communicate with parents in a variety of ways, including parent meetings and a variety of written communications. If you have questions about coaching style or decisions, the principal asks you to first contact the coach and have a discussion before calling an athletic director or the principal. Even though we all enjoy the role of the sideline coach, it is important modeling for our athletes to respect the judgment of coaches and engage in productive communication.**

- The athletic directors and the principal attend some combination of practices and competitions as a way of understanding what's happening in each sport and how coaches are performing. Coaches are familiarized with school expectations and a myriad of coaching details by the athletic directors.
- Most decisions about schedules and scheduling are not school decisions; most of them are the responsibility of the league or the North Coast Section when it gets to playoff competition. Most schools work out arrangements with each other around issues such as facility use, final exam schedules and opportunities for good parent attendance. Schedules get changed for many reasons...particularly the weather in the winter season. Parents sometimes need to "go with the flow" and expect last minute adjustments. It is helpful when families work out a plan for communicating about the schedule and schedule changes among themselves. Sometimes coaches make changes and neglect to inform the school office.
- Enrollment in Athletic PE as a sophomore does allow a student to substitute a school sports for the PE requirement. This is not the case with out-of-school sports such as crew or rugby which are not part of the state's governance for state sports. Some specialty sports do fall into the category of "Independent PE Study" in the district; there is a comprehensive application available from the student's counselor which must be submitted to the principal by August 15 for consideration.
- Some students play more than one sport. The rule for cross-over seasons is that athletes must finish the first sport before they engage in the next. Coaches understand the need for cross-over athletes to have a tryout opportunity and no penalty for joining a team late because of the preceding sport.
- 9<sup>th</sup> grade athletes will have a Class 6 and Class 7 in their schedules. Sometimes they will need to leave either class early for games; fortunately the block schedule rotates. There is no way to guarantee that athletes will not have an academic subject in conflict with a sports schedule. They are responsible for making up work and/or checking with teachers ahead-of-time to get their assignments or make arrangements for make-up tests. Coaches are not allowed to hold practice during G-day tutorials; sports competitions may inadvertently fall during a schoolwide tutorial day.
- Student athletes generally spiral up through their sport of choice, from freshmen teams in some, to junior varsity and then to varsity. At the frosh or junior varsity levels, the emphasis is more on building skills and learning how to function as a team. At the varsity level, the play is incrementally more competitive with the possibility of league playoff opportunities, section level opportunities and then on to the state level. The tighter discipline of the team, the stricter schedules and the higher sophistication of the sport know-how are characteristic of varsity play. There is a responsibility for contributing to the best competition possible in the league at the varsity level.

(Thoughts from Randall Booker, Principal for incoming 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Parents, May 20, 2009)