



VIDALIA HERITAGE ACADEMY

ATHLETIC / CLUBS MANUAL

2024-2025

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GENERAL INFORMATION

ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT CONTACTS

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VHA MISSION STATEMENT

“It is the mission of Vidalia Heritage Academy to equip students spiritually, intellectually, and physically to love God and serve Him as Christ’s ambassadors in the world.”

VHA ATHLETIC PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

In keeping with the mission of the school, the athletic department helps us to equip students physically and athletically as we teach skills that will help them become well-rounded and successful athletes, students, teammates, and leaders. We seek to instill the following values: teamwork, leadership, sportsmanship, persistence, confidence, healthy competitive spirit, and physical wellness.

VHA’s athletic program is based on the belief that participating in athletics helps to extend the principles of mind, body, and spirit beyond the confines of a classroom and beyond the physical conditioning of general exercise. Athletic participation teaches students to value teamwork and effort, to find satisfaction in working towards a goal, to perform under pressure, and to respond appropriately to adversity.

The goal of our athletic department is to develop strong character in student athletes. We expect each to give maximum effort to reach team and individual goals. We want our student athletes to value the intrinsic reward that comes with perseverance, goal achievement, and contribution to a team. Winning games, tournaments, and championships are desired extrinsic rewards for the values, effort, and attitude expected of our student athletes. We are committed to the pursuit of a winning tradition, but more importantly to excellence, instilling values in our student athletes, and to character building.

VHA ATHLETIC PROGRAM

ATHLETIC OFFERINGS

We offer a range of athletic opportunities with team and individual sports including:

HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

FALL

Cheerleading
Competition (Game Day) Cheer
Cross Country - Girls
Cross Country - Boys
Football (8-man)
Softball
Band (physicals required)

WINTER

Archery
Bass Fishing
Wrestling - Boys

SPRING

Baseball
Soccer - Girls
Soccer - Boys
Tennis - Boys
Tennis - Girls
Track & Field - Girls
Track & Field - Boys

MIDDLE SCHOOL SPORTS

FALL

Cheerleading
Cross Country - Girls
Cross Country - Boys
Football (8-man)
Softball
Band (physicals required)

WINTER

Archery

SPRING

Baseball
Soccer - Boys
Soccer - Girls
Track & Field - Girls
Track & Field - Boys

ELEMENTARY SPORTS

FALL

Cross Country - Girls
Cross Country - Boys

WINTER

Archery

Note: Offerings and teams may be made available depending on circumstances for each sport.

ACTIVITIES + CLUB OFFERINGS

Literary – High School

One Act – Middle and High School

Chess – Elementary, Middle, and High School

Band (Pep and Concert) – Middle and High School

AFFILIATIONS

HIGH SCHOOL

Vidalia Heritage Academy varsity athletics and clubs compete as a member of the Georgia Independent Athletic Association (GIAA).

The GIAA is an ancillary division of the Georgia Independent School Association (GISA). GISA is a non-profit association of private, independent K-12 schools throughout the state. The mission of GISA is to advance excellence and collaboration among Georgia's independent schools by serving the professional growth, advocacy, academic, arts, and athletic needs of member schools. Each member school is unique while sharing a unified commitment to overall excellence, as well as the nurture and care of the physical, intellectual, social, and moral development of all students.

This premier athletic league provides opportunities for athletic competitions encouraging each student athlete's overall academic, spiritual, social, and physical development.

MIDDLE SCHOOL AND ELEMENTARY

Vidalia Heritage Academy middle school and elementary athletics and clubs compete as a member of the Georgia Association of Private and Parochial Schools (GAPPS). The mission of GAPPS is to unite Christ-centered schools, independent schools, and learning centers in an environment where students can compete at their levels yet still be encouraged to grow in their faith. The goal of GAPPS is for member schools to work together to create a competitive athletic and academic setting in which members will strive to set a godly example of excellence.

**Please note that Archery will fall under the governance of the National Archery in the Schools Program.*

FACILITIES

The use of Vidalia Heritage Academy's athletic and sports facilities are designated for physical education classes, athletic practices/games, sanctioned VHA events, and athletic department use only. Exceptions must be approved by the Athletic Director or Head of School.

Athletic teams and students are required to maintain a clean and healthy environment while using all sports facilities. Safety of students, coaches, and their personal property is a top priority; therefore, students should remain mindful of the Honor Code when using all athletic and sports facilities.

WEIGHT ROOM & HITTING FACILITIES

The VHA weight room is primarily used for students in grades 8-12. The hitting facility, locker rooms, and fields are primarily used for athletic teams, coaches, and school use. Faculty and staff can use these facilities when not in use, if authorized by the Athletic Director.

Requirements for use:

- Authorized adult supervision is required at all times during student use.
- Students must have a signed waiver in order to use any of the athletic and sports facilities.
- Participants are required to clean and return all equipment before leaving the weight room/hitting facility.
- If the weight room/hitting facility is unlocked or unsupervised, please contact the Athletic Director or a coach to secure the facility.

Misuse of equipment or facilities will result in disciplinary action, as deemed appropriate by the Administration.

STUDENT ATHLETE + CLUB PARTICIPATION

SPORTSMANSHIP

Student athletes, club participants, parents, and VHA fans are expected to treat all facilities, coaches, officials, judges, team members, opposing teams, and fans with respect. Profanity, degrading remarks, intimidating actions, or other such negative behavior may result in disciplinary action from the head coach, Athletic Director, or Head of School. Vidalia Heritage Academy holds sportsmanship in athletic and club competition as a core value, and all student competitors are expected to uphold this value while representing the school in competition. The rules governing student behavior as outlined in the VHA Student Handbook are in effect for all athletic practices/games, extracurricular activities, school-sponsored trips, and interscholastic competitions.

GENERAL ELIGIBILITY

All students in good standing (academically, behaviorally, and financially) are eligible to participate, provided they agree to the rules and expectations established for all players as outlined in the VHA Athletic Manual and Student Handbook.

Students must be at school by 8:30 a.m. to be counted present and eligible to participate in athletics. Students checking in after 8:30 a.m. must have a doctor's note or valid excuse.

Students are ineligible to practice or compete if they check-out of school sick that day.

ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY – ALL GRADES

Students must be in good academic standing to participate in Vidalia Heritage Academy's athletic and club programs.

At-risk: Any grade below 80 at any time on report cards, will result in disciplinary action by the Athletic Director.

- Administration contacts the coach regarding the grade status.

Academic probation: Any grade below 70 at a grading period such as progress and quarterly reports.

- Mandatory academic center and tutorial attendance.
- The student will only be permitted to participate in one sport.
- Participation in the sport is at the discretion of the Athletic Director.

Athletic suspension: Two grades or more below 70 at a quarterly reporting period and every grade reporting period after.

- The student is suspended from the team and may not participate in practice or travel.

BEHAVIORAL ELIGIBILITY – ALL GRADES

Student athletes and club participants must be in good standing regarding discipline record and conduct to participate in sports and/or club activities.

FINANCIAL ELIGIBILITY – ALL GRADES

Student athletes and club participants must be in good standing regarding financial obligations to the school to participate in sports and/or club activities.

REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION – ALL GRADES

Please note that all forms are available on the school website under "Athletics" or by contacting the Athletic Director.

1. PRE-PARTICIPATION PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

It is a requirement of all VHA student athletes to have a physical examination conducted by a medical provider before participating in any level of athletics. A student may observe practice without participating, but no exceptions will be made for a student wanting to participate without having a current physical examination on file with the school. If a student athlete misses practice(s) due to not having a physical examination on file with the school, they will be required to make this missed time up at the discretion of the coach of that sport. The athletic department will seek to offer physicals once each year at no cost to the student athlete. If a student athlete chooses not to have a physical examination performed at this time, it is up to the student athlete and his/her family to set up an appointment with a

medical provider to have the physical examination conducted. The physical examination form will then need to be turned in to the Athletic Director or the coach of the sport the student athlete wants to participate in, before the athlete will be granted permission to begin competing. Physicals are valid for one calendar year from the date they are completed.

2. ACKNOWLEDGMENT / AWARENESS FORMS

All student athletes must have a signed acknowledgment/awareness forms on file with the Athletic Director before he/she can participate in any athletic functions through Vidalia Heritage Academy.

3. UPDATED MEDICAL RELEASE FORM

All students must have an updated medical release form, completed by a parent, for each school year. This form will allow the Athletic Department to be aware of any medical issues, should an emergency arise, or an injury occur during a practice or competition sponsored by Vidalia Heritage Academy. This form also allows for parents to provide multiple contacts and contact information should a situation arise in which a coach or the Athletic Director should need to reach a contact if the parent is unavailable.

4. SIGNED ATHLETIC & CLUB MANUAL AGREEMENT

All student athletes and parents of student athletes will be required to sign a copy of the VHA Athletic Manual for each school year. Parents are strongly encouraged to discuss matters addressed within the VHA Athletic and Club Manual with their child. If there are any questions or concerns regarding the policies addressed in the VHA Athletic Manual, please address them with the Athletic Director before signing the agreement. Before a student can participate in any athletic functions (i.e., practices, competitions, tryouts, etc.), he/she must have a signed Athletic Manual on file with the Athletic Director.

5. ADDITIONAL PAPERWORK FOR ALTERNATE EDUCATION STUDENTS

For Alternate Education Students (AES) who choose to affiliate and participate in extracurricular activities and athletics with Vidalia Heritage Academy, there are additional documents needed for eligibility purposes:

- A copy of the student's birth certificate
- A copy of the student's latest report card/transcript that proves the current grade he/she is in

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT ATHLETE PARTICIPATION

Fifth Grade Participation on Middle School Teams

Due to health and safety concerns, facility limitations, and certain league policies, **fifth grade students may only participate in cheer, softball, soccer, and track and field.** Vidalia Heritage Academy participates in several local cross country and track meets that do not allow fifth grade student athletes to participate due to grade-level

restrictions. Fourth and fifth grade students can participate in elementary archery and cross country. **Please note that fourth and fifth grade students CAN participate in Elementary Archery and Cross Country.*

Eighth Grade Participation on High School Varsity Teams

Eighth graders, in accordance with GIAA interscholastic guidelines, are eligible to play sports (except football) at the varsity level. Eighth grade students may be invited to play at the varsity level only when the varsity team has a low number of participants or when the eighth-grade student athlete is ready for a higher level of competition as determined by the head coach and Athletic Director (in consultation with the middle school administration regarding academic preparedness).

ATTENDANCE AT PRACTICE

Student athletes who choose to participate in any given sport are expected to attend practice as scheduled by the head coach. Unexcused absences from practices may result in suspension and/or dismissal from the team. Student athletes who arrive late to practice must provide a signed excuse (i.e. doctor's note, tutoring excuse, etc.) to the head coach.

MULTI-SPORT PARTICIPATION

Student athletes participating in school sports while at the same time competing with a community or club sports team must disclose this information to the school team's head coach prior to the season. Pre-season communication is necessary for the coach to determine if the commitment of the student athlete to the school team is great enough to be allowed membership on that school team. Pre-season communication also avoids any conflict surrounding potential missed practices and/or games. The arrangement for such dual participation must be in writing and approved/signed by the Athletic Director.

EQUIPMENT

Student athletes will be required to care for and return all equipment to the head coach of their respective sport. Failure to do so in a timely manner, as determined by the Athletic Director, will result in a fee charge comparable to the replacement cost.

FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS / ATHLETIC FEES

Booster Ad Sales:

Each family (including homeschool families) who plan on participating in athletics is required to sell booster ads. The minimum is \$350 for middle and high school and \$150 for elementary. For families with multiple student-athletes, this will be determined by the eldest sibling participating in athletics. ***If you choose to opt out of selling ads, you will be responsible for the booster ad fee as well as the individual athletic fees.***

Athletic Fees:

\$75 per athlete per sport/club. Athletic fees are due on or before the first day of practice after tryouts and is non-refundable.

Any middle school or high school family selling \$700 or more in booster ads will NOT be charged athletic fees for any of their children playing any sport.

Any elementary family selling \$450 or more in booster ads will NOT be charged athletic fees for any of their children playing any sport.

Fundraising:

Each sport or club may hold one school-approved fundraising event each season. Participation in these fundraising activities is optional, but strongly encouraged.

Please see the Athletic / Club Fee Schedule at the end of this manual.

TRAVEL

Travel guidelines refer to any time spent away from the Vidalia Heritage Academy campus which includes both practices and competitions. Student athletes are expected to conduct themselves in a manner away from campus that is consistent with behavioral expectations required on campus.

Behavior unbecoming of a Vidalia Heritage Academy student will be subject to disciplinary action by the head coach, Athletic Director, and/or Head of School. More serious misconduct on overnight trips may result in the student athlete being sent home. Should this occur, parents will be required to facilitate pickup of their child regardless of location.

At the conclusion of sporting events on the road, student athletes are allowed to travel with parents pending a face-to-face confirmation with the head coach at the time of departure. If a parent desires to make alternative arrangements for their child with other parents or family members, prior written or direct verbal communication from the student's parent with the head coach is required. A face-to-face confirmation/check-out will also be required of the student athlete at the time of departure.

School dismissal times for student athletes on days with off-campus travel are set by the head coach for each sport and will be announced weekly. There may also be an approximate departure time on sports schedules.

When traveling by bus or van, student athletes will be responsible for their personal belongings as well cleaning the bus/van upon their return to campus.

Student athletes must advocate for their own academic success and be responsible for all make-up work resulting from missed class time. Student athletes should communicate and make arrangements with his/her teachers prior to departure.

SPORTS AWARDS

The Fall sports awards ceremony will be held in December. The Winter and Spring sports awards ceremony will be held in May.

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP AWARDS

Winning a GIAA/GAPPS State Championship is a significant achievement; therefore, all players, coaches, and support staff members on a state championship team will receive a complimentary commemorative apparel item from the VHA Athletic Department. These items should be coordinated with and approved by the Athletic Director. State champion coaches will also work with the Athletic Director on a commemorative ring or pendant opportunity. State champion players will be responsible for the cost should they elect to order a ring or pendant. Coach rings or pendants will be provided by the VHA Athletic Department.

LETTER POLICY

The lettering policy for VHA athletics and clubs is as follows:

- Lettering only applies to a varsity competition team. No letters will be awarded for middle school sports.
- Students must attend a minimum of 90% of team practices. Coaches will take each circumstance into consideration in deciding who is eligible to receive a letter for a season. Circumstances such as illness, injury, and/or family emergencies will be taken into consideration when determining whether a student has met the requirements for lettering during a season.
- Any student participating in a varsity event attempting to earn a letter must finish the season in good standing with that team to be considered for a letter.
- A student must acquire two letters for a particular sport or activity before they will be allowed to order letter jackets. No student will be eligible to order a letter jacket until they have lettered in two varsity sports or activities, are at the end of their freshman year of high school and are in good academic standing at that time.

NIL INFORMATION / RECRUITING VIOLATIONS

We abide by the GIAA policies and guidelines regarding the NIL (Name, Image, Likeness). You can find those guidelines here: <https://giaasports.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/NIL.pdf>

We also recommend and encourage student athletes and their families and/or representatives to:

- seek legal counsel regarding NIL and its impact on future athletic endeavor and before agreeing to any NIL deals, clubs, etc.
- proactively report any communications to the school.

If a coach from another school contacts you about transferring to their school in order to participate in their athletic program, we encourage student athletes and their families to openly communicate with the Athletic Director and/or school.

COACH EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Vidalia Heritage Academy coaches are expected to uphold and abide by the rules, regulations, policies, and ideals set forth in this Athletic Manual as well as the Faculty Handbook, the GIAA interscholastic rules and regulations, and the GIAA code of ethics. Coaches are also expected to uphold and hold student athletes accountable for the rules outlined in this Athletic Manual and the VHA Student Handbook. Coaches are expected to mentor our students in both word and action.

CPR/AED/FIRST AID CERTIFICATION

It is required that at least one coach per team take and pass a CPR/AED/First Aid certification course. These coaches must have current certification that is approved by the Athletic Director.

BACKGROUND CHECK

All coaches must have a criminal background check.

COMMUNICATION

- Coaches will hold informational team meetings (which includes parents as well as student athletes/club participants) at the beginning of the season to share expectations, philosophies, practice and game schedules, travel policies, and volunteering needs/responsibilities.
- Coaches will communicate in a timely manner with student athletes and parents of student athletes regarding practice and game changes, cancellations, or additions.
- Single and multi-game suspensions must be approved by the Athletic Director.
- Coaches must contact a student athlete's parent in the event of a suspension.
- Coaches must provide an update to the designated contact in the Athletic Department after each competition.
- Coaches are responsible for facilitating the end-of-season celebration. Plans and associated funding of plans must be approved by the Athletic Director in advance.
- Coaches are to communicate clearly and in a timely basis the means of communication (i.e., email, app, etc.) they will use to communicate with their student athletes, club participants, and parents.
- The Athletic Director is responsible for contacting the newspaper, radio, and posting on social media for the athletic department.

ACADEMICS

- Coaches should continually monitor their student athletes' academic progress.
- Coaches should regularly encourage student athletes to seek assistance from teachers when missing class time for any athletic event.
- Practice scheduled during holidays and/or exam weeks are to be approved by the Athletic Director.
- Coaches should be consistent in dealing with student athletes and should treat all student athletes in the same positive manner while enforcing all rules uniformly among team members.
- Coaches should always maintain a friendly and professional relationship with student athletes.

TRAVEL

- A coach will remain on site and visible until the final student athlete has departed campus from practices, games, or trips.

EQUIPMENT & FACILITIES

- Coaches are required to get approval from the Athletic Director regarding purchasing needs.
- Coaches are responsible for securement of practice and playing fields at the conclusion of practices and/or games. All access points to locker rooms and athletic facilities must be locked and secured.

OTHER

- Coaches are ultimately responsible for the well-being of student athletes. It is important that coaches maintain an ongoing dialogue with student athletes and the parents of student athletes regarding the expectations and guidelines for the team members and their respective families.
- Coaches will consult with the Athletic Director regarding potential eighth grade participation at the varsity level.

PARENTAL SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT

EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS

- The GIAA code of conduct for all sporting event attendees is the following:
“The GIAA encourages and promotes sportsmanship by student athletes, coaches, and spectators. We request your cooperation by supporting the participants and officials in a positive manner. Profanity, racial, ethnic, or sexist comments, or other intimidating actions will not be tolerated and are grounds for removal from the event.”
Vidalia Heritage Academy stands behind the GIAA’s code of conduct and encourages parents to set a positive example for the student athletes through their conduct towards opposing players, opposing fans, and officials.
- Parents actively involved in athletic programs must be familiar with the GIAA’s code of ethics as it relates to recruiting athletes:
“No member of the school community (administrator, coach, booster club, alumni organization, etc.) will knowingly initiate attempts to enroll or bring about the transfer of a student for the purpose of athletic or literary competition.”
- Parents are the greatest influence in the lives of our students and the school values a healthy and open partnership in meeting the mission of the school. While we encourage student athletes to be self-advocates for their well-being, parents can support the school by fulfilling requests in a timely manner. Health forms and physical information must be up-to-date and student athletes must have an environment at home conducive to maintaining an acceptable GPA.
- Parents are encouraged to attend pre-season meetings scheduled by head coaches.
- Alcohol, drugs, and tobacco are prohibited on Vidalia Heritage Academy’s campus at all times.
- Athletic facilities are generally not made available to outside groups. We will make our facilities available to members of the VHA community at the discretion of the Athletic Director and/or Head of School.

CHAIN OF COMMAND

Many of us want to go straight to the top with a complaint; however, every successful organization follows an established chain of command. By following the proper chain of command, the Vidalia Heritage Academy Athletics Department will maintain a high level of accountability.

Level 1 - Meet with the coach.

It is important that coaches listen to parents and their concerns. The coach has a responsibility to all parties to explain the individual decisions that directly affect the student athlete. This does not mean that the coach has to or arbitrarily or automatically change his/her decision. The coach must communicate with the parents; this is a component of coaching.

Level 2 - Meet with coach and/or Athletic Director.

If no resolution was reached after speaking with the coach, parents should then contact the Athletic Director to have a meeting between the parents, coaches, and Athletic Director in an attempt to find a resolution.

Level 3 - Meet with the Athletic Director and Head of School.

If, after meeting with the coach and athletic director, no resolution has been reached, parents should then contact the Head of School to set up a meeting with the coach, Athletic Director, and Head of School in an attempt to resolve the issue.

COMMUNICATION

Communication between coaches, parents, student athletes, and school administration is essential for the VHA Athletic Program to function properly and successfully. Please follow the above-mentioned chain of command when addressing issues or concerns regarding a student athlete's status on a team. As an athletic department, in addition to following protocol in the chain of command for addressing problems, we ask that parents adhere to the following guidelines for addressing coaches:

- Please always be respectful and courteous when addressing an issue regarding your child with a coach. You are an advocate for your student athlete. While you may not always agree with a coach's decision within a program, we do as you respect the coach's decision and understand that coaches are under immense pressure during a competition and in-game decisions often have to be made without much time for forethought. Decisions regarding playing time or consequences are at the coach's discretion.
- If an issue occurs/arises during a contest, and your child's safety or health is not immediately threatened, ***please do not address a coach immediately following a contest.*** Emotions can be escalated from both parties and things may not be handled in a Christ-like manner. When addressing in-game issues, please abide by the "24-hour rule". Simply put, please allow 24 hours from the end of a competitive contest to address the coach.
- If at all possible, meet face-to-face.
- Under no circumstances will topics pertaining to another student athlete be discussed with you. If a parent has concerns, the coach will address those issues pertaining to your child only. Please do not ask a coach to discuss any matters pertaining to another student athlete with you.
- When addressing a coach, please try to avoid doing so in the presence of other parents and/or student athletes. The best scenario is to ask the coach when a good time would be to meet. If it is not possible to meet away from the vicinity of an athletic facility, please be mindful of stepping far enough away from others so as to not be overheard by anyone when discussing such private issues.

- Three topics that coaches (or the Athletic Director/Head of School) will not discuss with parents:
 - Playing time
 - Strategy
 - Any other player/student athlete on the team other than your child
- Parents, we respectfully ask for you to please be aware of these issues and do not ask a coach, in public or private, to discuss any of these issues with you. If an issue pertaining to another player involves the safety of your child, this can and needs to be addressed with a coach, but please do not attempt to discuss the performance, or lack thereof, of another student athlete with any coaches.
- A parent or guardian that continues to violate these rules and policies may affect their student athlete's involvement with that sports team.
- Above all, seek to honor God even in the midst of frustrations you might be feeling about a particular situation. Matthew 18:15-20 is a good standard of measure for how to handle such situations.

BOOSTER CLUB

The purpose of the VHA Booster Club is to:

- provide support for the VHA athletics programs, student athletes, and coaching staff
- promote school spirit throughout the athletics programs of VHA
- help fulfill the mission statement of VHA

For membership opportunities, please contact the Athletic Director.



VIDALIA HERITAGE ACADEMY

ATHLETIC MANUAL

2024-2025

I have read and understand all policies in the VHA Athletic Manual and agree to abide by them to the best of my ability.

Student Athlete Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____ Date: _____

Parent Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____ Date: _____

***Please return this signed page to the Athletic Director.**

- Pre-participation physical examination form
- Acknowledgment / Awareness Forms (concussion, heat policy, sudden cardiac arrest)
- Medical release form