

2010
MERRIMACK
CARDINALS
Football Teams & Spirit Squads



PARENT HANDBOOK

Dear Parents, Cheerleaders, and Football Players:

The Board of Directors of the Merrimack Cardinals would like to welcome you to the 2010 season of the Cardinal Football/Spirit Program. This year marks the 37th anniversary of the Cardinals Program.

The Cardinals' proud tradition dates back to 1973. Both the cheerleading and football teams have won many honors and championships at the state, regional, and national levels.

While winning is one of the goals of the Program, it is not the only or the most important goal. The Cardinals Program encourages academic excellence and endeavors to develop self-discipline, personal fitness, teamwork, concentration, leadership, and good sportsmanship. Each year, many Cardinals receive program-wide and league-wide recognition of academic achievement.

The money necessary to run the Merrimack Cardinals Program is derived from registration fees (31%), Town funding (16%), and fundraising efforts (53%) by program volunteers. We make every effort to keep the amount of fundraising required of the participants to a minimum and place that responsibility with the adults in the organization. Last year, the organization raised \$30,000 through various events and we were able to replace much of our older pads and equipment for our football participants, as well as send our spirit squads to two "fun" competitions.

Our 2010 fundraising goal is 40,000. We hope to raise this money through corporate sponsorships (\$5,000), "Kickoff" BBQ (\$2,500), 50/50 raffles on game days (\$1,500), our goods table (\$5,000), our concession stand (\$20,000), and several program wide fundraisers throughout the year. .

Because the Cardinals Program relies on the income from sales of Cardinals apparel (also available for purchase online!) and the concession stand to keep its registration costs down, the Program prohibits the solicitation and sales of similar products and materials by Cardinals participants and their parents/caregivers. The cooperation and assistance of all parents or caregivers in this effort is greatly appreciated and necessary to adequately fund this Program.

We hope that the information contained in this parent handbook is a helpful guide. However, if you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact a Board member. Our contact information is provided on page 4 and available through the Cardinal's web site (<http://www.merrimackcardinals.org>).

Together with your support and participation, we hope that the 2010 season is the best season ever for the players, cheerleaders, parents, friends, and the Cardinals Program as a whole. We look forward to working with you to create a successful and enjoyable 2010 season!

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Board of Directors

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Communication

Communication is an essential component to any successful organization. It requires a committed effort on all parties to provide timely, accurate, and clear messages. To this end, the Board of Directors has established several communication mediums using both traditional (in person) and non-traditional (electronic) methods for the dissemination and collection of information. While we recognize that providing information directly to individuals provides for enhanced accountability, we understand that today's world invites the use of technology to distribute messages efficiently. Therefore, in addition to the information provided before and after practices and games, the organization regularly uses its web site (www.merrimackcardinals.org) and email to communicate directly with participants and their families. The Board further encourages parents to attend their regular Board Meetings or to contact them using their posted email addresses, and with their teams through provided list serves.

Board Meetings

The Board of Directors meets at the MYA Building on the third Sunday of each month (except December) at 7:00 p.m. during the season and 6:00 p.m. during other months of the year. Meetings are open to ALL interested parents and caregivers. We encourage you to attend and offer your suggestions and input as we strive to make the Cardinals Program the best it can be. Board elections are held at the November meeting. Anyone interested in serving on the Board should notify any existing Board member at least one month prior to elections.

Documentation Required

All Program participants are required to submit medical certificates, a copy of their birth certificates, and full year end (June) report cards. These documents must be submitted before the participant will be allowed to practice. This is a rule of the state and national organization and no special exceptions or waivers can be granted.

A 2010 Physical Fitness and Medical History Form must be completed and dated after January 1, 2010. Section I must be completed for each participant. Section II or the Medical Practice's Form must be filled out and signed by a medical practitioner dated after January 1, 2010 and attached to Section I.

Safety

The safety of the participants, coaches, and spectators is of paramount concern to the Cardinals Program and the organization at the local, state, and national levels. The state organization has strict rules about practices, eligibility for play, and other conditions to ensure the safety of football players and cheerleaders. In addition, the Cardinals Program and the coaches have established rules to ensure the safety of the participants. Strict adherence to these rules is required. If you have a question or concern about safety, please contact the head coach.

Many parents are concerned about the safety of youth football. You should be aware that according to a Consumer Products Safety Commission report, football is safer than many youth activities that some take for granted, such as bicycling and skateboarding. You will not see at a Cardinals football game the types of hits that you see in the NFL, college football, or even high school football. In our youth football league, all teams are matched by age and/or weight. All players wear full safety gear, scaled down from professional designs. While our kids run, block, and tackle, they are not as fast, nor do they clash with the same forces generated at higher levels of play. The Institute of Sports Medicine and Athletic Trauma of New York completed a survey in 71 towns covering over 5,000 players and found an injury rate of only 5% (or 1.33 per team).

Among other rules, the state organization requires that certain program volunteers undergo background checks. The rule requires that background checks be conducted on all “coaches, Board of Directors members, and any other persons, volunteers, or hired workers who provide regular services to the league and/or have repetitive access to or contact with players or spirit participants.”

Injuries/Illnesses/Medical Conditions

If your child is ill or injured, please notify the head coach in advance of the next scheduled practice or game. Do not rely on coaches to diagnose the medical condition or injury. If your child is sick or injured for more than one or two days, we suggest that you consult with a medical care provider.

If your child has a medical condition, you should include the information about that condition on the medical form. In addition, you should make the head coach aware of the medical condition. If it is possible that your child will need an inhaler or medication during the course of a practice or game, be sure that that the inhaler or medication is available at the practice or game field or gym. If your child needs assistance with an inhaler or other equipment, or if your child needs medication during the practice or game, please do not leave your child at the field or gym alone. While some of our coaches are first aid and CPR certified, they are not authorized and in most cases, not trained, to administer medication.

Practice & Game Fields Rules

All players and cheerleaders are expected to report on time to practices and games. Parents must be certain that at least one of their son's or daughter's coaches is onsite prior to their departure. Parents should arrive at least 15 minutes prior to the scheduled end of each game or practice to receive announcements or updates regarding important information. Parents should make other arrangements for their children to be transported to or from the practice or game if they are unable to be there on time. **Please Note:** Parents of Tiny Mites/Mitey Mites participants are required to stay for the duration of each practice and game. Such parents are only allowed to leave unless another adult (18+ years) takes responsibility for your child.

We understand that life is busy. To help, the Cardinals offer a concession stand at both practice and game venues where credit cards are accepted. A ten (\$10) dollar minimum is required.

Wasserman Park Rules:

- Members of the Cardinals family ONLY will be permitted on the practice fields after dark. The park is "off limits" ½ hour after sunset.
- The dirt path from the parking lot directly above the fields will not be used after dark. Those who choose to use this path after dark do so at their own risk. The Merrimack Cardinals Program, the MYA, and the Town are not responsible if an injury occurs on the path after dark.
- Parents must park in a parking lot. Do not park on the sides of the roads. The ambulance will not be able to get to the field if a participant is injured. Police may ticket vehicles parked on the side of the road.
- If you bring siblings to the practice, you are responsible for their supervision. Do not allow them to enter the practice field.
- If your child is not able to participate in practice, be sure that they sit on the sideline to watch the practice. They are not permitted to wander around the park.
- Lights will be out on the field no later than 9:00 p.m. When your child's practice has been completed, please leave the park as quickly as possible.

Veterans Park Rules:

Unfortunately, parking at Veteran's Park is extremely limited and is available on a first-come, first-serve basis except for handicapped and other designated spaces. Additional parking is available a short walk away at Camp Sargent and Thorntons Ferry Elementary School.

In past years, cars were parked in ways that that created dangerous conditions as emergency vehicles and personnel did not have adequate access. As a result, and in order to ensure the safety of participants and spectators, the Board has been advised to strictly limit the number of cars that enter the Park for games and to monitor and regulate the available access. Vehicles parked in a manner such that prohibit or impede emergency vehicles and personnel from driving around the entire roadway or accessing the field will be kindly asked to move. Owners who cannot be located or who otherwise choose not to comply with the request may be towed at the owner's sole expense.

Volunteering

The Merrimack Cardinals is strictly a volunteer organization that relies solely on the goodwill and generosity of people's time and effort. Volunteers are necessary for the organization to function. Therefore, volunteering is considered a requirement for any parent or caregiver with a participant in the Program.

Your Team Parent will coordinate volunteer activities during the course of the season. Generally, volunteers are needed for the following activities: concession stand, 50/50, spotter, announcer, videographer, chain gang, minimum play recorder, goods table, field set-up and clean up, and writing articles and taking pictures for local newspapers. Please approach the Team Parent if you have a preference to work in one of the positions. The Team Parent will assign you to work in at least one of the activities if it becomes necessary. If you are scheduled to work and are unable to do so, you are responsible for finding a replacement. Keep in mind that if you do not show up, it places a burden on others as another parent in the Program may be compelled to work during their own child's game.

In addition to these activities, volunteers are also needed at the organizational level to help support our year-round fundraising efforts and end-of-year banquet. If you are interested in assisting with any of these activities or as a member of the Board of Directors, please contact a Board member.

Scholastics

Academic fitness is an integral part of Pop Warner and Merrimack Cardinals eligibility. Each participant is required to submit a full academic year report card from the previous school year (2009-2010). The participant must have achieved a grade point average of 2.0 (or 70%) or higher to be considered academically fit for the upcoming season. If a participant has not met this requirement, a Scholastic Eligibility Form must be submitted by the first practice and follow up with a satisfactory progress report from the current school year to maintain their eligibility. All Pop Warner participants currently in 5th grade or higher who have achieved a grade point average of 96 percent or above from the previous academic year will be considered for a Pop Warner Little Scholars, Inc. All-American Award. Each participant will be considered based upon grade point average, honors achieved, extracurricular activities, and community service. Participants and parents will be notified of eligibility during the season.

Inclement Weather Policy

Prior to school starting, all practices are held outdoors. Parents should pay special attention to weather conditions on practice nights, particularly if they leave the practice field. Participants will practice outside, except during thunder and lightning storms. Parents are expected to return to the field if a storm approaches during practice time as no child will be left at the field alone. Typically once school opens, cheerleading practice moves to an inside gym and is held regardless of the weather.

Refunds Policy

To be eligible for a refund, all program fees must be paid in full prior to equipment pick-up. Refunds of program and equipment/uniform fees will be allowed if such written requests are received by the respective football and spirit coordinator prior to the first day of practice (with the exception of personalized items). A partial refund of the equipment/uniform fees will be provided if such request is made within 7 days after the first practice takes place. No refunds will be provided if the request is made more than 7 days after the first practice. Personalized Cheering items are not refundable.

Bounced Check Policy

If the Treasurer is notified of a bounced check, the Treasurer will notify in writing the individual who issued the check requesting that the payment be re-issued in another form plus reimbursement for the bank charges incurred by the Program.

Problem Resolution Procedure

The Board members and coaches volunteer their time to provide players and cheerleaders with a fulfilling and enjoyable experience. However, we recognize that like in any program with more than 200 participants, concerns or issues may arise. For that reason, the Board has established this Problem Resolution Procedure and asks that you follow this procedure if you have a problem or concern.

Problems regarding specific football/spirit team rules or regulations should be brought to the Head Coach first. If you do not reach a satisfactory resolution, you should bring it to the attention of the coordinator for the spirit program or football program, whichever is appropriate. The coordinator will attempt to resolve the matter after speaking with the appropriate parties and gathering applicable facts. If you are dissatisfied with the resolution reached by the coordinator, you may submit your complaint, in writing, to the Board through any Board member and may present your grievance at the following Board meeting. Board meetings may, in appropriate circumstances, be scheduled on an emergency basis.

Concerns or problems that are not team rule specific should be brought first to a Board member. That Board member will present the matter to the full Board.

Spirit Squads

Spirit squads have been very important part of the success of the Merrimack Cardinals Program. They have competed at the state, regional, and national levels and have maintained high scholastic rankings at the state and national level.

The program stresses learning more than cheering. It involves self-discipline, teamwork, good sportsmanship, leadership, social development, respect, and fun! The program provides an opportunity to participate in an organized and supervised environment with emphasis on maximum safety and to offer a lasting experience.

Spirit squads are organized at multiple levels depending on age. The number of teams and the levels offered by the Cardinals in any given year depends on registration. Cheerleaders are contacted by their coach prior to their first practice with squad and practice information. Spirit squad continued eligibility is dependent upon attendance, attitude, and conduct at school, practices, and games.

Practices are held to develop each individual Spirit squad member into a complete Spirit squad unit to cheer at each game and to compete at the Spirit squad competition(s). It is **extremely important** for each child to attend each practice and be on time, due to the precise routine required for half-time and competition. Each practice will begin with a full range of necessary conditioning exercises. Even if the child is late to practice, he or she will be expected to do the conditioning exercises.

Each parent should ensure that their child is on time and at the appropriate practice and/or game location prior to leaving. Parents should make arrangements to pick up their children upon completion of the practice and/or game. A filled water bottle and appropriate clothing is required for each practice and game. Label all personal possessions for safekeeping.

Practices: Prior to school opening, practice will be 10 hours per week. After school opening, practice will be 6 hours per week. Breaks do not count toward the amount of practice time. Practice schedules are determined and set by each squad's coaches and will be announced at a later date. Conflicts that interfere with a scheduled practice must be made known to the appropriate coach.

Games: Games will be held each weekend during the season. **All cheerleaders are required to attend ALL games for their respective teams.** Game schedules will be announced as soon as they are available. Games are to be approached with the attitude of a competition and not a practice. The cheerleaders must be in place at the start of the game and at the start of the third quarter. A small break will be given during half-time. Each child must arrive in full dress uniform one hour prior to game time for conditioning, to practice the game cheers, and to prepare for the half-time routine.

Competitions: A State Competition will be held in October (time and place to be announced) to compete for state standings. Each spirit squad will perform a 2 1/2 minute routine (Tiny Mites and Mitey Mites perform a 1 minute exhibition). Qualified, impartial judges score each routine for motions, spirit, voices, formations, spacing, jumps, tumbles, stunts, dance, timing, and creativity. The Program also participates in other local competitions from time to time. Squad participation in these competitions is at the coach's discretion. Any participant who does not wish to compete shall notify their coach and/or the Spirit Coordinator prior to September 1 and complete the requisite forms.

Uniform Responsibility: Cheerleaders are provided with a vest and skirt that must be returned promptly at the end of the season. At the coach's request, cheerleaders may also be provided with a sweater and/or pom poms, which are also required to be returned promptly at the end of the season. The following personal items are provided and kept by the cheerleader: sneakers, body suit, and two pairs of socks.

The Spirit Coordinator inspects the equipment at the beginning of the season to deem it undamaged. Parents shall also inspect the equipment upon issuance and report any damage immediately to avoid later penalties.

It costs approximately \$350 to replace a sweater, vest, and skirts so please do **not allow your daughter to eat without first removing her uniform!**

Uniform care: NO BLEACH!! Sweaters, vests, and skirts are machine washable at cold or warm setting, gentle cycle. PLEASE DO NOT PUT THEM IN THE DRYER. The skirts and vests will not wrinkle if they are line dried.

UNIFORMS MUST BE RETURNED WITHIN TWO WEEKS AFTER THE SEASON ENDS. WHEN TURNING IN THE UNIFORM, THE UNIFORM MUST BE UNDAMAGED AND FRESHLY LAUNDERED. IF DAMAGE OCCURS TO THE UNIFORM DURING THE SEASON, PLEASE REPORT IT IMMEDIATELY TO YOUR COACH OR THE SPIRIT COORDINATOR. YOU WILL BE BILLED FOR UNRETURNED ITEMS OR ITEMS RETURNED DAMAGED OR ABUSED TO THE POINT THAT THEY ARE UNUSABLE. THE DETERMINATION OF DAMAGED GOODS FOR WHICH YOU WILL BE CHARGED LIES SOLELY WITH THE SPIRIT COORDINATOR AT HIS OR HER SOLE DISCRETION. NORMAL WEAR AND TEAR IS ANTICIPATED.

Football Teams

Football teams are organized at multiple levels depending on age and weight. The number of teams and the levels offered by the Cardinals in any given year depends on registration. I. The Football Coordinator will place players onto teams following the guidelines below.

Cardinals Football Levels:

<u>Level</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Max Certification Weight</u>
Tiny Mite (F)	5-6-7	35-75 lbs.
Mitey Mite (E) (older/lighter)	7-8 9	45-90 lbs. 45-75 lbs.
Junior Pee Wee (D) (older/lighter)	8-9-10 11	60-105 lbs. 60-85 lbs.
Pee Wee (C) (older/lighter)	9-10-11 12	75-120 lbs. 75-100 lbs.
<i>Junior Varsity and Varsity</i>		
Junior High	11-12-13-14 Grades 6-8	Unlimited weight

Players must meet all requirements of weight and age according to these standards. The above chart shows that a player may be eligible for more than one team. It is the policy of the Cardinals Program to place players at the lowest level of play for which they are eligible without requiring weight loss. For example, a 10 year old child weighing 88 pounds fits the profile to play Junior Pee Wee and Pee Wee. Our policy would place this child on the Junior Pee Wee team.

Northeast Jr. High Football League: The Northeast Jr. High Football League consists of teams from northern Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire. The league prepares players for high school football in a varsity/junior varsity format. It provides an opportunity for middle school age players who do not meet the youth football weight restrictions. **There are no weight limits.** The Merrimack High School Tomahawk football program directly supports and encourages the Cardinals' participation in the Jr. High League.

Practices: Preseason practice begins before school opens in late July, early August. For the youth football teams, preseason practice is limited to 10 hours per week and 2 ½ hours per day. Once regular season games begin, practice is limited to 6 hours per week and 2 hours per day. Break time does not count against the weekly and daily practice time limits. A minimum 10 minute break after each hour of practice is required.

The first 10 hours of practice for the youth football teams are devoted to conditioning. Each player is required to complete 10 hours of conditioning before the player will be allowed to practice in full pads and participate in hitting drills. After completing the mandatory 10 hours of conditioning and mandatory 10 hours of contact practice in pads (20 hours total), players are eligible to participate in inter-squad scrimmages.

Games: Games will be held each weekend during the season. All players are required to attend ALL games for their respective teams. Game schedules will be announced as soon as they are available. Games are to be approach with the attitude of a competition and not a practice. Each child must arrive in full game uniform one and a half hours prior to game time for conditioning and game preparation.

Guaranteed Play:

The Cardinals will continue to adhere to a guaranteed play policy. This means that each child will play at least 8, 10, or 12 plays per game in accordance with established state youth football league guidelines, depending upon the number of players at each level of play on game day.

Our conference complies with a mandatory play rule (“MPR”) in all divisions of play at all games. All players are entitled to play in all games, regardless of ability level, win-loss records, or score of the game. Under state rules, the number of minimum plays per player depends upon the number of players on the team: 31-35 players—8 minimum plays; 26-30 players—10 plays; 16-25 players—12 plays.

Additional requirements:

1. The plays must be from the line of scrimmage. Kickoffs, extra points, and free kicks do not count toward the MPR requirement.
2. Plays or downs that are called back by the referees are not counted toward the MPR requirement, unless the penalty is declined or the down counts. The ensuing replay of that down, however, is counted.
3. Only "active" plays count toward the minimum play rule. The team is prohibited from taking steps to minimize the action of certain players or the integrity of plays. For example, requiring that the QB fall to the ground after the ball is snapped to minimize the action of certain players is prohibited and does not count toward the minimum play number.
4. The number of players who make weight and are ready to play at the beginning of the game determines the roster size for the MPR for that game.
5. All players will be informed about the MPR.
6. The only exceptions to the MPR will be for injuries or discipline reasons (such as unexcused absence from practices or other local rules conveyed to players, cheerleaders, and parents and applied equally to players of all abilities). Any player on the roster who does not play should not be weighed prior to the game, and a written explanation must appear on the MPR sheet. Any disciplinary action extending to two or more games may be investigated. Any player not eligible to play must remove shoulder pads.
7. At the end of the third quarter, all players who have not completed their mandatory plays will start the fourth quarter. These players will remain in the game at least until their mandatory plays have been fulfilled. This includes plays that do not count toward the fulfillment of their mandatory plays (e.g., kickoffs, free kicks, and extra points).
8. Each team must provide two (2) monitors at every game to ensure compliance with the MPR. The opposing team's monitor will record the Cardinals' mandatory plays on the Cardinals' sidelines with the Cardinals' monitor spotting for him or her. The Cardinals' monitor will record the opposing team's mandatory plays in the same manner. Coaches should inquire about the MPR status for their team only. MPR status may be viewed by the referees, the team president, and the state conference staff. MPRs are not subject to review by any other persons.

Once the MPR requirement has been met for all eligible players, the MPR certification sheet must be signed by the head coach and both monitors on the sideline and sent to the Football Coordinator within seven (7) days. A player who fails to meet his or her mandatory play requirement is required to start the next game and complete twice the usual number of MPRs. Further action for failure to allow a player to meet the mandatory play requirement may result in fines or other appropriate action. Monitors should remain on the field until the end of the game to record the final score.

The playing time and positions of players will be based upon attendance, ability, desire, and effort shown at practice as determined by the head coach. Player eligibility is also dependent upon attendance, attitude, and conduct at school, practices, and games.

Warm Weather Precautions

To prevent dehydration and related heat illnesses, players should drink before, during, and after practice (see General Guidelines). Each player is required to bring a water bottle to practice. Players should be instructed to drink to replace fluids, even if they don't feel thirsty. Coaches provide frequent water breaks during practice, but players should tell the coach if they feel ill or in need of a drink at any time. Common warning signs of dehydration include thirst, headache, dizziness, weakness, irritability, fatigue, and nausea.

GENERAL GUIDELINES	Kids less than 90 pounds	Kids more than 90 pounds
One hour before practice	Drink 3 to 6 oz.	Drink 6 to 12 oz.
During practice	Drink 3 to 5 oz. every 20 minutes	Drink 6 to 9 oz. every 20 minutes
In the first hour after practice	Drink up to 8 oz. per ½ pound of weight loss	Drink up to 12 oz. per ½ pound of weight loss

Uniform Responsibility: Football players are provided the following equipment that must be returned promptly at the end of each season: game pants, game jerseys (2) practice pants, practice jersey, helmet with face mask, rib pads (optional), shoulder pads, and girdle with pads. Game jerseys must not be altered in any way. The following personal items are provided and kept by the player: socks, cups, and mouth guards. Players are permitted to wear sneakers, molded rubber cleats (soccer style), or detachable rubber (football style) cleats. No metal cleats are permitted. Cleats may not exceed ½” in length.

Prior to distribution, the equipment is inspected by the Equipment Coordinator and is determined to be in good condition. Parents shall also inspect the equipment upon issuance and report any damage immediately to avoid later penalties.

It costs approximately \$350 to replace the football equipment your child needs to participate, so please be sure that your child treats the equipment with care. Return the uniform promptly and be sure that it has been cleaned. If you have any questions regarding the uniform or equipment, please contact the Football Coordinator or Equipment Coordinator.

Uniform Care: NO BLEACH on game or practice pants or jerseys. Practice pants, game pants, and jerseys may all be machine washed at warm setting. Practice pants and game pants may be placed briefly in the dryer at warm setting. **GAME JERSEYS MUST NEVER BE PLACED IN THE DRYER UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.** The jersey may “melt” if put in the dryer.

UNIFORMS MUST BE TURNED IN WITHIN TWO WEEKS AFTER THE SEASON ENDS. WHEN TURNING IN THE EQUIPMENT, THE UNIFORM MUST BE

UNDAMAGED AND FRESHLY LAUNDERED. IF DAMAGE OCCURS TO THE UNIFORM DURING THE SEASON, PLEASE NOTIFY YOUR COACH OR THE EQUIPMENT COORDINATOR IMMEDIATELY. YOU WILL BE BILLED FOR UNRETURNED ITEMS OR ITEMS RETURNED DAMAGED OR ABUSED TO THE POINT THAT THEY ARE UNUSABLE. THE DETERMINATION OF DAMAGED GOODS FOR WHICH YOU WILL BE CHARGED LIES SOLELY WITH THE EQUIPMENT COORDINATOR AT HIS OR HER SOLE DISCRETION. NORMAL WEAR AND TEAR IS ANTICIPATED.

Regional & National Competitions

Some or all of the Merrimack Cardinals football teams may be eligible to play for the state championships in the playoffs after the regular season. The state champion for each division may be eligible to play in the New England Regional Playoffs. Only the winner of the New England Regional Playoffs will advance to the National Championships. If a Merrimack Cardinals football team wins its division (the winner's bracket) at the New England Regional Level, the Board of Directors may vote to allow the team to travel to the National Championships.

Merrimack Cardinals Spirit Squads may compete at the New England Regional Competition if they place first, second, or third in their divisions. If a Merrimack Cardinals spirit squad places first in its division at the New England Regional Competition, the Board of Directors may vote to allow the team to travel to the National Championships. The squad will not be considered to compete at the national level unless it places first in its division at the New England Regional Competition against other teams. Automatic bids do not necessarily qualify.

Traveling to the National Championship is very expensive. Unfortunately, the Cardinals Program does not have sufficient funds to pay the expenses for teams and their coaches to travel to the National Championships. Families of all players or cheerleaders who travel to the national championships are expected to participate in fundraising activities to raise funds to pay these expenses. Any families who fail or refuse to participate in fundraising are responsible for 100% of the travel expenses of their players or cheerleaders.

Code of Conduct for Participants

Players and cheerleaders are expected to comply with this Code of Conduct, as well as the expectations outlined in the “Partnership between Merrimack Elementary Schools, Merrimack Police Department and Merrimack Youth Association” as described on pages 18 and 19 and the Pop Warner Little Scholars Officials Rules. Failure to comply with any of these rules could result in disciplinary action, up to and including, suspension from a game or expulsion from the Cardinals Program.

- Players and cheerleaders are expected to show respect and courtesy to all other players, cheerleaders, coaches, officials, and spectators at every game, practice, or sporting event.
- Players and cheerleaders are expected to refrain from swearing and derogatory language toward others.
- Players and cheerleaders are expected to cooperate with their coaches.
- Players and cheerleaders are prohibited from the use of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco, on and off the field.

Code of Conduct for Parents

Parents of all Merrimack Cardinals Program participants are expected to comply with the following Code of Conduct, as well as the expectations outlined in the “Partnership between Merrimack Elementary Schools, Merrimack Police Department and Merrimack Youth Association” as described on pages 18 and 19.

- Parents and guests are expected to be positive role models for their children and encourage sportsmanship by showing respect and courtesy, and by demonstrating positive support for all players, coaches, officials, and spectators at every game, practice, or sporting event.
- Parents and guests are prohibited from engaging in any kind of unsportsmanlike conduct with any official, coach, player, or parent such as booing and taunting, refusing to shake hands, swearing, or using profane language or gestures.
- Parents are prohibited from encouraging any behaviors or practices that would endanger the health and well-being of the athletes.
- Parents are expected to demand that their children treat other players, coaches, officials, and spectators with respect, regardless of ability, race, religion, creed, gender, age, or any other status.
- Parents are prohibited from ridiculing or yelling at their children or other participants or coaches for making a mistake or losing a competition.
- Parents are expected to respect the officials and their authority during games and are prohibited from questioning, discussing, or confronting officials and coaches at the game field.
- Parents are prohibited from the use of drugs, tobacco, and alcohol at practices and games. Smoking is only permitted in designated areas where available.

Failure to comply with any of these rules and expectations will result as follows:

First Offense: Removal from practice and game facilities for a one week period;

Second Offense: Suspension from any Cardinal event and/or removal of child from practices and games for the remainder of the season;

Third Offense: Permanent removal from the Cardinals organization including registration.

Code of Conduct for Coaches

Coaches of all Merrimack Cardinals Program participants are expected to comply with the following Code of Conduct, as well as the expectations outlined in the "Partnership between Merrimack Elementary Schools, Merrimack Police Department and Merrimack Youth Association" as described below.

Coaches agree to never physically engage a child (such examples may include but are not limited to grabbing a face mask, pushing, poking, slapping, or pulling) regardless of their intentions, in any manner, which leaves a reasonable doubt (perception of the general public) as to their motivation. Violation of this provision will result in immediate removal from coaching within the Cardinals organization.

Coaches agree to not criticize/berate participants ever. Coaches agree to provide constructive criticism, in private, or in the presence of teams/squad members if others might benefit. Violation of this provision will result in the following:

First Offense: Written warning;

Second Offense: Suspension of one game up to suspension for the season;

Third Offense: Banned from coaching within the Cardinals organization.

Partnership between Merrimack Elementary Schools, Merrimack Police Department & Merrimack Youth Association

Statement of Common Purpose

The partnership between the Merrimack Elementary Schools, Merrimack Youth Association (MYA), and the Merrimack Police Department cooperatively creates opportunities for interaction and support to enhance the educational and social growth of Merrimack youth. The purpose of this partnership is to provide a clear and consistent guideline for a safe environment for the youth of Merrimack. We believe this alignment creates a spirit of involvement and concern for youth in the development of respect and cooperation, good sportsmanship, and citizenship. An important goal of the partnership is to offer opportunities for youth to grow physically, socially and emotionally, as well as build bridges to develop a sense of unity and pride in our community.

The purpose of this statement is to guide our youth toward becoming resourceful, confident community members who are able to adapt and contribute to an ever-changing society. The Merrimack Elementary Schools, MYA, and the Merrimack Police Department share the following goals and expectations:

Youth are expected to:

1. Take responsibility for their behavior and be accountable for their decisions at school and community events.
2. Learn socialization skills, respect and fairplay through interacting with team members, coaches, and officials while engaged in formal and informal recreation programs.
3. Understand that competition is healthy, but participation and good sportsmanship are equally important goals.
4. Make decisions that will lead to positive outcomes.
5. Develop the ability to work cooperatively in group settings.

Adults (school personnel, coaches, parents, and other adults) are expected to:

1. Teach and model respect for self and others.
2. Provide a safe and positive environment for youth to grow physically, socially, and emotionally.
3. Provide opportunities for youth to develop and master basic skills that include sharing, working with others, and accepting success as well as disappointment.
4. Take responsibility to maintain discipline and model good sportsmanship.
5. Foster life skills such as leadership, organization, and time management.

The following behaviors are examples of actions that will not be tolerated and will result in corrective action by the appropriate organization(s).

- Harassment and Bullying
- Teasing and Taunting
- Profane Language and Actions
- Unsafe Physical Actions
- Fighting
- Threatening or Endangering Others
- Destruction of Property