

# Student-Athlete Eligibility Policy

Roster Verification, Participation Standards & Compliance Requirements for All Member Schools · Grades 6–8

■ ELIGIBLE	■ ■ CONDITIONAL	■ NOT ELIGIBLE	■ NOT ELIGIBLE
Grades 6, 7 & 8	Grade 5	Grade 9+	Age 15 before Aug 1
Standard eligible	NFMSS written approval required	No exception exists	Written exception required

**■ REQUIRED READING — Before submitting rosters, all schools must review this policy in full.**

Use of an ineligible student-athlete may result in forfeiture, removal from rankings, suspension, or loss of championship eligibility. Questions: [compliance@nfmss.org](mailto:compliance@nfmss.org)

## 1 Who Is Eligible to Participate?

A student-athlete is eligible to participate in NFMSS competition when the student meets **all** of the following conditions:

- Is officially enrolled in the school he or she represents.
- Is in an eligible middle school grade level recognized by NFMSS.
- Is listed on the official roster submitted to NFMSS.
- Has been verified by the school's Athletic Director or authorized school administrator.
- Meets all applicable NFMSS eligibility requirements.
- Meets any applicable school, district, conference, state, or local athletic eligibility rules.
- Is not currently serving an academic, disciplinary, transfer, conduct, or eligibility restriction.
- Has not participated for another middle school team in the same sport during the same NFMSS calendar-year season unless approved in writing by the NFMSS National Office.

**Student-athletes may only compete for the middle school they currently attend and are eligible to represent.**

## 2 What Grades Are Eligible?

NFMSS is designed for middle school athletics and recognizes student-athletes in:

- 6th Grade
- 7th Grade
- 8th Grade

These grade levels represent the standard NFMSS middle school competition structure. A student-athlete must be enrolled in one of these grade levels at the time of participation unless a written exception is granted by the NFMSS National Office.

### 3 Are 5th Graders Allowed?

#### ■ Generally, no.

A 5th grade student may only be considered for eligibility if all of the conditions below are met AND the NFMSS National Office provides written approval before the student participates.

All of the following conditions must be satisfied:

- The student is officially enrolled in a school that includes 5th grade as part of its recognized middle school athletic structure.
- The student is permitted to participate in middle school athletics under the school's written policy.
- The school district, charter school, private school, or governing authority allows the student to compete at the middle school level.
- The student is placed on the official school roster.
- The Athletic Director submits written verification.
- The NFMSS National Office provides written approval before the student participates.

**Without written NFMSS approval, 5th grade students are not eligible to participate in NFMSS events.**

### 4 Are 9th Graders Allowed?

#### ■ No.

9th grade students are not eligible to participate in NFMSS competition under any circumstance.

NFMSS is a middle school athletics organization serving students in grades six through eight. A student who has entered 9th grade, is enrolled in high school, or is participating as a high school student is not eligible for NFMSS middle school competition.

This applies even if the student attends a school that includes both middle school and high school grades on the same campus.

### 5 Is There an Age Cutoff?

Yes. NFMSS uses an age cutoff to protect fair competition and age-appropriate participation.

#### ■ Recommended NFMSS Standard:

A student-athlete may not turn 15 years old before August 1 of the current school year unless a written exception is approved by the NFMSS National Office.

If a state, school district, local athletic association, or member school has a stricter age requirement, the stricter rule will apply. NFMSS reserves the right to review birth records, school records, enrollment records, and other documentation to determine age eligibility.

## 6 How Is Enrollment Verified?

All participating schools must submit official rosters to NFMSS for each sport. Enrollment is verified through the following process:

1. The school submits a roster for each sport.
2. NFMSS reviews the submitted roster.
3. NFMSS sends or makes the roster available to the school's Athletic Director or authorized school official.
4. The Athletic Director verifies that each student-athlete is officially enrolled at the school.
5. The Athletic Director confirms that each student-athlete is eligible to represent that school.
6. NFMSS records the roster as verified once approval is received.

**A student-athlete is not eligible to compete until the student appears on a submitted and verified roster.**

## 7 Official Roster Requirements

Each school must submit a separate official roster for every sport. Rosters must include, at minimum:

- Student-athlete full legal name
- Grade level
- School name and sport
- Jersey number, if applicable
- Date of birth, if requested by NFMSS
- Athletic Director or school administrator verification
- Any additional information required by NFMSS

Once a student-athlete appears on an official roster, that student-athlete may not participate for another middle school in the same sport during the same NFMSS calendar-year season unless the NFMSS National Office grants written approval.

## 8 Roster Additions After the Season Begins

A school may request to add a student-athlete after the season has started. However, the student-athlete is not eligible to participate until:

- The school submits the roster addition to NFMSS.
- The Athletic Director verifies enrollment and eligibility.
- The NFMSS National Office reviews the request.
- NFMSS provides written clearance.

**Warning:**

Any student-athlete who participates before being cleared by NFMS may be ruled ineligible.

**9 Transfer Students**

A transfer student is a student who moves from one school to another during the school year, athletic season, or NFMS calendar-year season. A transfer student may be eligible only if:

- The student is officially enrolled at the new school.
- The student is no longer participating for the previous school.
- The student has not already competed for another middle school in the same sport during the same NFMS calendar-year season, unless approved by NFMS.
- The receiving school submits the student-athlete for roster approval.
- The Athletic Director verifies enrollment and eligibility.
- The NFMS National Office grants written clearance.

NFMS may deny transfer eligibility if the transfer appears to be made for athletic advantage, recruitment, team-stacking, avoidance of discipline, or any purpose that violates the spirit of school-based athletics.

**10 Homeschool Students**

NFMS is a school-based athletics organization. Homeschool students may not form independent NFMS teams unless approved by the NFMS National Office. A homeschool student may be considered only if:

- The student is legally recognized as a homeschool student under applicable state law.
- The student is permitted to participate with a member school under state, district, or school policy.
- The member school accepts responsibility for the student's athletic participation.
- The student is submitted on the school's official roster.
- The Athletic Director verifies the student's participation eligibility.
- NFMS provides written approval.

**11 Charter School Students**

Students enrolled in charter schools may participate if the charter school is registered or approved by NFMS and the student meets all eligibility requirements. A charter school student must:

- Be officially enrolled in the charter school.
- Be in an eligible grade level.
- Be listed on the school's official roster.
- Be verified by the Athletic Director or school administrator.
- Meet academic, disciplinary, age, and conduct standards.
- Receive NFMS clearance if required.

Charter school teams must follow the same roster, eligibility, uniform, conduct, and competition standards as all other NFMS participating schools.

## 12 Private School Students

Students enrolled in private schools may participate if the private school is registered or approved by NFMS and the student meets all eligibility requirements. A private school student must:

- Be officially enrolled in the private school.
- Be in an eligible middle school grade.
- Be listed on the official school roster.
- Be verified by the school's Athletic Director or authorized administrator.
- Meet all NFMS eligibility standards and the school's academic and conduct requirements.

Private schools must not add students from outside the school for athletic participation unless those students are officially enrolled and approved under NFMS rules.

## 13 K–8, K–12, and Combined-Grade Schools

Some schools serve multiple grade levels on one campus, such as K–8, 6–12, or K–12 schools. Students may participate in NFMS competition only if they are in an eligible middle school grade level and meet all NFMS requirements.

- A student in 6th, 7th, or 8th grade at a combined-grade school may be eligible.
- A student in 9th grade or above at the same school is NOT eligible.

School structure does not override NFMS grade eligibility requirements.

## 14 Students Repeating a Grade

A student who repeats a grade may be eligible if the student:

- Is enrolled in an eligible middle school grade.
- Meets the NFMS age requirement.
- Is verified by the school's Athletic Director.
- Meets academic and disciplinary standards.
- Has not repeated a grade for the purpose of gaining athletic advantage.

NFMS reserves the right to review repeat-grade cases individually. A student repeating 8th grade may be subject to additional review, especially if the student is older than the standard age range or has previously completed an 8th grade athletic season.

## 15 Academic Eligibility

NFMSS believes student-athletes are **students first**. To participate in NFMSS competition, student-athletes must remain in good academic standing according to their school's academic eligibility policy.

NFMSS encourages member schools to require:

- Regular school attendance
- Satisfactory academic progress
- Passing grades in core subjects
- Compliance with school academic policies
- Intervention or support for students who are academically at risk

A student-athlete who is declared academically ineligible by his or her school may not participate in NFMSS competition until the school restores eligibility.

## 16 Disciplinary Eligibility

A student-athlete must be in good disciplinary standing to participate in NFMSS competition. A student-athlete may be ruled ineligible if the student is:

- Suspended or expelled from school
- Serving an athletic suspension or disciplinary penalty issued by the school, district, or NFMSS
- Removed from participation for misconduct or found to have violated the NFMSS Code of Conduct
- Involved in fighting, threats, harassment, bullying, unsportsmanlike conduct, or other serious misconduct
- Ejected from an NFMSS contest and subject to penalty

Schools must report disciplinary issues that affect eligibility when submitting rosters or before allowing a student-athlete to participate.

## 17 Multi-School Participation

Student-athletes may not play for multiple middle schools in the same sport during the same NFMSS calendar-year season. A student-athlete may not move from team to team, appear on multiple rosters, or compete for another school after being rostered with one school unless the NFMSS National Office grants written approval.

This rule exists to prevent team-stacking, recruiting abuse, competitive imbalance, and confusion over school representation.

## 18 Club, Travel, AAU, and Independent Team Participation

Participation on a club, travel, AAU, recreational, or independent team does not automatically make a student ineligible for NFMSS competition unless:

- The participation violates school, district, state, or NFMSS rules.
- The student uses outside-team participation to represent another school.
- The student participates in a conflicting NFMSS event without approval.

- The outside team is being used to avoid NFMS roster rules.
- The student's school declares the student ineligible.

## 19 False Information, Misrepresentation, or Fraud

### ■ Warning:

Any false information submitted to NFMS may result in immediate penalties. NFMS may request documentation at any time.

This includes false or misleading information about: enrollment, grade level, age, school attendance, transfer status, academic eligibility, disciplinary status, roster status, identity, and prior participation. Failure to provide requested documentation may result in the student-athlete being ruled ineligible.

## 20 What Happens If a School Uses an Ineligible Player?

If a school uses an ineligible player, NFMS may impose penalties on the student-athlete, coach, team, school, or program. Possible penalties include:

- Forfeiture of games
- Removal from rankings
- Loss of playoff, regional, state, or national championship eligibility
- Disqualification from an event or tournament
- Suspension of the student-athlete or coach
- Probation for the school or athletic program
- Fines or administrative penalties, if adopted by NFMS policy
- Loss of NFMS membership privileges
- Vacating awards, records, titles, or recognition
- Referral to the NFMS appeals or compliance process
- Denial of future roster additions or transfer requests

**A school that knowingly uses an ineligible student-athlete may face stronger penalties.**

## 21 Coach and Athletic Director Responsibility

Coaches and Athletic Directors are responsible for ensuring that only eligible student-athletes participate in NFMS competition. Before any student-athlete competes, the school must verify:

- The student is enrolled at the school.
- The student is in an eligible grade.
- The student is listed on the official roster.
- The student is academically eligible.
- The student is in good disciplinary standing.
- The student is not rostered with another school in the same sport.

- The student meets all applicable NFMSS requirements.

Failure to properly verify eligibility may result in penalties.

## 22 Parent and Guardian Responsibility

Parents and guardians are expected to provide accurate information regarding enrollment, age, grade level, transfer status, academic status, and prior participation.

Parents and guardians must not knowingly submit false information, encourage a student-athlete to compete for the wrong school, or assist in violating NFMSS eligibility rules.

## 23 Eligibility Challenges and Protests

A school may challenge the eligibility of a student-athlete if the school has credible information that the student-athlete may be ineligible. Eligibility challenges must be submitted in writing and include supporting documentation.

NFMSS may decline to review challenges based only on rumors, speculation, social media comments, personal disputes, or unsupported allegations. NFMSS may review eligibility before, during, or after competition.

## 24 Appeals

A student-athlete, parent or guardian, coach, Athletic Director, or school directly affected by an eligibility decision may request an appeal according to NFMSS appeal procedures. Appeals must be submitted within the required deadline and must include supporting documentation.

### ■ Important:

An appeal does not automatically make a student-athlete eligible. Unless NFMSS grants temporary written clearance, the student-athlete may not participate while the appeal is pending. The decision of the NFMSS appeals process shall be final unless otherwise stated in writing.

## 25 Final Authority

The NFMSS National Office has final authority to interpret and enforce this eligibility policy. NFMSS reserves the right to review unusual circumstances, grant exceptions, deny eligibility, approve waivers, impose penalties, or request additional documentation when necessary to protect the integrity of middle school athletics.

### ELIGIBILITY FAQ

#### Who is eligible?

Students who are officially enrolled at the school they represent, listed on the official roster, verified by the Athletic Director, and eligible under NFMSS and school rules.

<b>What grades are eligible?</b>	Grades 6, 7, and 8.
<b>Are 5th graders allowed?</b>	Generally, no. A 5th grader may only participate with written approval from the NFMSS National Office if the student's school structure and local rules permit middle school athletic participation.
<b>Are 9th graders allowed?</b>	No. NFMSS is for middle school athletics. Ninth grade students are not eligible under any circumstance.
<b>Is there an age cutoff?</b>	Recommended NFMSS standard: a student-athlete may not turn 15 before August 1 of the current school year unless a written exception is approved by NFMSS. Stricter local or school rules still apply.
<b>How is enrollment verified?</b>	Schools submit official rosters to NFMSS. The school's Athletic Director verifies that each student-athlete is enrolled and eligible to represent the school.
<b>What about transfer students?</b>	Transfer students must be enrolled at the new school, submitted on the official roster, verified by the Athletic Director, and cleared by the NFMSS National Office before participating.
<b>What about homeschool students?</b>	Homeschool students may only participate if permitted by state, district, and school rules, accepted by a member school, submitted on the school roster, and approved by NFMSS.
<b>What about charter and private schools?</b>	Charter and private school students may participate if their school is registered or approved by NFMSS and the student is officially enrolled and eligible.
<b>What about students repeating a grade?</b>	Students repeating a grade may be reviewed by NFMSS. They must meet grade, age, enrollment, academic, and disciplinary requirements.
<b>What happens if a school uses an ineligible player?</b>	Penalties may include forfeits, removal from rankings, disqualification from championships, suspension, probation, loss of awards, or other NFMSS sanctions.

**NFMSS Student-Athlete Eligibility Policy** — National Federation of Middle School Sports (NFMSS■)

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