Athletic Mission and Philosophy
Revised January 2015

Mission
The athletic mission of The Steward School is to provide a high-quality, interscholastic sports program that encourages athletes of varied talents and abilities to develop their unique strengths, while instilling the values of responsible teamwork. The Steward School seeks and celebrates the individual talents of every athlete and is committed to offering them an educational experience in an intimate and nurturing, yet challenging, environment.

The Steward School will:
• Champion small teams and limit the size of the overall student body, so that it will have the ability to develop and identify the talents of every athlete;
• Provide opportunities for individual participation to an extent not possible in a larger school;
• Provide adequate structure and discipline to give each athlete a moral/ethical compass;
• Expect that each athlete practices the values of honesty, integrity, and responsible sportsmanship;
• Expect that each athlete develops a sincere commitment to learn and grow; and,
• Attract enthusiastic, dedicated, and talented coaches who enjoy helping each student reach his/her potential.

Philosophy
The Steward School athletic program functions as an integral part of the overall curriculum. Lessons in sportsmanship, teamwork, competitiveness, and the ability to win and lose gracefully are important components of our program. At Steward, student participation in athletics is voluntary. Our Middle School teams have a “no cut” policy. At the JV/varsity levels, there may be roster limitations; however, we attempt to involve all interested students in other aspects of the total program.

Determining Success in Steward Athletics

At Steward we not only value wins and competitive play, but also inclusion. Although not every athlete can operate at the same skill level, we make a concerted effort to include students who want to participate. Success is determined by each member of the team giving his/her personal best at each practice and during each contest; the result of this ongoing intensity is that the team, not an individual player, will be the star, and as a result, wins and competitive greatness will follow.

To ensure the success of our athletic program, we have identified three specific goals. They are:
• To promote the continual learning and improvement of the student-athlete’s skills, effort in conditioning, and leadership development.
• To display good sportsmanship, enthusiasm, team spirit and collaboration, and respect for student-athlete peers, coaches, opponents, officials, and fans.
• To promote community spirit and pride within the school.

Expectations and Sportsmanship

The Steward School, the Virginia Independent Schools Athletic Association (VISAA), and the League of Independent Schools (LIS) have specific guidelines for student-athletes, coaches, and spectators.

I. The student-athlete will:
• Submit the required forms for play (see form requirements);
• Follow the Steward Student Code of Conduct with regard to tobacco, alcohol, or illicit drugs;
• Maintain academic eligibility (see below);
• Notify the Steward athletic trainer and/or a licensed medical professional if injured, before participating in athletic activities (The trainer reports to Steward at 2 p.m. daily and works directly with the coaches and athletes and in conjunction with any physician or physical therapist.); and

NOTE: Neither coaches nor parents may override a physician’s removal of an athlete from physical activity. Notes from doctors “clearing the athlete” for play must be submitted to the trainer, but final clearance for participation and/or travel rests with the athletic director and will be based on all information obtained.

• Honor their commitment to the team through the following:
  ◊ Attend all practices and games (schedule conflicts, acclimation, and season starts)
    ◊ Student-athletes will attend all scheduled practices and games on time. Coaches must be advised of detentions and tutorials in advance. In the case of conflicting activities, such as club/travel teams or arts productions, the player should confer with the coach prior to the season’s start to determine the possibility of dual commitments.
    ◊ All student-athletes must complete a minimum of 12 practices to participate in any game or scrimmage in order to acclimate to the temperature, playing surface, and equipment.
    ◊ Practice and try-outs for the fall JV/varsity sports begin two weeks prior to the first day of school. Middle School fall sports begin one week prior to the first day of school. The winter season begins in early to mid-November, and the spring season begins in mid-February.
    ◊ JV/varsity teams may practice one hour a day during exam week.
  ◊ Attend all academic classes unless excused by the directors of the Middle/Upper School
  ◊ Accept the coach’s authority regarding playing time, positions, etc.
  ◊ Ride the Steward buses to and from all destinations unless excused by the coach or athletic director

Sportsmanship Expectations
• Treat opponents with respect.
• Play hard, but play within the rules.
• Exercise self-control at all times, setting the example for others to follow.
• Respect officials and accept their decisions without gesture or argument.
• Win without boasting, lose without excuses, and never quit.
• Always remember that it is a privilege to represent the school and the community.

Should any of the above be violated, coaches may discipline players. Depending on the severity of the violation, actions may include loss of playing time, loss of captain status, removal from the team and/or suspension/expulsion from school. All sanctions will have final approval from the athletic director or head of school.

II. The coaches will:
• Treat their players and opponents with respect;
• Inspire in the athletes a love for the game and the desire to compete fairly;
• Model the behavior expected by the student-athletes and treat the athletic arena as a classroom;
• Discipline the players who display unsportsmanlike behavior;
• Respect the judgment and interpretation of the rules by the officials; and
• Communicate with parents on regular basis.

III. The spectators (parents, fans, students) will:
• Attempt to understand and be informed of the playing rules;
• Appreciate a good play no matter who makes it;
• Cooperate with and respond enthusiastically to cheerleaders;
• Show compassion for injured players, applaud positive performances, and refrain from heckling, jeering, profane, or obnoxious behavior and distracting players;
• Respect the judgment/strategy of the coach and not criticize players, coaches, or officials; and
• Respect the property of others and the authority of those who administer the competition and censure those whose behavior is unbecoming.

Spectators violating the above will be addressed by the athletic director (or his designee) and/or the head of school.

In addition, it is expected that parents will attend games and parent meetings, participate in athletic clubs, fundraisers, and other athletic events to support community spirit and pride at Steward.

Academic Eligibility

The student-athlete will balance his/her academic workload along with his/her participation in athletics and the arts. To maintain academic eligibility the student-athlete will have no failing grades on the current interim report card. The directors of Middle and Upper School may request exceptions to this policy for individual students.

Form Requirements

The forms listed below must be submitted prior to practice/play and will apply to all sports played during the school calendar year.

1. Physical Form
2. Athletic Consent Form
3. Emergency Medical Card
4. Concussion Form

Communication

Parents should attend all parent team meetings with coaches prior to each season’s sport to ensure all expectations are understood. If problems arise, parents are encouraged to confer with the coach at a mutually convenient time. Issues impacting a student-athlete deserve focused time, attention, and thought by all stakeholders, therefore discussing a concern before, during, or after a game or practice is prohibited. The athletic director is available to assist with any concerns not resolved by the coaching staff.

Current athletic schedules, highlights, news, rosters, directions to athletic events, and more may be accessed at www.stewardschool.org.

Inclement Weather

Cancellation of games or practices will typically be announced during lunch times. Information regarding cancellations, including possible rescheduling, will be posted on the website by 2 p.m. If school is closed due to inclement weather, no practices or games will be held unless there is a special circumstance, which must be cleared by the athletic director.

In case of thunder or lightning, the LIS and VISAA policies require the coach to remove the team from the field immediately and wait out the storm in a safe location. No team will return to the field until 30 minutes after thunder is heard or lightning is seen. This policy also applies to away games.
Selection of Teams

Middle School Teams
The Middle School teams are the introductory level of interscholastic competition at Steward. When there is more than one Middle School team for a particular sport, the teams will be separated by ability level. There is a “no cut” policy at this level. Coaches will make an effort to include players in games, but playing time is not guaranteed.

Junior Varsity Teams
The JV teams are considered the transitional level between the Middle School and varsity levels. JV teams consist of players below grade 11. Based on students’ skill and/or maturity levels, seventh or eighth graders may be asked to “play up” at the JV level. This decision must have the approval of the student, parent, division director, and athletic director. Coaches will make an effort to include players in games, but playing time is not guaranteed.

Varsity Teams
At the varsity level, the commitment is to put the best possible team on the field or court. Varsity selection and playing time will be based upon skill level, attitude, and work ethic. A coach may ask an eighth grader to “play up” at the varsity level based on his/her maturity and skill level along with safety awareness. The student, parent, division director, and athletic director must approve this decision. (Under state guidelines by the VISAA, no sixth or seventh grader may participate on a varsity level team when playing another VISAA school.) At the varsity level, roster limitations and playing time are determined by the coach.

Note: Please see Academic Handbook for the Upper School PE requirements.

Lettering Criteria and Athletic Awards

Seasonal Awards - Presented at the end of each sports season to all athletes. Dress-up attire is appropriate for this event.

Middle School and JV Levels: Criteria includes attitude, work ethic, and effort.
• Students receive certificates of participation.

Varsity Level: Criteria includes attitude, work ethic, effort, and number of games played.
• First year: Students receive a six-inch chenille letter “S” and a metal pin symbolic of the sport played.
• Subsequent varsity seasons: Students receive the following pins in successive years—a star pin (second year), a bar pin (third year), an insert pin (fourth year).

Major Awards - Dress-up attire is appropriate for this event.

At the Spring Athletic Awards Ceremony:
• The 110% Award is presented to that student-athlete who “knows no limit.”
• The Janet Rice Coaches Award is given to the student-athlete who exhibits exemplary sportsmanship and dedication to athletics and unselfish team play and support.

At Graduation:
• The Janet Rice Spartan Club Scholarship Award is given to a student-athlete who is recognized for his/her major team contributions, who inspired fellow teammates, who made significant contributions to the school community, and who has demonstrated leadership qualities.
• The James V. Buis Athletic Scholarship is given in memory of James V. Buis, Class of 1992, to a junior or senior student-athlete in good academic standing who has made a significant impact on the athletic program at the school.

Wall of Fame:
• Student-athlete graduates who participate in college sports are showcased in the hallways of the Athletic Center.

Hall of Fame:
• Several former student-athletes, coaches, and/or contributors are elected annually by a committee and inducted during a cer-
emony each January.

**Governing Bodies**

Most of our girls’ teams compete in the League of Independent Schools (LIS). The other member schools are Collegiate, Covenant, Fredericksburg Academy, Norfolk Academy, St. Anne’s Belfield, St. Catherine’s, Saint Gertrude, St. Margaret’s, and Trinity Episcopal. Our tennis team has an independent schedule. Currently, our boys’ teams are not associated with a conference, but have an independent competitive schedule and are eligible for state tournament play if the team qualifies.

**Athletic Offerings**

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Varsity teams exist for all of the above sports. The number of Middle School and/or JV teams will be determined each season based on interest.

**NCAA Information**

If an athlete is interested in playing college sports, he/she should meet with the coach and the college counselor for help with the NCAA information process. For additional information, go to the NCAA Clearance website (https://web1.ncaa.org/eligibility-center/common/) or call (877) 262-1492.