

ESD Sports Fellowship

Our Philosophy and Objectives

The Episcopal School of Dallas believes the purpose of athletics is to instill a love of sports in our ESD students. Involvement in athletics can help build strong character by teaching the virtues of honor, respect, and integrity, values essential to the ESD Code of Conduct. Additionally, involvement in team sports creates positive relationships among classmates and the parents, thereby strengthening the ESD community as a whole. Many ESD families elect to participate in the ESD Sports Fellowship, available for students Pre-K-sixth grade through both the Park Cities and Town North YMCAs.

ESD's program is governed by YMCA Youth Sports Rule Book and is in line with programs at our peer schools. The foundation of our philosophy is the YMCA's Youth Sports belief that places a "priority on family involvement, healthy competition rather than rivalry, value of participation over winning, team-building as well as individual development, a positive self-image and mutual respect for others."¹

The objectives of the ESD Sports Fellowship are to promote inclusivity in our sports community, ensure all parents are informed of the opportunities for their child, develop fundamental skills associated with each sport, and encourage sportsmanship among our students.

We encourage participation by all students and families and appreciate that some students may also participate in leagues and teams outside of the Town North and Park Cities YMCA. Many of these families opt to play for both.

Our Support

With these objectives in mind, ESD's Athletic Department and the Parents' Association joined together in support of the ESD Sports Fellowship. This partnership ensures all students have an opportunity to be included, parents have the information they need, and that ESD's beliefs for sportsmanship and inclusivity are embraced. The guidelines and policies set forth herein shall serve as ESD's official stance on matters.

While participation on teams is voluntary, all parents and students are expected to comply with the policies and procedures set forth as if they were contained in the ESD Code of Conduct.

¹ http://www.ymcadallas.org/youth_development/swim_sports__play/sports_leagues_camps__clinics

Our Procedures

Coaching and Parent Participation: Parents are strongly encouraged to help coach a team(s) or serve as a team coordinator(s). No experience in coaching is needed and your service is very much appreciated.

- *Role of Coaching:* Each team will have one head coach. Parents are encouraged to serve as the head coach, or as assistant coaches. Head coaches will determine their assistant coaches and team coordinator after rosters are formed. Each head coach will be required to complete certain training and certify agreement to comply with both YMCA and ESD policies and procedures, which include but are not limited to an honoring the gifts of each student, equal playing time for all participants, and devoting time and attention to all players.
- *Role of Team Coordinators:* Team coordinators will organize communication for the team regarding practices, games, schedules, and snacks/drinks. The Grade Representative will notify the head coaches of any parents on the roster who expressed an interest in serving as a team coordinator.

Should more parents volunteer to coach or coordinate than are needed, the Grade Representative shall contact all volunteers and collaboratively establish the coaches and coordinators; the final decision on any unresolved conflict shall rest with the Sports Fellowship Director. In the event that no parents volunteer or an insufficient amount of parents volunteer to coach the required number of teams, the Grade Representative shall request volunteers from the parents of participating students. Should an insufficient number volunteer, ESD will try to assist in the hiring of a coach from ESD's staff to assist the team, if staffing levels and commitments permit. This shall be a matter of last resort, and there is a strong hope and expectation that parents will lead ESD teams in the Fellowship. In such a circumstance, the costs of any non-parent coach will be divided and paid evenly by the parents of participating students.

Grade Level Representation: There will be one representative for female students and one for male students, per grade, appointed by the ESD Parents' Association to the Grade Level Sports Committee. As noted below, Primer students will be grouped with Kindergarten students.

Student Participation: Sports sign-up forms will be supplied by the ESD Sports Fellowship Director to be completed by all interested students and parents. Sign-up is limited to students currently enrolled at ESD during the given school year. One form will include fall and winter sports; another form will cover spring and summer sports. Because of the organization involved, this form should be completed by all parents and returned in a timely manner as stated in the instructions on the email and or form. Failure to do so jeopardizes participation on ESD Fellowship teams. We ask parents to be as objective as possible when completing the form, as this information will be used when selecting teams. Also, if there is some special circumstance

that should be considered, please note it on the form.

Primer and Beginner Students: ESD concurs with the YMCA philosophy not to support organized sports teams for Beginners. All Primer students will be placed with Kindergarten students.

Playing Beyond Student's Current Grade: The purpose of the ESD Sports Fellowship is to promote grade-level inclusivity and camaraderie. The YMCA and ESD concur that no child should play up a year in competition from his/her current grade absent exceptional circumstances and preference for a more competitive atmosphere shall not be deemed an exceptional circumstance in the ESD Sports Fellowship. Any decision concerning playing beyond a grade shall be made by the Sports Fellowship Director in consultation with Grade Representatives. While we strongly hope the student-athlete will also participate with his or her classmates in the ESD Sports Fellowship, for those seeking competitive-based teams, please contact the ESD Office of Athletics for suggestions of additional leagues.

Team Formation: Students will be sorted into three groups for each grade based on ability as submitted by the child's parents. The Grade Representatives will review the groups with volunteer coaches and then provide final lists to Sports Fellowship Director. The final categories will then be used to "blind draw" the students to ensure all students are included and the teams have players of comparable ability. The only students not subject to a blind draw are the head coaches' children. The number of teams offered each season will be based on standard roster sizes and the number of students interested in participating. For sports that play in both fall and spring (i.e. soccer), team and coaches will remain the same for the school year unless circumstances dictate otherwise.

- **Town North YMCA:** The ESD Sports Fellowship Director and or Grade Representative shall "blind draw" the team rosters. Those rosters will then be transmitted to the appropriate coaches, who will then alert parents to sign-up times and deadlines at the Town North YMCA. There is a strong expectation that coaches exhibit flexibility and also comply with reasonable requests concerning number of students per team, taking additional players, etc. The Sports Fellowship Director shall decide any conflicts concerning number of players per team or assignment of players.
- **Park Cities YMCA:** The ESD Sports Fellowship Director shall provide the categories to the Park Cities YMCA, who will then draw teams according to Park Cities YMCA guidelines. The Grade Representative shall alert all parents to sign-up times and deadlines at the Park Cities YMCA. After completion of sign-up, the Park Cities YMCA will supply rosters to each team's coach who will then contact his team's parents.

The rosters are final, and coaches shall not add to, modify, or alter the rosters without the expressed approval of the Sports Fellowship Director and YMCA. If an insufficient number of students exist to fill an ESD team, the ESD Sports Fellowship Director and Grade Representative will contact the YMCA to determine if non-ESD students exist to complete a team or to assist in placing the ESD students on other team rosters.

No individual parents should form new teams or invite others to join an existing ESD-branded YMCA team. Experience tells us this is one of the fastest ways to create hurt feelings and damage class cohesion. Your support is expected. Failure to do so is in violation of our Code of Conduct.

Attendance: The ESD Sports Fellowship maintains that one practice a week is appropriate, absent exceptional circumstances. Participating students and parents should punctually attend each practice and game to ensure the growth of the larger team, as well as respect for his or her coach's time and effort. If a student cannot attend a practice or game, it is the parent's responsibility to notify the coach of such an absence as soon as possible.

Football: ESD's Athletic Department recommends that teams play flag football only. However, it is each parent's decision whether to participate in tackle or flag football. ESD's Fellowship Program provides a tackle football option in fifth and sixth grade, and all coaches will be required to complete training provided by the ESD Athletic Department. ESD's teams will play tackle football through the Town North YMCA only.

ESD Branding: ESD does not permit the use of its name, image or likeness outside of the ESD Sports Fellowship or interscholastic teams, including the Middle School, Junior Varsity, and Varsity levels.

Uniforms: Because teams may be shuffled, use of standard ESD uniforms throughout the ESD Sports Fellowship program fosters cost-efficiency and community building. Uniforms may be purchased through Team Sports at 6025 Royal Lane, Suite 126, Dallas, Texas (214-378-5191). Team Sports works to keep a list of numbers assigned in each sport and grade to avoid duplication. The YMCA branches have agreed to minor duplication. To the extent possible, each coach shall be responsible for monitoring and eliminating number duplication.

Facility Use: **ESD interscholastic and Sports Fellowship Program teams will have first and highest priority in the use ESD facilities for practice.** ESD practice facilities and fields must be scheduled by the ESD Sports Fellowship Director. The ESD Sports Fellowship Director will contact all coaches concerning facilities use, dates and times at both the Lower School Campus and Merrell Road Campus. Coaches responsible for multiple teams in a given season shall be afforded first

priority of facility selection. Sports Fellowship team leaders are expected to respond in a timely manner to scheduling requests. Please note the ESD's interscholastic athletics' needs receive first priority for facility usage, which may result in the rescheduling or cancellation of facility usage for Fellowship teams.

Cancellations and Rescheduling: The YMCA branch controls game cancellations and reschedules. Team coordinators will notify all parents of any cancellations or reschedules. Coaches will be responsible for any necessary cancellation or rescheduling of practice. Outside of summer, ESD facilities cannot be used for practices on weekdays when school is not in session.

Competitive Teams: The Episcopal School of Dallas recognizes that some children want to participate in a given sport at a highly competitive level. Should an ESD family prefer a more competitive atmosphere, Chamber league or SVAA provide a more intense level of competition, more frequent practices and, usually, paid professional coaches. ESD will not coordinate Chamber or SVAA team sign-ups. Chamber or SVAA teams will also not be guaranteed the use of ESD fields or facilities, and cannot wear ESD uniforms or logos. ESD students may play for both Chamber/SVAA teams and an ESD YMCA team. Beginning in the fall of 2014, the YMCA does not allow a student to play on multiple YMCA teams within a given league during a season.

Because of the camaraderie and school spirit developed through the ESD Sports Fellowship, ESD does not support recruiting ESD Fellowship students to create or fill teams in other leagues in a manner that jeopardizes participation in the ESD Sports Fellowship program.

Thank you for your continued adherence to these policies.