

# **MSDB Athletic Handbook 2023-2024**



Mississippi Schools for the Deaf and the Blind  
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***Where Endless Opportunities Abound!***

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## **MISSISSIPPI SCHOOLS FOR THE DEAF AND THE BLIND (MSDB)**

### **OVERVIEW**

Mississippi Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (MSDB) are two special purpose schools combined into one school district. Each school serves the unique purpose of providing educational and residential services to qualifying students across the state of Mississippi.

The Mississippi School for the Deaf (MSD) was established in 1854 and is currently governed under Mississippi Code 1972 Annotated, Title 43, Chapter 5. MSD serves students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind.

The Mississippi School for the Blind (MSB) was established on March 2, 1848 by the State Legislature (Article 9, Chapter 43 – Laws of Mississippi) and currently operates under Mississippi Code 1972 Annotated, Title 43, Chapter 5. MSB serves students who are blind, visually impaired, or deafblind.

The two schools were combined into one campus in 1999. Over the years, certain services were combined to serve both schools including Facilities and Maintenance, Grounds and Transportation, Custodial Services, Health Services, Food Services, and the Business Office. In 2018, the two schools were combined into one district and Administration was restructured to serve over both schools.

On June 25, 2020 during the 2020 Regular Legislative Session, Governor Tate Reeves signed into law HB 667 amending MSDB provisions related to personnel, purchasing, and procurement for MSD, MSB, and MSDB. In implementing HB 667, new policies, procedures, and handbooks were developed and approved by the State Board of Education (SBE). MSDB registered with all required agencies and entities authorizing and allowing MSDB to conduct business as a school and as a district in educating students who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, visually impaired, and deafblind across the state of Mississippi.



# OVERVIEW OF MISSISSIPPI SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND (MSB)

## Governance and Purpose

Mississippi School for the Blind (MSB) is governed by the Mississippi State Board of Education and receives guidance on its programs and services by the MSB Stakeholder's Advisory Committee. MSB is a special purpose school for students 3-21 years of age who are visually impaired, blind and/or deafblind and are referred by their local school district for evaluation/eligibility in consideration of a placement decision.

## Mission Statement

The mission of MSB is to establish a strong foundation for learning and independence by providing individualized adaptive services and materials to enhance maximum potential for students with visual impairments or blindness.

## Belief Statements

1. Learning is the chief priority for students and the primary focus for decision-making.
2. Students with visual impairments or blindness learn in different ways and will be provided with a variety of instructional strategies.
3. Educators should be knowledgeable about the educational needs of individual students.
4. Students with visual impairments or blindness learn best when they are actively involved throughout the learning process.
5. Students with visual impairments or blindness should receive services from highly qualified professionals.
6. Positive relationships and mutual respect among and between students and staff should be present.
7. A commitment to continuous improvement is imperative for preparing students to be lifelong learners.
8. The expanded core curriculum should be a part of the course of study for all students with visual impairments or blindness.
9. Students receiving instruction in Braille should receive services from a TVI certified teacher with expertise in delivering braille instruction.

## Vision

Learning Without Limits!



## **OVERVIEW OF MISSISSIPPI SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF (MSD)**

### **Governance and Purpose**

Mississippi School for the Deaf (MSD) is governed by the Mississippi State Board of Education. MSD is a special purpose school for students 3-21 years of age who are deaf or hard of hearing and are referred by their local school district for evaluation/eligibility in consideration of a placement decision. MSD is a collaborative service provider that assists school districts in their provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education for their students, through statewide field services.

### **Purpose and Philosophy**

MSD advocates self-improvement through the education of all Deaf and Hard of Hearing students by utilizing a bilingual philosophy that places an emphasis on the linguistics of both American Sign Language (ASL) and English.

### **Mission Statement**

MSD strives to be a diverse bilingual community. In partnership with families, MSD will provide exemplary education in a nurturing, engaging, and challenging environment to help ensure our students achieve personal excellence and become productive citizens.

### **Vision**

**EMPOWER YOUR FUTURE!**

### **Belief Statements**

1. All people have equal value.
2. All students can learn and are lifelong learners.
3. ASL English Bilingual Education (AEBE) is a basic right of Deaf and Hard of Hearing students. ASL and English are two separate languages.
4. Both Deaf and Hearing interactions are vital to students' bicultural development.
5. Students benefit when parents and families are involved in the educational process, as all adults are vital educators.
6. A safe, secure, inviting, and healthy school environment is essential for learning.

7. All students need to be immersed in a creative, challenging environment that encourages risk-taking that enhances their social, emotional, and intellectual skills.
8. Students have the right to have their individual needs met through learning opportunities that promote optimum success.
9. Students should have cultural awareness, respect, and sensitivity when choosing a natural mode of communication with peers, staff, family, and the diverse multicultural society.



## **PHILOSOPHY AND OBJECTIVES**

The MSDB coaching staff is committed to the development of the total student athlete. Athletic opportunities are provided to 7th through 12th grade students who desire to engage in competitive sports and who meet the eligibility guidelines of the Mississippi Schools for the Deaf and Blind (MSDB) and the Mississippi High School Activities Association (MHSAA).

The physical, mental, and psychological growth of each student athlete is conscientiously considered when planning and implementing our athletic program. Our staff is aware of the social implications necessary to work as a member of a team. Students will be given the opportunity to reach their potential through extensive training and appropriate coaching strategies and techniques as they dedicate themselves to the MSDB athletic program.

MSDB goals are to produce young men and women who have the capacity to be successful citizens in our highly competitive society and who have a commitment to lifelong fitness. We want students to leave MSDB as well-rounded individuals who can proudly say that they were productive and successful members of the MSDB athletic department's sports teams.

## **INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS**

MSB offers students a variety of extracurricular opportunities. Interscholastic sports and activities for 7th through 12th grade students includes:

- Cheerleading

- Goalball
- Track and Field
- Wrestling
- Band
- Drumline
- Color Guard
- Choir
- Performance/Scholastic Competition



Students at MSB compete locally, regionally, and nationally in competitions against schools for the blind and public schools in order to improve their athletic skills. MSB competes as a member of the **South Central Association of Schools for the Blind (SCASB)**, **United States Association of Blind Athletes (U.S.A.B.A)**, and the **MHSAA**.

Eligible students can also compete with students from the MSD in sports such as basketball, football, and volleyball with clearance from the Mississippi Assistance Center's Low Vision Clinic Optometrist.

MSD offers students a variety of extracurricular opportunities. Interscholastic sports and activities for 7th through 12th grade students include:

- Cheerleading
- Basketball
- Track and Field
- Volleyball
- Football
- Academic Challenge Bowl
- Baseball/Softball



Students at MSD compete locally, regionally, and nationally in competition against schools for the deaf and public schools in order to improve their athletic skills. MSD competes as a member of the **Mason Dixon Schools for the Deaf Athletic Association (M-DSDAA)**, **National Deaf Interscholastic Athletic Association (NDIAA)**, and the **MHSAA**.

Eligible students can also compete with students from the Mississippi School for the Blind in sports/activities such as Wrestling, Color Guard, Band, Choral Music, and Drumline.

### **EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENT ATHLETES**

All students interested in actively participating in athletics at MSDB are expected to adhere to the following procedures:

1. Maintaining one's schoolwork is the primary responsibility of the student athlete. Athletes are required to maintain an overall "C" average to participate in the MSDB athletic programs.
2. Student athletes who fail to meet the minimum requirement of a "C" average will be referred for counseling and/or tutoring. Subsequently, if a student continues to fail to meet the minimum requirement, students may be put on probation or removed from the team.
3. Student athletes are expected to be present and on time for all scheduled and/or called practices. It is the student's responsibility to notify the coach when he or she will not be able to attend practice due to important constraints that may arise. Failure to comply with this regulation can result in disciplinary action and/or removal from the team.
4. Student athletes are to show respect, responsibility, and sportsmanship at all times to administrators, coaches, and fellow teammates. Disrespectfulness, teasing, bullying, or any unsportsmanlike conduct will not be tolerated. Parents will be notified and disciplinary action and/or removal from the team may occur.
5. If a student athlete quits a team, parents will be notified and he or she will not be allowed back on the team or be able to join another team during the same school year.
6. Student athletes are expected to be at practice on time, dressed in appropriate practice gear (clothing/shoes) and ready to practice. Failure to dress out appropriately will result in the students being dismissed from practice and ultimate dismissal from the team.
7. Being a part of a team requires dedication and commitment. Student athletes who do not take practice seriously by horseplaying, refusing to complete workouts, or just visiting will be given a warning on the first offense. If the behavior(s) should continue to occur, he or she will be dismissed from the team.



8. Student athletes who fail to demonstrate appropriate sportsmanship during competition will be given a warning on the first offense, and any subsequent occurrence will result in dismissal from the team.
9. All assigned uniforms, shoes, and equipment must be returned at the end of the season or upon dismissal from a team. Failure to comply will result in disciplinary action.
10. Out of school suspensions and continuous behavior infractions resulting in office referrals (inclusive of In-School Suspensions) can result in dismissal from an athletic team.
11. Local athletes in the Metro area will only be allowed to stay in the dorms with prior approval by the superintendent and principal, and the dorm directors must be given a minimum of 24 hour notice to prepare the dorm room. All athletes are held to strict behavioral expectations as outlined in the MSD/B Student Handbooks and this handbook and may be required to move out of the dorm immediately at the directive of the superintendent and principal.
12. If a student chooses not to dress out or participate, the student will be subject to disciplinary action and possible dismissal from the team.
13. MSB students who use a white cane must do so at all times at athletic events both at MSB and out of town. Failure to do so creates an unsafe environment for everyone and will not be tolerated. Refusing to use a cane may result in the student not being able to compete in the event(s).

### **SCHOOL ATHLETICS**

1. The school ensures that physical education teachers and coaches have appropriate training.
2. The school promotes equality in all aspects of its athletic programs, including equal access to athletics, and fair and just treatment within both the curricular and extracurricular program. Roster sizes for sports may need to be limited as a matter of practicality. This is to ensure team members receive adequate attention for training, supervision, and preparation for competitions and that adequate resources including transportation are in place to ensure a quality experience. Efforts will be made to fairly evaluate all candidates for teams.
3. The school is committed to the safety and physical/emotional health of participants in the athletic program. The school demonstrates this commitment by ensuring that appropriate safety precautions are in place

for all physical education activities. Furthermore, the school has appropriate response safeguards in place if a student is injured.

4. The school stands firmly in opposition to performance-enhancing drugs.
5. The schools and its athletic program do not tolerate any form of hazing, bullying, or other inappropriate behaviors.
6. The school ensures that students, parents, alumni, and others understand the expectations of sportsmanship, civility, and self-control at athletic practices and contests, much as those same characteristics are required within the more traditional academic environment.

### **SPORTSMANSHIP GUIDELINES**

1. Treat coaches with respect. Being disrespectful to a coach will result in automatic termination from the team.
2. Players will encourage and show respect for other team members. Criticizing a team member will not be tolerated.
3. Treat officials, opponents, and spectators with respect.
4. Do not “boo” or taunt officials, opposing players, or coaches.
5. Stay off the playing field and courts during athletic contests.
6. It is also important to remember that, whether home or away, each MSDB athlete is an ambassador of his/her school. As such, each will conduct himself or herself in a manner which brings honor to themselves, their team, and their school. This includes school performances, self-respect, healthy behaviors, and social responsibility.
7. Finally, all school rules are in effect during school-sponsored athletic contests.

### **ATHLETIC INJURY/ILLNESS & RETURN TO PARTICIPATION AFTER INJURY OR ILLNESS**

1. Certified Athletic Trainers are required to be in attendance at all MSDB home and away athletic competitions. However, trainers are not allowed to medically treat injuries but can administer over the counter medication (OCM) based on directives provided on the OCM Athletic Trainers Association guidelines. They will provide initial treatment and make the determination as to whether an athlete(s) continue competing or be transported for medical treatment at a healthcare facility.
2. All MSDB coaches are trained and certified in CPR, care of athletic injuries, distribution of student medication by MSDB medical staff, and

have completed additional training on athletic injuries, concussions and safety through MHSAA and NFHS.

3. If a student athlete sustains an injury or develops an illness resulting in missed practice or game time, the parent must provide a signed note stating any limitations and a time frame for allowing their return to normal activities. If an injury or illness requires professional medical attention, the student athlete must be cleared for return by their healthcare provider.

### **COMMUNICATION**

1. Each coach will distribute athletic schedules at the beginning of the season. Schedules and directions to away games are also posted on the school's website.
2. Unless a cancellation has been previously announced or posted on our website, students should come to school prepared to play or practice. Decisions to cancel will be made as early as possible in the school day, but it is sometimes difficult to predict weather and other events.
3. If an athlete has a concern with the coach, he/she should talk to the coach and work out the issue. If it cannot be worked out, then the parent should set up a meeting with the principal and the coach to discuss the issue.
4. The most effective way for a parent to address an issue is to make an appointment to speak directly with the coach and the principal. Since it is often inappropriate and counterproductive to do this after a game or during practice, a time should be set that is convenient for everyone involved.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

1. School sponsored transportation will be provided for all away competitions. Students must travel on school approved transportation. Any alternative travel plans must be approved by the principal and athletic coaches in advance and will only be considered in special circumstances.
2. Students are to return from away games with their team. However, if parents attend the sponsored event and want to take their child home, they must sign the student out before he/she is permitted to return with their parents. Prior notice should be provided to the coach and the principal if this arrangement will take place.
3. Coaches are to ensure that the team thoroughly cleans school sponsored vehicles upon returning to school. All team members should be involved in the clean-up process. This includes picking up trash, removing equipment,

etc. No team member is to be dismissed until the coach has inspected the bus and declared it clean.

### **ELIGIBILITY**

1. To be eligible to participate, students must maintain a current physical (less than one year old throughout all seasons they participate in) on file in the office prior to participation.
2. To be eligible to compete in athletics, a student must remain in good academic standing per the Parent/Student Handbook. Therefore, students must maintain an overall "C" average.
3. MSDB will abide by individual eligibility requirements as outlined by the MHSAA in order to participate in athletics and extracurricular activities.

### **REQUIRED FORMS**

- Parent/student athlete contract
- Physical
- Athletic participation clearance form
- Current report card
- Concussion Form

**Mississippi Schools for the Deaf and the Blind  
Parent/Guardian  
Student Athlete Contract**

The administration and coaching staff extend our appreciation and thanks to all parents for allowing your child to participate in the MSDB athletic program and extracurricular activities. MSDB has high expectations for players both on and off the field/court/mat.

I/We have read the athletic handbook and agree to abide by the policies and procedures as stated. I/We understand that participation in athletics is a privilege, and I accept the responsibilities that come with team membership. I/We understand that failure to abide by these expectations may result in disciplinary measures such as loss of playing time, suspension, or dismissal from a team.

I/We are aware that participation in sports comes with a risk of injury. I/We are aware that participation in sports will involve travel with the team. I/We acknowledge and accept the risks inherent in the sport, the travel involved and with this knowledge in mind, I/We grant permission for my child to participate and travel with the team in the MSDB Athletic Program and for extracurricular activities.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Athlete's Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Athlete's Signature      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian's Signature      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Coach's Signature      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ath. Coordinator's Signature      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal's Signature      Date

**Mississippi Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (MSDB)  
STUDENT PARTICIPATION CLEARANCE FORM**

I hereby give consent for my child, \_\_\_\_\_, to participate in **MSD, MSB, and/or MSDB's** athletic and activities programs during the **2022-2023** school year. I agree to abide by the rules and regulations of my school district and its governing body, the Mississippi High School Activities Association (MHSAA).

I hereby authorize and give permission for emergency medical treatment to be rendered for and on behalf of my child, \_\_\_\_\_, for any injury received while participating in any supervised school activity. This authorization includes, but is not limited to, any treatment deemed necessary by certified personnel, physicians, hospital emergency room physicians and hospitals.

I hereby release **MSD, MSB, and/or MSDB** and all school personnel for any and all liability associated with such necessary treatment.

I hereby acknowledge that health and accident insurance is recommended for participation in all organized sports and activities and further certify that my child is covered under the health and accident program listed below.

Insurance Provider \_\_\_\_\_

Policy ID# \_\_\_\_\_

Group ID# (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

In addition, I assume any expenses for liability not covered by the insurance policy above for injury received by the above named student while participating in

sports and school activities. I accept full responsibility for medical and hospital expenses and any other related expenses and do hereby hold harmless the **MSD, MSB, or MSDB and the State Board of Trustees**, their agents or assignees, of responsibility for any such injury or expenses and waive any and all claims which may arise against them. I realize that participation in organized sports and activities involves the potential for injury, sometimes severe enough to result in total disability, paralysis, or death.

I give the **MSD, MSB, MSDB, MHSAA** and its assigns, licensees and legal representatives the irrevocable right to use any picture or image or sound recording of the student in all forms and media and in all manners, for any lawful purposes. In addition, I consent to the disclosure, by my child's school, to the MHSAA, upon its request, of all records relevant to his/her eligibility and participation including, but not limited to, his/her records relating to enrollment and attendance, academic standing, age, discipline, residence and physical fitness.

The Student Participation Clearance Form is required for all students to participate in MHSAA athletic and activity programs.

Parent/Legal Guardian (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Legal Guardian's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Other Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ (valid 365 days from this date)

**MISSISSIPPI HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATION, INC.**

**Concussion Information Form**

***(Required by MHSAA Annually)***

A concussion is a brain injury and all brain injuries are serious. They are caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head, or by a blow to another part of the body with the force transmitted to the head. They can range from mild to severe and can disrupt the way the brain normally works. Even though most concussions are mild, **all concussions are potentially serious and may result in complications including prolonged brain damage and death if not recognized and managed properly.** In other words, even a “ding” or a bump on the head can be serious. You cannot see a concussion and most sports concussions occur without loss of consciousness. Signs and symptoms of concussion may show up right after the injury or can take hours or days to fully appear. If your child reports any symptoms of concussion, or if you notice the symptoms or signs of concussion yourself, seek medical attention right away.

**Symptoms may include one or more of the following:**

Headaches	Amnesia
“Pressure in head”	“Don’t feel right”
Nausea or vomiting	Fatigue or low energy
Neck pain	Sadness
Balance problems or dizziness	Nervousness or anxiety
Blurred, double or fuzzy vision	Irritability
Sensitivity to light or noise	More emotional
Feeling sluggish or slowed down	Confusion
Feeling foggy or groggy	Concentration or memory problems
Drowsiness	Forgetting game plays
Change in sleep patterns	Repeating the same question/comment



**Signs observed by teammates, parents and coaches include:**

- Appears dazed
- Vacant facial expression
- Confused about assignment
- Forgets plays
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily or displays incoordination
- Answers questions slowly
- Slurred speech
- Shows behavior or personality changes
- Can't recall events prior to hit
- Can't recall events after hit
- Seizures or convulsions
- Any change in typical behavior or personality
- Loses consciousness

**What can happen if my child keeps on playing with a concussion or returns too soon?**

Athletes with the signs and symptoms of concussion should be removed from play immediately. Continuing to play with the signs and symptoms of a concussion leaves the athlete especially vulnerable to greater injury. There is an increased risk of significant damage from a concussion for a period of time after that concussion occurs, particularly if the athlete suffers another concussion before completely recovering from the first one. This can lead to prolonged recovery, or even to severe brain swelling (second impact syndrome) with devastating and even fatal consequences. It is well known that adolescent or teenage athletes will often fail to report symptoms of injuries. Concussions are no different. As a result, education of administrators, coaches, parents and students is key to a student-athlete's safety.

**MHSAA Concussion Policy:**

- An athlete who reports or displays any symptoms or signs of a concussion in a practice or game setting should be removed immediately from the practice or game. The athlete should not be allowed to return to the practice or game for

the remainder of the day regardless of whether the athlete appears or states that he/she is normal.

- The athlete should be evaluated by a licensed, qualified medical professional working within their scope of practice as soon as can be practically arranged.
- If an athlete has sustained a concussion, the athlete should be referred to a licensed physician preferably one with experience in managing sports concussion injuries.
- The athlete who has been diagnosed with a concussion should be returned to play only after full recovery and clearance by a physician. Recovery from a concussion, regardless of loss of consciousness, usually takes 7-14 days after resolution of all symptoms.
- Return to play after a concussion should be gradual and follow a progressive return to competition. An athlete should not return to a competitive game before demonstrating that he/she has no symptoms in a full supervised practice.
- Athletes should not continue to practice or return to play while still having symptoms of a concussion. Sustaining an impact to the head while recovering from a concussion may cause Second Impact Syndrome, a catastrophic neurological brain injury.

Remember, it is better to miss one game than to miss the whole season.

**I have reviewed this information on concussions and am aware that a release by a medical doctor is required before a student may return to play under this policy.**

_____	_____	_____
Student-Athlete's Printed Name	Student-Athlete's Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Parent's Printed Name	Parent's Signature	Date