



Middle School Athletic Handbook

Central Middle School

5810 Ada Drive SE
Ada, MI 49301
616-439-8750

Northern Hills Middle School

3775 Leonard Street NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49525
616-493-8650

Eastern Middle School

2200 Pettis
Ada, MI 49301
616-493-8850



FHPS Mission Statement

*In partnership with our community,
Forest Hills Public Schools
will provide all learners with opportunities
to acquire the knowledge, skills, and
experiences necessary to build
meaningful and productive lives.*

FOREST HILLS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Mission Statement

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MIDDLE SCHOOL SPORTS

FALL

Cross Country – Co-ed
Volleyball – Girls

WINTER

Basketball – Boys

LATE WINTER

Basketball – Girls
Wrestling – Boys

SPRING

Track – Co-ed

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PHILOSOPHY OF INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS

The Forest Hills Board of Education recognizes the value of an interscholastic athletic program, which provides students the opportunity to exercise and test their athletic abilities in a context greater and more varied than that, which can be offered by a school or by the school district alone. Games, activities and practice sessions should provide many opportunities to teach the values of competition and good sportsmanship.

A well-organized interscholastic athletic program meets the athlete's needs for self-expression, mental alertness and physical growth, as well as enhancing each student's educational maturity. ***Participation in interscholastic athletics is, however, a privilege, which must be earned*** by the student by continuously adhering to the standards of conduct described in the Student Code of Conduct, the Athletic Handbook and the Team Expectations, both in and out of school.

Our goal in academics, in athletics and in all extracurricular activities, is excellence. A student who elects to participate in athletics is voluntarily making a choice to participate in a program, which requires self-discipline. Failure to comply with the School Student Code of Conduct, the Athletic Code or the Team Expectations will result in disciplinary action, up to and including denial of future participation in athletics.

MESSAGE TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Your student has indicated a desire to participate in the school interscholastic athletic program. Parents/Guardians of student athletes also commit themselves to certain responsibilities and obligations, which are outlined in this Athletic Handbook. Your signature on the Athletic Contract, along with the signature of your student athlete, indicates that you understand and accept those responsibilities and obligations and agree to cooperate with school personnel in enforcing the Athletic Code.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) of athletes participating in fall, winter, late winter and/or spring sports are required to attend the Parent Information Meeting scheduled by the Athletic Director at the beginning of each season. Copies of team expectations will be distributed and discussed. Parents/Guardians who are unable to attend the Parent Information Meeting will need to contact the Athletic Director. An athlete will not be allowed to play until his/her parent/guardian has contacted the Athletic Director, unless the principal waives the requirement due to unusual circumstances.

As fans and spectators at athletic events, parents/guardians of athletes play a special role in supporting their athlete, the coach and the team. ***Parents/Guardians of athletes are expected and encouraged to model good sportsmanship at all times during athletic events.*** Failure to adhere to acceptable standards of adult behavior at interscholastic athletic contests may result in removal from the event and/or future events.

INSURANCE

Forest Hills Public Schools is providing student medical insurance coverage for any student injured at school or during a school-related activity including athletics. This coverage is secondary to any student or family medical insurance. In effect, the district's medical insurance will cover medical costs for school-related injuries that are not covered by the family's medical insurance as long as the injury falls within the range of coverage. There is no longer a need for an athlete to purchase medical coverage. All athletes are covered under this program.

MESSAGE TO THE ATHLETE

Being a member of a Forest Hills interscholastic athletic team is the fulfillment of a goal for many students. The attainment of this goal carries with it certain traditions and responsibilities. Athletic tradition is not built overnight; it takes hard work by many people over many years.

When you wear our school colors as an athlete, you are expected to understand the traditions and understand the responsibilities they represent. In every situation, participation in our athletic program is regarded as a privilege that is earned through hard work in the classroom and in practice and through adherence to the high standards of conduct outlined in this athletic code.

The conduct of an athlete is closely observed by other students, staff, parents/guardians and the community. His/her behavior should be above reproach in all areas. All athletes are expected to follow the **Student Code of Conduct** issued to all students at the beginning of each academic year or upon enrollment during the school year.

Athletes also agree to live by the Athletic Code during the entire calendar year (365 days). Athletes make a commitment to follow these rules at all times, including when they are out of season and when they are off school property. The athlete agrees to abide by the following code of conduct, which prohibits illegal or inappropriate actions including:

- Use or possession of tobacco in any form;
- Use, possession or being under the influence of alcohol in any form;
- Use, possession or being under the influence of a controlled substance (illegal or prescription drug) other than as prescribed by a physician;
- Actions, in or out of school, which would bring disfavor upon the school, including hazing; and
- Actions, in or out of school, which would be deemed felonies under the criminal code.

Soliciting, encouraging, aiding or engaging in **hazing** is prohibited. “Hazing” means any intentional, knowing or reckless act directed against a student for the purpose of being initiated into, affiliating with, holding office in or maintaining membership in any organization, club or athletic team whose members are, or include other students. Student athletes involved in or engaging in hazing will be subject to disciplinary action according to Group II Penalties.

In addition to the Student Code of Conduct and the Athletic Code, athletes will be expected to adhere to the team expectations established by each coach. Failure to abide by the Student Code of Conduct, the Athletic Code or the Team Expectations will result in disciplinary action up to and including suspension from the team, suspension from school, suspension from athletics, expulsion from school and/or denial of future participation in athletics.

In compliance with the new State-Wide School Safety Act, the Kent County Prosecutor’s Office and the various courts within Kent County are now required to provide all school districts with periodic updates of juvenile offenders. Names that appear on the list are sent to the Principal of the building he/she attends. Principals will talk with these students, offer appropriate counseling services, and notify them of the disciplinary measures required by the Student Code of Conduct and the Athletic Code.

TEAM EXPECTATIONS

Team expectations will be approved by the Principal and/or the Athletic Director prior to the start of the season and will be distributed to athletes at the first tryout or practice (if there are no tryouts scheduled). Parents/Guardians will receive a copy of the team expectations during the **required Parent Information Meeting at the beginning of the season.** Penalties for violating team expectations may not be more severe than the penalties approved in the Athletic Code.

VIOLATION OF TEAM EXPECTATIONS

Each coach shall be afforded a reasonable amount of discretion, subject to final approval by the Athletic Director, in interpreting and applying his/her team expectations and in determining whether an expectation has been broken and setting the appropriate penalty or discipline for the athlete who has broken a team expectation. The explanation of the infraction and the ruling will be communicated to the parent(s) or guardian and the student within five school days after the decision is made.

Discipline imposed by a coach and approved by the Athletic Director, which results in suspension for more than half the season or removal from the team, may be appealed in accordance with procedures set forth under “Procedures and Appeals.” Pending an appeal, the penalty or disciplinary action imposed by the coach and approved by the Athletic Director shall remain in effect.

VIOLATIONS OF THE ATHLETIC CODE

Allegations about Athletic Code violations must be presented to the Athletic Director who will determine the validity of the allegations and administer any disciplinary actions. The athlete, athlete's parents/guardians, coach and principal will be advised of the disposition of the case within five working days.

Eighth grade students who violate the athletic code will be put on probation during ninth grade. If they do not violate the athletic code as a ninth grader, they will be removed from probation. If a violation does occur during their freshmen year, the second violation penalty will be applicable. Violations other than academic or eligibility deficiencies shall fall into the following categories:

Group I Violation:

- Actions, in or out of school, which would bring disfavor upon the school

Group I Penalties:

- First violation will result in exclusion from competition up to 10 percent or one contest of the scheduled competitions in that sport. If the suspension is not completed in one sport, it will be carried over to the next sport in which the athlete participates;
- Second violation will result in dismissal from athletics for 25 percent of scheduled competitions;
- Third violation will result in elimination from participation in athletics for one calendar year; and
- Fourth violation will result in elimination from participation in athletics in Forest Hills Public Schools.

Group II Violations:

- Use, possession of tobacco in any form or being under the influence of alcohol;
- Use, possession or being under the influence of a controlled substance (other than as prescribed by a physician);
- Actions, in or out of school, which would bring disfavor upon the school including hazing; and
- Actions, in or out of school, which would be deemed misdemeanors under the criminal code.

Group II Penalties:

- First violation will result in exclusion from competition for up to 25 percent or a maximum of three contests of the scheduled competitions in that sport. If the suspension is not completed in one sport, it will be carried over to the next sport in which the athlete participates.
- Second violation will result in elimination from athletics for one calendar year;
- Third violation will result in elimination from participation in athletics for Forest Hills Public Schools; and
- In addition, with any of the penalties listed above, the athlete will lose the privilege of attending other athletic or co-curricular activities for up to one month. The Head Coach, in consultation with the Director of Athletics, may withdraw or remove any team honors or awards and impose penalties, which do not exceed the Athletic Code.

Group III Violations:

- Sale or distribution of a controlled substance, alcoholic beverages or tobacco in any form;
- Actions, in or out of school, which would bring disfavor upon the school; and
- Actions, in or out of school, which would be deemed felonies under the criminal code.

Group III Penalties:

- First violation will result in dismissal from the athletic program for a minimum of one calendar year from the date of the offense;
- Second violation will result in elimination from participation in athletics for Forest Hills Public Schools; and
- In addition, with either of the penalties listed above, the athlete will lose the privilege of attending other athletic or co-curricular activities for up to one month. The Head Coach, in consultation with the Director of Athletics, may withdraw or remove any team honors or awards and impose penalties which do not exceed the Athletic Code.

General Provisions:

- An athlete shall not play in a contest or practice with the team while serving a school suspension;
- Failure to complete the season in good standing will result in forfeiture of any claim to athletic awards for that season;
- In order for the penalty to be served, the athlete must complete the season or seasons in good standing as identified by the Coach and Athletic Director; and
- Upon completion of any penalties prescribed in this code, other conditions may be required as a condition of reinstatement. These may include counseling, restitution and/or the imposition of a probationary period.

PROCEDURES AND APPEALS

The following procedural steps will apply in all cases where a student athlete is alleged to have violated regulations and team rules as set forth in the "Violations of the Athletic Code" section of the Athletic Handbook. Infractions will result in minimum consequences as stipulated in the "Group I Penalties," "Group II Penalties" and "Group III Penalties" section. Additional or more severe penalties may be imposed for a first or second offense at the discretion of the Principal, depending on the circumstances surrounding the offense.

1. An alleged Group I, Group II, or Group III, violation by an athlete should first be brought to the attention of the Athletic Director. If the Athletic Director believes the claim has merit, he/she will confront the athlete with the alleged violation and ask for a response. After hearing the athlete's response to the alleged violation(s), the Athletic Director will render a decision as to whether or not the student athlete has, in fact, violated the Athletic Code. If a violation has occurred, the consequence will be no less than those set forth under "Group I Penalties," "Group II Penalties" or "Group III Penalties," whichever is applicable. The athlete, parent(s)/guardian(s) and head Coach will be informed of the violation and the decision to remove the athlete from participation in competition. The decision first will be communicated verbally and then followed up in writing.
2. After receiving notification of the Athletic Director's decision to remove an athlete from participation, the athlete and/or parent(s)/guardian(s) may request a hearing to dispute either the nature of the charges against the athlete or the consequences imposed by the Athletic Director. The hearing will occur in a timely manner. The hearing will involve the student, the parent(s)/guardian(s), the Athletic Director, an Assistant Principal, and the Varsity head Coach of the sport in which the athlete participates. The Coach will be present for the hearing, but will be excused during discussion of potential consequences for the athlete.
3. The Principal may temporarily suspend an athlete from participation in athletics prior to a hearing, if an athletic event is scheduled to occur before a hearing could reasonably be held.
4. The purpose of the hearing will be to further determine if a violation has occurred, and, if so, the appropriate penalty. The decision concerning the violation and penalty will be communicated to the athlete, parent(s)/guardian(s) and Head Coach in a timely manner and followed up in writing.
5. If the athlete and parent(s)/guardian(s) are not satisfied with the above decision, they may appeal to the Principal. The penalty imposed on the athlete will remain in effect until the outcome of the appeal. The Principal will meet with the athlete and parent(s)/guardian(s) to determine if the decision of the Athletic Director or Assistant Principal should be upheld. The Principal will notify the athlete and parent(s)/guardian(s) of his/her decision on the appeal in a timely manner and follow up in writing.
6. If the athlete and parent(s)/guardian(s) are not satisfied with the above decision, they may appeal to the Superintendent or his/her designee. The penalty imposed on the athlete will remain in effect until the outcome of the appeal. The Superintendent or his/her designee will meet with the athlete and parent(s)/guardian(s) to determine if the decision of the Principal should be upheld. The Superintendent or his/her designee will notify the athlete and parent(s)/guardian(s) in writing of his/her decision on the appeal in a timely manner.
7. If the athlete or parent(s)/guardian(s) are not satisfied with the above decision, they may appeal to the Board of Education. A hearing shall be conducted and a decision on the matter will be rendered, in writing, to the athlete and parent(s)/guardian(s) in a timely manner.

FORMAT OF HEARINGS

Hearings shall be conducted informally and formal hearing procedures and rules of evidence need not be followed. The objective of such hearings is to reach a reasonable, fair and just result. An athlete and his parent(s)/guardian(s) will be given the opportunity to hear the charges and evidence against the athlete and to present witnesses and evidence in denial of the allegation(s) or in mitigation or extenuation of the violation.

EXPECTATIONS OF ATHLETES

In the Classroom:

Athletes are expected to be hard working students who put academics first.

Middle School Academic Eligibility:

A seventh or eighth grade athlete must pass each class he/she is taking during the season with a 'C' or above. Weekly eligibility lists will be distributed to teachers. If a student is not passing a class, he/she will be ineligible to participate and will be required to attend study table. If the student fails to attend the required study table, his/her ineligibility will be extended. If the academic problem persists, the student will continue to attend study table and will miss games/contests until the grade(s) improve.

During Competition:

Athletes will not be allowed to use profanity or employ illegal tactics. Athletes will be gracious in defeat, modest in victory and will be expected to always congratulate the opponent on a well-played game.

Using School Equipment and Uniforms:

Each athlete is financially responsible for all equipment **and uniforms** issued to him/her. All equipment **and uniforms** must be cleaned and returned to the coach at the coach's request. Any equipment **and uniforms** not returned and/or paid for will result in the athlete not being allowed to practice or participate in the next season of competition until said equipment **and uniforms** are returned or paid for.

Trying Out for a Sport:

Students wishing to participate on an interscholastic athletic team in Forest Hills must meet the residency requirement set forth by the Michigan High School Athletic Association. Students must also meet the academic requirements of Forest Hills Public Schools and the Michigan High School Athletic Association. Students must have a completed physical examination form and Athletic Code Contract signed by the student and his/her parent(s)/guardian(s). The student must have the Interscholastic Athletic Program Participation Fee form and fee in the athletic office prior to the first day of practice after tryouts or prior to the first day of practice if there are no tryouts scheduled for the team.

Dropping Out of a Sport:

Quitting a team is a serious matter. No athlete should quit a team without first discussing his/her intention to do so with his/her coach. An athlete will not be permitted to participate in another sport until the season of the sport he/she drops has been completed or unless he/she has the authorization of the Athletic Director and both coaches involved.

Attendance:

Coaches must be notified, either by the athlete or a parent/guardian, whenever an athlete will miss practice. Missing practices or games without good reason is a serious matter and may result in disciplinary action.

Athletes must be in school for the entire day in order to be eligible to compete in a scheduled practice or athletic event. In extreme situations, arrangements must be made with the Athletic Director and/or the Building Principal to acquire an excused absence. Scheduled appointments are an acceptable reason to be pre-excused.

Before pursuing a team sport, athletes and their parent(s)/guardian(s) should carefully evaluate schedule conflicts which may arise due to other school activities, jobs or family vacations. If a family vacation is scheduled during a designated Forest Hills Public Schools break, such as Thanksgiving vacation, the holiday break in December, the mid-winter break in February, or spring break, the athlete will be excused from scheduled practices and/or contests by the coach, if the athlete communicated this information to the coach in a timely manner prior to the scheduled family vacation.

Individual coaches will clearly define their practice and competitive schedules for the season, as well as their expectations for team members, during the preseason parent/guardian meeting, so that students and parent(s)/guardian(s) can understand the responsibilities they accept in joining the team. There will be no practices, formal or informal, on Sunday.

TRANSPORTATION

If school transportation is provided, athletes must ride to the event, but not necessarily return unless the Principal or Athletic Director approves an alternate plan. Violation of this policy will result in the athlete being prohibited from participating in the event. ***Athletes are expected to follow the rules set forth by the transportation department while riding in school vehicles.***

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) may take athlete home from an away event, provided a written request is given to the coach. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) may not provide transportation home for other athletes unless the coach has received written permission from the parent/guardian of the other athlete.

- Transportation will be provided **only to** athletic competitions within Kent County for school athletes.
- Round trip transportation may be provided **outside** of Kent County.
- No transportation will be provided for weekend athletic competitions.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

Most complaints are a result of misunderstandings and can be resolved with a conversation between the individuals involved. An athlete is advised to meet with his/her coach as the initial step in resolving any misunderstanding. If the athlete is unwilling to meet with the coach, the parent(s)/guardian(s) is/are encouraged to schedule a meeting with the coach. A coach should never treat an athlete differently as the result of a parent/guardian complaint, action or opinion.

- If the concern is not satisfactorily resolved after the meeting with the coach, the athlete and/or the parent(s)/guardian(s) should discuss the situation with the Athletic Director informally in an attempt to resolve the situation.
- If the athlete and/or the parent(s)/guardian(s) wish to make a formal complaint to the Athletic Director about the coach, it should be put in writing, with a copy provided to the coach.
- The Athletic Director will investigate the complaint and discuss the concern with the coach and the head varsity coach. The investigation may include observation of practice sessions by the Athletic Director, if necessary. The Athletic Director will document the results of the investigation and subsequent action(s) to be taken to resolve the complaint in writing.
- If the formal complaint is not satisfactorily resolved by the Athletic Director, the athlete and/or parent(s)/guardian(s) may appeal, in writing, to the Principal. The Principal will meet with the parties involved in a further attempt to resolve the situation.
- If the complaint is not satisfactorily resolved at this level, the athlete and/or parent(s)/guardian(s) may appeal to the Superintendent, or his/her designee, in writing.
- The Athletic Director will bring repeated complaints of a similar nature about a coach to the attention of the Principal and the Superintendent or designee.

Grievance Procedures For

Title VI of the Education Amendment Act of 1972 Title IX of the Education Amendment Act of 1972 Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Section I

If any person believes that the Forest Hills Public School District or any part of the school organization has inadequately applied for principles and/or regulations of (1) title VI of the Education Amendment Act of 1972, (2) Title IX of the Education Amendment Act of 1972, or (3) Section 504 Rehabilitation Act of 1973, he/she may bring forward a complaint, which shall be referred to as a grievance, to the local Civil Rights Coordinator at the following address:

Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources
Forest Hills Public Schools
6590 Cascade Road, SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546
(616) 493-8805

Section II

The person who believes he/she has a valid basis for grievance shall discuss the grievance informally and on a verbal basis with the Civil Rights Coordinator, who shall in turn investigate the complaint and reply with an answer to the complaint. He/she may initiate formal procedures according to the following steps.

Step 1

A written statement of the grievance signed by the complainant shall be submitted to the local Civil Rights Coordinator within five (5) business days of receipt of answers to the informal complaint. The coordinator shall further investigate the matters of grievance and reply in writing to the complainant within five (5) business days.

Step 2

If the complainant wishes to appeal the decision of the local Civil Rights Coordinator, he/she may submit a single statement of appeal to the Superintendent of Schools within five (5) business days after receipt of the coordinator's response. The Superintendent shall meet with all parties involved, formulate a conclusion, and respond in writing to the complainant within ten (10) business days.

Step 3

If the complainant remains unsatisfied, he/she may appeal through a signed, written statement to the Board of Education within five (5) business days of receipt of the Superintendent's response in Step 2. In an attempt to resolve the grievance, the Board of Education shall meet with the concerned parties and their representative within forty (40) business days of the receipt of such an appeal. A copy of the Board's disposition of the appeal shall be sent to each concerned party within ten (10) business days of the meeting.

Step 4

If at this point the grievance has not been satisfactorily settled, further appeal may be made to the Office of Civil Rights, Department of Education, Washington, D.C. 20201.

Inquiries concerning the non-discriminatory policy may be directed to Director, Office of Civil Rights, Department of Education, Washington, D.C. 20201.

The local coordinator, on request, will provide a copy of the District's grievance procedure and investigate all complaints in accordance with this procedure.

A copy of each of the Acts and the regulations on which this notice is based may be found in the Civil Rights Coordinator's office.

MHSAA Middle School Rules Regulations III-IV for 7th and 8th grade students

SECTION 12 - LIMITED TEAM MEMBERSHIP

SECTION 12(A) - A student who, after practicing with (including tryouts) or participating in an athletic contest or scrimmage as a member of middle school athletic team, participates in any athletic competition not sponsored by his/her school in the same sport during the same season, shall become ineligible for a minimum of the next two (2) days of competition and a maximum of the remainder of that season in that school year.

The following exceptions to this regulation will apply:

1. Cross country, swimming and diving, track and field and wrestling shall apply the limited team membership rule from the point of a student's first participation in a contest or scrimmage, rather than practice.
2. Tennis shall apply the limited team membership rule commencing with the first day of allowed practice under MHSAA regulations, regardless of when the team begins to practice or the player joins the team.
3. During the middle school season in cross country, swimming and diving, tennis, track and field or wrestling, a member of the school team in that sport may participate in a maximum of two (2) non-school meets or contests in that sport while not representing his/her school. An event held on not more than three (3) consecutive calendar days is considered a single meet (for purposes of this section only).

SECTION 12(C) - After once representing any MHSAA school in competition in any MHSAA Tournament sport a student shall not compete at any time in any sport under MHSAA jurisdiction in any of the following events: (1) Any event which is or purports to be an "All-Star" contest, regardless of the method of selection or one in which there is participation by one or more all-star teams; (2) "All-Star" fund-raising events or similar exhibitions if they involve contestants other than the students and faculty of that student's school; (3) Any event which is or purports to be a national junior high school championship, or the qualification thereto. Participation in such a contest by a middle school student shall cause that student to become ineligible for all interscholastic athletics for a maximum period of one year of school enrollment from the date of the athlete's last violation of this Regulation.

SECTION 12(D) - A student MAY participate as an individual without loss of interscholastic eligibility:

1. As a member of a National Team, (and the actual, direct tryouts thereto), which is defined as one selected by the national governing body of the sport on a national qualification basis either through a defined selective process or actual tryouts for the purpose of international competition which requires the entries to officially represent their respective nations, although it is not necessary there be team scoring by nation; or
2. In an Olympic Development Program (ODP), which is defined as a training program or competition:
 - a. conducted or sponsored by the United States Olympic Committee (USOC); or
 - b. directly funded in major part and conducted by the USOC member national governing body (NGB) on a national level (e.g., NGB national championship competition and the direct qualifications thereto); or
 - c. specifically authorized by a national governing body involving only athletes previously identified by the NGB as having bona-fide potential for participation in national or international competition in the sport involved.

The following procedures are required in (1) and (2):

- a. Participation, if during the school year, shall be approved by the student's school principal, and the MHSAA is notified in writing by the principal at 30 days prior to the event; and
- b. The student shall make prior arrangements to complete missed academic lessons, assignments and tests before the last day of classes of the credit grading period in which that student's absence occurs; and

The following additional principals apply in (2):

- a. An ODP student-athlete shall be allowed no more than one training or competition event during the school sports season.
- b. The ODP student-athlete shall miss no MHSAA-sponsored tournament event involving that student's school team in that sport.

Approved by the Board of Education: 4/82

Revised: 10/83; 8/84; 7/86; 7/90; 7/93; 8/95; 7/97; 7/99; 8/00; 7/02; 8/03; 7/04, 1/09, 5/11

NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

It is the policy of the Forest Hills Public School District that no person shall on the basis of race, age, color, or religious, national origin, sex or handicap, be excluded from participation including employment.

Any questions concerning Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, exclusive of athletic issues, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, or inquiries to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of handicap, should be directed to:

Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources
6590 Cascade Road, SE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546
Telephone: 616-493-8805