

SANDHILLS-THEDFORD KNIGHTS



2022-2023
COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT HANDBOOK

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Section 1 - Intent of Handbook: This handbook is intended for students, parents/guardians, coaches, staff, administrators, and board of education members as a guide to the rules, regulations, and general information about the Sandhills-Thedford Knights Cooperative Agreement. All parties are responsible for becoming familiar with the handbook and knowing the information contained in it.

Although the information found in this handbook is detailed and specific on many topics, it is not intended to cover all situations or circumstances that may arise during any season or school year. The administration will be responsible for interpreting the rules contained in the handbook. Should a situation or circumstance arise that is not specifically covered in this handbook, the administration will make decisions based upon all applicable policies and state and federal regulations.

Section 2 – History of the Cooperative: In May of 2007, the Boards of Education from Sandhills and Thedford voted to enter into a cooperative agreement for all athletic programs in grades 7-12. The beginning date of the cooperative was the start of the 2008-2009 school year.

Section 3 – Cooperative Advisory Board: A cooperative advisory board will consist of two board members from each district and the Superintendents from each district. The board will meet three times each year, following each of the athletic seasons. The activities directors from each district will be included in these meetings well.

The advisory board will take no action during their meetings, but will provide recommendations for policies, rules, procedures, and purchases to be approved through each individual district’s Board of Education. The advisory board may bring public concerns about personnel to the meetings, but will leave the responsibility of responding to such concerns with the Superintendents.

Section 4 - Cooperative Information:

- Official School Cooperative Name: Sandhills-Thedford
- Official Cooperative Mascot: Knights
- Official Cooperative Colors: Forest Green (base color) and Black (accent color). White will be included for National Federation rules for home and away uniforms.
- Official Fight Song: “Sons of Westwood”
- Official Logos:



Section 5 – Sports and Activities Included: The sports and activities that are included in this cooperative agreement, at all levels 7-12, are:

- Fall: Football, Volleyball, Boys & Girls Cross Country
- Winter: Wrestling, Boys & Girls Basketball
- Spring: Boys Golf (Girls may participate), Boys & Girls Track and Field

All other activities will be conducted by each individual district according to their policies and rules.

Requests for adding activities must be made through the Superintendents. Once the request is made, the Superintendents will bring the request, along with fiscal and policy concerns, to the Cooperative Advisory Board. The Board will send a recommendation to each Board to either accept or deny the request.

Section 6 – NSAA Membership: The cooperative and both individual districts are members of the Nebraska Schools Activities Association (NSAA) and agree to comply with all of its rules.

Section 7 – Policies: The Superintendents of each district will work together to review policies from both districts that affect athletic programs and participation. If any policies are in conflict with each other for any given situation concerning cooperative activities, the stricter of the two policies will be followed. The Superintendents will provide policy update recommendations as these situations arise.

Section 8 – Communication: Effective communication is vital to the success of this cooperative. The Superintendents at each district are charged with keeping each other, their respective Boards, staff, students, parents, and communities informed of anything concerning this cooperative.

Section 9 – Cool Down Period: We understand that school sports can be an emotional experience for everyone involved. Our coaches are expected to make many decisions during practices and games. It is important to recognize that the coach’s role is to make decisions for the team first and individual players second. We also understand that not everyone will agree with a coach’s decisions. We strongly encourage communication between parents and coaches, but want to make sure it is as positive an interaction as possible.

With that in mind, we will follow a “Cool Down” rule: Parents (or other community members) are NOT allowed to confront a coach, team, or player with a complaint or to discuss any “negative” situation immediately after a game or practice.

If parents respect the Cool Down Period, their concerns are MORE likely to be fully addressed in a reasonable discussion, when emotions are not as high. The intent of this rule is to move an emotional and confrontational discussion away from the presence of the players, and to allow the parties to compose themselves and put the situation in proper perspective before meeting.

Section 10 – Complaint Protocol: Complaints should be handled in the following manner:

- Parents should encourage their child to meet with the coach if there is an issue/complaint. However, this meeting should not take place immediately following a contest.
- If no solution is reached with that meeting or if the issue persists after the meeting, the parent and child should meet with the coach to discuss the issue/complaint. However, this should not take place immediately following a contest
- If no solution is reached or if the issue persists after the meeting, the parent and child should request a meeting with the coach and Superintendent of either school.
- If no solution is reached or if the issue persists after the meeting, the parent and child shall appeal, in writing, to the Superintendent of the school their child is enrolled in. The appeal shall include the meetings that were held to try to remedy the issue. The Superintendent shall then bring the appeal to the appropriate Board of Education at the next regularly scheduled board meeting. They may hold an executive session with the parent(s), child, coach, and Superintendent to hear the appeal.

Other rules to keep in mind for meetings with coaches or administration:

- Playing time is solely a coaching decision and will not be an issue that can be appealed to the Board.
- No other students/players will be discussed during any of these meetings. Only the student/player of the parent requesting the meeting will be discussed.
- Either side (parent or coach) can request an administrator be present at the initial meeting if necessary.
- No parent shall confront or address a negative situation immediately following a game or practice.

Section 11 – Financial Procedures and Operations: Each district will contribute sufficient monetary funds to maintain the operation of the cooperative. The location of the ST Cooperative Account will rotate between Sandhills and Thedford on a five-year basis. Thedford took over the account at the start of the 2019-2020 school year. It will shift back to Sandhills at the start of the 2023-2024 school year and will continue to rotate every five years.

Transactions from this account will include officials, uniforms, entry fees, and any other cooperative expense approved by the cooperative committee and both Boards of Education. The Superintendents will be responsible for approving typical expenses and will maintain open lines of communication with district business managers to ensure purchasing practices are equal and done properly.

Requests for purchases using cooperative funds must be made to the Activities Director, who will bring the requests to the Superintendent. The Superintendents will then determine if it is necessary to bring the request to the Advisory Board for a recommendation of approval to both Boards of Education based on individual board procedures for purchasing and limits pertaining to Superintendent Authority.

Any time there is a question about whether or not an expense should come out of the Cooperative Account, the Superintendents shall meet to discuss the issue and make a decision together. If the Superintendents are unable to come to an agreement, then the district that is requesting/making the purchase shall cover the cost until it can be discussed with the Advisory Board.

Coach compensation will be shared by the districts based on Section 10 of this handbook.

All gate proceeds are to be deposited in the ST Cooperative Account. Each Superintendent and Bookkeeper is responsible to provide the necessary documentation and records related to gate receipts and deposits.

Section 12 – Coaching Compensation Procedures: The following is a summary of current procedure related to compensation of coaches applied toward the sharing of coaching costs by the cooperative.

- Each coach will be compensated as appropriate according to their position on the extra duty schedule in the negotiated agreement of the school which holds the coach’s contract.
- Each district will provide the other district with the current approved negotiated agreement with said extra duty schedule.
- Head coaches will be paid “head pay” with assistant coaches receiving the appropriate “assistant pay”.
- The practice of head pay for “lone assistant” will be phased out as new assistants are hired effective with the 2017-2018 contracts. Current “lone assistants” will continue to receive head pay for their assistant duties until they are no longer the opposite school’s lone assistant coach.
- If either district decides to incur additional costs related to the assistant coach, it will be the sole responsibility of that district and the additional costs will not be eligible for cost sharing within the cooperative. Costs to be eligible for cooperative cost sharing will be for the duty performed and as listed in the appropriate negotiated agreement.
- Each school year, the Superintendents will share coaching salary costs and work together to determine the “split” of coaching salaries for the prior school year. The district with less cost than the average will supplement the ST Cooperative Account at an amount which makes their coach salary contribution equal to the average cost between schools.
- The procedures or practices above can be adjusted only by recommendation of the Superintendents and Cooperative Advisory Committee for approval by both Boards of Education.

Section 13 – Fundraisers: Any fundraisers, other than concession stands, conducted by a Cooperative Activity must be approved by the Superintendents before the fundraiser has begun. Coaches must indicate to the Superintendent of their district what they plan to sell, what the money will be used for, and what expectations they have for the students involved.

Section 14 – Donations: While donations are greatly appreciated, they can be difficult to track and can lead to complications with other activities, including Title IX rules. For athletic teams that make it to state, the Cooperative suggests that those that want to donate to the teams should do so by offering to purchase or reimburse meals instead of sending money to the district. Cash donations will be used for state trips and any additional money left over will be moved to the general Cooperative Fund.

Section 15 – Coaching Positions:

- The Superintendents will be in charge of assigning candidates for each coaching position. Input will be sought from the Activities Directors at both districts and the Cooperative Advisory Board.
- The Superintendents will also be in charge of recommending the number of coaches for each level of each sport based on needs of the program and number of participants.
- All coaches will be evaluated at the end of their season.
- The Superintendents also reserve the right to determine if a coach needs to be removed from a position or declaring a position open. This should be done through consultation with the Activities Directors of both districts and the Cooperative Advisory Board, but the final decision will rest with the Superintendents. Parental complaints cannot be the only cause for opening a position.

Section 16 – Coaching Expectations: In addition to the expectations stated in job descriptions, the cooperative board expects the following from all of their coaches:

- To be upstanding, ethical, and moral individuals that set the example of sportsmanship for all of our students.
- To develop practice schedules ahead of time and keep them on file.
- To communicate effectively with the Boards, administration, Activities Directors, staff, students, parents, and communities from both districts.
- To promote all activities at both districts, along with their own.
- To understand that conflicts with other activities may arise and that we need to work together with other cooperative athletics and district activities to give all students a well-rounded educational experience.
- To hold pre-season parent meetings to discuss expectations and rules.
- To allow for equal opportunities for all students.

Section 17 – Alignment Plans: Head Varsity Coaches are expected to provide written guidelines, directions, and overall objectives to all Coaches underneath them. This includes communicating with Assistant and Junior High Coaches. The purpose of providing this written plan is to increase continuity and communication from top to bottom in all athletic programs. Junior High and Assistant Coaches are expected to respect and implement the guidelines and suggestions of their respective Head Varsity Coach. The Activities Directors will be responsible for remind the Head Coaches of this duty. Plans shall include, but not be limited to, the following: Terminology, drills, specific plays, offensive/defensive philosophies, and other information they want to make sure is being covered in lower levels of the program.

Section 18 – Coaching Professional Development: All coaches are encouraged to find opportunities to improve themselves and their coaching. The districts will support this through the following:

- The Cooperative will reimburse all coaches for membership and conference registration to the Nebraska Coaches Association.
- The Cooperative will not reimburse for the Gold Card purchased by any coaches.

- The Cooperative will cover the cost of the hotel rooms and will reimburse one meal per day for the NCA conference.
- Clinics, online trainings, or DVD development courses can be requested through the school district the coach that is requesting is employed by.

Section 19 – Communication with Students: Coaches are encouraged to use GroupMe or email to communicate with students and parents. Coaches should not use personal applications (Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, etc.) to communicate with students.

Section 20 – Team Social Media: Coaches may develop social media sites for their teams (ie: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) but must share a list of social media accounts they have developed and provide administrative access to either of the Superintendents or Activities Directors. Coaches should not allow anyone but school personnel to post information on their sites. The Coaches are solely responsible for the content on their Social Media sites and should do all they can to review or limit comments.

Section 21 – Parent Meetings: Before each season, the Superintendents and Activities Directors shall schedule Parent Meetings for all students participating in all activities for that season (7th-12th grade). The following information should be covered during these meetings, although any other information necessary should be included:

- Superintendents: Eligibility policies, updated policies, conflict protocol, sign-off procedures, and crowd expectations.
- Activities Directors: Transportation schedules and times, Rschool and scheduling information.
- Coaches: All coaches should have a handbook/rule book that includes, but is not limited to: Lettering policy, team rules and expectations, any other information needed.

Section 22 – Student Participation: All students from Sandhills and Thedford are strongly encouraged to participate in cooperative athletics. The following expectations should be taken into account for all students:

- All students will be given an equal opportunity to participate.
- All students at the junior high level will be allowed to participate at games and contests as much as possible. There is no guarantee for equal playing time, but students should be able to participate in the “A” or “B” games that are scheduled.
- There will be no guarantee for playing time at Junior High Tournaments.
- All students participating in the sub-varsity levels in the high school shall be given opportunities to participate during games/events at the coach’s discretion. Students may not get equal time and may not get to participate in every game/event.
- All students participating at the varsity level shall be given equal opportunities to earn participation time during games/events. Students will not get equal time and may not get to participate in every game/event.
- All Coaches at all levels shall provide guidance and equal opportunities in practices for the athletes to improve their skills and the possibility of earning game time throughout the season.
- The Sandhills-Thedford Cooperative will use a “no cut” policy for all student activities.
- Playing time will be determined solely by the coach in charge of the program. Concerns about playing time should be discussed with the coach. Playing time concerns can also be discussed with the Superintendent at either school, but do not fall within the parameters of the Complaint Protocol (Section 32 of this Handbook) and cannot be appealed to the Boards of Education.

Section 23 – Student Physicals: All students will be required to have physicals on file with their respective AD’s by the first official day of practice for any activity they are involved in. Coaches will help the AD’s in the collection of these physicals.

Section 24 – Concussion Protocol:

- Our students’ health and education are the greatest responsibility that we have. We will never put winning a game over the health and safety of our students.
- Every student will take a concussion baseline test with the Activities Directors during the 7th, 9th, and 11th grade years.
- If a concussion is suspected during a contest, that student *shall not return* until they have been cleared by a medical professional.
- If a coach feels the need to “check” for a concussion, the student *shall not return* to the contest or practice until they have been cleared by a medical professional.
- Any students that needs to be subbed out of a game due to a blow to the head or neck area will automatically be suspected of a concussion and shall not return until cleared by a medical professional.
- After a suspected concussion, the athlete needs two pieces of information in order to be cleared to return:
 - A post-concussion baseline test conducted by the Activities Director; and then
 - A medical professional’s clearance to return.
- The coach will be expected to follow the Return to Play plan provided by the medical professional and/or district. The coach will also be expected to document what the students was allowed to do during practice and games as they are in the Return to Play protocol.

Section 25 – Transportation:

- All safety and capacity regulations for the vehicles used will be followed by both districts.
- Transportation for away games/events and practices will be scheduled by the Activities Directors from both districts.
- While scheduling, the Activities Directors will strive to keep the transportation responsibilities of each district as equal as possible.
- All students will be transported via bus or other school vehicle to and from the school for practice, home games held at the other school, away games, and other team activities. Students will not be allowed to drive themselves to any of these events without prior parental and administration approval.
- Students may only be signed out by their legal parent or guardian unless arrangements have been made before the game/event with the appropriate school administrator.
- Coaches may be asked to transport students to practices or games/events.
- Teams will stay overnight at the discretion of both Superintendents dependent upon the timing of the event.

Section 26 – Schedules:

- The Activities Directors of each school will be responsible for working together in order to develop a schedule of athletic contests with other school districts for all cooperative athletic teams.
- The Activities Directors will use contracts to finalize details of all contests with other districts.
- Practices and home events will be alternated between schools as evenly as possible.
- The Activities Directors will develop a practice schedule before each season and provide this information to the coaches. This practice schedule will be subject to change on short notice.
- It will be the responsibility of the Activities Directors to develop practice time and travel schedules.
- Coaches may request changes to the practice schedule due to situations which arise from time to time. However, the final decision on practice location, timing, and travel will be up to the administration.
- All practices will be completed and students will be on the buses no later than 6:25 pm for any Monday-Thursday practices. Friday practices shall be completed and students will be on the buses

no later than 6:00 pm. Coaches should be mindful of religion classes on Wednesdays and make sure they are getting the kids going at the appropriate times.

Section 27 – Sunday Practices: Sunday practices must be approved through the Superintendents before scheduling. Sunday practices should only be used for high school programs that have Conference or Sub-District games scheduled on a Monday.

Section 28 – Football Scheduling: Football home games will be split between Thedford and Dunning as equally as possible over the two-year NSAA schedule. Any home playoff games will be split as evenly as possible between the two schools over the same two-year period. The school that is closest to the first visiting playoff opponent will have the choice of hosting the game or sending it to the other school. After the first playoff site is determined, any subsequent home games will be rotated between the schools over the two-year NSAA schedule cycle.

Section 29 – Sub-District Hosting: Hosting Sub-District events for volleyball or basketball will rotate between Thedford and Sandhills as evenly as possible. Once one school has hosted a sub-district event, the other school will get the opportunity to host the next one, regardless of sport. This will be reviewed on a year to year basis.

Section 30 – Homecoming Guidelines: The site for the Homecoming game will alternate between Sandhills and Thedford for each two-year schedule cycle based on what works best for both schools. The school that hosts the game will also host the Homecoming dance.

Each school is responsible for its own activities during the week. A joint Homecoming day should be attempted each year where the schools get together for games and a pep rally before the game.

All seniors will be recognized during the Homecoming coronation ceremony held at the end of the football game. Seniors will fill out a personal vitae sheet that allows them to be recognized for their involvement through high school and their plans after graduation.

Each school will crown a Homecoming king and queen which is determined by majority vote of their respective high school student body.

Section 31 – Overnight Trips: Coaches will be expected to provide the Superintendents and Activities Directors with an itinerary for all overnight trips at least five days prior to departure. The itinerary will include the following: Departure date and time, hotel information (provided to the coach by the Activities Directors), meal plans/schedules, practice and performance schedules, and potential arrival times. The itinerary must be approved by the Superintendents before departure and must be shared with parents of participating students. Out of state trips/camps need to be approved by both Boards of Education well in advance.

Meal money will be provided by the Cooperative for all participating students, coaches, and bus drivers. This will only be provided for meals that it is necessary to have the students pay for themselves. No stipend will be given for breakfast if it is included with the hotel. Coaches should distribute the money at each meal as necessary and any money that is not used shall be returned to the cooperative account. The current meal stipend will be \$15.00 per meal.

Section 32 – Facilities and Insurance: Each district certifies that they have adequate facilities to implement this cooperative agreement and adequate insurance protection to cover all applicable provisions and situations that may arise from this cooperative.

Section 33 – Admissions and Passes: Cost of admissions and passes shall be the same for both districts. Currently, price of admission is \$5 for adults and \$3 for students. All students at Sandhills and Thedford Schools will be allowed into any home game for free. Activity passes will be \$40 per person.

Section 34 – Spectator Guidelines: Spectators are permitted to attend school athletic activities only as guests of the school district, and, accordingly as a condition of such permission, they must comply with the school district’s rules and policies.

Spectators will not be allowed to interfere with the enjoyment of the students participating, other spectators, or with the performance of employees and officials supervising the school athletic activity. Spectators, like the students participants, are expected to display mature behavior and sportsmanship. The failure of spectators to do so is not only disruptive but embarrassing to the students, the school district, and the community.

By entering the facility, spectators agree to abide by the following Rules of Conduct set forth by both Sandhills and Thedford Public Schools:

- No insults or personal comments of any kind are to be directed towards game officials, referees, or workers;
- Inappropriate language or profanity will not be tolerated and will result in immediate ejection from the game;
- Taunting or ridiculing of either team or team members is not allowed;
- Comments or insults directed at any students will not be tolerated and will result in immediate ejection from the game;
- Spectators may not enter the court/field during a game;

The Superintendents have the authority to eject any spectator from an event if they feel that the above rules have not been followed, or the actions of the spectator have interfered with any other person’s enjoyment of the event. The Superintendents may also impose season or year-long suspensions as deemed necessary for home and away events.

Section 35 – Concession Stands: Concession stands will be the responsibility of the host school. Both schools use concessions as fundraisers for other activities, so the revenue generated will not be used in the cooperative account. If either school is asked to host an event as a neutral site for sub-state contests, they will be responsible for staffing the concession stand.

Section 36 – Letter Awards: It will be up to the head high school coach of each activity to develop their lettering policy. These rules need to be given to each participant and their parents at the beginning of each season. A copy of their lettering policy also needs to be given to the Superintendents and Activities Directors.

Section 37 – NCPA Guidelines: When choosing students for academic all-state, the following procedures should be followed:

- The coaches of each activity shall work with the Activities Directors to select the recipients of the Academic All State Award.
- The highest GPA starting with the senior class. If nobody in the senior class qualifies, then they should work their way down to juniors and so on until somebody meets the requirements.
- If more than one student at any level qualifies for the award, then discussion should be held about the possibilities of the students being named for another activity/sport.
- If this cannot be determined or agreed upon by the coach and Activities Directors, then the Superintendents shall be consulted to make a final decision.

Section 38 – Athletic Banquet: One athletic banquet will be held in the spring of each year. The time and location will be determined by the Cooperative Advisory Board. All sports will be given time to be recognized and to hand out awards.

Section 39 – Updates: The effectiveness of this agreement and the regulations contained within will be assessed once per year. Changes will be proposed and discussed during the Cooperative Advisory Board meeting after the spring season. This agreement, and any changes made during the summer, will be approved at each district's July board meeting every year.

Student & Parent Sign-Off 2022-2023 STK Co-Op Handbook

This signed receipt acknowledges receipt of the Sandhills-Thedford Knights 2022-2023 Cooperative Agreement Handbook. This receipt acknowledges that we have read and understand the rules and expectations of the Cooperative.

In particular, we have read and understood the following expectations and agree to abide by all the rules they contain (parent and student please initial):

_____	_____	Section 9: Cool Down Period (Page 2)
_____	_____	Section 10: Complaint Protocol (Page 2)
_____	_____	Section 33: Spectator Guidelines (Page 8)

ALL STUDENTS must have this form initialed, signed, and turned in before the first day of practice if they are planning on participating in Cooperative Activities. Families with multiple students in activities, please have ALL of your children sign off on this form.

Student(s) Signature: _____	Date: _____
_____	Date: _____
_____	Date: _____
_____	Date: _____
_____	Date: _____
_____	Date: _____
_____	Date: _____
Parent Signature: _____	Date: _____