

Building an Inclusive Athletic Department

Gabriel Robison- Director of Athletics

Woodlynde School

SAIS 2022 Institute for Athletic Directors



Gabriel Robison (he/him/his)

- Background in Social Studies Education- Elizabethtown College 2012
- Masters Degree- MCAA Concordia University, Irvine
- Coached Basketball, Volleyball, Golf, and Bowling
- Director of Athletics at the Woodlynde School, Wayne Pennsylvania
 - Serves students with Learning Differences (K-12)
 - Unique Population of Students (roughly 230)
 - Member of the Penn-Jersey Athletic Association



Current Athletic Offerings at Woodlynde

Boys Sports

- Cross Country
- Soccer
- Basketball
- Bowling*
- Cheerleading*
- Golf
- Tennis
- Ultimate Frisbee
- Lacrosse/Baseball
- E-Sports*



Girls Sports

- Cross Country
- Volleyball
- Tennis
- Basketball
- Bowling*
- Cheerleading*
- Ultimate Frisbee
- Golf
- Lacrosse/Softball
- E-Sports*



Alternative Sports in the Works (start up costs)



Horseback Riding
(\$45 a lesson per
student)



Archery (\$2,000)



Chess (\$100-\$200)



Mountain Biking
(\$ Varies)



E-Sports
(\$160 per student)



Racquet/Paddle
Sports (\$ Varies)

E-Sports Offering



- Partnership with VANTA Leagues
- VANTA Leagues is a youth esports league and development program for kids ages 9-14. Through expert coaching, mentorship, and proprietary development curriculums, we help gamers get better at the games they love- all while ensuring safety, fun, and teaching valuable life skills.
- Current game offerings- Valorant, League of Legends, Rocket League, Fortnite
- Teach teamwork, communication, controlling emotions, self-regulation, game/life balance, etc.
- Community events, virtual 5ks, tournaments, meet and greets, open gyms and much more!

A close-up photograph of a bright yellow tennis ball striking a black, diamond-shaped mesh net. The ball is positioned in the center-left of the frame, partially obscured by the net's strands. The background is a blurred, light-colored surface, likely a tennis court. The overall image has a soft, slightly desaturated aesthetic.

Benefits of Athletics for LD Students

Learning Differences at Woodlynde

“Hidden” Learning Differences

- Dyslexia/Dysgraphia/Dyscalculia
- ADD/ADHD
- Auditory Processing
- Executive Functioning
- Nonverbal LD
- Anxiety
- Many more

Non “Hidden” Learning Differences

- Partial Paralysis
- Eyesight Challenges



Deficits for LD Students



- Communication
- Social Cues
- Short-Term Memory
- Long-Term Memory
- Social-Emotional Maturity
- Problem Solving
- Negative opinion of self
- Visual Spatial Awareness

Studies and Findings about the benefits of Athletics for LD Students

- André, Louvet, and Deneuve (2013)
 - High Risk Individual Exercises in athletics leads to positive peer acceptance, helping student's opinion of self.
- Stride and Fitzgerald (2011)
 - LD students participating with non-LD students in soccer matured, gained confidence in their abilities, changed their behaviors (less swearing, sulking, etc.).
- Kent, Wanzek, Swanson, and Vaughn (2015)
 - Team-based Learning (TBL) helped students in classroom settings with communication skills. Shows the benefits of team sports and TBL in athletics.



Building an Inclusive Community and Positive Culture

Student- Athletes

Parents

Coaches



Student-Athletes- Community and Culture



- No cut programs, welcome all skill levels
- Co-ed offerings
- Tailor offerings to student-athletes (levels, proper league, etc.)
- Leadership Positions (Captains Club)
- Build a Culture
 - "The Program" – Tennis Fest, Senior knighting ceremony, service projects
 - Cross Country- Awards, 5ks, gear
- Special Events- Pink games, senior days, Bowl-o-Rama, Tennis Fest etc.
- PATHlete of the Week

Parents- Community and Culture

Partnership (academics, athletics, and student-well being)

Open Communication (Positive and Negative)

Clear expectations (team contracts, yearly athletics meeting)

Parent engagement (team parties, events, Woodlynde Weekly)



Coaches- Community and Culture

Professional
Development
Opportunities

Positive
Coaches
Alliance (PCA)

Fair
Compensation

Coaches Gear

Presence and
Support

Freedom and
Autonomy



**POSITIVE
COACHING
ALLIANCE**

Thank you!

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- Questions? Discussions? Thoughts?