

# EDINA FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



## 2011 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> GRADE RULES

## **OVERVIEW -- EFA PHILOSOPHY**

The Edina Football Association (“EFA”) is a youth football organization. It was established in 1962. The primary purpose of the EFA is to:

- Teach players the fundamentals of football in a safe and positive manner;
- Instill a love for the game of football; and
- Reflect and amplify our community’s values. These include sportsmanship, team play, and discipline.

The EFA is fundamentally committed to the development of character and sportsmanship. It believes that an athletic contest is an educational experience. The coaches (who so generously give of their talents and time) should instill in their players a sense of fairness, teamwork, self-control, courtesy, and respect for the rules of the game, its participants, coaches, and officials.

In the EFA, the primary objective is not to win at all costs. We want to provide a learning experience for both football skills and sportsmanship. We expect our coaches and parents will not only teach this to the players, but practice it themselves. By adhering to both the rules and philosophy of the program, the playing experience for all is improved.

Finally, football – when properly taught – is fun. Players who have fun generally continue to play the sport. Understanding that children drop out of sports for a variety of reasons (some of which are entirely outside of a coach’s control) one of the primary metrics for evaluating EFA coaches is whether their players return the next year.

### **4<sup>TH</sup> AND 5<sup>TH</sup> GRADE**

Football may not be as complicated as some of us adults make it out to be, but it is undeniable that young players and new coaches have a whole series of challenges. There is a new vocabulary – splits, outside/inside, leverage, gaps, stance, *etc.* – to be absorbed and a variety of basic skills required at each position.

The EFA believes that, in the first two years of play, “less is more.” Generally speaking, young players and teams have a better experience when they focus on developing fundamental skills rather than on elaborate schemes and advanced techniques. The prohibitions and limitations contained in these Rules are an attempt to help coaches and players focus on fundamentals and to still play a game that is fun, creative, and challenging.

At the same time, the EFA has great respect for the abilities of its volunteer coaches and the rate at which young players can absorb information and develop new skills.

Accordingly, the EFA has tried to strike a balance between tradition – these Rules reflect general concepts that have been employed with success by the EFA over a number of years – and innovation. The primary method of accommodating innovation is the flexibility vested in the Grade Coordinators (who act in consultation with the EFA’s Coaches’ Education Committee). Where appropriate, Grade Coordinators can, in consultation with the CEC, allow their teams to deviate from these Rules.

### **NFSHSAA RULES & MAXIMUM PENALTY**

EFA games are governed by the “2011 Football Rules” published by the National Federation of State High School Athletic Associations (“NFSHSAA”) unless those rules are contradicted by these Rules.

The maximum penalty for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade play is 10 yards. If, under NFSHSAA Rules, a penalty for a given infraction is 15 yards, a 10 yard penalty will be assessed.

### **REFEREES**

The referees hired by the EFA work at a variety of different levels under a host of different rules. The EFA alone has four different sets of rules that apply to its tackle leagues. And it is not uncommon for the referees retained by the EFA to work with a number of youth leagues.

For these reasons, the referees may not always be aware of every rule applicable to EFA league play. Coaches are expected to work collaboratively with the referees (and each other) to make sure that games are officiated in a fair, sportsmanlike manner and in accordance with these Rules. In other words, if the referees make a mistake, don’t scream like an idiot and run onto the field to thrust a hi-lited, annotated version of the Rules in their faces. Instead, work it out in a calm, deliberative manner — model behavior that you want your players to emulate.

If teams have a question about a ruling or some other matter, coaches may talk to referees in a calm, deliberative manner. A team’s spectators may not talk to the referees. Coaches are responsible for reminding their team’s spectators of this rule. A chronic failure to abide by this rule can result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty. In extreme cases, Grade Coordinators (in consultation with the EFA Coaches’ Education Committee) may ban spectators.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE**

#### **Coaches**

1) Coaches are selected on the basis of their ability to work with young people and their ability to teach the fundamentals of football in a safe and fun manner. Coaches are required to sign an EFA Coaches’ Conduct Pledge and to abide by the spirit of

these Rules and the EFA's philosophy. Grade Coordinators, with the approval of the Coaches' Education Committee, have the discretion to remove any coach who violates these Rules. As vital as coaches are to the success of the EFA, they should always remember that the program is for players – not the coaches.

2) No coach may coach in a practice or game until that coach has signed a Coach's Conduct Pledge and turned it into the Grade Coordinator. Coaches must also register with the EFA and submit to a background check.

3) All head coaches and assistant coaches shall attend the mandatory training conducted by the Coaches' Education Committee. Coaches are expected to follow the requests and instruction of the Grade Coordinator.

4) A coach who has coached the year before has priority at the subsequent grade level. Second priority is given to qualified parents who desire to coach.

### **Registration**

1) Registrations are accepted through the end of the official sign-up date or until rosters are filled. Any other registrations must be approved by the Grade Coordinator and the EFA President. That player will not be allowed to play until he has passed through the evaluation process and has been assigned to the team deemed to have the greatest need. Players who wish to enroll after the beginning of the season must pass through the process described. Failure to do so may result in forfeiture of games and removal of player from that team.

2) No player will be allowed to practice or play in a game until a complete, signed registration form (including medical information) with the appropriate fee is returned to the EFA.

3) In case of financial hardship, the registration fee may be waived at the President's discretion.

4) All requests for refunds must be in writing and must be made by the parent/guardian to include; (i) the name/relationship to the player of the person requesting the refund, (ii) name of the player, (iii) reason for the request, (iv) instructions for distribution. Upon approval by the EFA President, funds will be immediately disbursed.

### **Selection of Teams**

1) The Grade Coordinators, in consultation with the Coaches' Education Committee, establish the number of teams to be fielded by each grade level.

2) Teams will be organized with the use of the "Equidraft" system. All players will be evaluated at skill sessions that take place during the first practices. The length of

the evaluation period will be established by the Grade Coordinator (in consultation with the Coaches' Education Committee).

The Grade Coordinator will weigh and time each player during the skills evaluation. A draft is then held using the results of the skills sessions to assemble equal teams. Players are assigned to teams, which are identified by a team number. Once the coaches and coordinator agree that all of the teams are as equal as reasonably possible, the coordinator shall assign coaches to teams. No changes or swapping of players between coaches are permitted after the drawing takes place without the approval of all the other coaches in the grade and the Grade Coordinator.

3) The Grade Coordinator shall determine how many head coaches and assistant coaches may have their sons transferred to their teams. The same number of coaches per team shall be permitted to request transfers. In other words, if 3 coaches from team "A" are allowed to transfer players to their team, every team shall be allowed to transfer 3 players.

If coaches are allowed to have their sons transferred to their team, they shall be traded for players of equal ability.

4) Once rosters are set, players may be moved only if an extreme inequity, injury, or special circumstance is identified. This will be done by the Grade Coordinator in consultation with the Coaches' Education Committee.

## Equipment

- 1) All players must use EFA-approved equipment. Players who do not have EFA-approved equipment may not practice or play until they obtain the appropriate equipment – with no exceptions. Each player must have:
  - a. **Helmets**-All players must wear a NOCSAE certified helmet with face guard and chin strap with hard plastic chin guard
  - b. **Mouth guards**-All players must wear approved mouth guards. Failure to wear a mouth guard during a game results in a 10-yard penalty.
  - c. **Shoulder pads.**
  - d. **Pants** -- all players must wear football pants with hip, thigh and knee pads.
  - e. **Athletic cup and supporter**
  - f. **Shoes** -- All players must wear approved shoes. Any cleats must be permanently molded into the sole of the shoe and not to exceed one-half inch in length. Screw-in cleats are not permitted.

2) Coaches are expected to see that each player is fitted properly in approved equipment. Any player wearing faulty or ill-fitting equipment will not be allowed to play.

### **Practice**

1) The practice schedule is set by the Grade Coordinator. **Any coach violating the schedule by holding practice outside the times approved by the Grade Coordinator may be removed or, in the Grade Coordinator's discretion (in consultation with the Coaches' Education Committee), subject to lesser discipline.**

2) The Grade Coordinator establishes the practice schedule. Generally speaking, teams practice every weeknight before school begins. Once school starts, teams typically practice three nights a week (M, T, Th) for 1.5 hours apiece. The start time for practice is adjusted to account for diminishing daylight as autumn progresses.

### **Weather**

The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade leagues practice and/or play their games on grass fields. The use of those fields is ultimately controlled by the Edina Parks and Recreation Department. When the weather is wet and the Parks Department perceives the possibility that play will permanently damage the fields, it cancels practices and games. The EFA does not have any control over those decisions.

The Parks Department tries to work cooperatively with the EFA to provide prompt notice of its decisions to cancel play, but it also tries to err on the side of allowing games to be played. This occasionally results in games being cancelled on short notice. Coaches and parents are asked to be mindful of the fact that the EFA is not in control of these decisions and that the seemingly late notice sometimes received from the Parks Department is a result of the fact that all involved would prefer to see league play go forward.

If the Parks Department determines that the EFA may play during wet or snowy conditions, the coordinators retain the discretion to cancel play if the weather poses a risk to players' safety – e.g., lightning or extreme cold. Generally, football is a game played in inclement weather and league play will go forward if the Parks Department permits the EFA to use its fields.

If games are cancelled, the Grade Coordinators will attempt to re-schedule games to the extent possible.

## **Weight Restrictions (“Designated Players” or “Black-Strippers”)**

- 1) Weights are determined in shorts and “t”-shirt, without shoes, when player evaluations begin. Unweighed players may not carry the ball.
- 2) Players who weigh more than **90 pounds** in the **4<sup>th</sup> grade** or **100 pounds** in the **5<sup>th</sup> grade** will be termed “Designated Players” or “Black Strippers.” They will be designated with a single black stripe on their helmet.
- 3) Designated Players may play ANY position on defense.
- 4) On offense, Designated players may not carry the ball or line up in a backfield position (e.g. as a blocking back) at any time during the game. Designated Players may line up as tight ends and advance the ball by catching forward passes (passes thrown beyond the line of scrimmage) and running after the reception. But Designated Players may not advance the ball on any offensive play as part of a punt, fumble, “shovel pass,” lateral, hand-off, or “end-around.”
- 5) On defense, Designated Players may advance fumbles, interceptions, and onside kicks if the Designated Player’s original alignment on the play was ten yards from the kicking team. If a “Designated Player” catches a kick-off that goes more than fifteen yards from the point where the ball was kicked, the play is dead and the player may not advance the kick. Designated Players may not advance punts. If a punted ball touches a Designated Player, the ball is “down” where it struck the Designated Player.
- 6) A player of any weight can be used as a kicker or punter.

## **EQUAL PARTICIPATION**

### **EFA Philosophy on Playing Time**

Equal participation is one of the EFA’s core principles. The EFA requires that every player at every level be given a starting position on both offense and defense each game and that every player play at least half the game. This requirement is consistent with the EFA’s philosophy – to maximize participation and develop as many players as possible.

This principle also takes into account the fact that football players develop at significantly different rates. A player who dominates the league in 6th grade might be relegated to a secondary role in high school – and a player who plays a secondary role in the 6th grade might be the star in high school. But if a player who struggles early in his development quits because he is never given a chance to play, the player is deprived of a valuable experience and EHS is deprived of a player who might ultimately contribute to the team’s success.

## Playing Time Rules

Each player should play at least a minimum of 50% of the game. Fifty percent minimum playing time of games is defined as each player has:

- a. One starting position on defense during one half.
- b. One starting position on offense during the opposite half.
- c. He should play that side of the ball during the relative half as much as possible except for disciplinary reasons.
- d. Special teams play does not count towards minimum playing time

The EFA expects that, in 2011, the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade leagues will be comprised of 10 teams of 13(+) players. If each team complies with these rules and they have a full roster is available, each team will have to play approximately 5 players both ways in the first half.

- For example, 9 players from team “A” play offense the first half. The remaining 4 players on the roster play on defense. 5 players from the offensive side of the ball must also play defense in order to field a team.
- Under this scenario, the players who play both ways in the 1st half may not play both ways in the 2nd. Rather, 5 new players must play both offense and defense in the 2nd half.
- Assuming a full roster of 13 players, 3 players per team will only play ½ of any given game (1/2 on offense, ½ on defense). Coaches are required to rotate their roster and playing time so that their players play equally throughout the season. Coaches are required to maintain records of who plays. The Grade Coordinator may request those records at any time. Parents will be aware of the equal play rules.

Unless required by injury, disqualifications, or absences, no player should play the entire game.

Coaches may hold a player out of a game for health reasons, failure to attend practice, or disciplinary reasons. But players being held out must be identified before the game to the opposing team’s head coach. If a player does not receive equitable playing time in 2 games, the coach shall report that fact to the Grade Coordinator.

A coach who encourages a player (or players) to miss a game to improve the teams’ chances of winning or who takes other actions to frustrate the intent of the EFA’s equitable playing time rules will be banned from coaching in the EFA.

## **Backfields**

Teams must play two entirely separate offensive backfields (QB, A, B, and Z backs) each half. Coaches in both 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades are encouraged to rotate their backfields each week so that all non-designated players (“black-strippers”) play roughly the same amount of time in the backfield.

No eligible player (non-black striper) should play exclusively in the offensive line during the course of a season. Rather, all eligible players should have the opportunity to play in the offensive line. As a result, all of a team’s players will learn invaluable blocking skills – and to learn to appreciate how difficult (yet important) offensive line play is.

## **Substitutions**

The only time that teams may substitute is

- The start of a new quarter;
- Injury (and the injured player shall return to his position as soon as it is safe for him to do so); or
- Disqualification.

These substitution rules do not apply to special teams. In other words, kickers, punters, and long-snappers may substitute on any kicking play.

## **GAME PLAY**

### **Time-Keeping**

Teams will play 12-minute running quarters with “stop time” rules being used during the last two minutes of each half. The clock will also be stopped for injuries and immediately after a score. Extra points will not be run against the game clock. Time is stopped until the ensuing kickoff. The game clock will re-start on the kick-off as in NFSHSAA rules.

### **45-Second Clock**

The offense will have 45 seconds from the referee’s spot of the ball to snap the ball for the next play. The game officials will keep the 45-second clock. Failure to initiate play within 45 seconds will result in 5-yard penalty to be assessed from the line of scrimmage.

Although the game clock will not run on extra points, the 45-second rule will still apply. The 45-second clock will be started by the officials for extra points, with delay of game receiving the usual 5 yard penalty.

Teams in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade will be given one warning before the first delay-of-game penalty is assessed.

## **Football**

“Junior” size footballs will be provided by the EFA and used for league play.

## **Fields**

Games shall be played on 80-yard long fields that are 40-yards wide. The coaches' box shall extend from each 30-yard line.

## **Home Team Responsibilities**

The home team is responsible for down marker and chain attendants. Both teams are responsible for policing the field and picking up trash and equipment after the last game of the day.

## **Scoring & Ties**

- 1) One point is awarded for extra points achieved by runs, two points for extra points achieved by forward pass.
- 2) All ties will be official. There will be no overtime, except in playoff games. In a playoff game, ties are decided by each team trying to score from the 10 yard line. Overtime begins with a coin flip. Each team gets four plays to score. The second team gets four plays to score, even if the first team scores on its first play. If a team scores, they also try an extra point from the three yard line. If a team loses possession of the ball they cannot run any further plays. The team with the highest score wins the tie-breaker.

## **Time-Outs**

Each team shall have 2 time-outs per half of 1&1/2 minutes duration. A time-out shall not be charged to a team in the event of player injury. An injured player must leave the field for at least one play.

## **Half-time**

Half-time shall be 5 minutes.

## **Four-Minute Warning**

Coaches will be advised by officials when 4 minutes are left before the end of each half.

## **Coaches on the Field**

One coach from each team can remain on the field during play. When on the field, coaches must remain at least 5 yards behind the line of scrimmage before the snap of the ball. The coach on the field may not talk to the opposing team's players.

## **Spectators**

Football is a game that incites passion. Occasionally, even some adults have a hard time putting youth football in its proper perspective. Too often we see reports of unruly and even violent behavior during or after children's games.

Coaches are responsible for the conduct of their team's spectators. Spectators who talk to the referees, are unruly, or who yell at the opposing team's players or coaches can be assessed a penalty for unsportsmanlike conduct (see below), asked to leave the field, and/or banned from EFA games.

## **Unsportsmanlike Conduct**

1. Any unsportsmanlike conduct by coaches, players, parents or spectators will result in an automatic 10 yard penalty. A warning is not required before an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty is called. If a player is warned by an official, he shall be removed from the game for at least two plays and shall be permitted to return only when the head coach has satisfied himself that the player understands the nature of his misconduct.
2. There shall be automatic ejection from the game for any fighting, kneeling, kicking or other deliberate actions taken to injure another player.
3. If a player is ejected from the game, that player may not play the next game.

## **OFFENSE**

### **Playbooks**

- 1) The EFA will provide both 4th and 5th grade coaches with playbooks. The playbooks are age and skill-appropriate adaptations of schemes and plays utilized by

the Edina High School. The playbooks will provide a broad enough spectrum of plays and schemes to allow coaches to run a variety of plays suited for their team. Coaches are encouraged to remember that players who learn the fundamentals early – and who can execute those fundamentals – are most likely to succeed in the long term.

At the same time, the EFA respects the tremendous contribution that its coaches make – and the skill and insight they bring to bear. Coaches are encouraged to engage in a dialogue with their Coordinators, the Coaches' Education Committee, and the EFA Board about anything that concerns them, including playbooks. If coaches feel that the playbooks are too limiting, inappropriate for their players' skill levels, or lacking in some other regard, the EFA is eager to receive that feedback.

2) The EFA playbooks are mandatory. Coaches may not deviate from them. Coaches and teams that do deviate are subject to penalty within the discretion of the Grade Coordinator, the EFA Coaches' Education Committee, and the EFA Board. Penalties can include forfeiture of games or, in the case of deliberate and frequent disregard of these Rules, a ban from coaching.

3) Grade Coordinators, in consultation with the Coaches Education Committee, have the discretion to allow teams to deviate from the playbooks. But any deviation from the playbooks has to extend to all of the teams in a league. For example, if a coach from "Team X" requests the opportunity to run a gadget play, every team in the league must be allowed to run a similar (if not the same) play.

A non-exhaustive list of factors for Grade Coordinators to consider in granting deviations includes:

- **Parity.** One of the EFA's primary goals is parity. Allowing deviations from the playbook may heighten disparities that already exist in an uneven league. In contrast, allowing teams in a well-balanced league to run a few plays not included in the playbooks does not raise the same concerns.
- **Skill Level.** The extent to which teams have mastered the plays in the playbook – and the skill necessary to execute them. Crawl before you can walk, walk before you run. Does a team that can't execute an off-tackle play really need to run a triple reverse?
- **Timing.** As the season winds down and teams settle in with their primary plays, players tend to get bored. Introducing a few gadget plays can spice things up and make practice more fun.
- **EHS Compatibility.** The extent to which a proposed deviation teaches schemes or skills that are relevant to an important football concept that players will be required to implement later (especially at EHS). For example, the use of motion. Motion is primarily used to identify defensive coverages, in "jet" or

“rocket” sweeps (which require significant practice time in order to be executed), and/or to require a defense to adjust prior to the snap. Given the fact that 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade teams don’t play any coverages, generally don’t have the time required to execute “jet” or “rocket” sweeps, and coaches are on the field to adjust defenses to motion, does allowing motion in these grades advance the EFA’s goals?

- **Balance between the offense and defense.** In order to provide a balanced, age appropriate experience for its players, the EFA has placed a number of limitations on the defense. For example, the defensive backs must line up at least 8 yards off of the line of scrimmage. Some offensive formations can unfairly exploit these limitations. For example, lining up three backs to the right of the line of scrimmage takes unfair advantage of the defense. In requesting deviations from the Coaches’ Education Committee, coordinators should be mindful of the restrictions on the defense and the balance between offense and defense.

### **Formations, Motion, and QB Sneaks**

- 1) All grades must have three backs, including the quarterback. Backs must line up no wider than the outside hip of the offensive tackles. The flanker or wingback may split wide to a maximum distance of 12 yards off the end.
- 2) Each team shall have 5 players on the line of scrimmage – a center, two guards, and two tackles. The tackles are eligible to catch forward passes. Unbalanced lines are not permitted.
- 3) The maximum split for players on the line of scrimmage shall be 2 feet.
- 4) Unless the Grade Coordinator grants a deviation, teams may not employ motion or shifts.
- 5) Quarterback sneaks are permitted unless:
  - The ball is within 3 yards of a 1st down or the goal-line; or
  - It is 3rd or 4th down.

Any play where the quarterback starts under center (or in the pistol or revolver formations) and runs between the guards is a “sneak.” So, for example, a “quarterback draw” -- where the QB takes a drop-step and then proceeds to run between the guards – is still a “sneak” and not permitted in the circumstances described in this rule. A play where the quarterback receives the snap 3 or more yards behind the line of scrimmage is not a “sneak.”

This rule is in place in order to compensate for the fact that linebackers are required to remain 3 yards behind the line of scrimmage.

## **DEFENSE**

### **Tackling**

With the increasing awareness regarding the danger of head injuries, coaches are reminded that one of the EFA's primary goals is to teach safe (but physical) play. Accordingly, coaches are required to teach safe methods of tackling and to insure that their players do not tackle using the helmet, spear, or make horse-collar tackles. All of these techniques are personal fouls and will be penalized 10 yards from the spot of the foul.

### **Alignment**

- 1) Teams shall employ a 4-3-2 defense. The defensive linemen "head up" on the offensive linemen and the middle linebacker must line up over the center. The outside linebackers and safeties must maintain a specified depth before the snap of the ball (see below), but otherwise may line up anywhere on the field.
- 2) The team's defensive alignment must be clearly established by the time the last offensive player takes a set position.

### **Defensive line play**

- 1) Defensive ends may line up in a 2 or 3-point stance. Defensive tackles must be in either a 3 or 4-point stance.
- 2) The defensive linemen may not be in an unbalanced alignment, nor may they cover the center. The defensive tackles line up over the offensive guards and the defensive ends line up over the offensive tackles. Both the tackles and ends must line up "head up" on the offensive linemen in front of them. For example, defensive ends may not shade the outside shoulder of the offensive tackle.
- 3) Defensive linemen are required to make their initial charge directly into the offensive lineman in front of them in an effort to stun, control, and then shed the lineman. The defensive line may not "stunt," "twist," or "shoot gaps." Stunts or twists occur when, after the snap, two defensive linemen "flip" responsibilities – for example, when a defensive end comes down the line to shoot the gap between a guard and center while the defensive tackle next to him loops to the rushing lane outside the offensive tackle. Shooting the gap occurs when a defensive linemen avoids the offensive linemen in front of him and attempts to burst, untouched, through the gap between two offensive players or when a defensive end fails to make contact with the offensive tackle and immediately rushes upfield.

The rationale supporting this rule is simple. Teaching young players to block is one of the most difficult tasks in youth football. Playing the offensive line is not intuitive. The task of teaching young linemen to block is made immeasurably more difficult if they have to immediately contend with defensive players shooting gaps.

This rule also has the defensive players' best interests at heart. Too often, young defensive linemen who are allowed to shoot gaps and stunt fail to master the primary skills required to play defensive line – namely, the ability to stun, control, and shed offensive linemen. By eliminating the ability to shoot gaps in 4th and 5th grade, the EFA encourages its coaches and defensive players to focus on the development of these primary skills.

### **Linebackers**

- 1) Linebackers must be at least 3 yards off of the line of scrimmage. Linebackers may not line up closer to the line of scrimmage when the ball is inside the 10-yard line. They must remain at least 3 yards off of the LOS.
- 2) Linebackers and defensive backs may not blitz. They must be coached to read the play and react. The defensive players who line up on the line of scrimmage are the only defensive players who can cross the line of scrimmage until the ball carrier has run wide of the offensive tackle. Once the ball carrier is beyond that point, any defensive player may cross the line of scrimmage. The penalty for violations is an automatic first down. Grade Coordinators and the Coaches' Education Committee have the discretion to issue additional penalties for chronic, flagrant violations.

This rule is premised upon the same principles that support the prohibition on shooting gaps, stunts, and twists.

### **Defensive backs**

- 1) Defensive Backs must be 8 yards deeper than the line of scrimmage. The safeties may limit their 8 yard distance to 5 yards when inside the 3 yard line.
- 2) If a player is running with the ball in an upright position (head above the position where the shoulders would normally be if the player were standing upright), the initial contact by the tackler must be below the shoulders on any play. The penalty shall be ten (10) yards and an automatic first down.

## **KICKING GAME**

### **Playing Time**

Participation on special teams does not count towards the "Equal Participation" Rule.

## **Field Goals and Extra Points**

There are no field goals or extra points by kick in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

## **Punts**

- 1) No fakes are allowed. Teams are required to declare if they are going to punt.
- 2) Rushing the punter or kicker is not allowed. To encourage the development of long snap skills, the center will do his best to execute the long snap. The Offense may not release downfield until the ball is punted.
- 3) A punt that hits a defensive player at the line of scrimmage “neutral zone” is not considered a live ball. The ball is down on contact and turns over to the receiving team.

## **Kick-Offs**

- 1) Kickoffs will be made from the kicking team’s 30 yard line. Kicks that go out of bounds without being touched by the receiving team will be put in play on the receiving team’s 25 yard line or the spot where the ball left the field of play, whichever is more advantageous to the receiving team.
- 2) The receiving team on a kickoff must have three players in front of its own 35-yard line.

## **Designated Players**

Designated Players may kick or punt.

Generally speaking, Designated Players may not return kicks. They may, however, return onside kicks if the Designated Player’s original alignment on the play was on his team’s 35-yard line. If a “Designated Player” catches a kick-off that goes more than fifteen yards from the point where the ball was kicked, the play is dead and the player may not advance the kick. Designated Players may not advance punts. If a punted ball touches a Designated Player, the ball is “down” where it struck the Designated Player.