

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

We know that all who support our students in their extracurricular activities, whether formally organized as a Student Support Organization or an informal group of parents, are motivated by the right thing: to enhance the quality of the students' experience here at Masco. The administration and the school committee thank you for that. Nonetheless, the school committee has a responsibility to students, parents, and all Tri-Town citizens to ensure that the right things are being done in the right way. The key to making that happen is trust. Neither the school committee nor the administration can "police" all of the myriad of activities done on behalf of students to ensure that the spirit and letter are being followed, so we have to trust all parties that this is being done. That's why we've developed these comprehensive (and hopefully) simple policies, processes, and guidelines that cover most issues that could arise. Let's work together to make that happen.

How is a Student Support Organization (SSO) different than a Booster group or Booster club?

There is no difference. Masconomet uses the term Student Support Organization to describe groups outside of the school, organized to provide support to recognized student teams and organizations, both athletic and non-athletic in nature.

Are SSOs controlled by the school district?

Yes and no. SSOs must be separately incorporated as 401.3c organizations and abide by all state and federal laws and state laws and regulations that govern, including tax laws.

The school district also has obligations to federal and state laws, regulations, and policies of the School Committee, as well as rules of the MA Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) of which Masconomet is a member institution. The District may and must promulgate rules and guidelines that must be followed by SSOs. These include policies and rules governing how SSOs may support student organizations, what kinds of fund-raising can be done, how money can be spent to support teams and organizations, and how SSO members interact with teams, coaches, organizations, and advisors.

The District enforces MIAA rules, federal and state laws pertaining to schools and students, and other laws and regulations that govern ethics, liability, and all aspects of the conduct of school sanctioned activities.

The District assumes no accountability or liability for SSO funds. Any financial obligations incurred by the SSO shall be solely that of the SSO.

When can the name Masconomet be used in fund-raising activities?

when the name Masconomet can used in conjunction with the fund-raising only after the fund-raising purpose and goals have been approved by school administration on the designated form "Fund-raising Application".

Can parents or supporters fund-raise if they are not part of a Student Support Organization that is properly constituted?

No. In cases where there is no recognized SSO for a student group, the coach or advisor is responsible for getting fund-raising support on the “Fund-raising Application for Student Groups”. Parents may assist teams and coaches/advisors in a support role. All funds must be deposited to the designated Student Activity Account, if one exists.

Are SSOs charged fees by the District for use of District facilities and fields?

Probably not. Please refer to the Facilities Use Guidelines. Uses of facilities fees are structured around the concept of the extent to which a facility’s use directly benefits Masconomet students and student groups. Use and benefit and the applicable fees are determined by District staff when a Facilities Use Request Form is received with all required additional documentation (see the Facilities Use Guidelines). All users (renters) can expect, at minimum, to be charged for direct costs related to the need for additional school personnel, police details, after use clean-up and/or restoration, etc.

Can a User Request a Waiver of Fees from the Masconomet School Committee?

No. There is no longer a waiver process. The Superintendent of Schools will hear concerns about the fairness of fees charged for facilities. The decision of the Superintendent is final.

Do SSOs have charge of or responsibility for end of season or end of year banquets and/or celebrations?

No. Team and organizational banquets and celebrations are school activities and under the authority and supervision of the School even when financially supported by the SSO. Even though the coach/advisor may delegate tasks or duties to SSO members, the ultimate authority is in the hands of the advisor/coach/director of the activity.

What is the District policy on the location and nature of end-of-season and end-of-activity banquets?

Banquets and celebrations must be held on-campus, except under extraordinary and isolated circumstances specifically approved by the Superintendent of Schools.

Fund-raising should be for the purpose of supporting the program as a whole and not to provide scholarships to individuals unless the scholarships or awards are given on a selective basis with specific criteria, and there is a process in place that ensures that parents of potential recipients remain “blind” or parental favor avoided by the specific requirements of selection process.

Incidental purchases for individual student members must be incidental in nature, valued at less than \$150.00 per year, and will become the personal property of the student-athlete. Gifts to seniors or gifts associated with a season’s participation are also limited to \$150.00. No gifts to participating team or organization members can be cash, gift cards, checks payable to the individual or other cash substitute.

Are there rules about when and how SSOs can purchase equipment or materials to support a program? Yes.

1. SSO purchases of equipment or materials that becomes the property of the program exceeding \$350 for a single purchase, or category of purchases in a school year, must be made through a donation to the District. Actual purchasing will be done by the District. When the SSO donates money for a specific purpose, the school can use its tax-exempt status for the procurement. Regulations prevent the District from allowing other organizations to use their tax status even if the item will ultimately be donated for our use. The process for SSO donations greater than \$350 is as follows:
 - a. The SSO writes a formal letter addressed to the Masconomet School Committee, care of the Superintendent of Schools, naming the specific beneficiary and purpose of the gift. The donation check, payable to Masconomet Regional School District, is included with the letter.
 - b. The Superintendent will bring the donation forward to the School Committee for their consideration at its next regular meeting.
 - c. The School Committee will approve or not approve the donation based on the intended purpose of the gift and its consistency with guidelines and policies. The School Committee also must consider Title IX considerations including the gift impact on gender discrimination. Conflict with Title IX laws and regulations can be best mitigated by consideration during the fund-raising approval process. The District's Title IX Coordinator and Civil Rights Officer is Patricia Bullard, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services.

Can SSOs make incidental purchases for program use or for student participants' personal use, items like t-shirts or season mementoes?

SSOs may from time-to-time make purchases of incidentals for programs or for individual student members. These purchases would be of the nature of equipment or material for the program costing less than \$350 and approved by the Athletic Director.

Incidental purchases for individual student members must be incidental in nature, valued at less than \$150.00, and will become the personal property of the student-athlete. Gifts to seniors or gifts associated with a season's participation are also limited to \$150.00. No gifts to participating team or organization members can be cash, gift cards, checks payable to the individual or other cash substitute.

Can an SSO provide compensation or gifts to volunteer coaches and volunteer advisors or to District employed coaches of advisors.

No – with a narrow exception. Under no circumstances can an SSO provide compensation or gifts to coaches or advisors, including volunteer coaches and advisors, except as allowed under Massachusetts Ethics Laws in the case of annual gifts valued at less than \$50.00. This is a total that the coach or advisor can legally accept. Multiple gifts of \$50.00 or “pooled” gifts of \$50.00 or less each are unlawful, and acceptance can be cause for termination of service for the coach or advisor and could lead to prosecution of the person receiving the unlawful gift or gifts.

Volunteer coaches and advisors will sign a volunteer contract with the District before each season or activity agreeing to conditions of employment as a volunteer and understanding that no compensation can be accepted from any source.

Can an SSO be involved with out-of-season activities for teams operating under MIAA rules?

No. Under no circumstances can SSOs provide funding for student participation in out-of-season athletics activities per MIAA rules. SSOs should also not be involved in the organizing of out-of-season teams for external events or with organizing Masco or local events in the out-of-season for Masconomet student-athletes.

How can an SSO best avoid conflicts with school and District rules, MIAA rules, and statutory requirements, as well as misunderstandings with school officials?

All SSO fund-raising project ideas must be approved by the Athletic Director or by the Principal for non-athletics-related fund-raising, no later than 14 business days before the fund-raising activity begins. It is important that we avoid competing fundraisers and fundraisers not consistent with guidelines or policies. Advance approval will avoid many of the problems that could occur and result in District intervention with the intended use of funds (purchases, rentals, other types of expenditures). There is a form for Student Support Organizations to request approval to do fund-raising or hold fund-raising events.

How can communication between and among SSOs, coaches and advisors, and District officials be supported by continuous improvement efforts?

There will be an annual, informational meeting for SSO officers and members hosted by District officials to review SSO Guidelines, exchange information in regard to improving processes, and as an opportunity for SSOs to provide feedback to school administration. This meeting will be announced to all SSOs at least one month in advance.

There will be an annual, mandatory meeting for coaches as well as one for advisors at which relevant rules and practices will be reviewed, including a review of the SSO Guidelines and guidance for coaches and advisors regarding their roles with SSOs.

All SSOs must sign and return the tear-off final page of the current Student Support Organization Guidelines attesting to the fact that they have read and understand the content of the Guidelines. This must be done annually and submitted to the Superintendent of Schools. This can be done at the annual informational meeting. No fund-raising will be allowed until this signed form is received by the Superintendent's Office.