OLYMPIC HANDBALL · MIDDLE SCHOOL (GRADES 6–8) · SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP PACKAGE

Olympic Handball

An 11-week middle school physical education unit for grades 6–8, built for real class sizes of 65–90. Motor skills, team play and the Olympic values, delivered by our coaches inside your PE schedule.

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Handball Rising · a program of New York City Team Handball Club Inc., 501(c)(3), EIN 27-0541418 · NYS Charities Bureau reg. 42-25-63 · NYC FMS vendor VS00085913
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Principal brief

The partnership on one page.

FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FOR PRINCIPALS AND PE TEACHERS · MIDDLE SCHOOL

A turnkey 11-week Olympic sport unit for your school.

Dear Principal,

Every New York City school leader knows the reality of physical education: large classes, stretched staffing and demanding state requirements. I am writing to offer your school something that adds capacity rather than asking more of it: a complete 11-week Olympic Handball unit, delivered by our coaches inside your existing PE schedule and built for real class sizes of 65–90 students. Your PE staff supervises; we bring the curriculum, the coaching and the sport.

What your school receives

- **An 11-week Olympic sport unit, 90 minutes weekly,** from structured warm-up to reflection, culminating in a school tournament with sportsmanship awards.
- **Full SHAPE America 2024 alignment,** mapped indicator by indicator to 24 Grade 6–8 learning indicators across all four national standards, and to the New York State PE Learning Standards (2020).
- **Character education built in:** the seven Olympic and Paralympic values and CASEL-aligned SEL practices woven into every session.
- **Differentiated instruction:** three fluid challenge levels, so first-time movers and experienced athletes are both genuinely challenged.
- **Assessment and reporting:** baseline-to-final growth data, participation rates and student reflections delivered to you at the unit's end.

New York State compliance

- Sessions run in collaboration with, and under the supervision of, your certified PE teacher(s), as New York State requires for grades 7–8 (8 NYCRR 135.4), so instruction counts toward your PE program.
- New York State requires grades 7–12 to receive PE three times a week in one semester and twice a week in the other. The unit serves as one of your required weekly PE sessions. It complements your program; it does not replace it.
- The unit is aligned to the New York State Physical Education Learning Standards (2020), Standards 1–5, for grades 6–8.

What it asks of your school

Gym or field space, one 90-minute weekly block, and your PE teacher's presence. No lesson planning, no staff training, no curriculum writing. Equipment is minimal and brought by us.

Enclosed you will find a one-page visual overview for your PE teacher and the complete week-by-week curriculum. I would welcome the chance to walk you and your PE staff through the program in person.

In partnership,

Shkumbin "Bini" Mustafa

Managing Director & Head Coach, Handball Rising · President, New York City Team Handball Club · 8× U.S. National Champion · former Team USA athlete

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The unit at a glance

Phases, session rhythm, standards and class management, on one page.

FOR THE PE TEACHER

11	90	1×	65–90
WEEKS	MIN / SESSION	PER WEEK	STUDENTS PER CLASS

THE ARC: THREE PHASES

PHASE 1 · WEEKS 1–3
Foundation & Discovery
What is handball? Sport connections, catching, passing, rules, team identity

PHASE 2 · WEEKS 4–7
Skill Building & Assessment
Throwing clinic, defense and goalkeeping, three differentiated levels, first full game

PHASE 3 · WEEKS 8–11
Competition & Tournament
Leveled teams, strategy and captains, sportsmanship, culminating tournament

EVERY SESSION, THE SAME 90-MINUTE RHYTHM

Warm-up	Concept	Skill development	Applied play	Reflection
10 min	5 min	45 min	25 min	5 min

Consistent structure means easy classroom management. Students know the routine by week 2.

SHAPE AMERICA 2024, ALL FOUR STANDARDS

S1 Motor skills
Throw · catch · dribble · shoot · defend · space

S2 Movement knowledge
Invasion tactics · space concepts · skill analysis

S3 Social skills
Communication · etiquette · leadership · feedback

S4 Personal skills
Goal setting · emotion management · reflection

24 Grade 6–8 learning indicators mapped week by week; full crosswalk table inside the curriculum.

BUILT FOR 65–90 STUDENTS

Station rotation
2–4 stations, rotate every 15 minutes

Peer leaders
Students help run stations

Multi-ball play
Max touches, zero waiting

Whistle & cone cues
Transitions without talk

GRADING: GROWTH, NOT TALENT

30%
Effort & participation
Present, active, contributing in every segment

25%
Skill growth
Against the student's own week 4–5 baseline, never peers

25%
Character & values
Sportsmanship, teamwork, accountability, reflection

20%
Knowledge
Rules, Olympic values, sport connections, tactics

Skill growth is measured against each student's own week 4–5 baseline, never against peers.

SEVEN OLYMPIC & PARALYMPIC VALUES, EVERY SESSION

Excellence · Respect · Friendship · Determination · Courage · Inspiration · Equality

Coaches deliver · you supervise · zero prep required

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The complete curriculum

11 weeks of session plans, standards crosswalk and assessment.

FOR CURRICULUM REVIEW

Executive summary

A note to the principal. This document presents a comprehensive 11-week physical education curriculum introducing Olympic Handball (European handball, team handball) to middle school students. It has been designed to meet and exceed the educational standards required of a physical education class by addressing the full spectrum of student development: physical, emotional and social. As an invasion game within the New York State physical education curriculum, handball is a fast-paced Olympic team sport that combines the athleticism of basketball, the spatial awareness of soccer, the physicality of water polo and the teamwork demands of volleyball. It is one of the most widely played sports in the world and has been on the Olympic program since 1972.

Why handball for middle school students?

Middle school is a critical developmental window. Students are building identity, social bonds and physical confidence. Handball is uniquely positioned as a teaching vehicle because:

- **It is immediately accessible:** no prior experience required, and all skill levels can contribute from day one.
- **It integrates multiple movement fundamentals:** catching, throwing, running, jumping, change of direction, making it ideal for motor skill development.
- **It demands communication and cooperation:** no single player can dominate; team success requires everyone's participation.
- **It connects to sports students already know:** by drawing parallels to basketball, soccer, football and water polo, students build on existing knowledge while gaining new skills.
- **It carries Olympic prestige:** introducing students to an Olympic sport elevates the educational experience and expands their worldview.

Curriculum core pillars

Physical
Motor fundamentals, coordination, agility, endurance, strength, spatial awareness

Emotional
Resilience, confidence, self-regulation, growth mindset, managing competition

Social
Teamwork, communication, accountability, leadership, respect, sportsmanship

Olympic
Excellence, Respect, Friendship, plus the four Paralympic values, guiding every session

Standards alignment

This curriculum is aligned to SHAPE America's National Physical Education Standards (2024 revision) and is mapped, indicator by indicator, to the Grade 6–8 learning indicators: Standard 1 (develops a variety of motor skills), Standard 2 (applies knowledge related to movement and fitness concepts), Standard 3 (develops social skills through movement) and Standard 4 (develops personal skills, identifies personal benefits of movement, and chooses to engage in physical activity). It is also aligned to the New York State Physical Education Learning Standards (2020).

Grade 6–8 learning indicator crosswalk

The table maps this curriculum, week by week, to the specific Grade 6–8 learning indicators of the 2024 SHAPE America standards. The unit addresses 24 middle school indicators across all four standards.

INDICATOR	GRADE 6–8 FOCUS (SHAPE AMERICA 2024)	WHERE IT LIVES IN THIS CURRICULUM
STANDARD 1 — DEVELOPS A VARIETY OF MOTOR SKILLS		
1.8.6	Correct throwing technique (overhand) in practice tasks and modified games	Week 4 throwing mechanics clinic; shooting stations, weeks 4–11
1.8.8	Proper catch in practice tasks and small-sided games	Catching progressions, weeks 1–3; applied in all game play
1.8.9	Throwing for accuracy, distance and power	Week 2 accuracy targets; week 4 power vs. accuracy challenges
1.8.15	Dribbling skill in practice tasks and small-sided games	Dribbling progressions, weeks 1–6; week 3 cone maze
1.8.17	Shot on goal in practice tasks and small-sided games	Shooting stations and match play, weeks 4–11
1.8.18	Techniques to create open space on offense	Week 3 space-awareness unit; week 6 numbers-up scrimmages
1.8.19	Defensive ready position in practice tasks and games	Week 5 defensive stance, footwork and 1v1 stations
STANDARD 2 — APPLIES KNOWLEDGE OF MOVEMENT AND FITNESS CONCEPTS		
2.8.1	Effective use of movement concepts in dynamic environments	Applied play segment in every session, weeks 3–11
2.8.2	Offensive tactics that create space in invasion games	Weeks 3, 6 and 9: give-and-go, screens, set plays
2.8.3	Reducing open space with movement and denial in invasion games	Week 5: 6-0 defense, deny-space and passing-lane concepts
2.8.7	Problem-solving skills in games and activities	Week 9 in-game timeouts, adjustments and adaptation
2.8.18	Analyzing skill performance by identifying critical elements	Week 4 throw breakdown; peer-observation reflection prompts
STANDARD 3 — DEVELOPS SOCIAL SKILLS THROUGH MOVEMENT		
3.8.2	Consideration for others; positive contribution to the team	Team Contracts (week 2); Compliment Relay (week 10)
3.8.3	Communication skills to negotiate strategies and tactics	Week 9 communication drills, team timeouts, captain huddles

Grade 6–8 learning indicator crosswalk (continued)

INDICATOR	GRADE 6–8 FOCUS (SHAPE AMERICA 2024)	WHERE IT LIVES IN THIS CURRICULUM
3.8.4	Constructive feedback to and from peers	Reflection Circles every session; captain feedback (week 9)
3.8.6	Follows game rules in a variety of situations	Rules progressions (weeks 2, 7); student referees (weeks 7–11)
3.8.8	Solves problems among teammates and opponents	Team Contract protocols; competitive play, weeks 8–11
3.8.9	Applies and respects etiquette in physical activity	Handshake lines; tournament sportsmanship scoring (weeks 10–11)
3.8.10	Communication, cooperation and etiquette in leadership roles	Rotating captains, peer station leaders, student officials
STANDARD 4 — DEVELOPS PERSONAL SKILLS AND CHOOSES PHYSICAL ACTIVITY		
4.8.3	Participates in activities that positively affect health	40+ minutes of vigorous activity in every 90-minute session
4.8.5	Examines individual and group challenges through movement	Three differentiated challenge levels (weeks 4–7); team goals (week 8)
4.8.6	Sets goals based on examining individual ability	Personal goal cards introduced week 4, reviewed weekly
4.8.8	Manages emotions and behaviors in a physical activity setting	Week 10 high-pressure scrimmages; regulation coaching throughout
4.8.9	Reflects on movement experiences to find personal meaning	Reflection Circle closing every session; final reflection (week 11)

New York State Physical Education Learning Standards (2020)

The unit also serves the New York State standards that govern the school's own program. Indicator codes follow the State's grade-by-grade format (for example NY.S2.2.7).

NEW YORK STATE STANDARD (2020)	WHERE IT LIVES IN THIS UNIT
Standard 1 · Motor skills and movement patterns	Emerging specialized skills in a game (cf. NY.S1.1.6): throw, catch, dribble, shoot, defend, weeks 1–11.
Standard 2 · Concepts, strategies and tactics	Strategies, tactics and communication in small-sided play (cf. NY.S2.2.6, NY.S2.2.7): weeks 3, 5, 6 and 9.
Standard 3 · Health-enhancing activity and fitness	40+ active minutes a session; speed variety and fast-break conditioning; personal goal cards.
Standard 4 · Responsible personal and social behavior	Team Contracts, student officials, sportsmanship scoring, Reflection Circles: every session.
Standard 5 · The value of physical activity	Reflection on enjoyment, challenge and belonging; the tournament; the pathway to the NYC Youth Cup and the Youth Academy.
Standard 6 · Careers and community resources	Student referees, scorekeepers and captains; where handball is played in New York.

Sources: SHAPE America, National Physical Education Standards, 2024 (grade-span learning indicators); New York State Education Department, Physical Education Learning Standards, 2020, and 8 NYCRR §135.4.

Curriculum overview

Phase structure

The 11 weeks are organized into three progressive phases, each building on the last.

PHASE	WEEKS	FOCUS	KEY SKILLS
Phase 1	Weeks 1–3	Foundation & Discovery. What is handball? Connecting to familiar sports. Core motor skills. Olympic values introduced.	Sport awareness, basic catching, passing, team identity
Phase 2	Weeks 4–7	Skill Building & Assessment. Differentiated skill development. Identifying student levels. Structured drills and mini-games.	Dribbling, shooting, defensive positioning, cooperative play
Phase 3	Weeks 8–11	Competitive Play & Team Development. Leveled team formation. Full-game play. Tournament-style competition with emphasis on sportsmanship.	Game play, leadership, tournament conduct, self-reflection

Session structure, every week

Each 90-minute session follows a consistent, intentional structure that lets students build routine while experiencing varied content.

TIME	SEGMENT	PURPOSE
0–10 min	**Warm-up**	Dynamic movement preparation, connection to the previous session, setting the day's intention
10–15 min	**Concept / discussion**	Introduce or reinforce handball knowledge, Olympic values, sport connections or a tactical concept
15–60 min	**Skill development**	Core motor and sport-specific skill work, differentiated by ability level
60–85 min	**Applied play**	Drills, mini-games or full matches applying the skills learned, competitive and cooperative
85–90 min	**Reflection Circle**	Group debrief: What did we learn? What did we notice about our teamwork? Accountability check-in

Managing 65–90 students: organizational strategy

Large class sizes require deliberate structure. The following model keeps all students active, safe and engaged throughout every session:

- **Station rotation model.** The gym or field is divided into two to four simultaneous stations. Groups of 30–45 students rotate every 15 minutes; each station targets a different skill or game element.
- **Peer leadership.** Student leaders (volunteers or rotating roles) help manage each station with coach supervision, building leadership skills and accountability.
- **Multi-ball approach.** Multiple balls are in play to maximize touches and minimize waiting.
- **Visual cue system.** Whistle signals and colored cones guide transitions, so management needs minimal verbal interruption.

Olympic values & character education

The Olympic Movement's three core values, Excellence, Respect and Friendship, are the moral framework for the entire curriculum. They are not abstract; they are discussed, modeled and practiced in every session.

Excellence

Giving your best effort every session, compared with yesterday's version of yourself, not with others. Excellence is personal growth, not just winning.

In practice: Completing every rep even when tired · setting a personal challenge each week · celebrating teammates' breakthroughs

Respect

Treating teammates, opponents, coaches and the game itself with dignity: playing fairly, listening actively, responding to mistakes without blame.

In practice: Shaking hands before and after matches · no trash talk, zero tolerance · encouraging the student who is still learning

Friendship

Building genuine connections through shared challenge. Working together under pressure is one of the most powerful friendship-building experiences there is.

In practice: Mixing ability levels in early weeks · team-naming ceremonies · group Reflection Circles after every session

The Paralympic values: completing the framework

Alongside the three Olympic values, the curriculum draws on the four Paralympic values, the same seven-value framework used in Olympic and Paralympic education programs worldwide.

Determination

Believing in yourself and continuing to give your best when things are difficult.
In practice: Personal goal cards · growth-mindset language ("I can't do this yet") · the Most Improved award

Courage

Being brave enough to attempt something new in front of your peers.
In practice: First jump shots · goalkeeper rotations for every student · captain-led warm-ups

Inspiration

Finding role models, and becoming one for someone else.
In practice: Olympic athlete stories · peer leaders and student referees · celebrating teammates' breakthroughs

Equality

Every student participates, contributes and is challenged at their own level.
In practice: Fluid ability levels · modified participation plans keeping every student, including students with disabilities, active and fully included

Accountability framework

Accountability is integrated throughout the curriculum as both an individual and a collective responsibility. Students are accountable to each other, not only to the coach.

- **Reflection Circle protocol.** The final five minutes of every session are a structured group reflection. Questions rotate: What skill did I improve today? How did I support my team? What would I do differently?
- **Positive accountability check-in.** Coaches and peer leaders note instances of excellent sportsmanship, effort and support, not just athletic performance, and acknowledge them publicly and consistently.

Handball and sports students already know

One of the most powerful tools in this curriculum is the sports-connection framework. Students arrive with knowledge of mainstream American sports; connecting handball to them reduces the intimidation of a new sport and accelerates learning.

SPORT	WHAT IT SHARES WITH HANDBALL	HOW HANDBALL IS DIFFERENT	DISCUSSION PROMPT
Basketball	Dribbling, passing, court positioning, teamwork, fast breaks	Smaller goal with a goalkeeper; three steps without dribbling; more contact allowed	What happens in basketball when a player drives to the basket? How is that like shooting in handball?
Soccer	Goalkeepers, formations, spatial awareness, transitions	You use your hands; the field is smaller; goals are scored by throwing	How does a soccer goalkeeper decide where to stand? A handball goalkeeper faces the same challenge.
Football	Throwing mechanics, strategy, team roles, moving the ball toward a goal	Continuous play; no timeouts between plays; everyone is constantly moving	A quarterback reads the defense before throwing. Handball players do the same; describe what they look for.
Water polo	Nearly identical rules, goal structure and positions	No water, so far more accessible; faster pace; jumping replaces treading water	Why do handball and water polo have such similar rules? What does that tell us about how sports evolve?

Motor fundamentals & physical development

Physical education's primary mandate is to develop the motor foundations students carry into a lifetime of activity. This curriculum addresses all major movement fundamentals in the context of a real sport, where each skill has an immediate purpose.

SKILL	HOW IT IS DEVELOPED IN HANDBALL	PROGRESSIVE CHALLENGES
Catching	Receiving passes at varying speeds, angles and heights from teammates and during drills	Static catch → moving catch → catch under defensive pressure → one-handed catch
Passing	Two-hand overhead, wrist pass, bounce pass, alley-oop: core to every possession	Short passes → long distance → passes while jumping → passes under pressure
Dribbling	Single-hand controlled dribble while running, used to advance before passing or shooting	Stationary → walking → full speed → change-of-direction dribble
Jumping	The jump shot is a signature handball move: an explosive vertical jump before throwing	Standing vertical → running jump → one-foot take-off → jump-shot form
Change of direction	Evading defenders, cutting to open space, transitioning between offense and defense	Cone agility → shadowing a partner → live 1v1 evasion → full-game application
Running (speed variety)	Sprinting on fast breaks, jogging to reset, lateral shuffling in defense	Sprint/jog intervals → defensive lateral slides → fast-break reaction runs
Throwing mechanics	The core skill of handball: the overhand throw developed progressively for accuracy and power	Stationary throw → moving throw → angled throw → power vs. accuracy challenges

Differentiated skill development (weeks 4–7)

Students arrive with vastly different movement backgrounds. Some are experienced athletes; others have had limited exposure to physical activity. Both deserve to be challenged at their level and to experience success.

Foundational level

Students still building basic motor patterns. Focus on form, confidence and short-distance success.

Sample activities: Stationary passing pairs · soft catch with two hands · walking dribble relay · underhand throw to goal

Developing level

Students with basic coordination who are ready for complexity. Focus on combining skills.

Sample activities: Pass-and-move combinations · dribble around cones · short-distance jump shots · 2v1 mini-games

Advanced level

Students with strong motor control who are ready for tactical challenge.

Sample activities: Fast-break sequences · cross-body jump shots · 3v2 offensive plays · defensive positioning challenges

Important: levels are fluid, not fixed. Students are encouraged and supported to move between levels as their skills develop. The goal is challenge, not categorization.

Phase 1: Foundation & Discovery (weeks 1–3)

Phase 1 is about invitation. Students meet handball as a global, Olympic sport, discover how it connects to sports they already love, and begin building the fundamental movement skills that carry them through the unit. The atmosphere is exploratory, high-energy and low-stakes.

WEEK 1 What is handball? Welcome to the Olympic stage

PHASE 1

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students can name handball as an Olympic sport and describe two or three basic rules.
- Students make at least one connection between handball and a sport they already know.
- Students experience their first catch-and-pass sequence with correct form.
- Students articulate the three Olympic values in their own words.

TIME	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION & LEARNING OBJECTIVES
0–10 min	**Energy wake-up**	Tag-based warm-up, "Olympic Nations": each student represents a country. Energizes the group and introduces the international scope of the Games.
10–25 min	**Handball discovery talk**	What is handball? Brief visual overview. Sport connections: "If you play basketball, you already know how to dribble. If you play soccer, you already know how a goalkeeper thinks." Olympic values defined and discussed.
25–55 min	**First touches**	Stations: (1) two-hand catch in pairs, stationary; (2) overhead pass, short distance; (3) free exploration with the ball; (4) roll the ball into an empty goal from close range. Comfort with the ball, not technique.
55–85 min	**Chaos Ball**	Modified game: all students in half-court, multiple balls in play. Pass to a teammate, catch without dropping, one point for your pair. No goals yet: movement, catching, passing. High energy, low pressure.
85–90 min	**Reflection Circle**	"Name one sport that reminds you of handball and explain why." "What is one Olympic value you showed today?" Teams introduced for next week.

Coach notes, week 1: your most important job this week is to create psychological safety. Students who feel embarrassed or judged shut down immediately. Celebrate curiosity and effort loudly. Never draw attention to mistakes negatively.

WEEK 2 Rules, roles and team identity

PHASE 1

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students can explain the basic rules: three-step rule, goalkeeper zone, out of bounds.
- Students understand the basic positions: goalkeeper, defender, center, wing, pivot.
- Students demonstrate improved passing accuracy from week 1.

TIME	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION & LEARNING OBJECTIVES
0–10 min	**Rules warm-up**	Movement-based rules review: the coach calls a rule, students act it out ("Three-step rule!": three steps and freeze). Energetic and memorable.
10–25 min	**Positions and roles**	Brief overview of court positions, each connected to a familiar role: goalkeeper (soccer GK), wing (basketball small forward), center (point guard). Students guess which position suits them.
25–60 min	**Team Contract + skill stations**	Groups spend ten minutes drafting and signing a Team Contract (How will we treat each other? How will we handle mistakes? What does success look like?). Then stations: passing accuracy targets, dribbling lines, close-range shooting.
60–85 min	**3v3 mini-handball**	Small-sided games on mini courts with small goals. Rules enforced: no running with the ball without dribbling, three-step rule, stay out of the goalkeeper area. Coach circulates and reinforces positively.
85–90 min	**Reflection Circle**	Teams share one line from their contract; the coach reads a student line that stood out. "What rule was hardest to remember? Why?"

WEEK 3 Moving with purpose: footwork, speed and space awareness

PHASE 1

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students demonstrate change-of-direction cuts at game speed.
- Students use peripheral vision to pass without staring at the ball.
- Students apply varying running speeds (sprint, jog, shuffle) in a game context.
- Students begin to understand spatial relationships: creating and denying space.

TIME	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION & LEARNING OBJECTIVES
0–10 min	**Agility warm-up**	Ladder drills and cone weaves. Light feet, low center of gravity, quick direction changes. Connect to football and basketball lateral movement.
10–20 min	**Space concept discussion**	"In handball, and in all team sports, space is a weapon. Creating space for your teammate matters as much as what you do with the ball." Cones or whiteboard show how movement opens passing lanes.
20–60 min	**Movement skill stations**	(1) Sprint/jog interval relay. (2) Shadow partner: mirror lateral movement without touching. (3) Cone maze with ball: dribble through obstacles with direction changes. (4) Pass and Go: pass, then run to a new position.
60–85 min	**4v4 with movement rules**	You must move after every pass. Points can only be scored after four consecutive passes, enforcing team play and ending ball-hogging.
85–90 min	**Reflection Circle**	"When did you create space for a teammate today?" "What does it feel like to be in the right place at the right time?" Next week: individual skill assessment begins.

Phase 2: Skill Building & Assessment (weeks 4–7)

Phase 2 is about depth. With foundational familiarity in place, the focus shifts to deliberate skill development. Coaches conduct informal assessments in weeks 4–5 to understand each student's level and adapt stations. By weeks 6–7, every student works at an appropriate level of challenge while beginning structured competitive play.

WEEK 4 Throwing mechanics and shooting technique

PHASE 2

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students demonstrate correct overhand throwing form (step, hip rotation, follow-through).
- Students shoot on goal from various angles and distances with increasing accuracy.
- Coaches begin informal observation for skill-level assessment.
- Students connect throwing mechanics to baseball, football and other throwing sports.

TIME	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION & LEARNING OBJECTIVES
0–10 min	**Arm warm-up**	Shoulder circles, arm swings, wrist rotations; banded resistance if available. Throwing is a full-body movement, not just the arm.
10–25 min	**Throwing mechanics clinic**	Explicit teaching of the overhand throw: athletic stance → non-throwing arm points at the target → arm cocks back → hip rotation leads → release → follow-through. Connect to a quarterback's throw and a pitcher's. Pairs practice at short distance with coaches and peer leaders circulating.
25–60 min	**Shooting stations**	(1) Stationary shot from 7 m, accuracy. (2) Moving shot: approach from the side, one-two step, shoot. (3) Jump-shot introduction: standing jump, hold form, throw at the apex. (4) Goalkeeper reaction drill, alternating shooter and keeper. Coach notes skill levels informally.
60–85 min	**Shooting scrimmage**	5v5 with emphasis on shooting opportunities: the offense must attempt a shot within five passes. Defenses are challenged: "How do you stop a shot before it happens?"
85–90 min	**Reflection Circle**	"What part of your throw improved today?" "What did you notice about a teammate's throw that helped them score?" Personal goal cards introduced for next session.

WEEK 5 Defense, goalkeeping and tactical awareness

PHASE 2

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students demonstrate an active defensive stance and lateral movement.
- Students experience goalkeeping rotation and develop appreciation for the position.
- Students begin to read offensive patterns and anticipate plays.
- Students connect defensive principles to basketball man-to-man and zone concepts.

TIME	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION & LEARNING OBJECTIVES
0–10 min	**Defensive footwork warm-up**	Lateral shuffle drills, drop-step practice, defensive slides. "Defense is not passive; it is athletic and intentional."
10–20 min	**Defense discussion**	Connect handball defense to basketball (man-to-man, zone) and soccer (pressing, dropping deep). Introduce the 6-0 defense and the difference between denying space and guarding the ball carrier.
20–60 min	**Defense and goalkeeping stations**	(1) 1v1 defensive challenge: stop the carrier without fouling. (2) Goalkeeper rotation: every student takes three minutes in goal with peers shooting softly. (3) Zone defense 3v3: hold formation. (4) Intercept the pass: read and cut off lanes.
60–85 min	**Offense vs. defense scrimmage**	Full 6v6 with the coach focused on defensive structure. Pause-and-teach moments: whistle, freeze, explain what the defense did well or should adjust, resume.
85–90 min	**Reflection Circle**	"How does good defense help your team even when you don't have the ball?" "Which is harder, offense or defense? Why?" Coach begins organizing ability-based groupings for weeks 6–7.

WEEK 6 Team plays, fast breaks and cooperative offense

PHASE 2

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students execute a three-player fast break with passing and finishing.
- Students identify and exploit numerical advantages (2v1, 3v2) in live play.
- Students demonstrate "team ball" behavior: no ball-hogging, all players involved.
- Differentiated stations operate at three challenge levels for the first time.

TIME	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION & LEARNING OBJECTIVES
0–10 min	**Fast-break warm-up**	Three-person fast-break drill: outlet pass → sprint → receive → finish. Rotate positions each rep.
10–20 min	**Offensive play concept**	Introduce the give-and-go and handball's equivalent of the pick-and-roll. NBA players use screens; handball has the same concept. "Creating a free teammate" is the goal of all offensive movement.
20–60 min	**Differentiated skill stations**	FOUNDATIONAL: stationary three-player passing triangle. DEVELOPING: moving three-player passing with a finish on goal. ADVANCED: 3v2 fast break with live defense. All groups work simultaneously; the coach rotates.
60–85 min	**Numbers-up scrimmage**	The offense always has one extra player (3v2, 4v3), forcing it to find the free player. Equalize to 6v6 for the final five minutes.
85–90 min	**Reflection Circle**	"When did you create a scoring chance for a teammate, not yourself?" Olympic value check-in: "Show me an example of Excellence from today." Goal cards reviewed.

WEEK 7 Full-game introduction and transition play

PHASE 2

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students play a full-court, full-rules handball game for the first time.
- Students demonstrate transition awareness: shifting from offense to defense and back.
- Students manage competitive emotions constructively under game pressure.
- Coaches finalize skill-level observations for team formation in Phase 3.

TIME	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION & LEARNING OBJECTIVES
0–10 min	**Transition warm-up**	3v3 transition game: 30 seconds of offense, coach signals, immediate switch to defense. Builds the habit of reading the game state and shifting roles instantly.
10–20 min	**Full-game rules review**	Complete walkthrough: throw-off, goalkeeper rules, free throw, penalties, out of bounds, time. Game-show Q&A format; teams compete for points.
20–85 min	**First full game day**	Multiple simultaneous 6v6 games on a divided court, 12 minutes each with referee rotation (student referees supervised by the coach). Real-time positive reinforcement and teachable moments. Sportsmanship explicitly modeled and acknowledged.
85–90 min	**Reflection Circle**	"How did it feel to play a real game? What surprised you?" "What is one thing you want to work on before the tournament?" Next week: teams are formed for Phase 3.

Phase 3: Competitive Play & Team Development (weeks 8–11)

Phase 3 is the culminating experience. Students are placed on leveled teams that ensure competitive balance and meaningful challenge for everyone. The focus shifts from individual skill to collective performance: strategy, communication, resilience and sportsmanship. The final week is a celebratory tournament that honors every student's growth.

WEEK 8 Team formation and team identity

PHASE 3

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students are placed on leveled Phase 3 teams that ensure competitive equity.
- Students create a team name, cheer and identity.
- Students articulate their team's collective goal for the final four weeks.
- Students play their first official Phase 3 match.

TIME	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION & LEARNING OBJECTIVES
0–10 min	**Team huddle warm-up**	Teams announced. Students find their new teammates and complete a dynamic warm-up together for the first time; the coach encourages teams to sync their movements.
10–30 min	**Team identity workshop**	A name (an Olympic nation, city or positive symbol), a three-word motto, a cheer, and a Phase 3 team goal that must include a character or teamwork goal, not just "win everything."
30–60 min	**Team practice time**	Self-directed practice: specific plays, communication signals, or simply getting comfortable together. The coach observes and guides.
60–85 min	**First official Phase 3 match**	Emphasis on following Team Contracts. Student referees. The coach observes character behaviors, not just athletic performance.
85–90 min	**Reflection Circle**	"How did it feel to play for your team?" "What do you already love about your teammates?" Teams share their mottos aloud.

WEEK 9

Strategy, leadership and playing smart

PHASE 3

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students apply basic offensive set plays (give-and-go, overlap run, screen) in a game.
- Students practice on-court communication cues: calling for the ball, defensive warnings.
- Rotating captains take on decision-making responsibility.
- Students manage frustration constructively, as outlined in their Team Contract.

TIME	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION & LEARNING OBJECTIVES
0–10 min	**Captain-led warm-up**	Each team's rotating captain leads the warm-up independently. The coach observes and does not intervene unless safety is at risk.
10–25 min	**Strategy session**	Two or three simple set plays on a whiteboard or with cones; teams practice their chosen play. "Every team in every sport has a system. Now you have one too."
25–60 min	**Match play + strategy focus**	Two rounds of 6v6 (12 minutes each). After round one, a three-minute timeout: What worked? What did we see from the other team? How do we adjust? In-game adaptation taught explicitly.
60–85 min	**Communication drill + scrimmage**	Both teams must call the name of the receiver before every pass. Then free scrimmage.
85–90 min	**Reflection Circle**	"Did your strategy work? Why or why not?" "How did your captain do? What feedback would you give?" "How did you show Respect in competition today?"

WEEK 10 Sportsmanship under pressure and tournament preparation

PHASE 3

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students demonstrate exemplary sportsmanship in high-stakes competitive moments.
- Students manage losing constructively: no blame, immediate accountability, reflection.
- Students celebrate opponents' successes as Olympic values in action.
- Students prepare mentally and physically for the culminating tournament.

TIME	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION & LEARNING OBJECTIVES
0–10 min	**Sportsmanship warm-up**	The Compliment Relay: before every pass in the warm-up drill, the passer says something positive to the receiver. Light at first, then a real culture of affirmation.
10–15 min	**Sportsmanship discussion**	Real Olympic moments of sportsmanship. "Why does the Olympics emphasize shaking hands even when you lose to your biggest rival?" Connected to the students' own experiences this unit.
15–65 min	**High-pressure scrimmages**	Games with manufactured pressure: close scores on a visible board, the coach narrating momentum shifts, overtime situations. Emotional regulation under stress in a controlled environment.
65–80 min	**Tournament preparation**	Teams review plays, vote on lineup strategy, confirm their identity for tournament day. Format, bracket and sportsmanship scoring explained.
80–90 min	**Reflection Circle**	"What would make you most proud about how you compete in the tournament, not the result, but the behavior?" Teams recite their mottos.

WEEK 11 The Olympic Handball Tournament: celebration and culmination

PHASE 3

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students compete in a tournament that provides meaningful challenge for all ability levels.
- Students demonstrate 11 weeks of physical, social and emotional learning in one cumulative experience.
- Students receive individual recognition for growth in physical skills, character and teamwork.
- Students leave with a connection to the Olympic sport of handball and to each other.

TIME	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION & LEARNING OBJECTIVES
0–10 min	**Opening ceremony**	Students enter by team; each presents its name and motto. A brief opening speech honoring the Olympic tradition and what the class has accomplished. Handshake line between all teams.
10–70 min	**Tournament matches**	Leveled bracket play: each team plays two matches (15 minutes each). Sportsmanship score tracked alongside the game score; a team can win the Sportsmanship Award even if it loses every match. Student referees and scorekeepers; the coach circulates with acknowledgment cards.
70–80 min	**Championship and awards**	Final match if the schedule allows; otherwise all award categories: Tournament Champions · Sportsmanship Award · Most Improved · Best Team Player · Olympic Spirit Award. Every student has a role in the ceremony.
80–90 min	**Final Reflection Circle**	"What is one thing handball taught you about yourself?" "What is one thing a teammate did this unit that you will never forget?" The coach closes with a statement of pride and a challenge to carry the Olympic values forward.

This is not just a tournament. It is a celebration of 11 weeks of physical growth, character development, teamwork and Olympic values.

Assessment & evaluation framework

Assessment in this curriculum is continuous, multi-dimensional and student-centered. The goal is never to rank students against each other, but to document individual growth across all developmental domains.

What we assess

DOMAIN	OBSERVABLE INDICATORS	ASSESSMENT METHOD
Physical development	Catching success rate, passing accuracy, dribbling control, throwing form, agility, active participation rate	Coach observation checklist (weeks 4–5) · skill station performance · game-play rubric
Emotional growth	Manages frustration without negativity, celebrates teammates, recovers from mistakes, demonstrates effort on every play	Reflection Circle contributions · coach observation · personal goal card completion
Social development	Communicates on court, includes all teammates, demonstrates leadership, follows the Team Contract, shows sportsmanship	Structured peer assessment · Team Contract adherence · tournament sportsmanship scoring
Olympic & Paralympic values	Can explain the values, connect them to real scenarios and apply them in competition	Discussion participation · final reflection responses · behavioral evidence in the tournament

Grading philosophy

Students are not graded on athletic talent. A student who cannot catch the ball but shows up every session, encourages teammates and demonstrates measurable personal improvement deserves the highest grade available.

30%
Effort & participation
Full engagement in every segment. Present, active, contributing.

25%
Skill growth
Personal improvement from the week 4–5 baseline, not comparison with peers.

25%
Character & values
Sportsmanship, teamwork, accountability, reflection quality.

20%
Knowledge
Rules understanding, Olympic values, sport connections, tactical concepts.

Coach observation checklist

Used informally in weeks 4–5 to inform differentiated groupings. Not shared with students as a grade; used as a teaching tool.

SKILL	FOUNDATIONAL (1)	DEVELOPING (2)	PROFICIENT (3)
Catching	Drops most catches; needs two hands; stationary only	Catches most two-hand passes; some movement	Catches reliably while moving; can catch one-handed
Passing	Short, inaccurate; no form; stationary	Moderate accuracy; some form; can pass while walking	Accurate passing while running; consistent form
Dribbling	Loses control; double-dribbles frequently	Controlled dribble while walking; some running	Full-speed controlled dribble; direction changes
Shooting	Pushes the ball; no step-through; off target	Some form; reaches the goal consistently	Overhand throw; jump-shot attempt; targets corners
Defensive stance	Flat-footed; no lateral movement	Low stance; some lateral slides	Active stance; anticipates; stays with the attacker

Evaluation & reporting commitment

Every school and funding partner receives an end-of-unit report. Because assessment is built into the curriculum, reporting requires no additional classroom time. Each report includes participation and active-minute rates; individual skill growth against the week 4–5 baseline; tournament sportsmanship scores; and anonymized student reflections from the final Reflection Circle. Results are shared with school leadership after each unit and, in aggregate, with donors.

Safety, equipment & logistics

Safety protocols

- All sessions begin with a structured warm-up to prevent injury. No student begins skill work before the warm-up is complete.
- The goalkeeper zone is clearly marked with flat spots. Field players may not enter the zone during drills or games.
- Physical contact rules are explained in week 1 and reinforced weekly. Handball is a contact sport, but this curriculum's version has almost zero contact for middle school students.
- Students with injury notices or medical accommodations receive modified participation plans that keep them physically active and socially included.
- Emergency procedures (nearest AED, emergency contacts, evacuation route) are reviewed by the coach at the start of the unit and posted in the gymnasium.
- Whistle system: one short blast pauses activity; two short blasts mean stop immediately and sit down; three long blasts mean the session or game is over.

Equipment requirements

ITEM	QUANTITY	NOTES
Handballs, size 1 (standard youth ball for grades 6–8)	20	Foam or rubber balls acceptable in early weeks to build confidence
Colored pinnies	90 (12 colors, 6–8 each)	Team identification throughout the unit
Portable handball goals or modified goals	2	Narrowed zones acceptable; cones can substitute
Agility cones	40–60	Boundary marking, stations, court division
Whistle	1–2 per coach	Essential for large-group management
Whiteboard or flip chart	1	Tactical drawings, rules, reflection prompts

Handball Rising brings and maintains all equipment; nothing is purchased by the school.

Expected student outcomes

By the end of the 11 weeks, students will have developed measurably in all three domains of physical education. The outcomes below represent what a student who has fully engaged with the unit will demonstrate.

Physical outcomes

- Demonstrates a correct overhand throw with step, hip rotation and follow-through.
- Catches a handball reliably while moving at moderate speed.
- Dribbles with one hand at walking and jogging speed while maintaining control.
- Executes lateral defensive slides and change-of-direction cuts with athletic posture.
- Participates in 40+ minutes of physical activity per session.
- Has improved cardiovascular endurance, coordination and agility as evidenced by coach observation.

Emotional outcomes

- Recovers from mistakes (missed catches, missed shots, lost games) without extended negativity.
- Sets and reflects on personal goals related to effort, growth and character, not just performance.
- Demonstrates resilience: keeps trying and contributing when frustrated or behind.
- Uses a growth-mindset framework: "I can't do this yet" instead of "I'm not good at sports."

Social outcomes

- Communicates effectively with teammates: calling for the ball, warning of defenders, encouraging after mistakes.
- Demonstrates sportsmanship in victory and defeat: handshakes, acknowledgment of opponents, no gloating.
- Takes on leadership responsibility (captain, station leader, peer coach) with growing confidence.
- Has built at least one meaningful peer connection through the shared challenge of team sport.

Academic & cultural outcomes

- Can name handball as an Olympic sport and describe its history, rules and global reach.
- Can connect handball to basketball, soccer, football and water polo through shared tactical and physical concepts.
- Can explain the three Olympic values and give real examples of each from their own experience in this class.
- Has developed basic tactical literacy: space, possession, transition and numerical advantage.

> **This is physical education at its highest standard.** Physical education is not a break from learning. It is learning of the most human kind. In this curriculum, students develop their bodies, build their character, learn to compete with integrity and discover what it means to be part of something larger than themselves.

When a student who has never thrown a ball in PE class completes a jump shot for the first time, they are not just learning handball. They are learning that they can do hard things. When a team that lost three games in a row comes back to win the Sportsmanship Award, they are not just playing a sport. They are practicing how to be a person. That is the promise of this curriculum, and that is why it belongs in every middle school.

> *"The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle."*
>
> Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympic Games