



# Sample Application

## School Physical Activity Award

### School Overview:

Homer High School (9– 12) promotes physical activity through daily physical education classes, health instruction, and robust athletic programs. Led by Certified Health and Physical Education teachers Richie Casey and Lafrance Cooper, all students engage in PE, with student-athletes receiving specialized training during the school day. The school ensures inclusivity with adaptive PE and modified activities for students with health conditions. Extracurricular offerings include football, basketball, cheer, dance, softball, baseball, and track and field, with teams training before and after school. Community support enhances the program through donated meals, upgraded equipment, and strong attendance at events. Teachers integrate activity breaks into extended classes, and a mentorship program supports student success and sports eligibility. With a culture rooted in excellence, marked by state titles, playoff runs, and college-bound athletes, Homer High demonstrates how movement, community, and mentorship build confident, well-rounded students ready for lifelong achievement.

**WRITTEN REFLECTION QUESTIONS:** In 500 words or less, respond to each of the following writing prompts.

1. **Physical Education Classes:** Describe how physical education is provided at your school. How does your program make necessary accommodations and modifications to maximize participation for all students, including those with disabilities and chronic health conditions?

At Homer High School, physical education classes are led by our two certified PE teachers, Coach Lafrance Cooper and Coach Richie Casey. All 9th and 10th graders, who do not participate in football or girl's/boy's basketball, take general physical education with Coach Casey. They have 60 minutes of P.E. instruction every day. For our 9th grade students, Coach Casey also provides health lessons to students, encouraging healthy living habits and personal hygiene practices. With support from our master teacher, Coach Casey uses the grade-level standards provided by the state. Coach Casey also leads our athletic P.E. Football class as the head coach of our football team. Athletic P.E. football serves students in 9th-12th grades. Coach Cooper is our head boy's basketball coach, and he leads the athletic P.E. Boys Basketball class, serving grades 9-12. Although not a Homer High School teacher, Coach LaDarien Amos of Homer Junior High School, serves as our head Girls basketball coach, and he leads athletic P.E. for our girl's basketball team in grades 9-12. All of the students who participate in athletic P.E. have 60 minutes each day to practice during school hours.

Students with disabilities are still able to participate in physical education classes. Students with physical disabilities are accommodated by an occupational therapist and a special education teacher who provide these students with adaptive physical education. Students with chronic health conditions are able to participate in physical education classes as well. Our P.E. teachers are informed, at the beginning of the school year, of students with health conditions, and they are able to make the necessary adjustments for these students. These adjustments come in the form of

breaks or modified activities. We strive to include as many students as possible in our physical education classes, while ensuring that students are safe and feel comfortable.

**2. Physical Activity Before and After School:** How have you implemented physical activity before and after school?

Our boy's basketball team implements a practice schedule before school on Tuesdays and Thursdays. These workouts begin at 5:00 AM and run until 6:30 AM. The boy's basketball coach, Lafrance Cooper, plans thorough morning workouts, focusing on building strength and conditioning for basketball players. We also have physical activity going on after school, as well. In the fall, our football team holds workouts 3:30-5:30 three times a week. Additionally, cheerleaders and danceline members participate in after school practices three times a week for 1.5 hours. During the winter, the girl's and boy's basketball teams practice for 1.5 hours after school three days a week. Additionally, the softball, baseball, and powerlifting teams begin after school practices in January. During the spring, our track and field teams (girl's and boy's) hold workout sessions after school two-three times per week. Students who are members of sports teams and spirit groups (123/242 students) are able to engage in physical activity either before or after school, improving their stamina and sharpening their skills.

**3. Physical Activity During School Hours:** How have you implemented additional physical activity throughout the school day outside of physical education?

This school year, our school district adopted a four-day school week. As a result, our class periods have been extended in order to accommodate the shorter school schedule. In the beginning of the year, we noticed that students were becoming restless in classes. So, as the principal, I began encouraging teachers to give students brain breaks where they could get moving and refocus. I spent six years in elementary and junior high settings, so I have used GoNoodle and other dance/exercise clips as a way to get students moving and energized. Although our high school teachers do not use GoNoodle, leading a stretch or light cardio session, in the classroom for about five minutes, has proven to be successful with students and keeping their engagement throughout longer class periods.

**4. Family and Community Engagement Activities:** How has family and community engagement been engaged in supporting physical activity?

The Homer families and community have supported our efforts in promoting physical activity. One of the main contributions from the families and community has been their food donations, ensuring that students have nutritious meals to fuel their bodies after completing strenuous activities. For example, every Wednesday during football season, a community member signs up to feed the football team after practice. Also, community members have donated water and sports drinks to organizations that do not have as much funds as football, such as cheer and danceline, in order to make sure these students are hydrated during practices and sports events. Also, one of our vendors, Coca-Cola, supported us in providing healthier drinking options to students. In our gym, students had access to a vending machine, after completing P.E. This vending machine carried

Coca-Cola products that were carbonated beverages. After speaking with our representative about the desire to provide students with a healthier alternative, Coca-Cola provided us with a vending machine that carries Body Armor sports drinks. We have even seen an increase in sales with the new vending machine, selling a healthier product. Finally, the Homer families and community members engage in supporting physical activity by being present at sporting events. Our sports teams have generated a significant amount of revenue over the last two years due to a spike in attendance at sporting events. Our head coaches are able to provide students with upgraded equipment and other experiences (trips to college games, etc.) that will impact students' future. Speaking with students last week, I learned that hearing the cheers from the fans actually does make an impact on their performance during sporting events. Having the community's support makes a lasting impact on the athletes representing Homer High.

5. **Staff Involvement:** How is your school staff involved in supporting the culture of increasing physical activity at school?

School staff support increasing physical activity at Homer High. One of the main contributions of the staff is serving as mentors to students. We implemented a mentorship program for students who have academic concerns and/or other apparent struggles that correlate to their poor academic performance. In the past, there were several instances where Homer High School students were ineligible to participate in a sport due to failing grades or could not accept a sports scholarship at the end of the fall semester due to not meeting state testing requirements for graduation. At the beginning of this school year, my leadership team and I vowed that this would never happen again. Students, who the leadership team selected as eligible to participate in the mentorship program, were able to choose faculty members who inspired them to serve as their mentors. Mentors have met with their students throughout the school year, checking in on their academic progress, as well as, helping them cope with any personal issues they may have. Of the students we identified for the mentorship program, 50% of these students participate in a sport or spirit group. I believe that without mentorship from a faculty member, these students would have possibly continued on a downward path in regards to their academics, resulting in removal from their respective sports programs. I am grateful that faculty members who were chosen took the time to meet with these students and support them in their academic careers. Our faculty also contributes to increasing physical activity through coaching. Although we have a small staff, half of the faculty members either coach or sponsor a sports team or spirit group. And, we are adding more options for physical activity each year. This year, we added softball as one of our sports offerings for students. Our school staff works hard to support increasing physical activity at our school.

6. **Additional Exceptional Work:** These materials may be in any format, such as a chart, news article, video, photos, etc. Please label all materials accordingly to clearly reflect the task they accompany. Provide any parent or community testimony regarding involvement in your physical activity program.

Community Testimony: I support Homer physical activities, because I know the value of sports in the development of our young people. As a former Homer athlete, I am a testament of what a

strong athletic program can teach our youth when it comes to character building, goal setting, and working as a team. -Rashid Young, J.D. Louisiana House of Representatives, District 11

Provide an example of a "Success Story" of your physical activity program.

Star Thomas is a 2020 graduate of Homer High School. As a Homer Pelican, Star excelled in football and basketball. Upon graduation, Star enrolled in Coffeyville Community College in Coffeyville, Kansas where he stood out as a running back, earning a selection to the all-conference team. In 2022, Star transferred to New Mexico State. He spent two years at New Mexico State, earning second team all-conference honors and helping the team secure an appearance in the Conference USA Championship game. After earning a bachelors in business and a masters in individual studies, Star decided to play another year of college football. Star Thomas enrolled at Duke University in the summer of 2024 and is a graduate student in the continuing studies program. As a Duke Blue Devil, under the direction of Head Coach Manny Diaz, Star has rushed for 871 yards, accumulated 153 receiving yards, and scored eight touchdowns. Star and the Blue Devils are gearing up to play Ole Miss in the Gator Bowl, where Star will face off against another Homer High graduate, Katrevrick Banks. For Star Thomas, his success started with the direction of his head football and basketball coaches– Richie Casey and Lafrance Cooper. Star Thomas is the epitome of the saying “Success starts on Pelican Drive.”

List any other accomplishments that showcase your work.

- Football:  
2021- Division IV Non Select Football Champions  
2022- Division IV Non Select Football Runner Up  
2023- Division IV Non Select Football Quarter Finalist  
2024- Playoff appearance (Moved up to 2A playing bigger schools and finished the season 5-5, #15 in the rankings)
- Boy's Basketball:  
2024- One player (All State 1A Honorable Mention)  
2024- One player (District 1-1A 1st team)  
2024- Playoff appearance
- Girl's Basketball:  
2024- One player (All State 1A Honorable Mention)  
2024- One player (District 1-1A 1st team)  
2024- Playoff appearance (Round 2)
- Baseball:  
2024- One player (District 1-1A 1st team)  
2024- Improved to 8-11 overall (5-2 district)  
2023- Finished the season 2-13 overall (2-6 district)
- Girl's Track:  
2024- 4x4 relay team (6th place in state competition)  
2024- 100m dash (3rd place finisher in state competition)

Supplemental materials providing support to responses (chart, news articles, video, photos, etc. Please label all files to clearly reflect the task/content.)

- [https://drive.google.com/open?id=1KklLrYnlla\\_uDZaYMmcd74jK\\_zCCL7Nt](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1KklLrYnlla_uDZaYMmcd74jK_zCCL7Nt)