Organising and conducting a school athletics carnival- Carnival convenor guide

Since their inception, school athletics carnivals have held a special place in the educational landscape of New South Wales. These events boast a rich historical significance, dating back to the early days of the education system. Rooted in the ethos of promoting physical fitness and camaraderie, these carnivals have evolved over the years to become cherished traditions that transcend generations.

Athletics carnivals not only foster a spirit of healthy competition but also promote physical wellbeing, teamwork and community engagement among students. This guide has been created to support school carnival convenors with the knowledge, tools, and strategies necessary to facilitate an organised and memorable athletics carnival.

Organisation and planning

Define the general goals and objectives of the event by considering the following:

Who is the event for?

- whole school
- part of the school e.g. students aged 8 and up
- competitors only
- inter-school competition e.g. zone or district

This will also determine the number of participants that you need to cater for as well as the structure of the carnival.

When is it going to be held?

- Check the school calendar, check district/zone/association/state date.
- Where possible, leave at least 2 weeks between school and district/zone carnivals to allow for a postponement and to finalise results.
- Set a date.
- Plan a backup date marked in both the school calendar and organised with the venue.

What type of carnival will you have and who will participate?

There are several ways of running a carnival. The 3 most common carnival types are:

- Traditional: students select what events they will enter and then participate at scheduled times.
- Tabloid: students move in their age, year or class group from one event to another. Teachers may stay at the same event or move with students.

- Participants only: the carnival is only for those students who are going to compete and have pre-entered an event prior to the day.

The type of carnival you have and who will participate is a school choice. There are many factors that may influence which carnival type is best, such as the facilities available, the number of staff available, the number of students and how transportation will be organised.

A school athletics carnival offers benefits beyond individual participation and progression. It promotes unity and school spirit as students, teachers, and parents celebrate physical activity and teamwork. For all students, it fosters personal growth, boosting self-esteem and confidence. Additionally, its inclusivity encourages belonging and community, enhancing the school's positive environment. The greater the student involvement, the greater the potential benefits for the school.

Venue

Select the venue and try to book the venue twelve months in advance. Make sure the venue meets the requirements for your carnival. Consider the size of the venue and areas for students to sit, the quality of the surface and toilet facilities.

Some other factors to consider when choosing a venue:

- How will students travel to the venue?
- Does the ground have a PA system?
- Who will mark the field? Do you need to organise this and if so when?
- Does the venue supply equipment?
- Who will unlock the changeroom and other facilities?
- Does the venue have a canteen? Can you run the canteen, or does someone have a contract on the canteen?
- Is there cover for heat or rain. Can you bring your own?
- Are there facilities and services available for students with disabilities? For example, are there appropriate toilets/amenities, seating accessibility, and wheelchair/frame runner-friendly tracks?

Program of events

1. The program of events may be influence by the facilities at the venue, for example the number of lanes on the track, the number of shot put circles, long jumps pits, and high jump bags.
2. Develop the track program first taking the following into consideration:
    a. Keep the 100m, 200m and 400m races are well separated.
    b. Ensure the 800m, 1,500m, 3,000m, 5,000m races are well separated. Holding all these events at a school carnival is generally not practical, these could be held separately before or after the event, or students could nominate by providing a personal best time for the distance.
3. Fit the field program around the track, try to avoid running track events and field events for the same age group at the same time.

4. If rules differ from World Athletics and World Para Athletics, schools can create 'local' rules, published before the event and included in the program. Consult the PSSA Athletics and CHS Athletics Handbooks for guidance. While school carnival rules don't have to match, alignment where possible is recommended.
5. Ensure accessibility of the program of events for both staff and spectators. Provide hard copies for officials and consider making it available online for spectators and participants. If choosing the online option, communicate clearly with spectators and participants, and consider displaying multiple QR codes around the venue for easy access.
6. Print large A3 posters of the event order and display these around the venue as a quick reference guide for students and spectators.

It is recommended that the program of events clearly communicates the protest system in place. If you decide not to have any avenues available to dispute officials' decisions or results, this should also be clearly communicated.

Officials

Officials are essential at a school athletics carnival to ensure the smooth and fair conduct of the event. Having teachers serve as officials brings several advantages:

- Teachers are familiar with the school's culture, policies, and expectations, which helps maintain consistency and adherence to the school's values throughout the carnival.
- Teachers are required to supervise students.
- They can also provide constructive feedback to students, fostering a positive learning environment. They can offer encouragement and guidance, whether students are excelling or facing challenges, promoting personal growth and development through the event.

The following are some considerations for ensuring officials are well prepared for the carnival:

- Utilise the School Sport Unit's Athletics carnival officials guide and Athletics Officiating teaching resource to help teachers prepare for the carnival.
- Try to give staff a preference of the duty or position they would like to have so that they can do something they feel confident in.
- Have clear responsibilities and duties outlined for each official and volunteer. Provide a printed copy of the rules and duties to the teacher before the carnival.
- If needed, parents, community members and/or students from a local high school (if primary carnival) can be used as officials. Give them a supporting role such as retrieving equipment or helping with marshalling.
- Schedule a briefing session for staff and volunteers before the carnival.

If you need additional officials, you can contact the local athletics club, local high schools and/or Athletics NSW.

Entry into events

Entry into events involves a systematic process to ensure organisation and participation of all students. Here's an outline of how a range of processes:

- Class entry form: The teacher nominates students by filling out a form and submits it to the carnival organiser by a specified date.
- House entry form: House captains or teachers complete nomination forms for different age divisions during a House Meeting.
- Event entry form: Separate forms are created for each event. They can be completed by houses, classes, or the school convenor.
- Individual entry forms: This system is used for championship level competitions or when student participation depends on parental consent through the entry form.
- Post entries: Entries are not accepted before the carnival. Competitors are called on the day of the event, and heats are organised by the marshal.
- Pre-qualifying: Typically used for field events, schools conduct qualifying rounds before the carnival. A designated number of participants compete in the final.

Try to have a process that aims to include as many students as possible. The carnival provides an opportunity for students to try new activities, challenge themselves, and contribute to the school's sense of community.

Students with disability – Multi-class events

Schools must fulfill a legal obligation under the NSW Disability Discrimination Act to provide equal access and opportunities for all students. Inclusivity also shows a commitment to creating a diverse environment where all students can thrive and showcase their talents fairly.

Give multi-class athletes a choice in how they would like to participate. This could be with peers of the same age and gender, other multi-class athletes or within their classification. All multi-class athlete's results should be recorded in the same way for able bodied students.

Students with disability don't need a formal classification to participate at a school carnival. However, just like able-bodied students, they should be encouraged to progress along the Representative School Sport Pathway for its numerous benefits and opportunities. Schools are encouraged to provide support for students and families with the classification process.

Check if multi-class athletes already have a sports-specific classification. Information on obtaining a classification can be found at: https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/sport/disability-and-inclusion/classification

Encourage classifying students as early as possible but note that a formal classification is generally not required until Association level. Check with your Zone executive or Zone athletics convenor to determine the level of classification needed for students to compete before the school carnival.

Equipment

Considerations:

- Organise equipment at least one month before the carnival as this will allow time for repairs and purchasing additional items. The venue may supply or lease out equipment.

- Make a list of exactly what equipment you need for each event- see sample checklist below.
- Make a list of resources you require for recording results for example recording sheets, laptops, timekeeper sheets, judging sheets. Remember tables, chairs and shelters for officials.
- Put a responsible person in charge of the equipment on the day. This person should issue the equipment and check that it is returned.
- Consider how equipment will be transported to venue.
- Do you need a public announcing system? Check that it is charged, in working condition and that it is sufficient for your needs.
- Two-way radios are helpful for the use of key officials. Ensure batteries are charged and personnel using them are provided with a training session.
- Do you need additional shelter such as tents or umbrellas.

Sample Equipment Checklist

Athletics Equipment	Checked Out	Checked In
Starting equipment e.g., caps and pistol		
Earmuffs or ear plugs		
Clip boards		
Whistles, bell		
Stop watches		
Witches' hats and markers - a variety of colours		
Walkie Talkies and spare batteries		
Timekeeper recording slips		
Track judge recording slips		
Track recording sheets		
Place cards, place sticks		
Heat sheets		
Point score sheets (if scoring for numbers entering, the marshal also needs a copy)		
Computer, extension cords and printer (as required)		
Finals sheets		
Programs		

Stationery – Pens, pencils, stapler, staples, tape, highlighters, markers, paper clips, wet weather recording folders, clips, paper, pencils, spare paper
Certificates
House flags, school flags
White flags (for umpires and field officials, if available)
Yellow flags (umpires and field time clocks, if available)
Tables and chairs
Loud hailers (spare batteries) or a public announcing system
First aid kit and student medication
Discus (rubber style suitable for primary students)
Check that discus cage is available
Discus recording sheets
Tape measures (one for each long jump, discus and shot-put location and javelin for secondary)
Spike rods (attach tape measure) one for long jump, discus, shot
Markers for throwing events
High jump bags
High jump stand
High jump bar – spare bar in case of breakage
High jump recording sheets
High jump measuring stick
Lap bell (distance races longer than 400m)
Relay batons (different sizes for primary and secondary)
Long jump recording sheets

Broom, rakes, shovel
Red flags (for field event officials)
Sunscreen
Garbage bags
Batteries
Hand sanitiser
Spray disinfectant
Rubbish tongs
Shade tents (anchored)
Staff sign on sheets and refreshments

Sample Athletics Carnival Checklists

It is important to start organising an Athletics Carnival as early as possible to ensure a well organised day is provided for students.

12 months prior to carnival day (End of the carnival)	
Book the venue (including back-up date)	☐
Publicise date on school calendar	☐
Develop a budget. Costs can include: • Venue hire • Equipment hire and purchases. • Ribbons, medals and/or certificates • Transportation	☐
Update championship records Updating carnival records/results should occur immediately after each carnival. Ensure trophies/ribbons are ready for any upcoming awards ceremonies.	☐
Evaluation notes from previous carnival • What went well? • What can be improved? • What needs to change/be removed?	☐

One or two months prior to carnival	
Book transport, confirm venue and any hired equipment	☐
Publicise dates to students/parents/carers	☐
Check equipment requirements, organise certificates, ribbons, trophies	☐
Organise to have the grounds marked (if required)	☐
Organise program and officials	☐
Organise risk management plan and permission procedures	☐
Organise and distribute information and permission forms to students/parents/carers	☐
Organise recording sheets and official's folders	☐

One or two weeks prior to carnival	
Conduct a staff briefing ensure teachers are familiar with their role. Organise additional training as required.	☐
Organise student entries (if occurring prior to the carnival)	☐
Hold house meetings and brief students on organisation of the day including travel to and from the venue and behaviour expectations.	☐
Check the grounds are marked and all equipment is available	☐

After the carnival	
Check equipment is returned	☐
Determine results such as age champion, house winners	☐
Select team for the next level of representation for example, zone/district	☐
Organise the next level of representation if required for example, transport, permission notes, entries as required	☐
Update any school records	☐
Evaluate the carnival, collect feedback from staff and students	☐
Prepare for the next years carnival	☐

Suggested Athletics Carnival Officials Job List

The number of officials required for each role can vary based on the scale of the carnival and the number of participants. Here are the suggested roles for officials, along with approximate numbers for a medium-sized school:

Role	Suggested minimum number	Notes
Carnival convenor	1	
Assistant carnival convenor	1	Where possible the assistant is 'shadowing' the Carnival convenor to succession plan.
Track referee	1	A member of the Executive team or the carnival convenor/assistant takes on the role
Field referee	1	A member of the Executive team or the carnival convenor/assistant takes on the role
Starter	1	Where possible, ensure the starter possesses experience and/or training in track starting.
Marshalls	2	
Chief timekeeper	1	An experienced teacher or member of the Executive team takes on the role.
Timekeepers	1 per lane	This can be reduced if you have access to electronic timing. See the timekeepers section of the carnival officials guide for more information.
Place judge	1	
Announcer	1	A member of the Executive team or the carnival convenor/assistant takes on the role
Shot put official	2	
Discus official	2	
Javelin official (HS only)	2	Measuring official must be an adult who is experienced in javelin.
High jump official	2	
Long jump official	2	
Triple jump official (HS only)	2	