

LISD

CHEER

PROGRAM

Handbook

2008-2009

Leander Independent School District

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Cheer Program & Mascot Handbook High School 2008 - 2009

Our Purpose

Cheerleading is a vibrant part of the community that comprises Leander ISD.

For campuses and the community, cheerleading exists in order to promote:

- Tradition,
- Spirit, and
- Ambassadorship

For participants, cheerleading exists to provide students:

- Multiple Leadership Chances,
- A Sense of Family,
- Participation in an Athletics for Students with a Particular Skill Set
- Occasions to Learn and Exhibit Sportsmanship and Citizenship
- Assistance in Achieving Academic Excellence, and
- Opportunities to Fail Forward.

These multiple opportunities help students grow and mature, both physically and emotionally, resulting in citizens who embody the LISD Ethical Principles.

Program Membership

The cheer membership consists of the following people:

- ◆ The Freshmen squad will consist of **up to** twelve (12) freshmen girls/boys.
- ◆ The Junior Varsity squad will consist of **up to** twelve (12) sophomore and/or junior girls/boys.
- ◆ The Varsity squad will consist of **up to** twenty (20) sophomore, junior, or senior girls/boys.
- ◆ The Mascot will be one or two, girls or boys, who are classified as a sophomore, junior, or senior.
- ◆ The Crew members will consist of girls/boys who are classified as a sophomore, junior, or senior.
- ◆ Managers will consist of sophomore, junior, or senior girls. They will submit an application to specific campus cheer coaches for consideration. Each campus coach will determine the criteria for be selected as manager.
- ◆ The cheer coach who will be a well-qualified individual who has the passion to lead, coach, and mentor the cheerleaders in his/her program.

In addition -

- ◆ The total number per squad will not exceed the numbers above, but may be less if there is a **natural point break** between candidates' scores from the tryout process.
- ◆ Cheerleader openings that occur after camp will not be filled.
- ◆ Cheerleaders who move to LISD after the tryout process has been finalized must wait until the following year to tryout for LISD squads.

Members of the cheer program will devote and pledge oneself to components outlined in the handbook.

A cheer member will serve from the day of selection until the last day of school the following academic year.

- ◆ Each cheer member should be aware of the amount of time cheerleading requires. It is an honor that requires not only commitment, but also hard work and dedication. Cheer squads, mascot, and manager are a year round commitments.
- ◆ Each cheer member (excluding the Crew members) will be required to be in the cheer class at their respective campus. Classes will consist of physical conditioning, prep for games/events, some tumbling, jump technique, and stunting. Physical conditioning may include, but is not limited to, running, weight training, push-ups, crunches, etc. Managers and mascots will participate with physical conditioning, but may also be given separate expectations per each campus cheer coach.
- ◆ Cheer members need to be aware that their LISD cheer commitments will come first. Jobs, driver education, outside cheer teams, etc. need to be considered before trying out for cheer squads. Any outside commitment will not be considered as a reason to miss any cheer event/game. Absences related to outside commitments will result in a “strike” (see LISD Cheer Discipline Process).

LEADERSHIP

- ◆ A cheer member is one who is willing to set aside his/her own personal agenda for the whole program's pursuit of excellence. This is done by living the ethical principles, through hard work, dedication, and self discipline.
- ◆ Members will demonstrate good sportsmanship, promote school spirit and display genuine concern for others.

ACADEMICS

- ◆ Any cheerleader who receives a grade **below** 70 at the end of a grading period, or who fails to meet the standards in his/her Individual Education Plan (IEP) may not participate in extracurricular activities for the allotted time set by the LISD UIL Athletic Eligibility Schedule.
- ◆ Any cheerleader who becomes ineligible, he/she will not be allowed to perform, travel with the squad, or wear his/her uniform for any reason for the term of ineligibility. The Head Coach will determine if the cheerleader(s) is required to attend an event without participation.
- ◆ Any cheerleader who has been ineligible for any two six-weeks grading periods during the current school will be dismissed from the squad for the remainder of the year.
- ◆ Any cheerleader who receives a grade **below** 70 at the end of a grading period in an approved Advanced Placement class will require a grade of 60 to apply for a participation waiver.
- ◆ A participation waiver request must be filed with the appropriate administrator by the due date.
- ◆ All cheerleaders will be allowed one participation waiver, in one course, for one grading period, per semester in an approved Advanced Placement class only. The first semester waiver will not be transferable to the second semester.

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

- ◆ It is important that LISD cheer members realize the level of commitment that is necessary to make a team successful. Attendance at all games and cheer events is not only crucial, but also mandatory. Absences jeopardize the entire squad and hinder success.
- ◆ An absence to a game/event will only be considered excused in the following circumstances:
 - Personal illness/accident (resulting in missing school)
 - Funeral or death in the family
 - UIL or school-related performance/event
- ◆ If a cheer member is absent from school, he or she may not participate in the cheer activity that day or evening. Again, an absence is considered missing half or more of the school day.
- ◆ If a cheer member is going to be absent from a practice, class, and/or scheduled event, he/she must notify his/her cheer coach (in writing and in person at least 48 hours prior to the conflict) before missing. A strike may still be applicable (see LISD Cheer Discipline Process).
- ◆ Pep rallies (during, before, or after school).
- ◆ Attending all practices, games, events, and fundraising activities. **Jobs are not an excuse to miss any of these events!**
- ◆ A student who is absent from two periods of school is considered absent and may not attend any school/cheer related activity that same day or evening.
- ◆ Freshman cheer members will cheer at all Freshmen games and events assigned by the coach, and if assigned, Varsity games and events.
- ◆ Junior Varsity cheer members will cheer at all Junior Varsity games and events assigned by the coach, and if assigned, Varsity games and events.
- ◆ Varsity cheer members will cheer at all Varsity games and events as assigned by the coach.
- ◆ Cheer members are representing LISD at all times (during and after school hours) so please conduct yourself accordingly.
- ◆ Crew members will be responsible for attending events at the coach's discretion. You will need to wear the appropriate attire to all events.
- ◆ Managers for squads will need to attend events at the coach's discretion. Expectations for this position will be set by each campus cheer coach.
- ◆ Mascots are responsible for attending all events decided upon by the campus cheer coach. They will be treated as a member of the cheer squad and held to all of the same expectations. Mascots are responsible for the care and upkeep of their mascot uniform.
- ◆ All cheer members, except for the Crew, are required to attend summer camp, summer practices, and any fundraisers set for the teams in the summer. Cheer members not attending these events will be dismissed from the squad.

FINANCIAL

- ◆ A payment schedule may be set for all payments due.
- ◆ All cheer members must be current with their payment schedule. Not being current will result in missing cheer events or games. In the event that a cheer account is not current, permanent suspension may result at the discretion of the coach and administration. In that case, the cheer member will still be responsible for the amount due to their program.
- ◆ Cheer members who owe a balance on their account will not be eligible to try out the following year until the amount is paid in full.
- ◆ Cheer members may attend and participate in all personal fundraising activities in order to receive credit to his/her account. Cheer members may also be required to participate in group fundraising activities in which all money earned will be contributed to the general cheer activity fund.
- ◆ At the high school level, all financial obligations are handled by the respective campus' cheer booster club. All payments should be made to the respective booster club.
- ◆ See "Cheer Cost" page in the tryout packet for questions or explanation of cheer cost.

PHYSICAL

- ◆ Cheerleaders must be capable of performing the essential functions for a cheerleader. Functions as listed:
 1. Cheerleaders will demonstrate clear diction, vocal strength, rhythm, and coordination.
 2. Cheerleaders will perform physical moves that may involve jumps, balance, agility, and upper body strength.
 3. Cheerleaders will exhibit stamina in physical activities that involve physical endurance and fitness, and will be able to perform routines in both indoor and outdoor settings, in heat and cold weather.

TRANSPORTATION

- ◆ The cheer team must ride together as a group to and from all games or activities with coaches (JV and Freshmen do not follow this guideline, as they only cheer at home games). Requests to return home by any other means must be submitted in writing to the coach 24 hours prior to departure. The cheer coach will decide if the request is reasonable. If no request is made, the member will return on the bus with the coach. Phone calls are not acceptable. **There will be no exceptions.**

PRACTICES

- ◆ The cheer coaches, prior to the last day of school, will determine mandatory summer practices and camp dates.
- ◆ Practice will be held during the cheer class period and before and/or after school with the coach's supervision.
- ◆ The coach may assign additional afternoon or morning practices, with a 48-hour notice to the cheer member.
- ◆ Practices may be conducted on the safety mats if stunting or tumbling is involved. Some stunting and/or tumbling may be done on hard surfaces based on the performance (pep rallies, football games, etc.).
- ◆ All practices are closed to the public.
- ◆ No cell phones are to be used during practice.
- ◆ Participants must attend all practices in order to perform at an event (game, Spring Show, pep rally, etc.). Members will be held accountable for an absence (see LISD Cheer Discipline Process).

Captain & Co-captain

Captain and Co-Captain Duties (for each squad)

- ◆ Captain Responsibilities:
 - Take attendance at each practice, activity, or game
 - Create a cheer practice clothes calendar (noted in cheer calendar book)
 - Select uniform for events/activities
 - (Varsity Captain Only) Communicate pep rally ideas and agenda with the other squad captain
 - Assign game responsibilities to each squad member
 - Organize and distribute all practice schedules and agenda with squad members
 - Comprise a cheer, chant, and incorporate list for games
 - Demonstrate a positive and motivating attitude at all times
 - Be dependable and cooperative with the coaches and all squad members
 - Have good organizational skills
 - Be on time to all events
 - Be responsible for transporting the gift exchange at home games
 - Report ALL problems, conflicts, and concerns to the coach
 - Keep communication open and flowing with all squad members
 - Use authority when necessary, but do not abuse it
- ◆ Co-Captain Responsibilities:
 - Support the captain at all times
 - Be on time to all events
 - Fill in as captain when or if the captain is absent
 - Help captain plan and organize pep rallies
 - Demonstrate a positive and motivating attitude at all times
 - Be dependable and cooperative with the coaches and all squad members
 - Follow captain guidelines if necessary
- ◆ Each campus will determine the process in which captains/co-captains are selected.

Communication is vital for a successful cheer program.

Communication coaches should expect from parents:

- ◆ Concerns regarding a son/daughter expressed directly to the coach at the appropriate time and place.
- ◆ Issues appropriate for discussion with the coach and/or school administrator:
 - Mental and physical treatment of a student
 - Student plan for success
 - Student behavior
 - Student safety
- ◆ Issues not appropriate for discussion with a coach:
 - Squad selection of cheers, chants, stunts, or elements of a performance
 - Any situation that deals with other students/cheer members

Communication of the coach:

- ◆ Communication parents should expect from their students' coach:
 - Requirements the coach has for his/her student and the squad
 - Locations, dates, and times of practices, games, and events
 - Squad requirements of special equipment, uniform, squad rules/regulations, travel arrangements, and off-season expectations
 - Procedures in the event the student becomes injured during a game, practice, or event

Communication between parent, school, and coach/Process of Appeals:

- ◆ If at any time a cheer member or parent feels he/she needs to discuss a problem or complaint, please follow the appropriate channels:
 - 1) Campus cheer coach - call and set up an appointment.
- ◆ Outline and define objectives for a meeting and stick to discussing facts only.
- ◆ Do not confront the coach before, during or after a practice, game or event. Meetings of this nature do not promote resolution of the situation, but often escalate it.
- ◆ Do not attempt to enter the cheer class without prior permission from the campus principal or his/her designee. Parents/guardians are restricted to visits under district guidelines for campus visitors.
- ◆ If the meeting with the coach does not provide satisfactory resolution, a parent or guardian should move to the next step in the process.
 - 2) Campus Assistant Principal (who serves as campus administrator contact) - to set up a meeting with the cheer coach.
- ◆ If after meeting with the coach and assistant principal, a parent is still satisfied, please see the next person in the process.
 - 3) Contact Renee Williams (LISD Administrator over district cheer program) to discuss concerns about the cheer program or situations involving your student.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- ◆ Cheer tryouts will be held in the second semester of the school year.
- ◆ All candidates must have all debts paid to LISD prior to being eligible to tryout.
- ◆ All candidates must be in good discipline standing at their respective school (not attending ISS, LEO, or suspension during process).
- ◆ A physical must be turned in as part of the tryout process. Any student who does not have a physical on file with the trainer or has one that is expired must have a new one turned in to the cheer coach by the beginning of the first day of the tryout clinic.
- ◆ LISD tryouts and clinic are closed to the public. Parents are asked to drop of their daughter/son and leave the LISD facility. There will be no areas for parents to wait. Candidates will be given an ending time for their tryout session. Parent pick-up will be in a specific location that will be announced during the tryout clinic. All cheer candidates will be escorted in/out by a cheer coach or administrator.
- ◆ Tryout packets will be handed out at the parent/candidate meeting to explain the tryout point scale and process.
- ◆ There will be NO CELL PHONES allowed in any of the tryout areas. Candidates are asked to leave cell phones at home or in their car, but we will also pick up ones that are brought to the school. We will have a phone readily available in case of emergency.
- ◆ Judges for the LISD Cheer Tryouts are experienced and knowledgeable of cheerleading and have had previous judging experience. They are professionals with multiple years of cheer experience.
- ◆ If a candidate fails to show up for his/her assigned tryout time, she/he will not be permitted to tryout at all. It is important that all candidates report to the designated tryout site on time.
- ◆ Candidates must attend everyday of the after school tryout clinic.
- ◆ There will be no “tryout by video” at any time.
- ◆ **All judges’ decisions are final.**

BEFORE TRYOUTS

- ◆ All candidates must be enrolled in an LISD school on or before the first day of the tryout clinics.
- ◆ All candidates must attend the mandatory parent/candidate tryout meeting.
- ◆ As part of the tryout process, cheer coaches will be looking at each candidate's report cards, behavior records, and attendance to determine Character Evaluation points (see Tryout Packet for explanation and break down of Character Evaluation).
- ◆ Parents and candidates are responsible for completing, signing, and returning all forms handed out at the mandatory tryout meeting. These forms must be returned by the set time and date. Parents need to read all information carefully and sign forms to give permission for their daughter/son to participate.
- ◆ Out-going seniors for each campus may teach the tryout cheer and dance. All LISD high schools will use the same tryout material. The senior cheer members will be helping the entire week of tryouts. Any senior member, who is not present during that week, will not be allowed to help or attend on the actual tryout date.
- ◆ The following will be evaluated during clinic week and **will not** be seen by any judge: stunting, GPA, character, and coach observations. Please see the "Tryout Packet" for further clarification of judged areas and point scales.
- ◆ Mascots will also tryout for their position at each high school. Mascot tryout requirements will be handed out at the parent/candidate meeting.
- ◆ Each candidate and parent has the total responsibility to review and verify (with signature) character evaluation scores (attendance, GPA, discipline). This signed verification is due on the last day of the tryout clinic.

DURING TRYOUTS

- ◆ During the tryout process, the following are all evaluated front of the judges: jumps, tumbling, cheer abilities, motions, memory, overall impression, and dance ability.
- ◆ During the tryout, no part of any official cheer uniform may be worn (i.e., specific squad bows, special squad socks, etc.). White cheer shoes will be permitted, but with nothing attached to the shoe to signify involvement with a previous or current squad.

AFTER TRYOUTS

- ◆ Each campus' cheer coach will decide upon managers and the Crew members. Each campus will have specifications/requirements for these positions.
- ◆ Parents may enquire about their child's tryout results by making an appointment with the cheer coach. Inquiries concerning another students' tryout results, including scores, will not be shared.
- ◆ Results will either be posted or delivered after all tryouts are finished. The method of notification will be based on a decision by the LISD coaches and administration. Each candidate will be aware of the notification process before they leave the LISD tryout site.

LISD Cheer Program Discipline Process

An LISD cheer member takes on the role of a respectful and disciplined athlete who should be a model for her/his peers at all times - in school, after school, and in the community. This is a very visual position and your peers are looking at you. Along with this position comes a great deal of responsibility, good work ethics, and a spirit of cooperation with parents, coaches, other cheerleaders, and other students. Each squad member will be held to these high standards in and out of school. All accountability will be handled in such a way as to teach the squad member the ethical principle that applies to the circumstance. The coaches of each campus program will determine all discipline. The following are levels at which behaviors will be handled. **This discipline process begins with each member the day of posting and the member becomes part of the LISD cheer program.**

LEVEL I -

Immediate Reminders: The cheer coach will determine the reminder at the time of the infraction. All discipline is assigned to be corrective and not punitive in nature. Consequences of behaviors that occur during a game will result in removal from some football, volleyball, and basketball game traditions and/or quarters/periods. The list below includes examples of some behaviors which would require immediate reminders:

- ◆ Tardiness to practice or class
- ◆ Forgetting practice clothes or arriving to practice/game without proper attire and/or hair
- ◆ Wearing jewelry in practice, game, or performance
- ◆ Chewing gum, eating candy, or snacking during a game, practice, or activity without permission
- ◆ Being disruptive, horsing around, talking excessively during a game, practice, or activity
- ◆ Socializing with friends or family without permission
- ◆ Failure to bring designated materials when required (i.e. notebook, paper, handbook)
- ◆ Failure to help hang or remove signs when assigned
- ◆ Failure to paint signs when assigned
- ◆ Failure to turn in any paperwork or project money
- ◆ Failure to be in complete uniform

LEVEL II -

Behavioral Infractions (Three Strike Level):

Any of the following behaviors listed will result in a strike:

- ◆ Disrespect/insubordination toward the cheer coaches
- ◆ Disrespect toward a teacher or administrator
- ◆ Disrespect/inappropriate language toward other team members
- ◆ An absence to a game/practice/event
- ◆ Leaving a performance, practice, or event
- ◆ Refusing to work or pay attention at practice
- ◆ Unsportsmanlike conduct at a game or performance
- ◆ Talking on cell phones during a game, practice, or activity
- ◆ Academic dishonesty
- ◆ Assignment to ISS
- ◆ Receiving a discipline report (for behavioral issues)
- ◆ Not participating in fundraising activities
- ◆ Repeatedly (more than three times) forgetting to remove jewelry
- ◆ Repeatedly receiving “reminders” for Level One
- ◆ Missing an event, practice, performance, or game due to school detention or Saturday school

Strikes will be given based on a cheer member’s behavioral infraction. The coaches will document each behavioral infraction. If at any time a cheerleader has received **three strikes**, he/she will be removed from the cheer program for the remainder of the year. They will not be eligible for “lettering” status or the Cheer Banquet at the end of the season. Any cheer member who is removed from the cheer program, for any reason, will need to be moved from the cheer class to a parallel physical education class in order to earn the P.E. credit for that semester. Any student who is removed from the program for grades or behavior/strikes must submit a formal appeal request to tryout for the cheer program the following year. Appeals will be granted on a case-by-case basis determined by a LISD cheer coach and administrator. Any student who does receive a waiver to tryout will be on a contract with the program and will be removed for a breach of that contract.

The following will occur when Level Two infractions are continually a problem:

Strike One- Parent notification and conference with student

Strike Two- Meeting with parent, student, coaches, and an assistant principal

Strike Three- Parent notification and immediate removal from team

All strikes are permanent.

LEVEL III -

Immediate removal from cheer program:

- Assignment to LEO
- Failing any two six weeks
- Alcohol*
- Drug use*
- Smoking*
- Destruction or vandalism of school property
- Suspension from school
- Stealing
- Receiving three strikes

*With the exception of first time offenders. A first time offense will result in temporary removal from the cheer squad. The cheer member will need to complete a minimum of the following consequences in order to be considered for reinstatement:

1. 24 community service hours
2. A formal apology to the cheer program
3. Attend a session with the district substance abuse counselor

- ◆ Violations of student code of conduct may also be handled by campus administration in conjunction with the LISD Cheer Discipline Process.
- ◆ The following behaviors/circumstances may lead to a temporary suspension from the cheer program:
 - Inability to perform at performance/games due to long term or catastrophic health conditions.
 - Ineligibility due to academic non-compliance (for the first time).

Parental Involvement

- ◆ Each campus has a Cheer Parent Support Group or Booster Club. Involvement with these groups is highly encouraged to help support your cheer members program. The purposes of these groups are to support the high school cheer program. The cheer coach is often a member of this organization, but not responsible for its voting, finance, executive board, etc.

Lettering

- ◆ In order for a member of the varsity cheer team to receive a letter or patch and qualify to purchase a jacket, she/he must participate in 15 cheering performances or activities. If a member has already been awarded a letter from another sport/activity, a cheerleading patch will be awarded.
- ◆ If a cheer member is removed from the program for any reason, he/she may not be awarded a letter/patch for that year.
- ◆ A cheer member must have permission from their cheer coach to order the before mentioned letter jackets or patches.

Competition

- ◆ All LISD cheerleaders will have the opportunity to tryout for their respective high schools competition team. A cheerleader must be a member of their school's regular cheer squad in order to tryout for the competitive team. Since the competition squad is optional and its own entity, each school program will govern the tryout process and expectations for these teams. They will be held to this constitution and the rules/regulations set for them by the respective campus' cheer coach.

Safety

- ◆ All participants must have a current physical form on file to participate.
- ◆ All participants must be trained and qualified for proper landing and spotting techniques before they are allowed to stunt.
- ◆ All participants must go through appropriate stunt progressions, qualifications, and follow NFHS/AACCA safety standards at all times.
- ◆ No playing around, laughing, or general socializing will be permitted during any stunt/practice session.
- ◆ Absolutely no jewelry will be worn during practices, games, or events. Jewelry includes all body piercings.
- ◆ No tumbling or building of any stunts is permitted unless a cheer coach is present. **Because of the increased athleticism of today's cheerleaders and the complexity of some stunts performed, there is a risk, as in any athletic sport, of serious injury.**

This handbook is a living document. If an incident should arise that is not specifically addressed in this document, the coach and/or school administrator will address the incident on an individual basis. In addition, in order to benefit the cheer program, the coach and/or administrators reserve the right to revise this handbook at any time.

(Last revised 02-13-08)

Leander ISD does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, or disabilities in providing educational services, activities, and programs, including vocational programs in accordance with the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title XI of the Educational Amendments of 1972; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; and Title II of the American With Disabilities Act. For information on compliance with these, contact LISD Administration representative Renee Williams at 512-434-5359. Each parent and cheer member/candidate will be provided a current copy of the LISD Cheer Program Constitution/Handbook. An electronic copy of the current handbook will be accessible on the LISD webpage and a copy will be filed with each campus principal, each campus cheer coach, the Athletic Director(s), the LISD Cheer Program Director, Renee Williams, and the LISD Central Administration Office.

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