



Rockwall
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

**Cheerleading
Handbook
2019-2020**

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PURPOSE

Cheerleaders and mascots are student leaders who exemplify and promote school spirit, pride, and sportsmanship. Cheerleaders enhance a positive school climate by exhibiting leadership skills, such as respect for individual differences, building consensus, academic excellence, and modeling appropriate behaviors at all times, both in and away from school.

Cheerleaders are expected to be mentally and physically fit and athletically skilled in the field of cheerleading. They are first and foremost representatives of their school. Because of these responsibilities, members of the cheerleading squad will be expected to maintain a higher standard of behavior both on and off campus than that of their peers. In or out of uniform, cheerleaders are representatives of the cheerleading squad and the school.

As leaders, cheerleaders and mascots are expected to set good examples and demonstrate high moral standards for other students. Respect for the school, other members of the squad, and the sponsor and his/her authority will be maintained at all times.

CHEERLEADING YEAR

The rules and procedures outlined in these guidelines are in effect from the date of the mandatory parent meeting preceding the tryouts until the next year tryout date.

UIL & TEA

It is the practice of Rockwall Independent School District to utilize the University Interscholastic League (UIL) guidelines to regulate and govern the cheerleading program with regard to no pass/no play, eight-hour practice limitations, athletic periods, and all other applicable regulations. The cheerleading program will follow the eligibility requirements as outlined by the TEA and the UIL.

TRYOUT – ELIGIBILITY & REQUIREMENTS

- A student must be enrolled in Rockwall ISD. New students to the campus must be enrolled seven days prior to tryouts.
- A student must have a cumulative GPA of 70 or better (high school) or an overall average of 70 (middle school) as of the preceding semester.
- A student must meet state guidelines for compulsory attendance.
- A student must have no outstanding balance for prior year financial obligations.

COMMITMENT

Candidates selected to be a member of the cheerleading squad are expected to make a commitment to the activity for the full cheerleading year. Any cheerleader who voluntarily quits the squad before the end of the cheerleading year without the approval of the principal and sponsor will not be allowed to tryout for the next year on any RISD campus.

TRYOUT GUIDELINES

Procedures for cheerleader selection are based on the guidelines in this handbook. Each school will be responsible for facilitating the tryouts for their campus. Parents will not be allowed in the building during any phase of the tryouts.

Each sponsor will be responsible for the preparation and distribution of a packet of information to be made available to all candidates. This packet will be provided to candidates in a reasonable amount of time prior to the tryout date and will include tryout dates, times, attire, and procedures. The building principal will approve this information prior to distribution.

Candidates and parents must attend an orientation meeting scheduled by the cheer sponsor. Candidates must have no outstanding financial obligations from the prior year. All cheer and mascot candidates must attend a tryout clinic prior to tryouts. If a parent is unable to attend the orientation meeting, the parent will notify the sponsor prior to the meeting date and an alternate meeting time will be provided.

The Cheerleading Handbook Parent/Student Acknowledgement form (p. 11 of this Handbook) must be turned in to the Cheer Sponsor at the parent orientation meeting prior to the student being allowed to participate in the tryout process.

The following forms must be filled out and signed prior to the parent orientation meeting:

- Cheerleading Handbook Parent/Student Acknowledgement
- Medical Release Form
- Inherent Risk Form
- Parental Information and Consent Form for Concussions
- Physical Evaluation—Medical History & Physical Examination

Participating schools require the aforementioned forms to be filled out electronically on the Rank One website (rockwallisd.rankonesport.com) prior to the parent orientation meeting.

SQUAD MAKEUP

The minimum score to be selected to be a member of a cheer squad for high school is 70. The minimum score to be selected for grade eight cheer squad is 65. Any student who scores the minimum score will be placed on the team.

- Varsity squad – a minimum of 16 juniors and seniors
- Junior Varsity squad – minimum of 12 sophomores
- Freshman squad – minimum of 12 freshmen
- Eighth Grade squad – a minimum of 16 eighth graders
- Seventh Grade squad – open enrollment

In the event that the tryout candidates do not meet the minimum score and the minimum number of cheerleaders is not met per team, the top candidates up to 16 for varsity squad, 12 for junior varsity squad, 12 for freshman squad, and 16 for grade 8 squad who have completed the required tryout process will be placed on the team. In the case of a tie score when reaching minimum members, the tied candidates will be added to the team.

A minimum of one mascot will be chosen for each campus.

After the tabulation of scores, all official scoring will be kept in the Principal or Principal designee's office until results are posted.

Any candidates wishing to receive their scores should provide a stamped, self-addressed envelope with the tryout packet at the time of packet submission. Individual score sheets will be mailed following tryouts to those candidates who have provided a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the sponsor prior to the tryouts. Candidate tryout scores are protected per confidentiality requirements and will not be released.

JUDGES

Judges will be selected from NCA and/or other professional cheerleading associations, universities, and/or out-of-district sponsors. It is best practices to hire judges who have not worked with students in the Rockwall area; however, with the hundreds of camps in the state of Texas, attended by thousands of cheerleaders and taught by hundreds of instructors, it may be possible at some time that a member of the judging panel may have had some contact with a candidate.

CLOSED TRYOUTS

Tryouts are closed to everyone except judges, principals, sponsors, campus administrator approved tabulators, and principal's designees. There will be no students, parents, or existing cheerleaders in the tryout areas, nor will they be involved in the collection or tabulation of scores. No parents are allowed in the school building during tryouts. Students and sponsors may not utilize electronic devices or texting during tryouts. Any deviation from the tryout requirements by the candidates may result in the disqualification of the candidate.

JUDGING GUIDELINES

The following guidelines determine membership for the cheerleading squad beginning in grade 8: Performance (70%); Academics (20%); and Conduct (10%). Parents will be provided a rubric for scoring of performance elements at the tryout orientation meeting.

Performance Elements

High School Cheerleading Squads

- Entrance/Spirit
- Crowd Appeal/Smile
- Memory/Recall
- Voice Projection
- Dance/Stunting

- Motion/Technique
- Jumps
- Tumbling

Middle School Cheerleading Squads

- Entrance/Smile
- Spirit
- Crowd Appeal
- Memory/Recall
- Voice Projections
- Group Dance
- Motion/Technique
- Jumps
- Tumbling

Academics

The academic evaluation represents 20% of the candidate's total score. Each candidate's academic score will be calculated from the cumulative GPA as of the preceding semester, as determined by the District. The maximum number of points a student can earn in this category is 20 points. The following formula will be used: Semester average X .20 = Score.

Conduct

The conduct evaluation represents 10% of the candidate's total score. Points for this category will include discipline action taken up to the point of tryouts. A discipline action is one that has been documented by an administrator during the current school year. A total of 10 points may be received in this category if the candidate has zero documented discipline actions. If a candidate has one documented discipline action, two points are deducted. Two discipline actions account for four points being deducted from this score. Zero points will be given if a candidate has three or more discipline actions or has been removed from an extracurricular activity for disciplinary reasons. Major conduct offenses may result in zero points for conduct at the tryouts.

TABULATION OF SCORES

Tabulation of scores will be conducted by campus administrator(s) and designated staff tabulators. For each candidate, three judges' scores are used to create a composite score for performance by averaging the three scores. Scores will be calculated to the nearest one-hundredth.

INJURY & USE OF VIDEO

A candidate for the cheerleading squad may show a video of his/her performance for the judges only if he/she is incapable of required physical activity. Sponsors must receive a doctor's note the day after the injury or the first day of the clinic and must state the reason(s) for the inability to try out. The medical doctor's note must indicate the specific skill the student is incapable of performing as well as any limitations associated with the injury. The video to be shown must be approved by the sponsor, should be no more than six months old, and cannot exhibit a skill that the cheerleader will no longer be able to perform. The final determination of eligibility to tryout using a video will be at the sponsor's discretion. The video will be judged using the same criteria as outlined in this section.

FINAL DETERMINATION & NOTIFICATION

The principal and designee will tabulate scores and calculate to the nearest one-hundredth. Candidates will receive notification of results on the day of tryouts. The notification message will only identify the selected candidates based on assigned tryout numbers. No candidate's name, rank, or score will be included in the notification.

CHEERING ACTIVITIES

All cheerleaders and mascots will have a scheduled class period during the instructional school day to allow for planning and practice. Cheerleading practices and performances are under the umbrella of UIL time limit restrictions. Special practices may be called by the sponsor when necessary.

Varsity

Football—All home and away games, including play-off games.

Basketball—All home games, including play-off games, with sponsor's discretion on away games.

Camps/Clinics—Cheerleading camp held in June, July, or August. (Camp/clinic instruction is an integral part of program quality and attendance is required. Cheerleaders who fail to attend may be removed from the cheerleading program.)

All Other Squads

Football—All grade-level home games and other games at sponsor discretion.

Basketball—All grade level home games and other games at sponsor discretion.

Camps/Clinics—Summer camp and a clinic. (Camp/clinic instruction is an integral part of program quality and attendance is required. Cheerleaders who fail to attend may be removed from the cheerleading program.)

Participation in other sports events, community activities, and social occasions will be at the discretion of the sponsor.

Squads *may* be split to accommodate games and to conform to UIL guidelines.

Students must be present at least one-half of the school day to participate in an activity.

Cheerleaders may not leave a practice, class, or any other activity at any time unless approved by the sponsor.

- Any absence must have the prior approval of the sponsor.
- Prior notification of conflicts with school activities will be addressed with the sponsors and when appropriate, the principal.
- Work is not considered an excuse for an absence.

UNIFORMS & APPEARANCE

All uniforms and practice attire is approved by the sponsor and principal. While performing, each member is expected to:

- Wear proper attire as directed. The uniform is worn to official functions only and a member may perform only if he/she is in the complete required uniform. A specific uniform will also be required for each practice.
- Keep uniforms clean, pressed, and mended at all times.
- Reflect grooming standards as directed by the sponsor, including, but not limited to:
 - Makeup that is natural and wholesome looking
 - Secured hairstyle with ribbons
 - Nails that are short and well-groomed and do not exceed the length of the finger; acrylic nails or tips are strongly discouraged for safety reasons; colored nail polish is not to be worn when cheering or in uniform
 - No visible jewelry, including body piercing
 - No visible tattoos
 - No gum chewing or candy
- Parents are financially responsible for the replacement of school-issued uniforms and equipment; at the end of the school year, launder and return all school-issued uniforms.

COMPETITIONS

High school squads may participate in one summer camp and may elect to participate in regional and national competitions with principal approval. Middle school squads may participate in one area summer camp and may elect to participate in area competitions at the discretion of the sponsor and principal. Every other year, the high school varsity squad may go out of state for competitions with the approval of the principal and superintendent.

COMPETITION SQUADS

Whether to have a squad that enters competition is a decision to be made by the sponsor and campus principal. Selection of any competition squad will be decided by the sponsor. This activity will not interfere with the regularly scheduled activities of the cheerleaders.

FUNDRAISING

A thorough description of appropriate practices and procedures for fundraising is outlined within the document *RISD Campus Activity Fundraising Guidelines*. Individuals directly responsible for fundraising should refer to the document and District policy for complete directions. The following is important information for all members and parents:

- Each cheerleader shall participate in fundraising activities.
- Fundraising activities must support the educational goals of the District.
- Fundraising will be coordinated by the sponsor, and/or Booster Club officers, approved by the building principal, and must include a written request outlining the need for funding, the type of fundraising activity, the projected amount to be raised, how the money will be used, and the time and duration of the activity. Efforts should be made to avoid conflict with other school organizations attempting to raise funds.
- Sponsors are required to keep a detailed account of income and expenditures of student money, with all transactions processed through a campus activity account.

HEAD CHEERLEADER

There may be two head cheerleaders chosen for each of the three squads at the high school level. Head cheerleaders are rotated at the middle school level. The head cheerleader serves in a leadership role as a liaison between cheerleaders, students, and faculty. He/she also serves as a liaison between sponsors and other cheerleaders and is the spokesperson for the program in public meetings and in front of the student body. The following is expected of this position:

- Communicates information to squad members regarding upcoming activities, such as uniform requirements and practice schedules.
- Teaches and starts all cheers and routines for camp, games, and competitions.
- Assists the sponsor in planning all pep rallies.
- Organizes the creation, placement, and removal of signs and items throughout the school and stadium.
- Carries out all other duties assigned by the sponsor.

Head cheerleaders may be removed from the position for conduct that occurs on or off campus that is detrimental to the school or squad as determined by the sponsor and principal.

MASCOT

Each school may select a minimum of one mascot. The mascot will be an integral part of the spirit program at the school. His/her main responsibilities are to provide interaction with the crowd at all functions by incorporating them in cheers and skits and to work closely with all organizations to enhance the spirit of the school. The mascot will follow all cheer guidelines. Additional responsibilities include:

- Work closely with the athletic department and cheerleader sponsor to foster school spirit.
- Be familiar with game rules to make appropriate responses with the crowd at sporting events.
- Create skits with appropriate themes to foster spirit, in conjunction with the cheerleaders.
- Dress in creative attire, when appropriate, with sponsor approval.

REPLACEMENTS

If there is an opening in the cheerleader squad for any reason prior to the first day of school, the sponsor may fill the opening by reviewing the ranked scores from tryouts.

ELIGIBILITY – MAINTENANCE

The Cheerleading program will follow the eligibility requirements as outlined by the University Interscholastic League (UIL) and Texas Education Agency.

All conduct grades must be satisfactory. If a cheerleader receives a grade of “N” or lower, a meeting will be held with the cheerleader, parent, teacher, sponsor, and campus administrator.

CONDUCT GUIDELINES

Upon the completion of tryouts, selected cheerleaders will be subject to all rules, expectations, and discipline consequences associated with the new squad. All discipline actions will affect the cheerleader’s standing on his/her squad after tryouts and throughout the following academic year. Any member failing to abide by rules and regulations as set forth under the provisions may be subject to review by the sponsor and principal. Dismissal from the group may result from that review.

The guidelines for student discipline are outlined in the Student Code of Conduct adopted by the Rockwall Independent School District Board of Trustees and the *UIL Side by Side* <https://www.uil texas.org/policy/tea-uil-side-by-side> .

EXTRACURRICULAR STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOR

Student participation in extracurricular activities is encouraged. Rockwall ISD makes extracurricular activities available as an extension of the regular school program, with an important difference: participation in the regular curriculum is a right afforded to each student, while participation in the extracurricular program is a privilege that carries additional expectations for acceptable conduct. Students who engage in extracurricular activities represent not only themselves but also other students and the District when performing, competing, or participating in extracurricular activities and while wearing uniforms or other clothing that identifies the student to the community or public in any setting as a Rockwall ISD student. Behavior must reflect the finest attributes of the Rockwall ISD student body at all times and in all places.

Since participation in extracurricular activities is a privilege and not a right, Rockwall ISD is authorized to set higher standards for participants of extracurricular activities than for students who choose not to participate in extracurricular activities. Cheerleaders must conduct themselves with utmost integrity. The expectations for extracurricular activities extend beyond the Rockwall ISD Student Code of Conduct, not only in types of behavior prohibited, but also in corresponding consequences and jurisdiction for imposing discipline. Extracurricular expectations apply to all students participating in extracurricular activities, regardless of whether:

- School is in session;
- The offense occurs on or off school property or at a school-related event;
- The student is directly involved with the extracurricular activity at the time the prohibited conduct occurs;
- The extracurricular activity is in-season; and
- Regardless of where or when the conduct occurs, including inappropriate use of social media.

In addition to all conduct prohibited in the Student Code of Conduct, occurring on or off campus, cheerleaders will not represent themselves in an unfavorable, questionable, or illegal manner. They will not attend any event at which underage drinking or smoking is occurring. They will not ride in a vehicle containing alcohol unless a parent, guardian, or other responsible adult is present and aware of the presence of the alcohol. They will not engage in inappropriate touching, including “making out” in public places, and they will not engage in any inappropriate behavior in public places, including inappropriate use of social media.

Consequences for behavior infractions covered in the Student Code of Conduct and in the Cheer Handbook will be assigned at the discretion and determination of the cheer sponsor and campus administrator and may include disciplinary consequences, suspension, removal from squad, and/or prohibition from future participation in all extracurricular activities.

GENERAL CONDUCT RULES

Coaches, administrators, and sponsors will review all facts and circumstances surrounding a particular event and determine appropriate disciplinary action or sanctions.

- 1st offense – Parent/student/sponsor/administrator conference to discuss the event and sanctions, and possible dismissal.
- 2nd offense – Parent/student/sponsor/administrator conference to discuss the event, sanctions, and possible dismissal.
- 3rd offense – Parent/student/sponsor/administrator conference to discuss the event, sanctions, and dismissal.

Any event may be serious enough to result in removal from the extracurricular activity at any step. Sanctions may include, but are not limited to: bench time, loss of playing or performance opportunities, and removal. Decisions of the sponsor and principal are final.

PERMANENT DISMISSAL

Reasons for permanent dismissal from the cheerleading squad include but are not limited to:

- Academic Removal – If academically ineligible for three reporting periods, consecutive or non-consecutive, removal for the remainder of the year.
- Unexcused absence from more than two events (for example games, camps, parades, performances, appearances) over the course of the fall/spring season.
- Failure to meet behavior expectations.
- Expulsion.

Prior to being dismissed, the student and parent will be notified of the reason for the action. Student and parent will be afforded the opportunity of a hearing with the sponsor and principal. Appeals must be submitted in writing to the building principal within five school days. The student will not be eligible for any individual or team recognitions or awards that occur after the date of dismissal.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

In the event of inclement weather, it will be the responsibility of the sponsor, in collaboration with the campus principal, to make the decision to leave the event. Cheerleader(s) who leave a cheerleading event without approval from the cheerleader sponsor will be subject to penalties outlined in these guidelines.

TRANSPORTATION

Each cheerleader shall ride school-provided transportation to and from out-of-town games. A written request from the parent/guardian is required for the student to be released to the parent or to another adult designated by the parent. Prior approval from the sponsor is required. The penalty for missing school-provided transportation is suspension from that night's game and the following game. *Note for Middle School Cheerleaders: Middle school cheerleaders are transported by parents/guardians.*

If the cheerleaders meet at the campus prior to going to the stadium/event, then school-provided transportation must be utilized. If the cheerleaders meet initially at the stadium/event, then students may utilize their own means of transportation to the event.

BOOSTER CLUBS

Booster clubs are optional, but may be allowed at the discretion of the sponsor and principal. Booster clubs are formed by school patrons to help enrich an organization's participation in extracurricular activities.

The purpose of the cheerleading booster club is to support and promote the cheerleaders through fundraising, attendance at athletic performances, and special events. The cheerleading booster club shall:

- Gain sponsor and principal approval on all actions regarding expenditures, fundraising, performances, special events, and other decisions.
- Work cooperatively with the sponsor and school to provide the opportunity to meet the cheerleading organization's goals.
- Follow District policies, UIL/TEA guidelines, booster by-laws, and fundraising procedures.

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The District will provide the basic uniform for each member. Additional uniforms, camp wear, clothing items, bags, sweaters, and practice attire are purchased by the parent and must be approved by the sponsor and campus principal prior to purchase. Cheerleaders are required to attend summer camp and are responsible for all fees associated with summer camp. A more specific list of approved items outlining financial requirements will be provided to parents at orientation.

CIVILITY

Parents are partners with the school and are expected to support the cheerleading program, cheerleaders, and sponsors through attending performances, meeting financial obligations in a timely manner, and assisting in fundraising, among other supportive measures. Mutual respect is imperative and civility is required at all times. Individuals who speak in a demanding, loud, insulting or demeaning manner, or otherwise disrupt operations, will be directed to leave the school or District property [GKA(LOCAL)].