

Cheer Program Handbook
Klein Independent School District
2019-2020

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KISD Cheer Program & Mascot Handbook for High School 2019-2020

OUR PURPOSE

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

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

- Tradition
- Spirit
- Ambassadorship
- Sportsmanship
- Leadership

For participants, cheerleading exists to provide students:

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

These multiple opportunities help students grow and mature, both physically and emotionally, resulting in citizens who embody the KISD high personal ideals and good character.

PROGRAM MEMBERSHIP

To respect the diversity of the five high school campuses, the tryout data will be used to determine each team in each high school's cheer program.

Each high school will have a Varsity and Junior Varsity Squad with the option to carry a freshman squad. The decision to carry a freshman squad will be based on the data presented on the day of tryouts. In the event that a campus carries a freshman squad, it will consist of only freshmen.

The Cheer Teams will be made up of the following class ranks:

Varsity: The varsity squad will consist of juniors and seniors. The squad will have a minimum of 16 and a maximum of 20 cheerleaders.

Junior Varsity: The junior varsity squad will consist of sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Squads will have a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 16 cheerleaders.

Freshman: The freshman squad will consist of a minimum of 8 candidates and a maximum of 14 to create a freshman team.

Other Cheerleader membership:

The Mascot will be one or two students who are classified as a freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior. The mascot will be a member of the Varsity squad and held to the same standards as a cheerleader.

Managers may be freshmen, sophomores, juniors, or seniors. They will submit an application to specific campus cheer coaches for consideration. Each campus coach will determine their needs for a manager and the criteria to be selected.

In addition:

- Cheerleader openings that occur after camp will not be filled.
- Cheerleaders who move to KISD or transfer after the tryout process has been finalized must wait until the following year to try out for KISD squads.
- In the event that a current cheer student transfers to another campus after tryouts, the student will not be eligible to cheer on the squad at the transfer campus.

COMMITMENT

Members of the cheer program will devote and pledge themselves to components outlined in the handbook. A cheer member will serve from tryout to tryout.

- 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. Being part of the cheer program is a year round commitment.
- Each cheer member must enroll in the cheer class at their respective campus for the entire academic year. Classes will consist of physical conditioning, prep for games/events, sign painting, 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.
- Cheerleaders are expected to maintain, improve, and perform any skills demonstrated at tryouts.
- Non-returning members will be removed from the cheer class after tryouts are complete.
- Cheer members need to be aware that their KISD cheer commitments will come first. Jobs, driver education, outside cheer teams, etc. need to be considered before trying out for cheer squads.
- If at any time a cheerleader has received three strikes or resigns, they 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 or resigns from the cheer program, for any reason, will be moved from the cheer class to a parallel physical education class in order to earn the P.E. credit for that semester.

DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

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 KISD high personal ideals and good character, as well as through hard work, dedication, and self-discipline.
- Members will demonstrate good sportsmanship, promote school spirit, and display genuine enthusiasm.

GRADE REQUIREMENTS

- Cheerleaders should maintain a grade of 70 or above in all classes. Eligibility will be determined in accordance with the district UIL calendar.
- Any cheerleader who becomes ineligible will not be allowed to perform, travel with the squad, or wear their uniform for any reason for the term of ineligibility.
- Any ineligible cheerleader is required to attend practices unless exceptions are made by the cheer sponsor
- Any cheerleader who receives two or more "F's" as a semester grade during the cheerleading year will be permanently removed from the squad.

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

- It is important that KISD 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.
- Attending all practices, games, events, and pep rallies is mandatory.
- If a cheer member is going to be absent from a practice, class, and/or scheduled event, the parent must notify the cheer coach in writing at least 24 hours prior. A strike may still be applicable (see KISD Cheer Discipline Process). Absence from any cheerleading activity is unexcused, except in these circumstances:
 - Personal illness or accident
 - Funeral or death in the family
 - Competing in an UIL event or a school-related performance
- Cheer members will cheer at all games and events assigned by the coach. Away games must be approved by the principal.
- Each cheerleader will receive two Game/Event Passes to use throughout the year. These must be approved at least a week in advance by the cheer sponsor. The number of passes allowed will be determined by the sponsors and communicated in advance. Passes may not be used to remove a consequence for a discipline infraction. Passes will be honored on a first come, first served basis.
- A cheerleader who is absent for more than one-third of any grading period must have a doctor's written statement. After one month of extended illness or injury, the cheerleader may be removed.
- Cheer members are representing KISD at all times and need to conduct themselves accordingly.
- Managers for squads will need to attend events at the coach's discretion.
- Mascots are responsible for attending all events decided upon by the campus cheer coach. Mascots are responsible for the care and upkeep of their mascot uniform.
- All cheer members are required to attend the coach designated summer camp and summer practices. Alternative camps are not an option for individual members. Cheer members who do not attend camp are subject to being dismissed from the squad.
- A cheerleader who does not participate in cheerleading class and/or practice after school will not be allowed to participate in the associated performance/event unless the absence is approved by one of the

sponsors. However, the cheerleader must attend the event in uniform and sit with the sponsor. Non-participation includes absences, early dismissals, and sitting out.

SAFETY

The safety of all of our cheer members is of utmost importance. We do a number of things which we believe will stress the importance of using safety strategies and encourage the members of the team and coaches to practice good safety skills.

- 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 and coaches must go through appropriate stunt progressions, qualifications, and follow NFHS/AACCA safety standards at all times.
- All Klein ISD Cheerleading activities must be in compliance with the guidelines delineated in the NFHS/AACCA Cheerleading Safety Manual.
- No playing around, laughing, or general socializing will be permitted during any stunt/practice session.
- Absolutely no jewelry or spacers will be worn during practices, games, or events. Jewelry includes all body piercings.
- Cheerleaders will maintain nail length and shape that is acceptable for the safety of the sport at sponsor discretion.
- Fingernails, including artificial nails, shall be kept at a length appropriate for safe participation. The appropriate length means fingernails are not visible beyond the end of the fingers when viewed from the palm side of the hands.
- No tumbling or building of any stunts is permitted unless a cheer coach is present.
- Cheer Camp - all members of the cheer team (and coach representation) are required to attend summer cheer camp at which time there are entire sessions presented on proper cheer safety.
- Use of mats - cheer members use mats for practice and for some performances.
- Each campus athletic training department presents the following topics to cheer programs: concussion training, safety training, injury prevention, how to handle injuries, rehabilitation of personal injury, and the importance of working out, stretching, and staying in good physical condition.

UNIFORM AND GROOMING

- The sponsor will establish appearance and uniform guidelines for cheerleaders.
- Fingernails, including artificial nails, shall be kept at a length appropriate for safe participation. The appropriate length means fingernails are not visible beyond the end of the fingers when viewed from the palm side of the hands.
- Uniforms must be clean and neatly pressed at all times.
- Shoes must be clean and in good condition at all times.
- Uniforms should be worn only at scheduled events (games, appearances, etc.).
- No display of affection in uniform per sponsor's directive.
- If a uniform needs to be modified, the coach's written permission must be obtained and the expense of modifying the uniform is that of the cheerleaders.
- It is the cheerleader's responsibility to care for his/her uniform.
- If assigned detention or suspension, a uniform may not be worn while serving that time.
- It is the responsibility of the member to return any borrowed item in the condition that it was received. Any item, uniform or costume (mascot) must be repaired or replaced at the member's expense if it is lost, stolen or destroyed due to negligence.

SPORTING EVENT EXPECTATIONS

The main focus for KISD Cheerleaders is to support our school and teams in any way possible. All assigned games are required.

- Reporting time to games/events will be established by the cheer sponsors.
- Permission must be obtained before leaving sidelines.
- While performing, there will be no socializing with spectators or fellow cheerleaders.

To allow our members to be involved in other organizations and/or jobs and to be able to succeed academically, we will be following the schedule of games below:

- Football: Varsity - all home and away games; JV- all home games (alternating A/B games); Freshmen - all home games (alternating A/B games)
 - Cheerleaders are solely responsible for whatever equipment is needed at the game.
- Volleyball: a minimum of four home games
- Basketball: a minimum of one game per week.
- For the following sports, cheerleaders will attend per the coaches' discretion: Baseball, Wrestling, Soccer, Softball, Swim, Tennis, Golf, Track, Cross Country

Playoffs: Squads will make every attempt to attend playoff games.

FINANCIAL EXPECTATIONS

- A payment schedule may be set for all payments due.
- All cheer members must be current with their payment schedule. Not being current may 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 or fail to return school issued property will not be eligible to try out the following year unless the amount is paid in full or items are returned.
- All fundraising money earned will be contributed to the general cheer activity fund.
- See tryout packet for questions or explanation of cheer expenses.
- Cheer members who quit, resign, or are dismissed from a team will be responsible for unpaid balances. No money will be refunded.
- Personal mandatory cost to cheerleaders should not exceed a cost of \$550 in addition to the cost of camp.

TRANSPORTATION

Traveling cheer squads must ride together as a group to and from all away games or activities with coaches. All varsity cheerleaders and necessary equipment must be ready to load the bus 15 minutes before designated departure time. Failure to ride approved transportation will be considered an unexcused absence. Requests to return home by any other means must be submitted in writing or via email to the coach 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 and/or text messages are not acceptable.

LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

Elections and responsibilities of leadership positions will be determined by campus coaches. Each campus will determine the selection date on which leadership positions are selected. Failure to adhere to the cheer handbook standards will result in disciplinary action. Leaders will be removed from their leadership position if a strike is received. Any student who receives a strike during the previous year is not eligible to run for a leadership position.

TRYOUT QUALIFICATIONS & INFORMATION

- At the time of tryouts, a cheerleader candidate must be a resident of the attendance zone in which the school for which the student is trying out is located, or have an approved transfer from the Department of Campus Safety and Support to attend that school for the next school year.
- A permission slip explaining estimated expenses and the KISD Cheer Handbook must be signed by the parents and returned to the school before tryouts.
- A physical waiver form signed by parent or guardian is necessary prior to student's participation in clinic and tryouts.
- At the beginning of tryouts, the students running for varsity cheerleader must be a sophomore or junior; for junior varsity, they may be either a freshman, sophomore or junior; for freshman cheerleader, they must be an eighth grade student.
- All Klein ISD cheerleading activities must be in compliance with the guidelines delineated in the NFHS/AACCA Cheerleading Safety Manual.
- A candidate's course schedule must require them to complete the entire term of the cheerleader year.

In Klein ISD, the permitted ranges for the number of cheerleaders on a high school squad are listed below. However, the final number of cheerleaders accepted into each squad is at the discretion of the campus principal.

SQUAD	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM
Varsity	16	20
Jr. Varsity	10	16
Freshman	8	14

- Cheerleader tryouts will be held during the second semester of the school year and no later than April 30. The KISD standardized tryout guidelines using the 70% judge evaluation and 30% record evaluation will be used. The candidates with the highest scores from the tryout will become cheerleaders for the squad on which they are eligible.
- All candidates will be screened by professional judges who are not employees of KISD.
- All candidates must attend the tryout meeting with an adult representative. Candidates must also attend cheerleader clinic, mock tryouts, and tryouts. (Administration has the authority to make exceptions for extenuating circumstances, but the principals did not feel that this needed to be written)
- Candidates with a medical excuse should consult the sponsor and school administration if they are physically disabled at the time of tryouts.

CODE OF CONDUCT

KISD Cheer Program Discipline Process

A KISD 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. Along with this position comes a great deal of responsibility, good work ethic, and a spirit of cooperation with parents, coaches, other cheerleaders, and other students. Each squad member will be held to these high standards both in and out of school and in and out of uniform throughout the cheer and academic year. The coaches of each campus program will determine all consequences based on the following prescribed discipline process and the KISD Student Code of Conduct.

There are two types of permanent infractions for the cheer program:

- **Reminders:** A reminder is a minor infraction which results in an immediate consequence. The cheer coach will determine the consequence of the infraction. Consequences of behaviors that occur during a game may result in removal from some game traditions and/or quarters/periods.
- **Strikes:** A strike is a major infraction which results in an immediate consequence. The following will occur when a strike has been issued:
 - **Strike One:** Parent notification, may include conference with student and an assistant principal, and consequences as determined by sponsors
 - **Strike Two:** Parent notification, conference with parent, student, and an assistant principal, and consequences as determined by sponsors
 - **Strike Three:** Parent notification, conference with parent, student and an assistant principal, and immediate removal from team.

The following are levels at which behaviors will be handled. This discipline process begins when each member becomes part of the KISD CHEER program.

Reminders – The list below includes, but is not limited to, behaviors which would require reminders:

- Tardiness to practice, game, or non-school hour activity/event
- Leaving a performance, game, practice, or activity/event early
- Wearing jewelry in any practice, game, non-school hour activity/event, or performance
- Wearing uniform outside of a non-scheduled event
- Chewing gum, eating candy, or snacking during a game, practice, or activity/event without permission
- Being disruptive, horsing around, talking excessively during a game, practice, or activity
- Socializing with friends or family without permission
- Using a cell phone during practices, games, or activities/events
- An excused absence (see p. 6) to a game/practice/event without written parent advance notification
- Failure to bring and/or clean up game and/or event materials
- Failure to bring designated materials when required
- Failure to help hang/remove signs when assigned
- Failure to paint signs when assigned
- Failure to turn in any paperwork or project money
- Failure to adhere to grooming and uniform expectations for a game, practice, or activity/event
- Failure to cover tattoos for a game, practice, or activity/event
- Assignment to detention
- Having unnatural hair color at a game, practice, or activity/event

- Inappropriate language

Strikes: Below are examples of behaviors that may warrant a strike infractions:

- Insubordination or disrespect toward the cheer coaches, teacher, or administrator
- Failure to regain eligibility at progress report time
- Undignified behavior of a cheer member as determined by the cheer coach
- Any unexcused absence (see p. 6)
- Refusing to work or pay attention at practice
- Unsportsmanlike conduct at a game or performance
- Assignment to ISS
- Receiving a P or U on any nine-week grading period
- Receiving 10 "reminders" for any combination of reminders

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, resigns, or withdraws from the school, he/she will be removed from the cheer program for the remainder of the year. They will not be eligible for "lettering" status or attend the Cheer Banquet at the end of the season. Any cheer member who is removed or has resigned from the cheer program, for any reason, will be removed from the cheer class. Any student who receives a strike during the previous year is not eligible to run for a leadership position.

Immediate Removal: Below are examples of behaviors that will warrant immediate removal from the cheer program:

- Any assignment to OSS or DAEP
- Failing any two classes at the end of a semester
- Alcohol, tobacco, vape, and/or any drug use
- Destruction or vandalism of school property
- Stealing
- Gross, serious, or persistent misconduct
- Misrepresentation of the school or KISD
- Receiving three strikes (or 30 reminders which results in 3 strikes)

Consequences for being removed or resigning from a squad will be enforced at any KISD campus should the removed/resigning cheerleader transfer to another KISD campus.

Violations of student code of conduct may also be handled by campus administration in conjunction with the KISD Cheer Discipline Process.

GENERAL INFORMATION

COMPETITION

- A squad may compete in no more than four contests during the school year, should they receive an invitation and provided there are no scheduling conflicts. Financial arrangements should be at the discretion of the squad and the sponsor.
- Participating cheerleaders should attend tournaments as a group with the sponsor.
- Participating preliminary competitions must be limited to within the state. All KISD requirements must be met before out-of-state contests are planned.
- A competitive team may be selected from current freshman, JV, and Varsity cheerleading squads at coaches' discretion. A separate tryout may be held to select this 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.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Cheerleaders are high-profile representatives of the Klein Independent School District, and their behavior is subject to scrutiny by their peers, the campus, community, and the media. The actions of a single student-athlete can reflect positively or negatively not only on the individual student-athlete, but also on his or her team and coaches, the entire school campus and the KISD Cheer community.

Therefore, cheerleaders are expected to represent themselves and KISD with honor, dignity and integrity at all times –including when interacting on social networking websites and in other online environments. The popularity of social networking websites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Vine, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.) has grown tremendously during the last few years. These websites can serve as valuable communication tools when used appropriately. The use of social media, however, has the potential to cause problems for both the cheerleaders and the school environment. Almost anything a cheerleader posts on a social networking site may be viewed by others, and both the media and the general public are more likely to view the profiles of cheerleaders than the profiles of other students.

The KISD Cheer Program has developed this Student-Athlete Social Networking Guideline in order to:

- provide recommendations and suggestions for cheerleaders to help them use social media in a safe and responsible manner
- outline important rules that cheerleaders must follow when using social media

Important Suggestions & Recommendations Regarding Social Networking Sites

Some students mistakenly believe social networking websites have a veil of privacy about them and assume their profiles are viewed only by a close circle of friends and fellow students. To the contrary, the content on most of these sites is accessible by anyone in the general public unless security and privacy features are used. The public nature of these websites has created personal safety and personal welfare concerns. For example, cheerleaders have been stalked or sexually harassed and assaulted as a result of their Facebook profiles. Fans of opposing teams have taunted cheerleaders based on information obtained from social networking sites. Cheerleaders also should be aware that potential employers and graduate school admissions officers now regularly screen applicants by conducting “Google” searches of an applicant’s name and by reviewing the applicant’s social networking profiles. Students are being passed over for interviews and denied admission to universities based on the content of their profiles.

Cheerleaders should be very careful about what personal information they share on the internet.

For their own security, protection and welfare and that of their teammates and friends, the KISD Cheer Program strongly recommends and advises student-athletes to:

- Keep phone numbers, physical addresses, birthdates, current whereabouts, travel plans and other personal information strictly confidential. This information should not be contained in a student-athlete's personal online profile.
- Limit the access of others to e-mail addresses and screen carefully those whom a student- athlete may accept as "friends" on a social networking site.
- Use whatever security and privacy features are available to restrict the ability of others view a cheerleader's site or to post pictures, messages and other content on a cheerleader's site.
- If an individual contacts a cheerleader via a social networking site and the nature of the contact makes the cheerleader concerned for his or her safety or uncomfortable in any way, the cheerleader should immediately contact a parent, a coach, or a campus administrator.

Rules Regarding Social Networking Sites

As a condition of being a cheerleader in KISD, cheerleaders must abide by the following rules related to the use of the internet and social networking sites:

- All Cheer members are expected to uphold all of the standards outlined in the KISD Cheer Handbook and will positively represent their high school and its cheer program in the school and in the community. Cheerleaders may not post any content online that would constitute a violation of the KISD Student Code of Conduct.
- Members will not post pictures, statuses, nor be involved in any social networking conversations that negatively represent themselves, their high school, or its cheer program.
- Members will not post or be associated with postings involved with smoking, vaping, inappropriate gestures, drugs, alcohol, or sexual content.
- Members will not post or be associated with postings/conversations that are negative in regards to their school, the cheer program, its members, or its coaches.
- Cheer members may not engage in any ambiguous association such as re-tweeting, subtweeting, favoriting, liking, re-posting, etc. of inappropriate material in regards to this code of conduct and the social media contract.
- Members will not engage in cyberbullying, slander, or harassing behavior.

Consequences will be issued for members who do not follow the above standards. A member who engages in inappropriate behavior regarding social media may be removed from the cheer squad per sponsor and administrator discretion.

LETTERING

- Students may only receive one (1) school-purchased award jacket during their high school career at the same school.
- Only members of the Varsity squad are eligible for a letter jacket.
- Athletes shall participate the entire season, finish in good standing, and be recommended by their head coach.
- Managers shall complete the entire cheer year. They shall receive a certificate award the first year and a jacket for a subsequent year of participation.
- Any coach who feels that an athlete classified as a senior has made sufficient contributions to the team, even though he or she has not met the above lettering requirements, may submit the athlete's name for consideration to the director of athletics.

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. The resolution of this incident may not be addressed team wide especially when privacy issues are involved. 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 2-28-2018)

Klein 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 IX 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 KISD Administration representative. Each parent and cheer member/candidate will be provided a current copy of the KISD Cheer Program Constitution/Handbook. An electronic copy of the current handbook will be accessible on the KISD webpage and a copy will be filed with each campus principal, each campus cheer coach, the Athletic Director(s) and the KISD Central Administration Office.

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