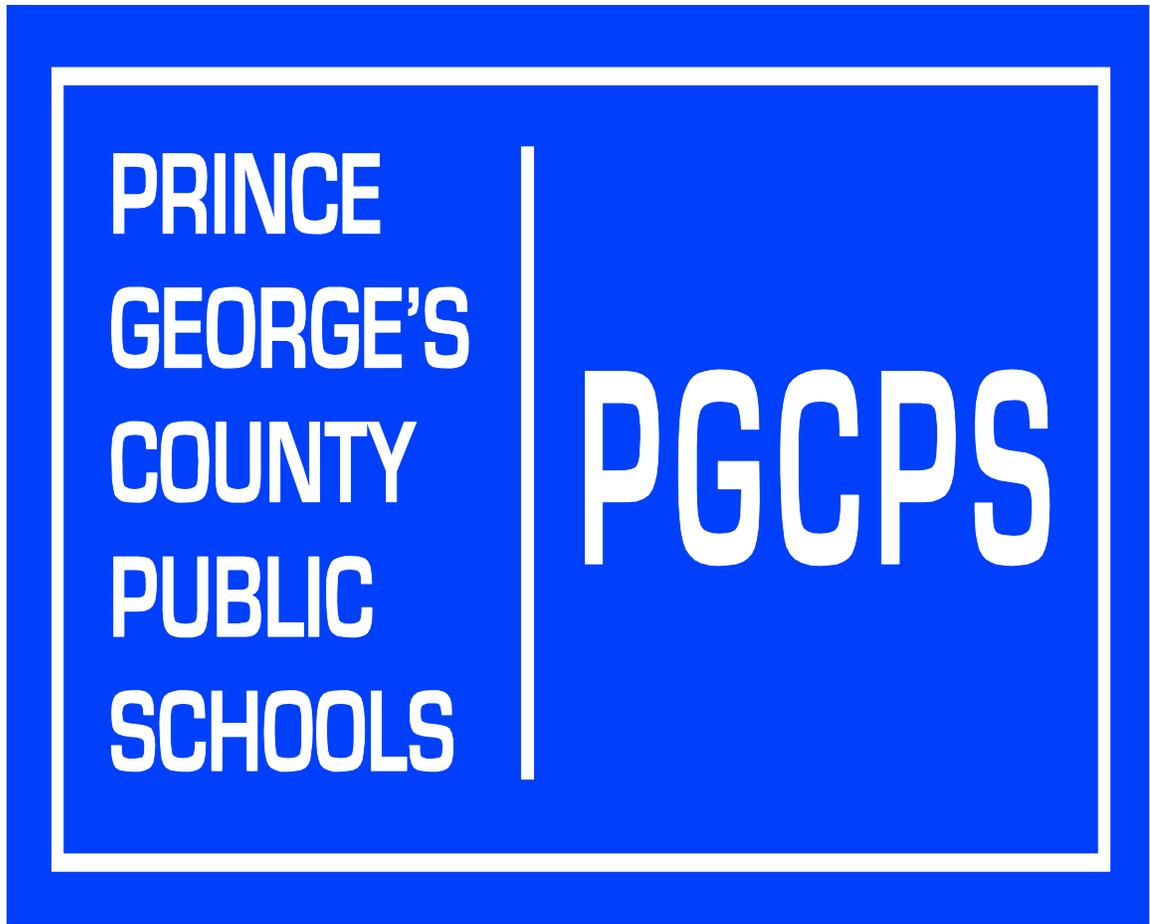


2013-2014
Cheerleading Handbook



Dr. Kevin Maxwell
Chief Executive Officer

Earl Hawkins
Director of Interscholastic Athletics

O'Shay Watson
Supervisor of Interscholastic Athletics

Office of Interscholastic Athletics
*4400 Shell Street * Capital Heights, Maryland 20743 * 301-669-6000*

Cheerleading Philosophy Statement

Adopted from the National Federation Spirit Committee

Interscholastic athletics shall supplement the secondary curricular program and provide the students with educational experiences and learning outcomes that contribute toward the development of the attributes of good citizenship. This can be accomplished only when the emphasis is placed upon teaching “through school athletics. Interscholastic athletics can be justified only when this is the primary philosophy and purpose.

Cheerleaders shall serve as a support group for the interscholastic athletic program with the school, and, as such, play a very important role in the administration of athletic contests. Each squad should strive to boost school spirit, promote good sportsmanship, develop good positive crowd involvement and help student participants and spectators achieve the most worthwhile educational objectives of the interscholastic program.

As the term implies, cheerleading activities should center on leading or directing the cheering of student and adult fans. In this role, cheerleaders can become the school’s most effective student leaders. Cheerleading activities should be focused on creating a cooperative spirit among the cheerleader squads, athletes, student bodies, school administrators and communities; recognizing outstanding plays and examples of good sportsmanship on the part of both teams, and aiding the school and game officials in the promotion of good sportsmanship and the administration of the contest.

Performing is a secondary role of cheerleading and can effectively promote school spirit when included at appropriate times at interscholastic contests such as pre-game, non-injury time-outs and intermissions, as well as pep rallies and assemblies.

Cheer competition requires the development of physical skills performed in a choreographed routine. The purpose of this activity is to provide a basis for competition in which the team’s performance is judged against other team performances. Each local school system, state high school association or organization governing cheerleading in a state shall determine whether cheer competition is allowed by high school students. If cheer competition is approved as a part of the school’s activities, it should be placed in perspective with the total educational program and should not interfere with the primary responsibility of cheerleaders, which is to support the interscholastic athletic program. Cheer competition, like cheerleading, should serve to develop leadership, confidence and skill.

Being the most recognizable representatives of a school, cheerleaders are in a position of great influence; therefore, high standards of conduct are essential. Positive personal behavior and squad cohesiveness demonstrate these standards. Appropriate behavior will help earn the respect of the student body, which is the core of developing effective school spirit and student involvement.”

WHAT IS CHEERLEADING?

Cheerleading is an intense physical activity using organized routines, usually ranging from one to three minutes, which contain the components of tumbling, dance, jumps, cheers, and stunting to direct spectators of events to cheer on sports teams at games or to participate in competitions. The person involved is called a **cheerleader**.

In 1898 a University of Minnesota student Johnny Campbell, directed a crowd in cheering “Rah, Rah, Rah! Ski-u-mah. Hoo-Rah! Hoo-Rah! Varsity! Varsity! Varsity! Minn-e-So-Tah!” making him the very first cheerleader and November 2, 1898, the official birth date of organized cheerleading. Cheerleading started out as an all male activity, but females began participating in 1923. At that time, gymnastics, tumbling, and megaphones were incorporated into popular cheers, and are still used today.

Organized cheerleading competitions began to pop up with the first ranking of the “Top Ten College Cheerleading Squads” and “Cheerleader All American” awards given out by the International Cheerleading Foundation in 1967. In 1978, America was introduced to competitive cheerleading by the first broadcast of Collegiate Cheerleading Championships on CBS.

The 1980’s saw the onset of modern cheerleading with more difficult stunt sequences and gymnastics being incorporated into routines. Even with its athletic and competitive development, cheerleading at the school level has retained its ties to the spirit leading traditions started back in the 1890’s. Cheerleaders are seen as ambassadors for their schools, and leaders among the student body. At the college level, cheerleaders are often invited to help at university fundraisers.

Most American middle schools, high schools, and colleges have organized cheerleading squads made up solely of students. Several colleges with competitive cheerleading teams offer scholarships for talented athletes. School-sponsored cheerleading promotes school spirit and motivates the players and fans. A cheerleading team may also compete outside of sporting events (local, regional, and national competitions). Cheerleading is quickly becoming a year-round sport, starting with tryouts during the spring of the preceding school year, organized camp as a team, practices, attendance at various sporting events and ending with National competition season, typically from winter through spring.

Middle school cheerleading evolved shortly after high school squads started. In middle school, the squads serve mostly the same functions as high school squads and follow the same rules and regulations; however, the stunts are not always as intense as those found in high school. The cheerleaders cheer at basketball and many other sports that may be in their school. They also perform at pep rallies and compete against other schools from local competitions all the way to nationals. Cheerleading in middle schools sometimes can be a two-season sport, fall and winter. However, a lot of middle school cheer squads will go all year round like high school squads.

Its competition aspect makes cheerleading its own sport. There is year-round practice, cheer camps, and competitions throughout the winter. The competition aspect of cheerleading can be very enduring. All high school coaches should attend rules meetings at the beginning of the season. This ensures their knowledge and compliance of rule changes.

INTRODUCTION

Cheerleading teams are approved school organizations recognized by the Prince George's County Board of Education. They comprise an integral part of the Prince George's county Public Schools' Athletic Program. Over the past few years the scope, activities, and athleticism for cheerleaders has increased as rapidly as the athletic programs. The responsibilities of coaches have increased accordingly.

The student body, community, and athletic teams are all influenced by the performance of cheerleading teams. It shall be the purpose of Prince George's County cheerleading teams to promote and uphold school spirit, to develop a sense of good sportsmanship to better the relationship between our schools and the schools with whom we compete and develop the skills to excel in the competitive sport of cheerleading. The tremendous exposure of cheerleaders must be carefully managed to promote constructive support and interest for our educational system.

The cheerleading program will follow all athletic policies and procedures established by Prince George's County Public Schools and Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association.

During the fall and winter seasons, participation in cheerleading competition shall not conflict with interscholastic athletic events. There will be a countywide competition to determine a county champion in each league, as well as an overall grand champion.

This handbook has been written to provide coaches and athletic directors with a resource of information to assist them in the administration of their responsibilities. Coaches should direct any questions they might have to the cheerleading representative, the athletic director or principal of their school.

I. OBJECTIVES FOR CHEERLEADERS

Cheerleaders need to be guided by coaches so that they can successfully fulfill this basic task and fulfill their basic tasks and fulfill other objectives associated with cheerleading.

A Cheerleader will be able to:

- A. Encourage practice and good sportsmanship and mature behavior at all times.
- B. Provide support and recognition for all athletic teams and other School groups as appropriate.
- C. Ensure that visiting teams are always welcomed courteously and treated with friendliness.
- D. Promote school spirit.
- E. Lead organized cheers and chants to the student body and other spectators.
- F. Acquaint students with a variety of appropriate cheers to be used in different situations.
- G. Control crowds through organized leadership.
- H. Follow the rules and constitution provided by the school.
- I. Commit to the full cheerleading season as set by the school.
- J. Uphold scholastic responsibilities during the cheerleading season.

II. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHEERLEADER COACH

The following responsibilities have been established through consultation with coaches, athletic directors, the Director of Interscholastic Athletics, and Principals.

The coach will:

- A. Be responsible for the cheerleading squads in all their activities.
- B. Supervise all practices and performances or provide a faculty member substitute to supervise.
- C. Work cooperatively with the local school athletic director or proper administrator throughout the year.
- D. Arrange, through the athletic director, transportation of the squad for away games.
- E. Keep accurate attendance for practices and games.

- F. Approve all cheers.
- G. Provide leadership, chants, and stunts to captains of the cheerleading squads.
- H. Coordinate a schedule for the coverage of events and ensure that all sports receive some recognition.
- I. Keep a medical card for each cheerleader readily accessible at all practices and events.
- J. Supervise carefully the teaching of stunts and acrobatics, seek help from gymnastic teachers and coaches, ensure safety of the team and eliminate stunts requiring skills beyond the ability of the squad members.
- K. Be responsible for the planned practice tryouts and the selection of the squad.
- L. Encourage and practice good sportsmanship and mature behavior at all times.
- M. Ensure that visiting teams are always welcomed courteously and treated with friendliness.
- N. Follow the spirit rules and regulations of the National Federation of High Schools.
- O. Seek training in the elements of proper cheerleading.
- P. Ensure the cheerleading team practices proper athletic conditioning to reduce the risks of injury.
- Q. *To provide concussion awareness and heat acclimatization information to participants and their parents.*

III. CODE OF ETHICS

The National Federation of state High School Association has endorsed this code of ethics for sponsors. All cheerleading sponsors will emphasize the following guidelines as they work with their squads.

- A. Strive to develop in each athlete qualities of leadership, initiative, and good judgment.
- B. Respect the integrity and personality of the individual athlete in the selection of the team as well as in the playing of the game.
- C. Demonstrate good human relations skills.
- D. Encourage the highest standards of conduct and scholastic achievement among all athletes.
- E. Promote good health habits, including the establishment of sound training rules.
- F. Fulfill responsibilities to provide health services and an environment free of safety hazards.
- G. Exemplify the highest moral character, behavior, and leadership.

- H. Promote ethical relationships among sponsors.
- I. Encourage respect for all athletics and their value.
- J. Abide by the rules of the game in letter and spirit.
- K. Demonstrate a mastery of and continuing interest in cheerleading

IV. KNOWLEDGE OF SPORTS

Cheerleaders should become knowledgeable in the sport of cheerleading and the sports for which they are going to cheer.

Coaches should contact coaches of various sports prior to the season for any needed assistance.

V. STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES FOR CHEERLEADERS

- A. Eligibility rules for interscholastic athletics apply to all cheerleading squads.
- B. Squads shall be under the direct supervision of the appropriate Coach or Principal's designee at all practices, events, and performances.
- C. Coach shall coordinate programs and activities under the direction of the Principal or Principal's designee.
- D. Coaches will coordinate performance and tryout dates with one another and with the athletic director in order to avoid conflicts.
- E. Team member must try out each year to re-qualify for a position on The squad. Additional tryouts may be held to fill open positions.
- F. Prior to tryouts, each student must submit a signed parent/guardian permission form.
- G. Each team member will submit a completed medical examination form to the coach prior to the start of practice. A medical evaluation from an athletic team will suffice if it is within one year.
- H. The coach will keep a medical card readily accessible at all practices and events.
- I. Stunts and gymnastics should be taught under careful supervision. Tumbling mats and spotting techniques should be utilized while students are learning stunts and gymnastic skills. Coaches are encouraged to seek help from gymnastic coaches. All pyramids and partner stunts are limited to two (2) persons high. The base must have both feet on the floor. Basket tosses and any type of toss must have a spotter at the head and shoulders plus the two (2) original bases to catch the top person in a cradle dismount position. Stunts, which require skill beyond the ability of the squad, should be eliminated.

- J. The school should try to keep the financial expectations of performing groups to a minimum. All uniforms purchased by the school become the property of the school. Personal items other than the basic uniforms shall be the responsibility of the individual member and will be retained by the student.
- K. The Schools have the responsibility to keep out-of-pocket expenses for cheerleaders to a minimum. “Voluntary” purchases such as expensive jackets, which are not part of a uniform, should be carefully monitored and approved by the Principal.
- L. The Board of will provide transportation to athletic events Education. Cheerleaders are not permitted to drive their own car.
- M. Participation in summer camps or summer practices cannot be required of cheerleaders or sponsors.
- N. No practice is permitted during regular school hours on school in-service days.
- O. All cheerleaders should respect the integrity and judgment of sports officials and display modesty in victory and graciousness in defeat.

VI. CHEERLEADER RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. At away games, the squad will sit in the area designated by the athletic director of the host school.
- B. The members of the cheerleading squad shall:
 1. Conduct themselves in a courteous, polite, and considerate manner, reflecting good sportsmanship.
 2. Extend courtesy toward spectators, teams, and cheerleaders of the other school.
 3. Refrain from the use of profanity or any other unsportsmanlike conduct.
- C. Practice sessions, events, and activities shall be attended by all team members unless excused by prior consent of the coach.
- D. Appropriate apparel – t-shirts, gym suits, shorts, rubber-soled shoes, etc., shall be worn for practice.
- E. Uniforms shall be worn at all official cheerleading and related activities as approved by the coach.
- F. Uniforms shall be kept clean and in good condition at all times.
- G. Cheerleaders are to wear no jewelry. Sponsors will discuss general guidelines with their squads.
- H. Stomachs covered.

VII. TRYOUTS PROCEDURES

Tryout procedures may vary from school to school, but the following guidelines shall be in writing and approved by the Principal.

- A. The coach will ensure that recruitment is school wide, utilizing a variety of techniques, so that all segments of the population are reached, i.e., P. A. announcements, posters, teachers' announcements, and PTSA newsletter to local schools and to all feeder schools where appropriate.
- B. All those eligible for tryouts will receive a schedule of clinic and tryout dates, words and guidelines for cheers, and a detailed description of the selection criteria and tryout procedures, expectations of behavior in various situations, safety in dress for practice, etc.
- C. The coach shall coordinate the tryout schedule with the athletic director to avoid conflicts with other athletic activities and facilities.
- D. Instructional clinics will be held for all interested students prior to tryouts.
- E. Before the clinics begin, each participant will submit a permission form signed by the parent/guardian. A current medical exam is required.
- F. Each tryout participant should receive information describing the responsibilities of cheerleaders.
- G. Tryouts will be open to all eligible students enrolled in the school or who have an approved transfer prior to tryouts or who attend a feeder school.
- H. If a judging panel is to be utilized, it is recommended that the judges' panel have at least three members.
- I. Judges for the tryouts should have knowledge of cheerleading skills. No students from within the school, judges younger than 21 years old, or parents shall be used in the selection process. Cheerleader coaches from other schools may serve as judges.
- J. Prior to the tryouts, the judges should be given the selection criteria and a demonstration of the cheers, jumps, and stunts. They should also be given an explanation of the rating sheet and encouraged to maintain constant judging standards throughout the tryout.
- K. Subjective teacher evaluation sheets, when used, should be approved by the Principal and cannot be confidential.

VIII. GENERAL INFORMATION

A. Practice and Performance Schedules

- 1. The county will set the official date for the start of practice. There must be at least 21 days of practice prior to the first game.
- 2. It is expected that practices will be held at least 2 days or 6 hours a week in preparation and the duration of the season; games support is included in this allotted time. Practices shall be held to keep the squad up to a creditable performance.
- 3. All high school sports should receive some recognition; therefore, a minimum of 32 activities (16 fall and 16 winter) should receive support from cheerleading teams. The following sports should be supported a

minimum of two times during their season: Volleyball, Boys Soccer, Girls Soccer, Football, Girls Basketball, Boys Basketball, and Wrestling.

4. All middle school winter sports should receive some recognition; The following sports should be supported a minimum of five times during their seasons: Girls Basketball and Boys Basketball.
5. Each team will cover at least the above minimum number of events. Beyond this minimum number, optional events will be scheduled by the coach and team according to the needs of the individual school. Sponsored optional events such as "It's Academic", etc., are permissible.
6. All cheer squads must participate in the Prince George's County Invitational and the Prince George's County Championship Competitions.
7. Cheer squads must cheer during home and away County, Region and State Championship contests where permissible.

B. Helpful Hints

1. Cheerleaders should warm up before every practice or performance session.
2. Cheerleaders should be dressed appropriately for all practices, including proper shoes, shorts, and shirts.
3. Schedules of game assignments and other responsibilities should be planned well in advance and given to each squad member as well as posted at some central location.
4. If a demerit system is used, careful records must be kept in writing by the coach
5. A notebook of cheers, chants, skits, traditions, etc., can be kept to pass from squad to squad.

IX. MIDDLE and HIGH SCHOOL ELIGIBILITY

- A. In order for students to participate in interscholastic athletics and extracurricular activities, the Board of Education of Prince George's County Public Schools shall require students in high school to maintain a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or equivalent according to PGPCS' grading criteria for participation in interscholastic athletics and extracurricular activities. (See Administrative Procedure 5122 – 2.0 requirements for Participation in Interscholastic Athletics and Extracurricular Activities).

If a student's Eligibility Index falls below a 2.0 while participating in a sport or activity which continues through the following quarter, the student will no longer be eligible for participation in the sport or activity. The student will need to cease participation, effective the date the report cards are released to students, as listed on the approved Board of Education school calendar.

- B. Students must be in school to practice or participate in any sport contest that articular day (except with legal excuses as defined by the Board of Education policy.)

C. Students suspended from school for any reason shall not be eligible to participate until they have been reinstated by the Principal of the school and have attended more than one-half of their class periods for one day. Participants suspended from school for any reason may not travel with a team or group representing the school. They shall not perform any other function in connection with the school until reinstated by the Principal.