

SPIRIT HANDBOOK RUSSELLVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

I. Introduction

The purpose of this handbook is to provide guidelines for the administration of the Russellville Public School's spirit squad programs. Its purpose includes helping to establish uniform standards and procedures for all participants.

The information in this handbook has been developed in consultation with spirit squad coaches, parents, and administrators. This handbook has been approved by the Athletic Director and the administrators of Russellville Jr. and Sr. High Schools.

Changes to this handbook may be made by the spirit squad coach only with the written approval of the Athletic Director. Spirit squad members will be responsible for changes upon notification by the spirit squad coach.

II. Philosophy

Spirit squads play an important role at athletic contests and other school and community activities. Each squad boosts school spirit, promotes sportsmanship, and develops positive crowd involvement. Because of their high visibility and recognition by the public, it is imperative that high standards of conduct be observed, including positive personal behavior and an emphasis on teamwork. Responsibilities for cheerleaders and dance team members should center on "leading" or "directing" students and other fans in positive expressions of support and involvement that create a cooperative spirit among students, faculty, athletes, and members of the community. All spirit squads' main responsibility is to support the teams at the high school and junior high school sporting events. The senior high spirit squad's next responsibility is to compete at the highest level in state contests.

III. Responsibilities of the Spirit Squad Coach

- Attend the fall AAA Spirit Rules Meeting
- Attend a documented safety meeting at least every other year, unless he/she has the four-year ACCA Safety certification
- Keep current medical information for each squad member
- Be responsible for members of the squad in all of their activities, fulfilling responsibilities to provide an environment free of safety hazards
- Attend all assigned activities, including practices, games, coaches' meetings, community activities, or have an athletic department approved adult substitute in case of emergencies or pre-approved absences.
- Work cooperatively with the schools' administrators, activities director, other coaches, sponsors, band director and community personnel.
- Review District transportation guidelines and information and be on board the bus for all spirit squad trips
- Arrange through the athletic director the squad's transportation/meals to away contests, activities, and performances keeping early dismissal from school to a minimum
- Making sure all routines/cheers and music are school appropriate
- Coordinate a schedule of performances at events and meet all required administrative duties
- Recognize individual and squad ability levels and limit activities accordingly
- Provide members of the squad with a copy of this handbook and enforce the policies and procedures it contains.
- Keep open lines of communication with spirit squad members and parents.
- Strive to develop in each squad member qualities of leadership, initiative, good judgment, high standards of conduct, and scholastic achievement.
- Seek to promote good health habits including the establishment of sound training rules.
- Encourage good relationships among members of the squad and develop and maintain a positive working relationship between squads

- Respect the integrity and judgment of sports contest officials.
- Manage the spirit squad budget according to the athletic department budget guidelines.

IV. Expectations of Squad Members

- Act in a courteous, polite, responsible, and considerate manner
- Promote school spirit and good sportsmanship
- Cooperate with the coaches, officers, teachers, administrators and other students
- Attend all scheduled practices, events and activities and arrive on time
- Promote and maintain a positive working relationship between squads and squad members
- Be enthusiastic, properly dressed, and well-groomed at all required events/activities
- Know/master all cheers, chants, routines
- Follow all guidelines/procedures outlined in the spirit handbook
- Follow all school rules/guidelines
- Maintain eligibility requirements (RSD and AAA)
- Participate in all required fundraisers (clinics, dances)
- Do not post derogatory or hurtful comments about the team and/or other squad members on any social media outlet.

V. Expectations of Parents

- Provide positive attitude/behavior/role model for their student/school/community
- Show respect for all participants, officials/judges/coaches
- Attend pre-season meeting (prior to tryouts) with the spirit squad sponsor
- Provide financial support for required costs of participation on spirit squads
- Follow proper chain of command when dealing with problems. Address issues/concerns with the head coach first. (See grievance procedure outlined below)

Grievance Procedure:

- Schedule meeting at school with the coach. Do not approach the coach before, during, or after a game or practice.
- If problem is unresolved, schedule an appointment with the Athletic Director
- If problem is still unresolved, contact the building principal
- If problem is still unresolved, follow the Russellville School District appeal process

VI. Captains and Co-Captains

The decision to have spirit team officers will be determined by the spirit squad coach. The captains and co-captains will be appointed by the spirit squad coach.

Responsibilities of Captain:

- Be able to work will with all members of the squad on an equal basis
- Know the cheers/dance choreography
- Show no partiality
- Make the coach aware of any issues concerning the squad
- Work closely with the coach to see that needed materials/equipment are present

Responsibilities of Co-Captain:

- Assist the captain in his/her duties
- Take captain's place is captain is absent
- Carry out other duties assigned by the coach

VII. Summer Camp

The selection of the type, date, and location of the summer camp to be attended will be made by the spirit squad coach. Summer camp costs and expenses are the responsibility of each spirit squad member. Camp costs will be provided to parents at the team parent meeting. All spirit squad members

are required to attend the scheduled summer camp/practices. Exceptions must be preapproved by the spirit squad coach.

VIII. Tryouts

Tryout procedures must be outlined by the spirit squad coach and approved by the athletic director and building principal. Spirit squad coaches are responsible for the selection of squad members.

Tryouts will be held in the spring. Prior to tryouts, the spirit squad coach will hand out a tryout packet containing all tryout expectations (criteria/skills/times/locations). An instructional clinic will be held the week of tryouts. Attendance is required. Exceptions must be preapproved by the spirit squad coach.

Tryout Eligibility Requirements:

- Meet all RSD and AAA eligibility requirements
- Not have resigned, quit, or been dismissed from a spirit squad
- Attend the pre-tryout meeting with a parent/guardian. Exceptions must be preapproved by the spirit squad coach.
- Have written permission from parent/guardian to participate in spirit squad activities
- Have all required paperwork/forms completely filled out/signed by parent/guardian returned by due date
- Have current physical
- Wear black shorts/pants, white short-sleeved t-shirt, socks, and tennis shoes/dance shoes

Tryout Scoring:

A total score derived from two areas will be utilized in determining membership on the spirit squad(s). It will be decided by 70% Skill on tryout skills/routine; 30% Coaches Clinic Evaluation. The senior high coach and two outside individuals will judge tryouts. Scores will be computed with the clinic score to determine a total percentage.

Male Cheerleaders:

Due to the change in competition divisions with a co-ed team, male cheerleaders may or may not compete depending on number of males on the team, skill level, and overall potential. Male cheerleaders will be judged on a separate set of criteria at tryouts than the female candidates.

In selection of all spirit squads:

- The membership number of each squad will be determined where the “natural” break occurs with the top scores
- All scores will be kept confidential and will not be divulged.
- The selection decision from tryouts is final.

Grievance Procedure:

- Grievances concerning tryout results must be submitted in writing to the athletic director within one week after tryout results are announced.

Membership of spirit squads

Russellville Junior High School

Cheerleading Squads:

- o Top total scores of not less than 10 and not more than 22 incoming 8th and 9th grade candidates. Squads may number less if enough participants do not score 50% or higher on their skill scores.

Dance Team:

- o Top total scores of not less than 12 and not more than 24 incoming 8th and 9th grade candidates. Squads may number less if enough participants do not score 50% or higher on their skill scores.

Russellville High School

Cheerleading Squads:

- o Top total scores of not less than 10 and not more than 20 incoming 10th-12th grade candidates. Squads may number less if enough participants do not score 50% or higher on their skill scores.

Dance Team:

- o Top total scores of not less than 10 and not more than 24 incoming 10th-12th grade candidates. Squads may number less if enough participants do not score 50% or higher on their skill scores.

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IX. Involvement in Other Sports or Activities

- Member may participate in another school-sponsored sport/activity if it is mutually acceptable to and appropriately arranged with all involved parties (parents/student/coaches/athletic director/principal)
- Conflicts will be addressed/resolved by coaches/students involved

X. Grade Eligibility

Middle School and Junior High

- All first semester 7th and 8th grade students have no requirements to be eligible as long as they have been promoted for any reason.
- Second semester 8th grade students and first semester 9th grade students must pass (4) academic courses during the previous semester as specified by the Arkansas Department of Education's Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools.
- All second semester 9th grade students must pass (4) academic courses the previous semester and have a 2.0 GPA to be eligible for their 10th grade year.

High School

- All 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students must pass (4) academic courses and have a 2.0 GPA. If a student passes (4) courses, but does not have a 2.0 GPA, he/she can attend SIP classes. Head coaches and the Athletic Director can provide further information regarding the SIP Program.

XI. Sportsmanship

The promotion of good sportsmanship is a primary responsibility of spirit groups. Spirit squad members should serve as role models for spectators, whether in uniform or not. All spirit squad members should know and follow the NFHS policy statement concerning good sportsmanship. All material (cheers/choreography) should be directed toward entertaining and/or motivating the crowd to support the athletic team. All performances should exemplify positive support of the Russellville athletic teams.

XII. Appearance

- Members should look their best physically at all times.
- **No colored nail polish will be allowed while in uniform or at practice.**
- Hair should be worn up and off the face when practicing/required events/games
- All uniforms and accessories, including shoes, must be kept neat and clean at all times.
- **No jewelry, including body piercings, is allowed during practice or events.**
- No new ear or body piercing is allowed if it will not have sufficient time to heal before practices/camp/games/competitions

- All tattoos must be covered while in uniform and must not be placed in an area of the body that cannot be covered by the spirit squad uniforms.
- Undergarments must be completely covered by the uniform
- Look your best when representing RSD in uniform

XIII. Uniforms and Expenses

The school will provide uniforms for spirit squad members. The purchase of accessories and/or additional uniforms will be at the expense of the spirit squad. Such purchases must be approved by the spirit squad coach and the athletic director or superintendent. "Out-of-pocket" expenses for spirit squad members and parents will be kept to a maximum of \$350.00, plus summer camp expenses. Uniforms purchased with school funds remain the property of the school.

Fundraising activities will be planned and/or approved by the spirit squad coach to aid in meeting individual expenses. Other fund-raisers may also be conducted which will be directed toward the general fund for operational cost. All spirit squad members are required to participate in scheduled fund-raisers. Exceptions must be preapproved by the spirit squad coach.

Uniform Policies:

- Members must wear correct and complete uniform at all required events
- Members may not give out any part of their spirit squad uniform to non-spirit squad individuals-**including the spirit squad jacket**.
- Members are to launder/clean uniforms prior to turning them in at the end of the year
- No part of the spirit squad uniform or accessories except the spirit squad jacket/hoodie, is to be worn unless in complete uniform.
- No jewelry or other "extras" will be worn while in uniform or at practices.
- Do not wear the spirit squad uniforms as a costume

XIV. Practices

- All practices are required for all squad members
- Absences will be excused at the discretion of the coach
- Coaches must be notified prior to absence if possible
- Absence from practice may result in restriction from activities/demerits
- Additional practices may be scheduled depending on need
- Working (job schedules) is not an excused absence
- Non-school sponsored activity classes/practices are not excused absences
- Members who miss practice are responsible for any information/choreography/cheers that they missed
- All spirit squad members must dress out in appropriate clothing for practices/classes
- All stunts/pyramids/cheers, must be approved in practice before being performed in a game or pep rally. **No** stunts or pyramids may be practiced **without supervision** of the coach.
- You must dress-out and be prepared to practice at all scheduled practices

XV. Performances and Games

- Members are required to attend all home ballgames/performances/competitions/practices set by the coach
- Coaches must be notified prior to an absence
- Members must be on time for events and stay until the event is officially over
- Students who miss school or check out on the day of an athletic event will not be allowed to participate unless they missed for an emergency or the building principal excused their absence.
- Gum/Suckers/Food are not allowed while cheering at events.
- Members are not to leave the stands or track during an event without the permission of the coach.
- Spirit squads will perform pre-game or halftime cheers/routines at home football and basketball sporting events.

- In case of school closing due to weather, practice will not be held but if the teams still play, spirit squads are expected to participate unless directed not to by the athletic director/principal

XVI. Transportation

- All students will ride to school events (games, performances, etc.) on an RSD bus. If there are extenuating circumstances, please contact your building principal and coach/director.
- If parents/guardians would like their child to ride home with them from the event, they will need to sign them out at the actual event.
- If parents would like their child to ride home with someone other than the parent/guardian, parents need to write a note to the school principal with their phone number on the note, asking for permission to do so, prior to students departing for the event.

*Parents will need to send a separate note for each event. The building administrator or their designee will call the parents to verify each note unless the note is personally delivered by the parent.

XVII. Competition

The decision to participate in competitions will be made by the spirit squad coach/principal/and athletic director. Squads may attend up to five AAA-sanctioned invitational competitions per year, in addition to the AAA state championships for high school teams.

High school spirit coaches may cut members from competitions due to lack of skills, poor work ethic, or failure to attend practices. However, there will not be a separate “game-day” and “competition only” squad selected at tryouts.

XVIII. Safety

All AAA and NFHS guidelines must be followed at all practices and performances. No practice or meeting is to be held without the spirit squad coach or an adult specifically designated by the spirit squad coach being present.

XIX. Discipline

The very basis for, and philosophy of, the spirit squad member position demands high standards of conduct. Demerits will be given by the coach for rule infractions. Members will be notified periodically by the coach about any demerits they have been given. Once a member has been dismissed from or resigns from a spirit squad, he/she is ineligible for future tryouts.

The following demerit system will be used by the spirit squad coach:

One Demerit:

- Eating, drinking, or chewing gum while on the field or court unless at designated time.
- Being tardy to any team activity(1 demerit for every 5 min)
- Excessive talking or out of proper line-up
- Disrupting practice/event
- Being picked up late from an activity (1 demerit of r every 5 min)
- Failure to assume responsibility
- Turning money/notes/permission slips/etc. in late
- Public display of affection
- Not cheering, yelling, or smiling during game or performance
 - This could also get you benched if behavior is not corrected
- Inappropriate practice uniform
 - This would include any piece of the uniform.
 - This would also include inappropriate hair.
- Wearing jewelry during practices/events/while in uniform
- Being in cheer gym without coach permission
- Forgotten props or accessories

Two Demerits

- Not cooperating with captains, coaches, or other squad members
- Giving out any part of team uniform to non-spirit squad members
- Uniform violations including but not limited to:
 - untidy uniform or appearance
 - wearing wrong or incomplete uniform
 - wearing clothing that is not part of the official uniform

Three Demerits

- Unexcused absence from practice or class
- Insubordination to officer
- Gossiping
- Unfavorable attitude or display of poor sportsmanship
- Leaving practices or games without permission/approval from coach
- Using your phone during any event (practice, game, fundraiser) unless specified by coach
- Receiving negative feedback from a teacher or any other school employee.
- Receiving lunch detention for behavioral issues or tardies.
- Bullying (including cyber bullying), or being inconsiderate to other teammates
- Negative remarks on social media (including secret messaging) about teammates, school or coaches

Five Demerits

- Unexcused absence from a game/event/performance
- Insubordination to coach (This could be grounds for dismissal)
- Assignment of in-school suspension, SDC
- Not correcting any unacceptable behavior after being notified by coach
- Improper behavior, including but not limited to :
 - Cursing
 - Fighting
 - Bad Sportsmanship toward another team
- Any violation listed in the AAA handbook including:
 - Acrylic Nails or Nail Color on Nails during Cheer Season

For anything not covered in the list above, the coach may hand out from 1 through 6 demerits depending on the severity of the occurrence. **Coaches maintain the ability at any given time to bench a member for inadequate performance levels and/or poor work attitude. Continued failure to measure up to the standards set by the spirit coach may result in dismissal from the squad.**

Reasons for Dismissal:

- Use or possession of tobacco products(including vape juice), alcoholic beverages or drugs on or off school property
- Assignment of out-of-school suspension
- Accumulation of 15 demerits
- Not following the rules pertaining to travel to and from games/events
- Not following correct plan laid out for probation
- Walking out of a game or practice
- Unexcused absence from game, competition, performance, or mandatory function

Demerit Penalties:

- 5 Demerits: Suspension from one event. Away games - cheerleaders do not go. Home games - cheerleaders come to the game dressed out and sit on the bench with the coach.
- 10 Demerits: Member placed on probation and meeting held with member and parent/guardian and correction plan developed. Dismissal from competition squad
- 15 Demerits: Dismissal from squad

If spirit squad coaches choose NOT to use the demerit system above, they will need to provide an appropriate disciplinary action plan to parents during the team parent meeting held before tryouts.

XX. Awards

Spirit members will receive an award based on years of service. This award will align with awards given in other areas of athletics. If a member quits or is dismissed from the squad, he/she will not receive an award.

XXI. Conclusion

It is understood that not every conceivable aspect of an organization can be governed by a set of rules. Therefore, the spirit squad coaches, athletic director, and the superintendent reserve the right to deal with matters that may arise and are not covered in the preceding material. In addition, the spirit squad coaches, athletic director, and superintendent reserve the right to act jointly to waive provisions under unusual or extenuating circumstances.

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