

ARTICLE 16
CHEERLEADING / SPIRIT GROUPS

Section 1: PHILOSOPHY

The RIIL endorses the following philosophy as listed in the NFHS Spirit Rules book.

The term “spirit groups” may encompass cheer teams as well as other groups designated by the school. Spirit groups shall serve as support groups for interscholastic athletic programs within the school and as such play a very important role in the administration of athletics/activities contests. Each team should try 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.

Being one of the most visible and recognizable representative of a school, spirit groups 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.

Cheerleader 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. These activities should be focused on; creating a cooperative spirit among the cheerleaders, athletes, student bodies, school administrators and the 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 in the administration of the contest. Performing is a secondary role of cheerleader groups and can effectively promote school spirit when included at appropriate times at interscholastic contests, pep rallies and assemblies.

Cheerleaders should be an integral part of the total activities program. While performances at school events and competitions may be a focus, working in partnership with other school organizations is essential.

Spirit Groups have evolved to include competition as athletes. Participants must condition, practice and warm up the same as other athletes in preparation for a performance. Competition should be a secondary consideration for spirit groups unless designated as a purely competitive team by the school.

Competition requires the development of physical skills performed in a choreographed routine. Each local school system, shall determine whether spirit competition is allowed for high school students.

If spirit 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 spirit groups, which is to support the interscholastic athletic program. Spirit competition should serve to develop leadership, confidence and skill.

Section 2: RULES

- A. Rules and Regulations of the RIIL shall be applicable to all cheer groups. In order for a cheer group to participate in RIIL sponsored activities, the school must be a member of the RIIL and the cheer group must follow all National Federation High School Spirit Rules and any special rulings adopted by the Committee.
- B. In order to participate in RIIL sponsored activities, a cheer group must have a coach and assistant coaches as deemed appropriate by the individual school system. Cheerleading requires that a coach be qualified and trained in cheerleading procedures before a cheerleading team participates in cheerleading techniques and skills. Coaches should attend cheerleading clinics,

seminars and courses to allow a coach(s) to obtain the qualifications necessary for the coaching position within a particular school system.

- C. Cheerleading teams shall be gender neutral but shall be classified as all girl or co-ed depending on the eligibility and division of cheerleading teams as designated by RIIL.
- D. Cheerleading should be conducted in a safe environment conducive with the cheerleading activities being conducted and in accordance with NFHS Spirit Rules.
- E. Cheerleading teams and individual team members who are involved in cheerleading activities such as cheerleading skills practice, participation at cheerleading events, participation at RIIL sports and sporting events and performing while at other forums or assemblies, shall follow applicable NFHS Spirit and RIIL rules and guidelines, and shall not perform cheerleading skills outside those allowed by said rules.

Section 3: CERTIFICATION/COACHES TRAINING

- A. All coaches must meet the RIIL Coaching Requirements as listed in Article 13 of the RIIL Rules and Regulations in order to participate in RIIL sponsored activities, events and competitions.
- B. All coaches must complete the AACCA safety certification course or other national safety course that is recognized by the NFHS before the beginning of the season. Certification must be maintained by the coach. It is the coach's responsibility to make sure that their certification does not lapse or expire.

Section 3: INSURANCE

- A. Schools must provide insurance coverage for ~~competition~~ cheerleading participants and coaches. The insurance coverage must cover practices and events both in school and off campus.

Section 4: CHEERLEADING CHAMPIONSHIP

- A. RIIL shall schedule and administer one unified State Cheerleading Championship.
 - 1. Divisions will include Junior Varsity, Varsity and Varsity Co-Ed.
 - 2. A Co-Ed varsity team is any team with one or more males on the team. If there is only one Co-Ed varsity team, the team will compete in its respective division (based on female enrollment at the school.) **No student shall be denied in any implied or explicit manner the opportunity to participate on the cheerleading team because of his/her gender.**
 - 3. In order to have a division, there must be a minimum of two teams.
 - 4. The RIIL has the right to expand, combine or eliminate division(s).
- B. The RIIL Cheerleading Championship shall be open to all RIIL Cheerleading member high schools.
- C. For a team to participate at the RIIL State Championship, all coaches must meet all coaching and safety requirements as listed in Article 13 and Article 16, Section 2 of the RIIL Rules and Regulations.
- D. All registration forms entered for the RIIL State Cheerleading Championship must be received by the date designated. Registrations received after this date will not be accepted.
- E. Competition Rules shall be as follows:
 - 1. Maximum participants performing the routine shall be 20 members, including spotters. Teams may have alternates unless the school has a junior varsity team from which a varsity team can draw, should a participant have to be removed. Minimum team size will be four (4) participants.

2. Varsity/Junior Varsity squads shall be limited to ninth (9th) grade through twelfth (12th) grade.
3. The RIIL State Championship will have the following divisions. The winners of each Division will be named RI State Champions in their respective Divisions:
 - a. Small Varsity
 - b. Medium Varsity
 - c. Large Varsity
 - d. Co-Ed Varsity
 - e. Junior Varsity
 - f. Game day
4. The small, medium and large division is based on female enrollment (as of October of the previous year) of those schools (grades 9 – 12). The enrollment numbers will be placed in order from smallest to largest and then the list shall be divided into three with each division having as close to equal numbers as the list shall allow.
5. Each team will have a minimum of two (2) minutes to a maximum of two and one-half (2 ½) minutes to perform the complete routine. If a team uses music in their routine, the maximum time limit for music is one and one-half (1 ½) minutes. If a team exceeds the music time limit of one and one-half (1 ½) minutes, one point per second over the time limit will be deducted. If a team exceeds the overall routine time limit of two and one-half (2 ½) minutes, one point per second over the time limit will be deducted. Music time limit and overall routine time limit are considered separate infractions. If a team does not perform an overall routine of a minimum of two minutes, one point per second under the two minutes minimum time limit will be deducted.
6. Timing will begin with the first note of music or first motion.
7. All teams must perform the cheerleading routine on a mat. The minimum mat size will be 42' by 42'. Any team performing off the mat will be assessed a ten- point safety infraction. Teams must begin their routine on the mat.
8. Any team not following the safety guidelines shall be penalized. Teams are also required to adhere to their own school rules in regards to skills performed. All cheerleading teams not following National Federation High School Spirit Rules shall be assessed the appropriate penalties.

F. Scoring

1. Each team shall be scored according to the system set forth in the score sheet recommended by the Cheerleading Committee and adopted by the RIIL.
2. Judges will follow the Judging Criteria form adopted by the RIIL.
3. In the event of a tie, co-winners shall be declared.
4. At the conclusion of the Championship, each squad will receive a copy of the master score sheet as well as a copy of their individual squad's score sheet.

G. RIIL shall present awards and medals as determined by the RIIL.

1. The RIIL shall declare Division State Champions in the Small, Medium, Large and Co-Ed Divisions and runners-ups as recommended by the Competition Cheerleading Committee.
2. The team with the highest overall score at the State Competition shall be declared the RIIL Competition Cheerleading State Champion and the next highest overall scoring team shall be declared the runner up.

H. RIIL shall present awards and medals as determined by the RIIL.

- I. Registration and admission fees shall be determined by the RIIL. Any team not meeting the deadline for payment of fees will be assessed a late penalty fee.

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