



Rio Vista Middle School Cheer Handbook 2025-2026

JUANA SPERLING ADVISOR/DIRECTOR

HEAD COACH

Students, Parent(s), Guardian(s), and Community:

Rio Vista Middle School has developed the cheer program to be an important part of the school and community. Cheerleaders create and boost school unity, morale, spirit, and support athletic and co-curricular programs, along with competing regionally and nationally. Our school and community appreciate the pep and cheer squads' leadership and performance at athletic events, rallies, competitions, and other spirit activities.

It is our pledge to our students, parents, and community to organize, conduct and maintain a high quality of cheerleading at Rio Vista Middle School. To support that goal, this contract has been created in order to clarify the pep and cheer program guidelines.

Please read the contract carefully and contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Juana Sperling

Rio Vista Middle School
Cheer Advisor/Director/Head Coach
jsperling@centralunified.org

Organization

The Rio Vista Middle School Pep & Cheer Program is overseen by the Administrative Office, supported, and coordinated by the Athletic Office, and managed by the Rio Vista Middle School Cheer Advisor, Juana Sperling.

Rio Vista Middle School cheerleaders are held to the highest standards of academics and behavior. Their main responsibility is to represent Rio Vista Middle School in a positive manner. Their duties will include cheering at various athletic events and playoffs, cheering at Special Olympics events, performing at rallies, fundraising, and participating in other school and community functions.

There will be no minimum or maximum number of athletes that make the squads. The number of athletes chosen for any given squad will be decided at try-outs. Alternates will be chosen and/or considered on as needed basis and can occur throughout the year with or without notice. Competition teams will be chosen this summer. Only students who have been selected for the pep & cheer squads will be eligible to try out for the competition teams.

Qualifications

To participate in try-outs for Rio Vista Middle School Pep & Cheer, a potential squad member must meet the following qualifications:

- Have at least a 2.0 GPA on the most recent progress report.
- Have no outstanding fines.
- Interest form completed.
- Signed contract (Page 11) from the parent/guardian giving permission to try-out. • Students not currently attending a Central Unified school must have a copy of attendance, discipline, and grades and the signature of a school official at the bottom of their application.
- Have the parents assume the responsibility of their child and the guidelines of the handbook. • Purchase accident insurance (either own or one available through the school) – *after try-outs*. • Pass a physical – *after try-outs*.

Criteria for Selection

- ◆ Grades
- ◆ Discipline
- ◆ Teacher and Coach Recommendation
- ◆ Physical try-outs (technique, rhythm, personality, enthusiasm, overall performance)
- ◆ Participation and attitude at clinic
- ◆ Knowledge of Pep and Cheer Fantastic Four
- ◆ Interview question

RV Cheer Commitments

1. Abide by the cheer Fantastic Four, Rio Vista Middle School rules, and Athletic Code of ethics.
2. Participate proudly and represent Rio Vista Middle School at all school, athletic, and community events.
3. Maintain at least a 2.0 GPA throughout the school year.
4. Attend cheer practices, games, spirit events, etc. - missing events may result in being benched.
5. Participate in fundraisers and assume all financial responsibilities.

Financial Commitments

RV Cheer squad members will be asked to participate in fundraisers that support the pep & cheer program. These help to keep individual costs as low as possible. If you choose not to fundraise at least your share of team costs, you will be required to pay the difference.

All Varsity Brand items are purchased on the Varsity Payment Portal: skirt, bodysuit, shoes, bows, warmups, and poms. If items are not ordered by the portal's close date price will go up to do a late individual order. Once you have paid for your items, they cannot be returned since all items are custom even if your child quits or is removed from the team.

According to district policy, uniforms may be provided for those who cannot afford them. The uniform will be a loaner, in a general size (not custom fit to your child) and cannot be altered in any way. You must let your advisor know before the uniform fitting date if you choose to have a loaner uniform. Uniforms are to

be kept in good condition and clean at all times. Uniforms/pom-poms ruined, lost, or stolen will be replaced by the individual at their own expense

Time Commitments

Practices and Game Responsibilities:

- Cheerleaders are required to attend all practices, games and events.
- **Summer Practices & Choreography camp:** calendar for choreo TBD
- **Fall Sideline Cheer Practices:** Weekly practices for the sideline teams will run from August through November and then on an as needed basis for the rest of the year.
- **Football Games:** Each team will cheer at their assigned football game each week. Games are held on Saturdays from about 8am- 1pm. Football season is from August through November.
- **Basketball games:** Home games only. Tuesdays and Thursdays from December through February after school until about 6pm.
- **Additional Events:** Cheerleaders/teams may be asked to participate at other events throughout the 2025-2026 school year. Some of these events may include but are not limited to the following: Central East Spirit Night, Central/Justin Garza Showcase, rallies, Back to School Night, Orientation, fundraisers, Open House, Special Olympics, etc.
- **Pep and Cheer is a multi- season program that occurs throughout the year. Team members may not participate in other sports/activities that conflict with pep and cheer practices, games, performances and/or duties.**
- If a member is injured, benched or on probation, they are required to be in uniform sitting with the coach at all practices, games, and events.

Meetings:

- Parents are REQUIRED to attend scheduled parent meetings. Cheerleaders are encouraged to also attend meetings. Meetings help to run our program efficiently and keep both parents and cheerleaders updated and involved in the cheer program and decisions

Other Commitments

Transportation:

- Transportation is the responsibility of the individual for attendance to home games, home school events, and events within Central Unified boundaries.
- Transportation will be provided by the school to away games. All cheerleaders **must** ride the bus to away games. Students who ride home with a parent must sign out with the coach before leaving the game.
- Cheerleaders must be picked up at the end for each practice and/or event by a parent or guardian. **ON TIME!** Coaches will not leave cheerleaders unattended even if asked by a parent/guardian. • **It is expected that cheerleaders will be picked up promptly at the end of each practice and/or event. If parents are consistently tardy, cheerleaders will receive disciplinary consequences as a result.**

Communication:

- Reminders will go out often through the BAND App. It is very important that parents (from each household) and cheerleaders (if they have a phone) are on the BAND App. *PLEASE KEEP NOTIFICATIONS ON*
- Parents should communicate:
 - Concerns regarding a son/daughter directly to the coach at the appropriate time and place.
 - Issues appropriate for discussion:
 - Member plan for success
 - Member behavior
 - Member safety
 - Issues not appropriate for discussion with a coach:
 - Squad selection of cheers, chants, or elements of a performance.
 - Any situation that deals with other students/squad members.
- Communication between parent, school, and coach:
 - *If at any time a cheer member or parent/guardian feels he/she needs to discuss a problem or complaint, please follow the appropriate channels:
 - Advisor and/or cheer coach 1st (set up an appointment).
 - Do not confront the coach before, during or after any event.
 - Only enter cheer practice with permission from the campus principal or his/her designee.



Pep & Cheer Fantastic Four

Be There, Be Ready

- * Attend all practices and assigned games on time and ready to cheer.
- * Excused absences from game or practice must be cleared with advisor at least 2 weeks in advance and made up in a timely manner. Excused absences are limited to: family emergency or illness (with a doctor's note).
- * Anytime you are asked to be in uniform, it must be complete (hair in ponytail with bow, no jewelry, cheer shoes, etc.)
- * Being a member of the pep & cheer squads means that you are a part of a TEAM. This is not an individual sport or activity. All members are required to abide by all rules set forth by the advisors & coaches.

Remember that when you miss practices or games, you are letting down your entire TEAM. *
Learn all material needed for games and performances

Be Responsible:

- * Think about how you represent your school. You are the face of Rio Vista Middle School. *
- Always have a positive attitude and put forth your best effort.
- * You represent Rio Vista even when not in uniform.
 - * Uniform and other cheer apparel may not be worn by others.

Follow Directions:

- * Absolutely no jewelry or artificial nails are allowed at practice or at games.
- * Be sure to get your ears pierced either over winter break or spring break so that you can safely remove them for practice or games. You are not allowed to simply cover them with band-aids or use clear plastic place holders.
- * Be focused at practice and at games – if you are talking or not paying attention, someone can get hurt.

Be Respectful:

- * Treat your coaches, advisors, fellow squad members, yourself and others with respect and kindness. *
- * Be very careful about what you post on social media. Once it is out there, it can never be taken back. *
- * Respect yourself – do not use profanity or show excessive affection while in or out of uniform.

Social Media

CHEERLEADER SOCIAL MEDIA EXPECTATIONS: Cheerleaders are representatives of their school and community. Each campus requires cheerleaders to exercise good judgment in their use of social media websites, and to conduct these activities in a responsible and respectful manner. It is impermissible for a cheerleader to post information, photos, or other representations of sexual content, inappropriate behavior (e.g., drug or alcohol use), inappropriate language, or items that could be interpreted as demeaning or inflammatory. It is not permissible to comment on injuries, any decision made by the coach, or team matters that could reasonably be expected to be confidential to team members. Cheerleaders are required to follow all respective social media website rules. Best Practices and Reminders;

1. Think twice before you post. If you wouldn't want your coach, parents, or future employer to see your post, don't post it. Once it's posted, it is permanent. Be respectful and positive.
2. Never post anything negative about a coach or fellow team member. Remember, many different audiences view your posts including fans, alumni, kids, local authorities, parents, faculty, etc. The internet is permanent. Even if you delete something, it's still out there somewhere.
3. Be in the right state of mind when you make a post. The public will see your social media websites. Potential employers often use these social media websites to screen candidates.
4. Violation of the Cheerleader Social Media Policy may result in disciplinary action – including temporary or permanent suspension from the team – as determined by coach, principal, spirit coordinator and/or athletic director. As representatives of our school and programs you are held to a higher standard. Represent your campus with pride and class!!

Student Signature _____

Discipline

Each squad member is given **20 points** to start the year. Penalties will be assessed as listed below. When a squad member reaches zero, it will result in removal from the squad. Advisors have the right to adjust points during the year, as they deem necessary.

It is recommended that squad members do their best to save up as many points as possible so that they are available when games or events need to be missed for any reason other than illness or family emergency.

An unexcused absence includes anything but a school activity approved by the advisor, illness with a doctor's note, or family emergency. Missing a practice due to travel, doctor's appointments, or other team practices will not be considered excused absences. Squad members must notify their coach for all excused or unexcused absences.

Squad members are also strongly advised to attend practice even if they are injured or not feeling 100% to sit and observe practice for any changes or new material.

Parents and/or athletes have the right to request a hearing regarding their removal from the team. The hearing will be held as soon as possible with a panel consisting of an administrator, advisor, and athletic director. The member and parent will be given the opportunity to present reasons for this action to be voided. The decision of the panel will be final.

Offenses that result in point loss:

1 point

- Improper uniform at practice, game, school, or event (missing bow, sloppy hair, etc.)
- 1-15 minutes late for practice/game/bus • 1-15 minutes leaving early from practice/game • Loaning your pep & cheer attire to someone other than a pep & cheer member
- Not being ready to go at the assigned time for practice or game (need to use the restroom, apply makeup or lotion, etc.)
- Disrespecting a coach or advisor at practice or game

2 points

- 16-30 minutes late for practice/game/bus • 16-30 minutes leaving early from practice/game • Missing check-in at break on game day
- Improper behavior while in uniform or pep & cheer attire (excessive affection, use of profanity, talking during the national anthem, etc.)
- Failure to have parent/approved adult sign squad member out from games- adult must be listed on

emergency card to sign out

- Eating/chewing gum during a game or practice (From check in time until release time)
- Using cell phone during a game or practice

3 points

- Failure to notify advisor for an excused absence from practice at least one hour before
- More than 30 minutes late for practice/game/bus
- Leaving practice or game more than 30 minutes early
- *Missing any part of your uniform including poms during a game/performance.

5 points

- Unexcused absence from practice-anything but an illness or family emergency

10 points

- Missing a game/performance for any reason other than illness or family emergency

Offenses that result in immediate removal from squad (on or off campus):

- * Use and/or possession of alcohol, drugs, or tobacco
- * Stealing or possession of stolen goods
- * Use and/or possession of weapons.
- * Defiance of advisor, coach, teacher, or administrator.
- * Two grading periods below a 2.0 GPA.
- * Fighting on or off campus.
- * Any suspendable offense.
- * Any violation of the athletic code of ethics.
- * Anything deemed inappropriate posted on Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, etc.

Rio Vista Middle School Cheer Contract

I, _____, parent or guardian of _____, assume the responsibilities that go with being a Rio Vista Middle School cheer squad member.

I have read the handbook and contract and will abide by these rules.

I accept all responsibility for any injury that may occur during clinics, practices, and games. I release Rio Vista Middle School, Central Unified School District, and Rio Vista Middle School Cheer advisors and coaches from liability.

I understand that I am encouraged to participate in the support of fundraisers sponsored by the Rio Vista Middle School pep & cheer program.

I agree to pay in full any expenses incurred by my son/daughter while he/she is a member, even if he/she is removed from the squad or quits.

I understand that if my child chooses to be fitted for a custom uniform, that I will be required to pay for that uniform.

I understand that if I let the advisor know before fittings, the school will provide a uniform for my child. If a uniform is provided by the school, I am not allowed to alter it in any way, shape, or form. If I do alter it, then I understand that I will have to pay the cost of the uniform to have it replaced. I also understand that if the uniform is not returned at the end of the season, that I will be placed on the fines list.

I understand that if my child makes the squad and does not pass the cheer test they will not be allowed to cheer at a game until they successfully pass.

Signature of Parent/Guardian Date

I understand that if I do not maintain satisfactory citizenship, school attendance, and academic standards, I may be removed from the squad. I have read the handbook and contract and agree to comply with the rules. I understand disciplinary action or removal from the squad will result if I do not adhere to the rules. I understand that if I make the squad and do not pass the cheer test that I will not be allowed to cheer at a game until I successfully pass.

Signature of Student Date