



El Capitan
Pep & Cheer
Handbook 2026 - 2027

Organization

The El Capitan Pep & Cheer Program is overseen by the Administrative Office, supported and coordinated by the Athletic Office, and managed by the El Capitan Pep & Cheer Director, Allison Phillips.

El Capitan Pep & Cheer members are held to the highest standards of academics and behavior. Their main responsibility is to represent El Capitan in a positive manner. Their duties will include cheering at various athletic events and playoffs, performing at rallies, Spirit Night at Central High School, the CIF Championship for Dance and Cheer, and participating in other school and community functions.

Qualifications

To participate in try-outs for El Capitan 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.
- Have an application, signed contract from the parent/guardian giving permission, and 3 letters of recommendation to try-out.
- Have the parents assume the responsibility of their child and the guidelines of the handbook.
- Pass a physical

Criteria for Selection

- ♦ Grades
- ♦ Teacher recommendations (2 out of 3 must be from core subject teachers)
- ♦ Advisor recommendations for current pep & cheer members (both middle and Elementary School)
- ♦ Physical try-outs (technique, rhythm, personality, enthusiasm, overall performance)
- ♦ Participation and attitude at clinic
- ♦ Knowledge of Pep & Cheer SOAR
- ♦ Interview questions
- ♦ Pep and Cheer Rubrics are posted on the Cheer Website
- ♦ In order for a 7th or 8th grader to be on sideline cheer, they must have good grades, no discipline issues, and positive teacher and coach's recommendations.
- ♦ **Participants do not automatically make the team if they were on the team the previous year. All former squad members must tryout out again and have the requirements to make the team.**
- ♦ **If you quit the team, you will not be allowed to try-out for the following season.**

Competition Qualifications & Criteria

- In addition to the qualifications and criteria of being a pep and cheer squad member, considerations for competition will be selected based on their knowledge of material, dance technique, stunt technique, tumbling ability, and interview questions about being a competition member.
- There will be one competition team.
- **All Competition Teams** will consist of 7th and 8th graders.
- If coaches and judges feel that a member's abilities are at the next level, they will be placed on the competition team. There is no set number of members that will make the competition teams.
- Competition members are required to attend **all practices, competitions**, and the **Central Unified Spirit Showcase and Competition. Tumbling and dance classes are recommended**
- If you are selected for a competition team and decide to quit, you will be removed from both sideline pep/cheer and competition pep/cheer.

Varsity Pep & Cheer Competition Dates:

Central Unified Showcase (for Sideline and Competition) - October	USA Regional Competition - November
Virtual Regionals (If Needed) - December	CIF Competition - December
Bullard Competition - December	Clovis Pep Classic @ Clovis High- January
Central Unified Elementary Championships - January	Clovis West Showcase @ Clovis West - January
Central East Nationals Send-Off - February	Nationals @ Anaheim Convention Center - February

Try-out Dates & Times

- ⇒ An informational meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 23rd @ 5:30 PM El Capitan Cafeteria. Participants must have a completed online Google Form Application submitted by Wednesday, March 11th, and 2.0 GPA on the 6 week progress report to try out. Teacher recommendations and signed contracts are due Wednesday, March 25th.
- ⇒ Try-out material will be posted online on Monday, March 9th on the El Capitan Website under Athletics → Pep & Cheer 2026-2027 Pep & Cheer Information. There will be 3 cheer try-out clinics to evaluate stunting technique, review material and answer any questions. The clinics will be on March 23rd, 25th and 26th from 3:00pm - 5:00pm. Cheer participants will review the sideline dance, and sideline cheers posted online.
- ⇒ **Competition Cheer and Competition Pep Tryouts:** Will be the same day as game day tryouts. Please check if you want to be on either one of the Competition Teams on your Google Form Application. Participants will be selected based on stunt technique, jumps, and execution of motions.
- ⇒ Cheer tryouts are Friday, March 27th beginning @ 3:00pm in the El Capitan Gym.
- ⇒ All participants must wear a plain white t-shirt (no midriff tops), black shorts/leggings, tennis or cheer shoes (or dance shoes for pep), white socks, and **NO JEWELRY** to try-outs and clinics. Girls must wear their hair in a slick ponytail. If hair is too short for a ponytail, then it must be worn out of the face. Bows are allowed.
- ⇒ Judges for the try-outs will consist of, but are not limited to: Squad advisors, coaches, administrators, and outside judges. Judges' decisions are final.

Responsibilities

1. Abide by the pep & cheer SOAR, El Capitan Middle School rules, and athletic code of

ethics.

2. Participate proudly and represent El Capitan Middle School at all school, athletic, and community events.
3. Maintain at least a 2.0 GPA.
4. Attend evening practices during football season – (If cheerleaders miss practice, the athlete will not perform the halftime performance.)
5. Must pass the Cheer and Dance test in order to cheer at games.
6. Participate in fundraisers and assume financial responsibilities.

Program Fundraisers

Double Good Popcorn

Pieology

Rocky Mountain Chocolate

Roundtable

Vertical Raise

Yogurtland/Menchies

Nothing Bundt Cakes

Pandas Express

See's Candy

Mrs. Field's Cookies

Pep & Cheer SOAR

Safety:

* Absolutely no jewelry is allowed at PE, practice, games or while in uniform. * Be sure to get your ears pierced either over winter break or spring break so that you can safely remove them for practice or PE. 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.

Ownership:

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

Achievement:

- * Attend all practices and assigned games on time and ready to cheer.
- * Learn all material needed for games and rallies
- * Excused absences from game or practice must be cleared with an advisor at least 2 weeks in advance and made up in a timely manner. Excused absences are limited to: family emergency or illness.
- * Anytime you are asked to be in uniform, it must be complete (hair in a ponytail with bow, no jewelry, cheer shoes, etc.)

Respect:

- * 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.
- * 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.

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 including competition teams. 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.

Squad members will only be allowed one family emergency per season. If used more than once, we will need to schedule a meeting with parent, cheerleader, and administration. Documentation will need to be provided.

Competition squad members must call, text or email their coach at least one hour before missing practice or conditioning. Failure to do so will result in a loss of points.

An unexcused absence includes anything but school activity, illness with a doctor's note or family emergency. Missing a practice due to travel arrangements will not be considered an excused absence. Squad members should notify their coach even if an absence is excused or unexcused.

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.

Parent and/or athlete have the right to request a hearing regarding the 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 (missing bow, wrong shirt, 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
- Disrespecting a coach or advisor at a 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 when required to dress up: for games and spiritwear.
 - Must check-in with the Advisor or Admin!
- Improper behavior while in uniform or pep & cheer attire (excessive affection, use of profanity, talking during national anthem, etc.)
- Eating at the game (No eating from check-in time until game is over)
- Failure to pass cheer test for football or basketball season after 3 attempts
- Chewing gum during a game
- Texting or talking on cell phone during a game
- Failure to complete given task at home/away games (put away cheer box,

clean up, set up stadium, carry orange box/air compressor, etc.)

- First offense for wearing jewelry during practice or in uniform (may not wear bandages to cover piercings)

3 points:

- Unexcused absence from practice or conditioning - anything but an illness or family emergency
- Failure to notify an advisor when you will miss a practice with an excused absence – must call, text or email advisor at least one hour before meeting time

5 points:

- More than 30 minutes late for practice/game/bus
- Leaving practice or game more than 30 minutes early
- 2 or more offenses for wearing jewelry at practice or in uniform
 - Failure to be picked up within 30 minutes after practice, game, or competition.
- Defiance of a coach. If it is an extreme case, pep/cheerleader can be immediately removed from the team.
- Hair color that is not natural for each practice/game (Examples: pink, purple, blue, rose gold, green)
- Failure to have parent/approved adult sign squad member out for away games – adults must be listed on emergency card to sign out (Also, pep/cheerleader will not be allowed to cheer at the following away game for failing to get

signed out.).

10 points:

- Failure to get cleared (Family ID, Physical, and Clearance Packet). Pep/Cheerleader will be removed from the team if they are not cleared

by the second football game.

- Missing a game for any reason other than illness or family emergency. This includes playoffs, the Valley Championship games, Unified Sports, and the CIF Championship for Pep and Cheer

*****There is never a good time to get piercings since pep and cheer is a year round**

sport. AACCA School Cheer Safety:

All jewelry is prohibited during participation. Religious medals and medical medals are not considered to be jewelry. A religious medal without a chain must be taped and worn under the uniform. A medical alert medal must be taped and may be visible.

Offenses that result in immediate removal from any squad including competition team (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.
- ❖ Passing less than 4 classes during one grading period.
- ❖ Fighting on or off campus.
- ❖ Any in-house or off campus suspension.
- ❖ Any violation of the athletic code of ethics.
- ❖ Anything deemed inappropriate posted on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Snap Chat, etc. ❖

Athletes must display acceptable standards of behavior and citizenship while interacting with teammates.

Points Can Be Earned Back:

- Attending all tryout clinics and Elementary Cheer Camp - 5 points each.
- Grades 3.5 or Higher - Show us your Progress Reports to earn. - 5 points for each progress report shown ○ Students must bring them to coaches/advisors to earn points. We will not seek out students for this information.
- Volunteering for school events: Setup, Clean up, helping leadership (if allowed) - 3 points
 - Check in with advisors/admin/teacher so they can let us know you helped.

- Summer Practices:
 - Home Varsity Camp
 - Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays: 9:00am - 1:00pm

Times and Dates are subject to change
- Competitions:
 - Regionals: \$360
 - Clovis Pep Classic: \$80
 - Bullard: \$140
 - Nationals: \$1,000
 - Virtual Competition (if needed): \$350
 - Clovis West: \$80 - January 31, 2026

Estimated Pricing

El Capitan Middle School Pep & Cheer Application

(Google Form Due on March 11th)

Please turn this form in at the clinic on March 23rd.

Name _____ Current School _____ Grade (next year) _____

Parents' name(s) _____

Address _____

Home Phone # _____ Parents' Cell # _____ your cell # _____

Parent's e-mail address _____ Your

e-mail address _____

School/Community involvement (clubs, leadership, sports, performing arts, volunteer work, etc.): _____

List three words that describe you: _____

List any previous gymnastics/dance experience and any classes that you may have taken: _____

List any tumbling/stunting skills or dance technique that you have (ex. back handspring, tuck, base, back spot, flyer, turns in second, triple pirouette, leg hold turn, etc.). Prepare to show tumbling or dance skill at tryouts.

Which of the Pep & Cheer SOAR do you think is most important and why? _____

School official's name: _____

Signature: _____

of pages:

El Capitan Middle School Pep & Cheer Squad Contract

I, _____, parent or guardian of _____, assume the responsibilities that go with being a El Capitan Middle School pep & cheer squad member (and El Capitan Middle School Competition Team 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 El Capitan Middle School, Central Unified School District, and El Capitan Middle School Pep & Cheer advisors and coaches from liability.

I understand that I am encouraged to participate in the support of fund raisers sponsored by the El Capitan pep & cheer program.

I understand that if my son/daughter reaches zero points, he or she will be removed from both competition and sideline pep and cheer.

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.

Signature of parent/guardian date

I understand that if I do not maintain satisfactory citizenship, school attendance, academic standards and complete 2 hours of community service, 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.

Signature of student date

*Any transfer student must be registered and approved prior to try-outs.

*A current grade report, discipline, and attendance records must accompany the application and contract if not currently a student in Central Unified.

*A student must have and maintain a 2.0 GPA or better and be passing five classes each grading period to be eligible.

Advisor/Teacher/Coach Recommendation

Student's name _____ School _____

Teacher's name _____ Subject _____ Grade _____

of Missed assignments _____

	Outstanding 5 points	Good 3 points	Fair 1 point	Poor 0 points
1. Responsible <i>completes work, good attendance, good effort, accountable, on time, etc.</i>				
2. Respectful <i>good manners, considerate, tolerant, shows respect for students and teacher, etc.</i>				
3. Trustworthy <i>reliable, has the courage to do the right thing, doesn't gossip or spread rumors, tries to build a good reputation, etc.</i>				
4. Attitude <i>kind, compassionate, positive, willing to help others, always tries their best, etc.</i>				
5. Cooperative <i>Works well with others, shares, open minded, listens, doesn't blame, etc.</i>				

TOTAL POINTS	
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_____ Teacher Signature

- Please justify the above ratings by writing comments in the boxes provided or on the back. These will be used in helping to select next year's pep & cheer squad members.
- **Do not give it back to the student.** These are confidential so please be candid.
- Send recommendation through intra-district mail, e-mail, fax, or mail to:

El Capitan Middle School
4443 W. Weldon Ave Fresno, CA 93722
Fax: 533 - 9062

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Allison Phillips: aphillips@centralusd.k12.ca.u

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