

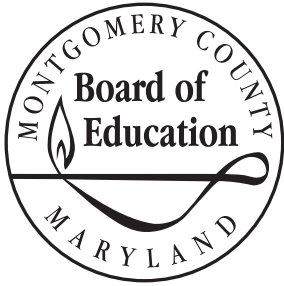
# CHEERLEADING & POMPONS



## 2021–2022 HANDBOOK

Maryland's Largest School District

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**



## **VISION**

*We inspire learning by providing the greatest public education to each and every student.*

## **MISSION**

*Every student will have the academic, creative problem solving, and social emotional skills to be successful in college and career.*

## **CORE PURPOSE**

*Prepare all students to thrive in their future.*

## **CORE VALUES**

*Learning  
Relationships  
Respect  
Excellence  
Equity*

## **Board of Education**

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## INTRODUCTION

The *Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Cheerleading and Pompons Handbook* serves as a supplement to the *MCPS High School Athletics Handbook* and ensures uniform countywide standards and procedures for all participants.

The information in this handbook has been developed in consultation with coaches, student-athletes, high school principals, athletics specialists, sport directors, the systemwide athletics specialist, the systemwide athletics compliance specialists, the director of systemwide athletics, and the chief operating officer. It is a requirement of cheerleading and pompons coaches to read and abide by the applicable sections of both the *MCPS High School Athletics Handbook* and this publication. Additionally, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) produces a *High School Spirit Rules Book* each year, which outlines the foundational rules of the MCPS cheerleading and pompons programs.

Coaches and student-athletes must follow all MCPS and NFHS rules and regulations at all events, contests, competitions, performances, parades, or anytime the team represents the school. In addition, cheerleading teams and coaches must also follow all rules and regulations set forth by the Maryland Public Schools State Cheerleading Association (MPSSCA). Cheerleading and pompons competitions should be placed in perspective within the educational program and should not interfere with the primary responsibility of supporting interscholastic athletics programs.

## PHILOSOPHY

Cheerleading and pompons teams boost school spirit, promote sportsmanship, develop positive crowd involvement, and help students and spectators maximize their experiences at athletic contests and community activities. Since they are among the most visible and recognizable representatives of a school, these spirit groups can have a great influence in creating a positive atmosphere at events. It is imperative that high standards of conduct are observed. Positive personal behavior and teamwork are essential. Cheerleading teams should focus on “leading” or “directing” students and other fans in positive expressions of support and involvement that create a cooperative spirit among students, athletes, faculty, and members of the community. Pompon teams should focus on entertaining students and other fans through a variety of performances. In addition, both teams perform at school events and work with other school organizations to develop cohesiveness within the school and student body. Team members must recognize that they are important role models and that they contribute significantly to the success and wholesomeness of school, athletic, and community events.

## MODIFICATIONS AND CHANGES

The MPSSCA revised the classification structure, including the use of new region alignments for state competition.

## SPORT DIRECTORS

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## **MCPS PHILOSOPHY**

MCPS believes participation in interscholastic athletics supports the overall mission of the school district to ensure that every student will have the academic, creative problem solving, and social emotional skills to be successful in college and career. The MCPS philosophy of interscholastic athletics is founded in our vision, mission, purpose, and R.A.I.S.E. core values, which were established in July 2017.

## **VISION**

We promote academic excellence, athletic achievement, positive sportsmanship, and upstanding citizenship by providing the greatest education-based interscholastic athletics program.

## **MISSION**

Every student-athlete will attain the mental, moral, physical, and social-emotional skills to excel in the classroom, community, and the realm of competition.

## **PURPOSE**

To provide an innovative education-based interscholastic athletics program that maximizes diverse participation through a commitment to equity and access.

## **R.A.I.S.E. CORE VALUES**

Respect & Sportsmanship

Academic Excellence

Integrity & Character

Spirited & Safe Competition

Equity & Access



## **LOGO**

The official logo for the MCPS athletics program depicted above was established in 2018 and is used to promote the MCPS athletics program. The design incorporates the colors and components of the Montgomery County flag, along with an outline of the county and the MCPS logo. The R.A.I.S.E. core values are proudly displayed in the outer rim of the logo.

## **#WeRAISE**

Coaches, student-athletes, athletics specialists and stakeholders across the MCPS athletics program are encouraged to celebrate and promote examples and accomplishments that exemplify our R.A.I.S.E. core values. When doing so on social media platforms, users are encouraged to use the hashtag #WeRAISE.

## **SECTION I: CHEERLEADING HANDBOOK**

### **COACHES RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **A. Resources**

When gathering information, coaches should consult these resources in the following order:

1. *MCPS High School Athletics Handbook*
2. *MCPS Cheerleading & Pompons Handbook*
3. *MCPS “Stunt-Safe” Manual*
4. MPSSCA Semi-Finals and Finals State Cheerleading Bulletin
5. MPSSCA Rubrics and Score Sheets
6. National Federation of High Schools *Spirit Rules Book*
7. *MCPS ECA Handbook* (performance schedule requirements and coach responsibilities)
8. MCPS Cheerleading Sport Director
9. MCPS Athletics Specialist

#### **B. Administrative Responsibilities**

In addition to the administrative responsibilities outlined in the *MCPS High School Athletics Handbook*, Cheerleading coaches will:

1. Work collaboratively with the athletics specialist, other coaches, feeder schools, band director, and community personnel.
2. Promote and maintain a positive working relationship between teams (cheerleading and pompons - varsity and junior varsity).
3. Establish a working budget with the athletics specialist so that team members are not spending personal money on necessary materials and supplies (personal items excluded).
4. Ensure that all financial transactions, including fundraisers, are approved by the local school athletics specialist or school administrator.
5. Ensure that team financial expenses are kept to a minimum. Personal items such as shoes, socks, or apparel with names, shall be the responsibility of individual team members and will be retained by the student-athlete. Student purchases, such as expensive jackets, banquet tickets, etc., cannot be required.
6. Ensure that team members do not provide special treatment, such as baking and/or buying gifts, etc., to selected teams.
7. In accordance with the athletics specialist, approve and assume responsibility for uniform selection. Refer to the *MCPS Uniform Standards and Guidelines* included in this publication.
8. Assume responsibility for team selection, performances, practices, and activities.
9. Communicate to the team’s captains their roles in the program.
10. Ensure that practice times are scheduled in appropriate facilities. For indoor practices, the team should receive its share of late, Saturday and off-site practices if other athletic and athletically related groups within the school have them. Note: schools may not rent or utilize non-MCPS facilities in order to conduct practices or performances.
11. Ensure that the performance schedule is sport and gender equitable.

12. Teach or supervise proper warm-up, cool-down, and stretching exercises to be used before, during, and following practices and performances.
13. Recognize individual and team ability levels and adjust routines accordingly.
14. Ensure music and choreography is appropriate for all routines and performances.
15. Have a written copy of all lyrics used in routines available at all times, including the MCPS Championship Competition, State Regionals and State Finals Cheerleading competitions.
16. Establish an emergency plan with your teams in the unlikely event it is necessary to remove cheerleaders from the area quickly. A hand signal or verbal command should be agreed upon prior to the season. It is also suggested that a specific meeting area be designated at all home and away events in case of emergencies. This plan should be discussed with the athletics specialist and shared with the coaches of the visiting schools.
17. Ensure that the coach responsible for the conduct of the team accompanies the team to all practices and contests and remains until the event is over and all team members have left school property. Performing cheerleaders will not be allowed to gain entry at away events, unless accompanied by their coach. The team should arrive and enter the premises together.
18. Consult the school's student service learning coordinator to further assist team members who perform activities for which student service learning credits may be awarded. Participation in parades, back-to-school night, orientation sessions, etc., are examples of SSL activities.

### **C. Safety**

The ultimate responsibility for cheerleaders' safety rests with the coach. Not every cheerleader or cheerleading team has the ability to perform tumbling skills or stunts permitted under the rules of the *Spirit Rules Book* of the National Federation of State High School Associations. The following safety measures must always be used:

1. Stunting and tumbling skills must be taught under careful supervision. Stunts and tumbling which require skills beyond the ability of the cheerleader(s) or coach must not be used. Cheer mats and spotting techniques must be utilized while cheerleaders are learning and practicing new skills. All cheerleading skills taught, practiced, and performed must be in full compliance with the *National Federation Spirit Rules Book* and the *MCPS "Stunt-Safe" Manual*.
2. MPSSAA and NFHS rules prohibit middle or elementary students from participating in high school athletics. Therefore, children, middle school students, and elementary school students may sit in the stands with cheerleaders but may not be on the cheering surface or involved in stunting.
3. A coach must be present at all practices and performances.
4. The practice and performance area should be obstruction free.
5. Warm-up, stretching, cool-down techniques should be stressed and included.
6. Megaphones, cards, pompons, etc. should be removed from the performing area when not in use.
7. No items should be tossed into the stands to spectators during athletic contests (they may be distributed to spectators as they leave the facility).

## CHEERLEADER EXPECTATIONS

Well before the first instructional clinic, coaches should communicate clearly in writing what will be expected of all cheerleaders. The list of expectations should be a collaborative effort between the coach, athletics specialist, and principal, and must meet the guidelines of this handbook and the *MCPS High School Athletics Handbook*. Each cheerleader will abide by the following standards:

1. Exhibit a courteous and considerate image reflecting positive sportsmanship
2. Serve as role models for the school and community who promote a positive culture and school spirit.
3. Include only movements and words that are deemed appropriate by school officials in an educational setting and for audiences that include people of all ages and beliefs.
4. Provide support and recognition at athletic events, school functions, and community events.
5. Be courteous toward spectators and teams of other schools.
6. Offer crowd control through organized leadership and performance.
7. Ensure that cheers are positive and directed at the home athletes, spectators and fans.
8. Ensure that visitors feel welcome.
9. Refrain from the use of profanity or any other behavior school officials deem unsportsmanlike or inappropriate.
10. Attend all scheduled practices, events, and activities.
11. Wear appropriate apparel for all practices and activities.
12. Wear the assigned uniform(s) for school-coached activities only.
13. Promote and maintain a positive working relationship between teams (pompons and cheerleading - varsity and junior varsity).

## SPORTSMANSHIP

Positive sportsmanship is conduct that requires self-control in stressful situations, healthy rivalries, courteous relations, and graceful acceptance of results. School spirit is a reflection of these attitudes and behaviors. The promotion of positive sportsmanship is the primary responsibility of spirit groups. Cheerleaders should serve as role models for spectators. The material and timing of the presentation is crucial in the sportsmanship of spirit groups.

1. The material presented by cheerleaders at games should be directed toward entertaining and/or motivating the crowd to support the athletic team.
2. Cheerleaders shall never perform material that is derogatory toward officials, opposing coaches, opponents, fans or could be interpreted as offensive or obscene.

Below are some guidelines for cheerleading teams and the conveying of positive sportsmanlike behavior:

1. Teams should never boo, encourage booing, or cheer during an injury timeout
2. Cheers, chants, and dances with suggestive words and/or motions are unacceptable
3. Teams should not take any action intended to purposely distract players.

Cheerleaders should cheer when the following occurs:

1. Their team comes on the floor or field
2. Their team or a player makes an exceptional play
3. A substitution is made, and when appropriate, cheer the outgoing and incoming players
4. An injured player leaves the field/court (cheer as encouragement)
5. An opponent, who has played spectacularly, leaves the field
6. Their team is driving for a score or is in defense of its goal

## **TRYOUTS, PRACTICES AND TEAM FORMATION**

The coach is ultimately responsible for the selection of the team and will adhere to the following tryout guidelines:

### **1. Publicizing Tryouts**

A variety of techniques shall be used at the local school and feeder schools for the recruitment of tryout participants, so that all segments of the population can be reached. Coaches should use the following methods of communication:

- a) Public address announcements
- b) Flyers
- c) Posters
- d) Newsletters
- e) Websites and school email lists
- f) School-approved social media

Coaches should contact the feeder schools' physical education resource teacher, athletic coordinator, and/or principal to establish how information concerning tryouts may be distributed to eighth grade students. Tryouts must be publicized as open to both genders.

### **2. Scheduling Tryouts and the Informational Meeting**

Optional practices may begin on August 11, 2021. Teams must begin practices by August 14, 2021. For teams with more than one tryout, winter tryouts may begin on November 15, 2021. Coaches must complete the following tasks before tryouts may begin:

- a) Ensure that tryout procedures are distributed in writing and approved by the school's principal and athletics specialist.
- b) Reserve the necessary tryout/meeting facilities with the school's business administrator.
- c) Provide candidates with a schedule of tryout dates and times, a detailed description of selection criteria and tryout procedures, a sample judging sheet, and a description of selection criteria for team captain(s) prior to tryouts. In addition, candidates should be provided with the teams' policies and procedures, expectations, responsibilities, eligibility, and attendance requirements prior to tryouts.
- d) Coaches will develop routines for formal assessment of participants.
- e) Refer to the MCPS High School Athletics Handbook for information regarding the required online registration process for candidates through the ParentVue.

### **3. Selection Procedures**

Composition of the selection panel, selection criteria, and tryout procedures shall be approved by the principal and athletics specialist prior to tryouts. One of the following two selection procedures must be used:

- a) With prior approval from the principal and athletics specialist, the coach may select the team.
- b) A panel of judges (three–seven are recommended) may be used. Judges should represent equity in gender, race, ethnicity, and age. No current high school students, high school graduates from the past four years, or parents may be used. The coach(es), as well as coaches from other schools, may serve as judges.

### **4. Formation of Cheerleading Teams**

With the permission of the athletics specialist and principal, the coach may elect to restructure the team formation away from the traditional varsity/junior varsity team. Some examples include the following formations:

- a) Coaches may schedule one tryout in the fall, where they select a varsity team for both fall and winter seasons, and a junior varsity team for the fall.



- b) Coaches may form one single, large, varsity team (no junior varsity team), that can be divided into two or more groups to cover all activities, for both fall and winter.
- c) Two distinct teams for fall (varsity and junior varsity) and a varsity only winter team —each is autonomous and cheers for all varsity or junior varsity sports respectively.

## **5. Captains**

The captains' roles and responsibilities, along with a list of selection criteria, must be approved by the principal and/or athletics specialist and shared with the team prior to selection.

### **a) Selecting Captains**

There are a variety of ways to establish team captains, which include the following methods:

- I. The coach may choose captains
- II. The team may elect captains
- III. There may be a formula for determining captains

### **b) Captain Responsibilities**

The coach must clearly communicate the following responsibilities to the captain(s) or potential captain(s):

- I. Leading by example
- II. Performing any duties as directed by the coach
- III. Acting as a liaison between the team and coach if necessary.

## **PARTICIPATION RULES & RESTRICTIONS**

1. Eligibility rules for interscholastic athletics apply to cheerleaders with the following exception: Cheerleading team members must tryout each year (or season, if applicable) to qualify for a position on the team.
2. Students who have been selected for a position on the cheerleading team may not try out for a position on the pompons team and vice-versa. If both teams are conducting tryouts by season, students may try out for a different team in a different season.
3. Holding separate, intra-team tryouts to select a competing or performing team is not allowed.
4. All cheerleaders on the junior varsity and varsity rosters must participate in all school-related, spirit and game day activities and performances.
  - a) Note: Refer to the MPSSCA state bulletin for information regarding roster limitations for state regional and final competitions
5. JV teams shall not compete in any competition except the JV cheer exhibition hosted by Col. Zadok Magruder High School. Varsity team members may not participate in the JV exhibition as members of the JV team.
6. Schools may not rent or utilize non-MCPS facilities in order to conduct practices or performances.
7. While MPSSCA allows teams to participate in a maximum of four invitationals per season, MCPS will continue with the current limitation of two invitationals combined across the fall and winter seasons.
8. Teams may only participate in competitions sanctioned by the MPSSCA.

## **OUT OF SEASON PARTICIPATION / SUMMER CAMPS**

1. MCPS cheerleading teams shall adhere to all MPSSAA and MCPS regulations regarding camps and out of season participation. The MPSSAA handbook outlines state regulation, while MCPS rules and interpretations are included in the *Out of Season Participation Guidelines*, available on the Coach/AD page of the MCPS website. School teams may not, under any circumstance, practice, compete, or meet beyond the established MPSSAA sports season.
2. Out of season participation rules and regulations extend to volunteer coaches.
3. It is illegal for a school team to attend a camp as a team because school teams may not participate, compete, or assemble out-of-season.
4. Teams may host clinics or camps however no returning team members may participate in the clinic or camp if it is conducted or sponsored by the program/school or persons associated with the program or school.
5. Returning student-athletes may be used as clinic or camp counselors.
6. Teams may hold clinics or camps at elementary and middle schools with the permission of the principals of both schools. Appropriate information, flyers, etc. must be approved prior to distribution. Clinics must be open to both genders. All materials must be gender equitable or neutral.

## HOSTING AN INVITATIONAL CHEERLEADING COMPETITION

Schools may host their own invitational competitions. All cheerleading invitational competitions will be held under the rules of the Maryland Public Schools State Cheerleading committee (see *Section II. Responsibilities of Schools Participating in a Tournament of the Semi-Finals and Finals State Cheerleading Bulletin*). A date should be selected well in advance that does not conflict with other sports, important school-related functions (SAT exams, etc.), or the county championships. Hosting a competition should be a collaborative effort of the coach, athletics specialist, and principal and must comply with all procedures and regulations outlined in the *MCPS High School Athletics Handbook*, the *MPSSCA Semi-Finals and Finals State Cheerleading Bulletin*, and this publication. Following are some additional rules and guidelines for hosting a competition.

### 1. Competition Information Packet & Host School Responsibilities

At least six weeks prior to the invitational, coaches should send competing schools a competition information packet that should include the following items:

- 1) Date and time
- 2) Score sheets: MPSSCA – Scoring Rubrics, Score Sheets & Routine Deduction Sheet
- 3) Directions to the school
- 4) Length/maximum time limit of the routine \*Note: MPSSCA guidelines state that cheer routine length should not exceed 2 minutes and 30 seconds.
- 5) Procedures concerning music (MP3s, CD's, marking of music, etc.)
- 6) Division breakdowns and criteria for being in each division
- 7) Statements explaining how and when order of performance will be determined
- 8) Entry form for teams that wish to compete
- 9) Explanation of all fees.

#### The host school has the following responsibilities:

- 1) Provide appropriate security and supervision – \*MPSSCA rules state that hosting schools must provide a qualified site manager other than the participating coach.
- 2) Open the building at least one hour prior to competition
- 3) Post spirit signs in the designated area
- 4) Hold an orientation meeting approximately one-half hour before the start of the competition
- 5) Identify the person playing the music, or provide each team's designee with the necessary information concerning the playing of team music
- 6) Identify each team's assigned waiting area if they are not to view the competition, and a seating area if they are to view the competition
- 7) Assign a hostess or host to assist teams
- 8) Encourage all participants and spectators to leave promptly after awards are presented.

Coaches and teams should honor commitments to competitions throughout the season. While circumstances may make participation difficult, schools that host additional competitions allocate funds and resources to hosting competitions.

## **2. MCPS Competitions/Exhibitions**

MCPS schools will host the following competitions/exhibitions during the 2021–2022 school year:

### VARSITY CHEERLEADING COMPETITIONS

- ❖ October 30, 2021, at Montgomery Blair High School – MCPS Cheerleading Championship Competition
- ❖ November 6, 2021, at Harford Community College – State Regional Competition
- ❖ November 13, 2021, at Harford Community College – State Final Competition

### JV CHEERLEADING EXHIBITION

- ❖ October 23, 2021 at Col. Zadok Magruder High School

\*Cheer coaches can reference the MPSSCA website for additional invitational competition dates.

## MCPS CHEERLEADING CHAMPIONSHIP COMPETITION

Competition can and should be a learning experience that is different from performing at individual athletic events. The coach, athletics specialist, and principal will ensure that competition does not take precedence over support of school athletic events, outside of post-season competition.

The MCPS Cheerleading Championship Competition serves as the qualifying event for the State Regional Competition. All of the rules and regulations outlined in the National Federation *Spirit Rules Book*, the MPSSCA *Regionals and Finals State Cheerleading Bulletin*, the *MCPS High School Athletics Handbook*, the *MCPS Cheerleading and Pompons Handbook*, and the *MCPS “Stunt-Safe” Manual* will govern each competition. The coach is responsible for knowing and enforcing all rules and regulations throughout the competition. Illegal moves and safety violations will result in deductions from the team’s score. Following are specific guidelines, rules, and regulations pertaining to the administration of the MCPS Cheerleading Championship Competition:

### 1. General Guidelines and Procedures

- a) The coach must have emergency medical cards available at all times.
- b) Non-performing spirit teams, including JV cheerleaders, may not attend the competition in uniform, nor bring poms or props.
- c) No money may be spent on extras (i.e., choreography, routines, gloves, confetti, hand held signs, balloons, special shoes, crowd handouts, props, etc.) for this competition.
- d) Body paint, face paint, tattoo transfers, glitter, and stamps are not allowed to be worn by competitors.
- e) Choreography for routines must be created by the team and/or coaches and may not be purchased. It is expected that a few parts of the routine will come from a variety of sources and experiences (i.e., camps, clinics, consultants), but the final routine must be primarily the work of the team and coach. For further clarification about consultants, refer to the *MCPS High School Athletics Handbook*.
- f) Music for routines and performances must be school appropriate and comply with applicable copyright laws.

### 2. Tickets/Admission Policy

The price of admission to each competition is \$5.00. Schools are strongly urged to pre-sell tickets to assure seating for family and friends. Pre-sale tickets will be allocated equally for each competition and distributed to athletics specialists. Schools may choose not to sell tickets; however, if their students and parents are denied entry because of a sell-out, complaints will be referred back to the local school. Coaches are responsible for returning checks, cash, tickets (or any combination) on competition day PRIOR to the start of the competition to the competition accountant an hour before the scheduled start time of the competition. It is recommended that coaches bring one school check to pay for tickets to alleviate the added stress of counting money the day of competition. Coaches, cheerleaders and one additional chaperone will be admitted free. Only team members performing in their respective session may come in uniform. Team members attending other sessions must wear street clothes and pay admission.

### 3. Safety

Coaches are reminded to recognize individual and team ability levels and limit skills accordingly. Stunts that do not follow the *MCPS “Stunt-Safe” Manual* progression cannot be used. NFHS rules and *MCPS “Stunt-Safe” Manual* rules must be followed at every practice, contest, competition, performance, or event.

### 4. Performance

The order of performance will be randomly determined at the preseason coaches meeting. All team competitors must be members of the team for the fall season, listed on the team roster submitted to

the athletics specialist, and must perform in at least one team performance prior to the competition (this includes any JV team member moved up to varsity following the JV exhibition).

Prior to the MCPS Cheerleading Championship Competition, teams will have the opportunity to have their routine observed by the MCPS cheerleading sport director and a competition rules interpreter. Dates and times will be included in a separate communication to coaches.

## **5. Music**

Music may be used for all or part of the routine. Competition music must be recorded on MP3 and the file e-mailed to the Systemwide Athletics Compliance Specialist, Ms. Anne Rossiter at [Anne\\_M\\_Rossiter@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Anne_M_Rossiter@mcpsmd.org), by noon on Monday, October 25, 2021. The MP3 file must contain only the competition music and be clearly marked with the school name. The improved quality of the sound on MP3 is preferable for the sound system. A back up MP3 file should be submitted to the Master of Ceremonies at check-in for a sound check. All music used for routines and performances must comply with applicable copyright laws.

## **6. Lyrics**

The coach must have a written copy of the lyrics available in the event that the appropriateness of the lyrics played is questioned.

## **7. Competition Area**

The MCPS Championship Competition will be conducted on a regulation size cheerleading mat.

## **8. Uniforms**

Traditional cheerleader uniforms, that meet all MCPS requirements as outlined in this handbook, are required at the MCPS Championship Competition.

## **9. Awards**

First, second and third place teams and the spirit winners, will receive awards at each competition. Each participating cheerleader and coach will receive an official MCPS Championship Competition pin.

## **10. Judging**

Judges will be assigned in coordination with the MPSSCA. One head judge, three category judges, and two safety judges will be assigned. Samples of the state cheerleading rubrics, score sheets and routine deduction sheet can be found at <http://marylandcheercoaches.org/scoring-systems> and are also included in this section of the handbook.

The following tie breaking guidelines will be followed, in order, in the event there is a tie for 1<sup>st</sup> place:

- a) Add all of the deductions. The team with the fewest total deductions earns the higher place.
- b) Add all of the degree of difficulty points. Higher points win.
- c) Send the decision back to the judges.
- d) If all other options do not produce a clear winner, the decision goes to a coin toss.

If there is a tie for 2<sup>nd</sup> at state semi-final competition, the next place awarded will be 4<sup>th</sup>, if there is a tie for 3<sup>rd</sup>, the next place award will be 5<sup>th</sup>. If there is a tie for the last advancing place, both teams will advance.

All teams will be judged on one routine that must be no longer than 2 minutes and 30 seconds. Time starts with the first choreographed movement, voice, or musical note, whichever comes first, and ends with a signal from the coach to the timekeeper. All entrances must comply with all MCPS safety guidelines. Entrances that are not choreographed do not count in the time. Choreographed structured entrances (i.e., tumbling lines, organized chants, etc.), will be included in the time. Please review the *Routine Deduction Sheet*, for descriptions of stunting, tumbling or general routine elements that could result in a penalty.

## 11. Spirit Award

The spirit award will be given to the school whose fans embody the MCPS R.A.I.S.E core values and display the most positive spirit and respect for all competitors at each competition. The spirit award categories, each worth 20 points, are enthusiasm, sportsmanship, organization, crowd interaction, and the design of the team's sign.

## 12. Signs

Each team/school is expected to bring a handmade sign (no larger than 5' x 10') to be mounted on the wall to mark each school's seating area. The sign is worth 20 points toward the Spirit Award. Coaches and teams are responsible for taking signs down at the end of each competition. Spectators are not allowed to bring hand held signs, flyers, pompons, balloons, confetti, noisemakers or routine-related props.

## 13. Mascots

Mascots are allowed. If they are on the floor during the team's performance they will be judged.

## 14. Warm-up Schedule

The warm-up schedule includes five minutes on a full mat, six minutes of stretching and six minutes of walk-thru, prior to reporting for performance. The order of the warm-up schedule is the same as the competition performance order. Coaches must be with their teams at all times.

## 15. Other Information

- All cheerleading teams will be seated in the gymnasium.
- Teams may not stunt or tumble on the sidelines before, between, or after performances. Stunting may be done only during the warm-up sessions and in the actual routine.
- Please do not bring valuables. There will be no provisions for locking up personal items.
- An athletic trainer will be on duty.
- Concessions will be available.
- There will be no MCPS qualifying event for the winter state regional and final state competition.

## 16. Divisions

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, divisions for cheerleading will remain intact for the next two-year (2021–2022 and 2022–23) scheduling cycle. The division alignments for the 2021–22 school year are:

Division I	Division II	Division III
James Hubert Blake	Bethesda Chevy-Chase	Montgomery Blair
Winston Churchill	Col. Zadok Magruder	Albert Einstein
Clarksburg	Richard Montgomery	Gaithersburg
Damascus	Northwest	John F. Kennedy
Walter Johnson	Northwood	Poolesville
Quince Orchard	Paint Branch	Rockville
Sherwood	Watkins Mill	Seneca Valley
Thomas S. Wootton	Walt Whitman	Springbrook
		Wheaton

## **SECTION II: UNIFORM STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES**

### **HISTORY**

Principals and athletics specialists requested clarification regarding cheerleading and pompons uniforms. A workgroup of principals, athletics specialists, sports directors, and sponsors was formed to establish uniform standards and guidelines and to address issues regarding the appropriateness of certain uniforms to a high school setting. This workgroup met in November 1999 and examined a variety of uniforms. Detailed guidelines regarding appropriateness of cheerleading and pompons uniforms were subsequently established. Workgroups have since conducted reviews of the uniform standards and guidelines in 2007, 2012, and 2017. Reviews are conducted every five years. The next review is scheduled for the spring of 2022.

### **GENERAL GUIDELINES**

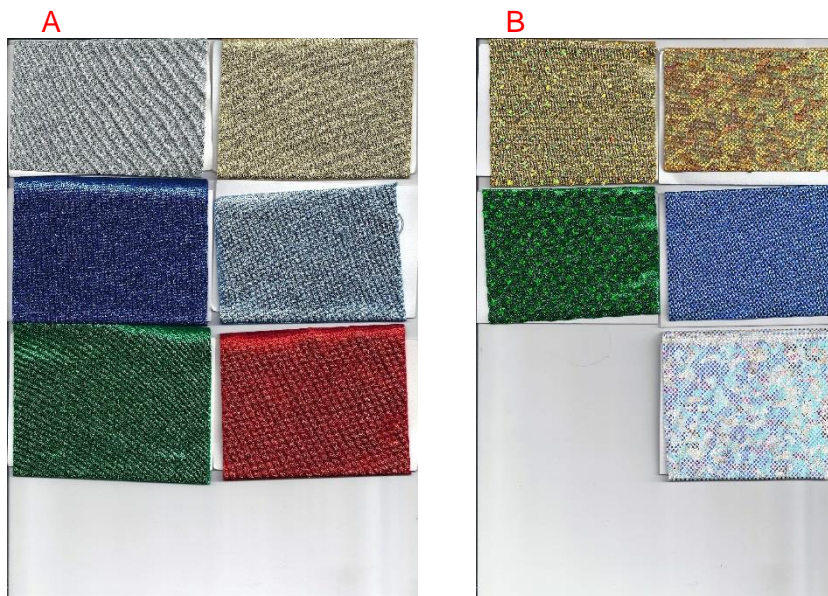
These standards and guidelines are designed to assist with the purchasing process:

1. Cheerleading and pompons coaches should carefully evaluate uniforms and must have the approval of their athletics specialist and/or principal before purchasing new uniforms.
2. School athletic departments must provide each cheerleader and pompon with two uniforms. For pompons, one of the uniforms must be the traditional cheerleader-type uniform.
3. Purchasing of cheerleading and pompons uniforms should be part of the standard uniform purchase rotation established by each school, not yearly or through parent funding.
4. Each team member is expected to keep uniforms in good condition.
5. Coed teams are expected to provide boys with appropriate coordinated uniforms.
6. School uniforms may not be used at summer camps or in physical education classes.
7. All uniforms are the property of the school.
8. Uniforms must be appropriate to the educational setting and age appropriate.
9. Uniforms must be selected that can be worn appropriately by individuals with a wide variety of body types.
10. Uniform tops and skirts should reflect the school's traditional colors.
11. It is the coach's duty and responsibility to ensure that uniform guidelines are followed.
12. Cut away skirts, breakaway skirts, flyaway skirts, large keyholes, bare midriffs, see through material, revealing cuts, and revealing skirts which do not cover the entire buttocks when the participant is standing are not allowed.
13. Skirt length should be 2" to 3" below the buttocks (underwear should not be visible when standing straight). Skirts may not be rolled up at the waist.
14. Bottoms/briefs must be a solid color.



## MATERIALS

- There are essentially two types of materials used for cheerleading and pompons uniforms: a polyester material which is firm and tends to be a little stiffer, and a more flexible material such as *Motionflex* or *Powerfit*. Most manufacturers of cheerleading and pompons uniforms have a type of flexible material, although it is not necessarily called *Motionflex* or *Powerfit*. *Motionflex* and *Powerfit* are specific to Varsity Spirit Fashions.
- There is a concern that the more flexible materials do not hold up as well as the polyester material; and among the manufacturers of the flexible materials, there may be a considerable variation in expense, lifespan, and quality.
- Schools should be aware that the flexible material does not offer the same degree of support that may be beneficial for various body types as does the polyester, and should be certain the uniforms are the appropriate size (large enough).
- The flexible material will be allowed in the crop top, the coordinating liner, the skirt, and the shell. The *Powerfit* material is approved for all components of the uniform.
- Sublimated uniforms that meet all MCPS guidelines are allowed.
- See-through materials or nude colored uniforms are not allowed.
- Regarding metallic materials, picture A includes samples of metallic materials that are muted and permissible as trim on cheer and pompon uniforms. Picture B shows samples of metallic materials that are the 'hologram' type and samples of non-muted metallic materials that are not permissible are below:



## COMPETITION UNIFORMS

For the MCPS championship competitions and state competitions for cheerleading, pompons and cheerleaders are encouraged to wear a three-piece uniform consisting of the following options:

- Top – A poly shell top can be worn alone, or preferably with a flexible bodyliner.
  - A flexible bodyliner may only be worn without a shell, if the liner has a “shell-like” appearance. A “shell-like” appearance includes liners with embroidered lettering and/or school logo and sublimated uniforms meeting this criterion.
- A skirt, made from a flexible type of material that coordinates with the bodyliner and/or shell.
- Pompons may wear pants instead of a skirt with either a top, shell, or flexible bodyliner with a “shell-like” appearance.

Below are examples of three uniforms. Uniforms A and B are not allowed. Uniform C is allowed:

### MCPS Uniforms



A



B



C

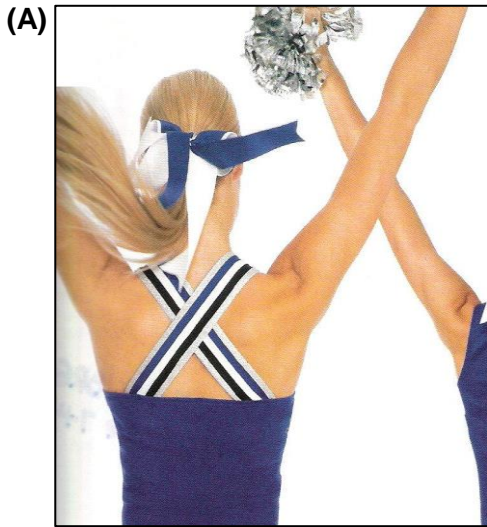
Uniform A: Not allowed - off the shoulder with too much metallic material.

Uniform B: Not allowed - off the shoulder, shoulder blade exposed.

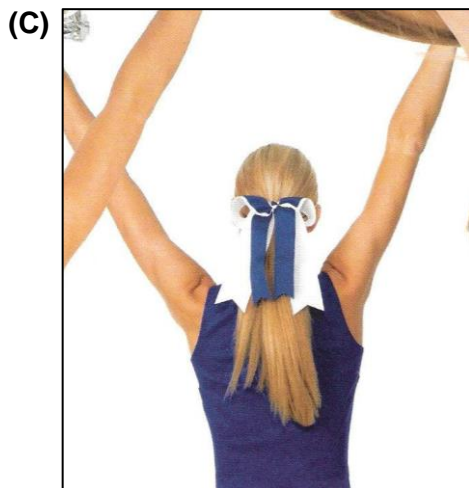
Uniform C: Allowed for the MCPS competition. The metallic trim is appropriate.

## TOPS

- 1) **Crop Top:** A sleeveless top that ends well above the waistline. The midriff is visible.  
**Not appropriate**
- 2) **Half Top:** An extremely short top which ends just below the bra line. Picture (D) in group below. **Not appropriate**



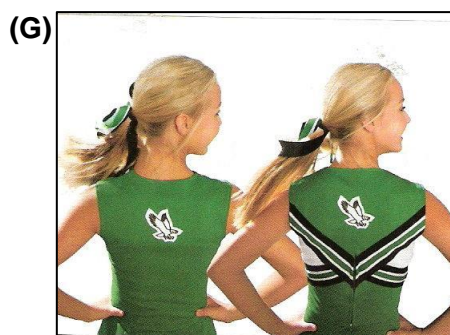
- 3) **Halter Top:** A form-fitting top with wide straps over the shoulder as opposed to more solid shoulder.  
**Not appropriate** (Pictures A and B)



- 4) **Halter Top Exception:** Halter top with a solid back and straps that are at least 2 and ½ inches wide. **Appropriate** (Picture C)
- 5) **Halter Crop Top:** A halter top with midriff revealed. **Not appropriate** (Picture D)



- 6) **Keyhole Tops:** Any style of top which has pieces of materials cut out from the pattern to reveal skin beneath. **Not appropriate** (Pictures E and F)
- 7) **Keyhole Top Exception:** Keyhole in the back only of the top no larger than 3 inches, times 3 inches (9 square inches) of missing material. **Appropriate**



- 8) **Shell Top:** The general term used for all sleeveless tops with round or V-necklines that are at least waist length. **Appropriate** (Picture G)
- 9) **Unicrop:** A top similar to a crop top but with long sleeves. May be worn under shell when long sleeves are necessary. **Appropriate** only when worn **under** shell top.
- 10) **Racerback:** Wide strap of material across the back. Front and back of shoulders revealed. **Not appropriate** (Pictures H1 and H2)



- 11) **Racerback Exception:** The back strap must be wide enough so that the shoulder blades are predominantly covered. **Appropriate** (Pictures H3, H4)
- 12) **Bra Top Bustier:** has a fancier, but nonetheless bra like appearance. **Not appropriate**



## SKIRTS

- 1) **A-Line:** A skirt with no pleats which becomes slightly wider towards the hemline often with side slits. **Appropriate** (Picture I)



- 2) **A-Line Cut Out:** A-line skirt with small triangle cut-out(s) on one or both sides, or one in front which is/are no taller or wider than 1 ½ inches. **Appropriate** (Picture J)



- 3) **Angled:** A skirt which is longer in the front and back and shorter over the side (hip) area. **Not appropriate**

- 4) **Break Away:** A pleated skirt in which the pleats are not sewn together the total length of the skirt. There is no overlap between unconnected pleats. In a sitting position, the pleats will split apart and reveal the total leg. **Not appropriate** (Picture K)



- 5) **Cut Outs:** A skirt with patterns which are 'cut out' of the skirt to reveal skin underneath, often a star or geometric pattern. **Not appropriate** (Pictures L and M)



6) **Fly Away:** Skirts which have pleats that are not sewn together the total length of the skirt. The pleats overlap and create a solid look when standing. In sitting position, pleats will split open. There are three types of FLY-AWAY skirts.

- a. **Bi-Fly:** Skirts with 2 pleats that are not sewn at the bottom. A solid skirt with two pleats would be **appropriate**. Should be worn with boy cut briefs (Picture N).



- b. **Tri-Fly:** Skirts with 3 pleats not sewn at the bottom. This includes skirts with three open pleats at the side. Should be worn with boy cut briefs. **Appropriate** (Picture O)



- c. **Super-Fly:** Has no pleats sewn to the bottom of the skirt. In a sitting position, the pleats will split open to reveal the total leg. No pleats are connected. **Not appropriate** (Picture P)



- 7) **Hip Hugger:** A skirt that has a dropped waistline which fits on top of the hips. **Not appropriate** (Pictures Q and R)



- 8) **Side Slits:** One or both side seams are not sewn to the bottom of the skirt. It should not be greater than 1-1/2 inches from the bottom of the hemline. Usually side slits are seen on A-line skirts. **Appropriate** (Picture S)

- 9) **V-Waist:** A skirt which fits at the waist, but has a dropped V pattern in the front of the skirt. **Not appropriate** (Picture 19)



## OTHER

- 1) **Pep-Dress:** This is a one-piece garment with a skirt attached. There is less flexibility in fitting because the top and bottom are not separate. It also has a tendency to ride up whenever arms are stretched upwards. **Not appropriate** (Picture U)



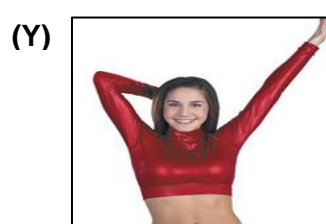
- 2) **Long Pants:** Long pants are available in a variety of styles and fabrics which may or may not be flattering to a variety of body types. Selections should be made with all body types in mind. This includes hip huggers (midribs may now be revealed). Long pants may be worn at the MCPS championship competition if they are part of the three-piece uniform that includes the pants, the body liner, and the shell top. A uniform that includes black pants must still predominantly incorporate the school colors. Long pants are **appropriate** (Picture V).



- 3) **Undergarments:** Boy-cut briefs are required (Picture W).



- 4) **Midriff Bodyliners** cannot be worn alone (must be worn under an approved top). (Pictures X and Y)



## MCPS SPIRIT TEAM PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES

The information below has been developed in accordance with the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) *Spirit Rules Book* and the *MCPS Stunt-Safe Manual*.

The promotion of positive sportsmanship is the primary responsibility of cheerleading and pompon teams. Members of spirit teams must recognize that they are important role models at athletic and community events and that their actions contribute significantly to the wholesomeness and success of the event. Through performances, they boost school spirit and have a great influence in creating a positive atmosphere. Music, choreography and apparel must be appropriate for an educational setting and for audiences that include people of all ages and beliefs.

**Following are safety, appearance, music and choreography guidelines for MCPS cheerleading and pompon teams, and non-MCPS spirit teams, participating in MCPS events. - Revised July 2019**

### **SAFETY:**

Please refer to the NFHS *Spirit Rules Book* for specific safety guidelines and situation rulings. In addition to the *Spirit Rules Book*, coaches are responsible for following proper stunt progressions as outlined in the *MCPS Stunt-Safe Manual*.

### **APPEARANCE:**

Before beginning a performance, coaches are responsible for verifying that the appearance of each team member is in accordance with the guidelines below.

- 1) **Uniforms** must be appropriate for an educational setting and age appropriate. Uniforms should be suitable for a wide variety of body types. Please refer to the uniform guidelines found in the *MCPS Cheerleading & Pompons Athletics Handbook*.
- 2) **Accessories**
  - a) Ribbons, socks, bodysuits/liners, and shoes are considered part of the uniform.
  - b) Hairpieces not regularly worn by a team member are considered an accessory.
- 3) **Jewelry and Body Piercings** are prohibited.
  - a) Adhesive body jewelry and false eyelashes are prohibited.
  - b) Religious or medical medals must be taped to the body (without chain) under the uniform.
- 4) **Fingernails** shall be kept at a length that the nails are not visible beyond the end of the fingers when viewed from the palm side of the hands.
- 5) **Glitter** is prohibited on hair, face, uniform or the body.
  - a) Glittery fabric, ribbon, etc. from which glitter cannot be removed or cannot fall off is considered legal.
  - b) "Shimmer", not glitter, in make-up is permitted.
- 6) **Decals and Face Paint** are prohibited at the MCPS Championship Competition. Raised decals are prohibited. Make-up used as face paint is prohibited.

### **MUSIC:**

- 1) Music must not contain lyrics with profane language, vulgar statements, references to drug and alcohol use, sexual content or racial epithets.
- 2) Teams are expected to bring a type-written copy of competition lyrics to all MCPS competitions.
- 3) All music used for routines and performances must comply with applicable copyright laws.

### **CHOREOGRAPHY:**

Choreography that is overtly and/or intentionally sexual, exploitive or violent is prohibited. Illegal motions include, but are not limited to:

- Gyrating
- Twerking
- Forward hip thrusting
- Fight scenarios - punching, kicking, slapping, shooting
- Upper body shaking (shimmy) in which the shoulders do not lead the movement
- Movements in which the hands rest on the pelvic bones and/or are slapping
- Gun hand positions - thumb up with fingers extend



## **SECTION III: POMPONS HANDBOOK**

### **COACHES RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **A. Resources**

When gathering information, coaches should consult these resources in the following order:

1. *MCPS High School Athletics Handbook*
2. *MCPS Cheerleading & Pompons Handbook*
3. National Federation of High Schools *Spirit Rules Book*
4. *MCPS ECA Handbook* (performance schedule requirements and coach responsibilities)
5. Athletics specialist
6. MCPS Pompons Sport Director
7. MCPS Athletics Specialist

#### **B. Administrative Responsibilities**

In addition to the administrative responsibilities outlined in the *MCPS High School Athletics Handbook*, Pompon coaches will:

1. Work collaboratively with the athletics specialist, other coaches, feeder schools, band director, and community personnel.
2. Promote and maintain a positive working relationship between teams (pompons and cheerleading - varsity and junior varsity).
3. Establish a working budget with the athletics specialist so that team members are not spending personal money on necessary materials and supplies (personal items excluded).
4. Ensure that all financial transactions, including fundraisers, are approved by the local school athletics specialist or school administrator.
5. Ensure that team financial expenses are kept to a minimum. Personal items such as shoes, socks, or apparel with names, shall be the responsibility of individual team members and will be retained by the student. Student purchases, such as expensive jackets, banquet tickets, etc., cannot be required.
6. Ensure that team members do not provide special treatment, such as baking and/or buying gifts, etc., to selected teams.
7. In accordance with the athletics specialist, approve and assume responsibility for uniform selection. Refer to the *MCPS Uniform Standards and Guidelines* included in this publication.
8. Assume responsibility for team selection, performances, practices, and activities.
9. Communicate to the team's captains their roles in the program.
10. Ensure that practice times are scheduled in appropriate facilities. For indoor practices, the team should receive its share of late, Saturday and off-site practices if other athletic and athletically related groups within the school have them. Note: schools may not rent or utilize non-MCPS facilities in order to conduct practices or performances.
11. Ensure that the performance schedule is sport and gender equitable.
12. Teach or supervise proper warm-up, cool-down, and stretching exercises to be used before, during, and following practices and performances.

13. Recognize individual and team ability levels and adjust routines accordingly.
14. Ensure music and choreography is appropriate for all routines and performances.
15. Have a written copy of all lyrics used in routines available at all times, including the MCPS Championship Competition and invitationals.
16. Establish an emergency plan with your teams in the unlikely event it is necessary to remove poms from the area quickly. A hand signal or verbal command should be agreed upon prior to the season. It is also suggested that a specific meeting area be designated at all home and away events in case of emergencies. This plan should be discussed with the athletics specialist and shared with the coaches of the visiting schools.
17. Ensure that the coach responsible for the conduct of the team accompanies the team to all practices and contests, and remains until the event is over and all team members have left school property. Performing pompons will not be allowed to gain entry at away events, unless accompanied by their coach. The team should arrive and enter the premises together.
18. Consult the school's student service learning coordinator to further assist team members who perform activities for which student service learning credits may be awarded. Participation in parades, back-to-school night, orientation sessions, etc., are examples of SSL activities.

## **POMPON EXPECTATIONS**

Well before the first instructional clinic, coaches should communicate clearly in writing what will be expected of all pompons. The list of expectations should be a collaborative effort between the coach, athletics specialist, and principal, and must meet the guidelines of this handbook and the *MCPS High School Athletics Handbook*. Each pompon will abide by the following standards:

1. Exhibit a courteous and considerate image reflecting positive sportsmanship.
2. Serve as role models for the school and community who promote a positive culture and school spirit.
3. Include only movements and words that are deemed appropriate by school officials in an educational setting and for audiences that include people of all ages and beliefs.
4. Provide support and recognition at athletic events, school functions, and community events.
5. Be courteous toward spectators and teams of other schools.
6. Offer crowd control through organized leadership and performance.
7. Ensure that cheers are positive and directed at the home athletes, spectators and fans.
8. Ensure that visitors feel welcome.
9. Refrain from the use of profanity or any other behavior school officials deem unsportsmanlike or inappropriate.
10. Attend all scheduled practices, events, and activities.
11. Wear appropriate apparel for all practices and activities.
12. Wear the assigned uniform(s) for school-coached activities only.
13. Promote and maintain a positive working relationship between teams (pompons and cheerleading - varsity and junior varsity).

**SPORTSMANSHIP**

Positive sportsmanship is conduct that requires self-control in stressful situations, healthy rivalries, courteous relations, and graceful acceptance of results. School spirit is a reflection of these attitudes and behaviors. The promotion of positive sportsmanship is the primary responsibility of spirit groups. Pompons should serve as role models for spectators. The material and timing of the presentation is crucial in the sportsmanship of spirit groups.

1. The material presented by pompons at games should be directed toward entertaining and/or motivating the crowd to support the athletic team.
2. Pompons shall never perform material that is derogatory toward officials, opposing coaches, opponents, fans or could be interpreted as offensive or obscene.
3. Pompon team members should sit together as a team to promote spirit.

Below are some guidelines concerning pompon teams and the conveying of positive sportsmanlike behavior:

1. Pompons, even though they may not be performing, should not encourage or participate in inappropriate cheers or chants, nor should they boo or encourage booing.
2. Cheers, chants and dances with suggestive words and/or motions are unacceptable.

## **TRYOUTS, PRACTICES AND TEAM FORMATION**

The coach is ultimately responsible for the selection of the team and will adhere to the following tryout guidelines:

### **1. Publicizing Tryouts**

A variety of techniques shall be used at the local school and feeder schools for the recruitment of tryout participants, so that all segments of the population can be reached. Coaches should use the following methods of communication:

- |                                 |                                    |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| a) Public address announcements | d) Newsletters                     |
| b) Flyers                       | e) Websites and school email lists |
| c) Posters                      | f) School-approved social media    |

Coaches should contact the feeder schools' physical education resource teacher, athletic coordinator, and/or principal to establish how information concerning tryouts may be distributed to eighth grade students. Tryouts must be publicized as open to both genders.

### **2. Scheduling Tryouts and the Informational Meeting**

Optional practices may begin on August 11, 2021. Teams must begin practices by August 14, 2021. For teams with more than one tryout, winter tryouts may begin on November 15, 2021.

Coaches must complete the following tasks before tryouts may begin:

- Ensure that tryout procedures are distributed in writing and approved by the school's principal and athletics specialist.
- Reserve the necessary tryout/meeting facilities with the school's business administrator.
- Provide candidates with a schedule of tryout dates and times, a detailed description of selection criteria and tryout procedures, a sample judging sheet, and a description of selection criteria for team captain(s), prior to tryouts. In addition, candidates should also be provided with the teams' policies and procedures, expectations, responsibilities, eligibility, and attendance requirements prior to tryouts.
- Coaches will develop routines for formal assessment of participants.
- Refer to the MCPS High School Athletics Handbook for information regarding the required online registration process for candidates through the ParentVue.

### **3. Selection Procedures**

Composition of the selection panel, selection criteria, and tryout procedures shall be approved by the principal and athletics specialist prior to tryouts. One of the following two selection procedures must be used:

- With prior approval from the principal and athletics specialist, the coach may select the team.
- A panel of judges (3-7 are recommended) may be used. Judges should represent equity in gender, race, ethnicity, and age. No current high school students, high school graduates from the past four years, or parents may be used. The coach(es), as well as coaches from other schools, may serve as a judge.

### **4. Captains**

The captains' roles and responsibilities, along with a list of selection criteria, must be approved by the principal and/or athletics specialist and shared with the team prior to selection.

#### **A. Selecting Captains**

There are a variety of ways to establish team captains, which include the following methods:

1. The coach may choose captains
2. The team may elect captains
3. There may be a formula for determining captains.

#### B. Captain Responsibilities

The coach must clearly communicate the following responsibilities to captain(s) or potential captain(s):

1. Leading by example
2. Performing any duties as directed by the coach
3. Acting as a liaison between the team and coach if necessary.

### **PARTICIPATION RULES & RESTRICTIONS**

1. Eligibility rules for interscholastic athletics apply to pompons with the exception that pom team members must tryout each season, if applicable, to qualify for a position on the team.
2. Students who have been selected for a position on the cheerleading team may not try out for a position on the pompons team and vice-versa. If both teams are conducting tryouts by season, students may try out for a different team in a different season.
3. Holding separate, intra-team tryouts to select a competing or performing team is not allowed.
4. Teams that enter a competition are expected to compete with their full complement of team members.
5. Pompons teams are not allowed to perform gymnastics, mounts, pyramids, or inverted moves.

### **OUT OF SEASON PARTICIPATION / SUMMER CAMPS**

1. Pompon teams shall adhere to MCPS rules and interpretations included in the *Out of Season Participation Guidelines*, available on the Coach/AD page of the MCPS website.
2. Out of season participation rules and regulations extend to volunteer coaches.
3. It is illegal for a school team to attend a camp as a team because school teams may not participate, compete, or assemble out-of-season.
4. Teams may host clinics or camps however no returning team members may participate in the clinic or camp if it is conducted or sponsored by the program/school or persons associated with the program school.
5. Returning team members may be used as clinic or camp counselors.
6. Teams may hold clinics or camps at elementary or middle schools with the permission of the principals of both schools. Appropriate information, flyers, etc. must be approved prior to distribution. Clinics must be open to both genders. All materials must be gender equitable or neutral.

## HOSTING AN INVITATIONAL POMPON COMPETITION

Schools may host their own invitational competitions. A date should be selected well in advance that does not conflict with other sports, important school-related functions (SAT exams, etc.), or the county championships. Hosting a competition should be a collaborative effort of the coach, athletics specialist, and principal and must comply with all procedures and regulations outlined in the *MCPS High School Athletics Handbook*, and this publication. Following are some additional rules and guidelines for hosting a competition.

### 1. Competition Information Packet & Host School Responsibilities

At least six weeks prior to the invitational, coaches should send competing schools a competition information packet that should include the following items:

- 1) Date and time
- 2) MCPS score sheets: Team Scoring Rubrics, Score Sheet & Score Adjustment Sheet
- 3) Directions to the school
- 4) Length/maximum time limit of the routine
- 5) Procedures concerning music (MP3s, CD's, marking of music, etc.)
- 6) Division breakdowns and criteria for being in each division
- 7) Statements explaining how and when order of performance will be determined
- 8) Entry form for teams that wish to compete
- 9) Explanation of all fees

#### **The host school has the following responsibilities:**

- 1) Provide appropriate security and supervision
- 2) Open the building at least one hour prior to competition
- 3) Post spirit signs in the designated area
- 4) Hold an orientation meeting approximately one-half hour before the start of the competition
- 5) Identify the person playing the music, or provide each team's designee with the necessary information concerning the playing of team music
- 6) Establish a designated area for drummers
- 7) Provide at least 3 judges
- 8) Identify each team's assigned waiting area if they are not to view the competition, and a seating area if they are to view the competition
- 9) Assign a hostess or host to assist teams
- 10) Encourage all participants and spectators to leave promptly after awards are presented.

Coaches and teams should honor commitments to competitions throughout the season. While circumstances may make participation difficult, schools that host additional competitions allocate funds and resources to hosting competitions.

**Pompons Invitational Competitions:**

- ❖ January 8, 2022 at Springbrook High School
- ❖ January 15, 2022 at Northwest High School
- ❖ January 22, 2022 at Blake High School
- ❖ January 29, 2022 at Seneca Valley High School
- ❖ February 5, 2022 at Blair High School – MCPS Pompons Championships

**MCPS POMPONS CHAMPIONSHIP COMPETITION**

Competition can and should be a learning experience that is different from performing at individual athletic events. Preparation and participation can increase a team's sense of achievement and cohesiveness as its members demonstrate their unique proficiencies to their peers, community members, and students in other schools. The coach, athletics specialist, and principal will ensure that competition does not take precedence over support of school athletic events. Following are specific guidelines, rules, and regulations pertaining to the administration of MCPS Pompons Invitationals and Championship Competition:

**1. General Guidelines and Procedures**

- a) The coach must have emergency medical cards available at all times.
- b) Practice session time limits must be followed.
- c) Non-performing spirit teams, including cheerleaders, may not attend the competition in uniform, nor bring poms or props.
- d) No money may be spent on extras (i.e., choreography, routines, gloves, confetti, hand held signs, balloons, special shoes, crowd handouts, props, etc.) for this competition.
- e) Body paint, face paint, tattoo transfers, glitter, and stamps are not allowed to be worn by competitors.
- f) Choreography for routines must be created by the team and/or coaches and may not be purchased. It is expected that a few parts of the routine will come from a variety of sources and experiences (i.e., camps, clinics, consultants), but the final routine must be primarily the work of the team and coach. For further clarification about consultants, refer to the *MCPS High School Athletics Handbook*.
- g) Music for routines and performances must be school appropriate and comply with applicable copyright laws.

**2. Tickets/Admission Policy**

The price of admission to each competition is \$5.00. Schools are strongly urged to pre-sell tickets to assure seating for family and friends. Pre-sale tickets will be allocated equally for each competition and distributed to athletics specialists. Schools may choose not to sell tickets; however, if their students and parents are denied entry because of a sell-out, complaints will be referred back to the local school. Coaches are responsible for returning checks, cash, tickets (or any combination) on competition day PRIOR to the start of the competition to the competition accountant an hour before the scheduled start time of the competition. It is recommended that coaches bring one school check to pay for tickets to alleviate the added stress of counting money the day of competition. Coaches and one additional chaperone will be admitted free. Only team members performing in their respective session may come in uniform. Team members attending other sessions must wear street clothes and pay admission.

### 3. Safety

- a) Coaches are reminded to recognize individual and team ability levels and limit skills accordingly. Choreography beyond the ability of the team should not be used.
- b) Prior to each competition, the competition safety judge will check team members for safety/appearance violations. Refer to the MCPS *Pompons Performance Information and Competition Deductions* included in this publication for information regarding safety and appearance deductions. This check will occur immediately following the pre-assigned practice time.
- c) Due to safety issues and congestion, cheerleaders and mascots may not be on the performance floor of the gymnasium.

**In addition to the MCPS performance guidelines which outline expectations for appearance, music and choreography, below are the safety guidelines for MCPS pompon squads and non-MCPS pompon squads participating in MCPS events.**

#### **SAFETY GUIDELINES:**

- b) Pompon squads are not permitted to do gymnastics, mounts or pyramids.
  - a) **gymnastics** – any tumbling skill including a forward/backward roll, cartwheel, etc.
  - b) **mounts** - skills in which one or more persons are supported by one or more persons; this applies to skills performed in the air or on the ground
  - c) **pyramids** – multiple mounts
- c) Pompon squads are not permitted to do inverted moves.
  - a) **inverted moves** – skills in which the head is below the waist and both feet are above the head
  - b) An **illusion** and properly executed **donkey kick** are legal; however, if even one squad member performs an illusion or donkey kick incorrectly, a penalty will be assessed.
- d) Split and thigh drops from a standing or airborne position are prohibited unless most of the weight is first borne on the hand(s) or foot/feet, or is controlled, to break the impact of the drop. **NOTE:** If even one squad member performs the drop incorrectly, a penalty will be assessed.
  - a) **split drop** – dropping with legs extended in a split
  - b) **thigh drop** – dropping with legs bent in a Z-sit
- e) Knee, front and seat drops from a standing or airborne position are prohibited.
  - a) **knee drop** – dropping directly to the knees
  - b) **front drops** – dropping to a horizontal, face-down position
  - c) **seat drops** – dropping to a seated position
- f) Dropped items which land or remain in the area of the performers create a safety hazard.
  - a) **dropped item** – any item that falls onto or is unintentionally left on the performance surface
  - b) A penalty will be assessed if an attempt is not made to remove or recover the dropped item. The only exceptions are pom streamers and standard hair ribbons.

### 4. Performance

The order of performance will be randomly determined at the preseason coaches meeting. A school may not perform first in back-to-back years within a two-year division cycle.

- a) Timing - the time limit for all divisions will be 4-6 minutes. Pompons must be used for a minimum



of two minutes during the performance. A captain's motions to signal the start of the routine are limited to a single arm extension and/or flash of a pompon. Time will begin with the first choreographed movement to drums or music no matter where the pompons team members are (i.e., lined up on an end line or in the middle of the floor, etc.) and will end as the last team member crosses the end line. Time needed for captains to exit the floor is included in the overall allotted time. Penalty for overtime will be 1 point per 15 seconds, or portion thereof.

- b) Choreography - Routines must be developed by the team and/or coaches and cannot be purchased. It is expected that a few parts of the routine may be from a variety of sources and experiences (i.e., camps, clinics, and consultants), but the final routine must be primarily the work of the team and coach. Props may not be used.
- c) Drum accompaniment may be used. Drummers are not allowed to play between team performances, prior to or after the competition while waiting for scores.
- d) A written copy of the lyrics used in the competition must be available at the competition. In the event of a deduction due to inappropriate lyrics, coaches will have an opportunity to review the music and the written lyrics with the competition staff before the winners are determined.

## **5. Music**

Music may be used for all or part of the routine. Competition music must be recorded as an MP3 file and then e-mailed to the Systemwide Athletics Compliance Specialist, Ms. Anne Rossiter at Anne\_M\_Rossiter@mcpsmd.org, by noon on Monday, January 31, 2022. The MP3 file must contain only the competition music and be clearly marked with the school name. The improved quality of the sound on MP3 is preferable for the sound system. A back up MP3 file should be submitted to the Master of Ceremonies at check-in for a sound check. All music used for routines and performances must comply with applicable copyright laws.

## **6. Uniforms**

Traditional uniforms are required at the MCPS Championship Competition. Pants will be permitted as part of the uniform. If black pants are worn, the shell and body liner must reflect the school colors. All uniforms must include a skirt or pants, a body liner, and a shell, and must be predominantly in school colors. Even with a waist length top, midribs may become exposed while dancing. Team members are encouraged to wear a bodysuit/liner under the shell.

## **7. Judging**

Efforts will be made to provide judges from a variety of pompon and dance officiating organizations. Five judges will judge all areas of each category of the performance as listed on the MCPS "Scale of Fundamental Skills". An additional judge may be used as the safety judge. High and low scores will not count toward the final tally. MCPS will follow the Pompon Performance Information and Competition Guidelines and the MCPS Pompon Competition Score Sheet. MCPS guidelines and score sheets have been distributed and discussed at preseason and postseason pompon coaches' meetings.

Ties in team scores will be broken using the following procedures:

- a) If a tie exists in team scores, the highest and lowest judge's scores will be included in the calculation of the scores for the teams which are tied;
- b) If a tie still exists, the two teams will remain tied.

Pompon teams will perform facing their fans. Judges will be positioned on the same side of the gymnasium as the school's fans. Information regarding seating for the competition will be sent to coaches in advance of the competition.

## **8. Competition Area**

The competition area is the basketball court area. A diagram of the host site's floor and gymnasium will be sent to coaches prior to the competition. Competing teams should orient their routine toward

the judges. All competitors will be in the gym unless they are performing next.

## **9. Awards**

First, second and third place teams and the spirit winners will receive awards at each competition. Each participating pompon and coach will receive an official MCPS Championship Competition pin.

## **10. Spirit Award**

The spirit award will be given to the school whose fans embody the MCPS R.A.I.S.E core values and display the most positive spirit and respect for all competitors at each competition. The spirit award categories, each worth 20 points, are enthusiasm, sportsmanship, organization, crowd interaction, and the design of the team's sign. Coaches and pompoms are asked to inform their student bodies about this special award.

## **11. School Spirit Sign**

Each team/school is expected to bring a handmade sign (no larger than 5' x 10') to be mounted on the wall to mark each school's seating area. The sign is worth 20 points toward the Spirit Award. Tape will be provided to assist in the mounting of the signs. Coaches and teams are responsible for taking signs down at the end of each competition. Spectators are not allowed to bring hand held signs, flyers, pompoms, balloons, confetti, noisemakers or routine-related props.

## **12. Pre-assigned Practice/Floor Marking Time**

Prior to the competition, teams will be allowed three minutes each to mark their routines on the floor. Schools will be provided with a warm-up and practice schedule. The master of ceremonies will be available during the team's assigned practice time. Coaches must be with their teams at all times. Additional marking times cannot be guaranteed if a team is not present for the pre-assigned times.

## **13. Other Information**

- a) Please do not bring valuables. There will be no provisions for locking up personal items.
- b) An athletic trainer will be on duty.
- c) Concessions will be available.

## **14. Divisions**

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, divisions for pompoms will remain intact for the next two-year (2021–2022 and 2022–23) scheduling cycle. The division alignments for the 2021–22 school year are:

<b>Division I</b>	<b>Division II</b>	<b>Division III</b>
James Hubert Blake	Bethesda Chevy Chase	Montgomery Blair
Damascus	Gaithersburg	Winston Churchill
Albert Einstein	Walter Johnson	Clarksburg
Col. Zadok Magruder	Richard Montgomery	John F. Kennedy
Poolesville	Northwest	Paint Branch
Quince Orchard	Rockville	Seneca Valley
Sherwood	Wheaton	Springbrook
Walt Whitman	Thomas S. Wootton	Watkins Mill
		Wheaton

# MCPS NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) prohibits illegal discrimination based on race, ethnicity, color, ancestry, national origin, nationality, religion, immigration status, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, family structure/parental status, marital status, age, ability (cognitive, social/emotional, and physical), poverty and socioeconomic status, language, or other legally or constitutionally protected attributes or affiliations. Discrimination undermines our community's long-standing efforts to create, foster, and promote equity, inclusion, and acceptance for all. Some examples of discrimination include acts of hate, violence, insensitivity, harassment, bullying, disrespect, or retaliation. The Board prohibits the use of language and/or the display of images and symbols that promote hate and can be reasonably expected to cause substantial disruption to school or district operations or activities. For more information, please review Montgomery County Board of Education Policy ACA, *Nondiscrimination, Equity, and Cultural Proficiency*. This Policy affirms the Board's belief that each and every student matters, and in particular, that educational outcomes should never be predictable by any individual's actual or perceived personal characteristics. The Policy also recognizes that equity requires proactive steps to identify and redress implicit biases, practices that have an unjustified disparate impact, and structural and institutional barriers that impede equality of educational or employment opportunities.

<b>For inquiries or complaints about discrimination against MCPS staff *</b>	<b>For inquiries or complaints about discrimination against MCPS students *</b>
Office of Human Resources and Development Department of Compliance and Investigations 850 Hungerford Drive, Room 55, Rockville, MD 20850 240-740-2888 DCI@mcpsmd.org	Office of the Chief of Districtwide Services and Supports Student Welfare and Compliance 850 Hungerford Drive, Room 162, Rockville, MD 20850 240-740-3215 SWC@mcpsmd.org
<b>For inquiries or complaints about sex discrimination under Title IX, including sexual harassment, against students or staff*</b>	
Title IX Coordinator Office of the Chief of Districtwide Services and Supports Student Welfare and Compliance 850 Hungerford Drive, Room 162, Rockville, MD 20850 240-740-3215 TitleIX@mcpsmd.org	

*\*Inquiries, complaints, or requests for accommodations for students with disabilities also may be directed to the supervisor of the Office of Special Education, Resolution and Compliance Unit, at 240-740-3230. Inquiries regarding accommodations or modifications for staff may be directed to the Office of Human Resources and Development, Department of Compliance and Investigations, at 240-740-2888. In addition, discrimination complaints may be filed with other agencies, such as: the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Baltimore Field Office, GH Fallon Federal Building, 31 Hopkins Plaza, Suite 1432, Baltimore, MD 21201, 1-800-669-4000, 1-800-669-6820 (TTY); or U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Lyndon Baines Johnson Dept. of Education Bldg., 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20202-1100, 1-800-421-3481, 1-800-877-8339 (TDD), OCR@ed.gov, or [www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/complaintintro.html](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/complaintintro.html).*

This document is available, upon request, in languages other than English and in an alternate format under the *Americans with Disabilities Act*, by contacting the MCPS Office of Communications at 240-740-2837, 1-800-735-2258 (Maryland Relay), or [PIO@mcpsmd.org](mailto:PIO@mcpsmd.org). Individuals who need sign language interpretation or cued speech transliteration may contact the MCPS Office of Interpreting Services at 240-740-1800, 301-637-2958 (VP) or [MCPSInterpretingServices@mcpsmd.org](mailto:MCPSInterpretingServices@mcpsmd.org). MCPS also provides equal access to the Boy/Girl Scouts and other designated youth groups.





# R.A.I.S.E.

- RESPECT & SPORTSMANSHIP
- ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE
- INTEGRITY & CHARACTER
- SPIRITED & SAFE COMPETITION
- EQUITY & ACCESS

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