



Standard Operating Procedures

Middle School Cheerleader Handbook

APPROVED: 10-21-24

Middle School Cheerleader Handbook

Policy Cross Reference Sheet

This handbook is an administrative procedure of the District and subject to policies adopted by the Board of Trustees. In case of conflict between administrative procedures and Board policy, policy shall prevail.

Superintendent Signature: 

Date of Superintendent Approval: 10-21-24

Version Number: (i.e. "2020.1") 2024.1

The contents of this handbook relate to the following Board policies:

Policy	Title	Page(s)
FM (Legal)	STUDENT ACTIVITIES	*
FM (Local)	STUDENT ACTIVITIES	*
FO (Legal)	STUDENT DISCIPLINE	9-10
	Student Code of Conduct	9-10
FNG (Local)	Student Rights and Responsibilities – Student and Parent Complaints/Grievances	10

* The above listed policies relate to areas in which Student Activities are necessary. This handbook speaks directly to Middle School Cheer.

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Introduction

Philosophy

The Board believes that student activities provide opportunities for students to practice and demonstrate the attributes of the Profile of a Graduate. As such, the District shall encourage participation in student activities, engage students through inclusive and collaborative experiences, and allow students the opportunity to create and participate in student organizations and student groups.

This handbook becomes effective immediately for the tryout process in the current school year and remains in effect for successful candidates throughout the period until tryouts begin the following calendar year.

Fort Bend ISD Athletics Mission/Profile of a Graduate

FBISD Athletics exists to inspire and equip student athletes with responsibility, values, sportsmanship, and teamwork through participation in sports so they can pursue futures beyond what they can imagine.

Cheerleaders will exhibit the FBISD Profile of a Graduate, including being a collaborative team member.

Fort Bend ISD prohibits discrimination, including harassment, against any student on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, gender, national origin, age, disability, or any other basis prohibited by law. No qualified disabled student shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any Fort Bend ISD service, program, or activity.

Fort Bend ISD provides supplementary non-academic aids and extracurricular services determined appropriate and necessary to afford children with disabilities an equal opportunity for participation in those services and activities. Any student with a disability requiring reasonable accommodations for participation in any Fort Bend ISD service, program, or activity should contact their campus to request a meeting of their student's Section 504 committee or ARD Committee.

Questions regarding Fort Bend ISD policies and procedures relating to students with disabilities should be addressed to Dr. Deena Hill, Executive Director of Student Support Services and Special Education, at 281-634-1143 or Deena.Hill@Fortbendisd.com.

GENERAL SAFETY GUIDELINES

Basic Safety Guidelines

- Coach in accordance with American Association of Cheerleading Coaches and Administrators (AACCA) Safety Standards.
- The cheerleading Coach or other knowledgeable designated school representative (with Principal approval) will be in attendance at all practices and functions to supervise the cheerleading.
- All cheerleaders shall receive proper training before attempting any form of cheerleading gymnastics (i.e., tumbling, partner stunts, pyramids, and jumps.)
- All partner stunts shall be mastered according to the “partner stunt progressions” before attempting a new level of difficulty. (See Coach)
- All practice sessions shall be held in a location suitable for the activities of cheerleaders (i.e. use of tumbling mats, away from excess noise and distractions, etc.)
- Training in proper spotting techniques shall be mandatory for all squads attempting gymnastics.
- Jewelry, accessories, and apparel that is not conducive to safe performance is prohibited.
- Warm-up exercises and stretching shall precede all practice sessions, pep rallies, games, competitions, and other physical activity.
- All cheerleading squads shall develop a conditioning and strength-building program.
- The cheering surface, location, lighting, and weather conditions shall be taken into consideration before engaging in physical activity.
- Coach recognizes the entire squad’s ability level and limit the squad’s activities accordingly.
- Cheerleaders shall not be permitted to stunt while the football (or other sport) team is in play, regardless of distance from cheerleaders.
- An emergency plan must be in place and practiced in case of an emergency.
NO COACH, NO PRACTICE!!!!

Competition Guidelines

Designation as a Competition Squad:

- The squad is a competition squad as decided by the Coach and Principal.
- All members are expected to prepare for competitions.

Safety:

- According to University Interscholastic League (UIL) regulations - CHEERLEADERS; SPIRIT GROUPS "All cheer and spirit performances at any UIL activity shall be in accordance with safety standards as prescribed by the National Federation High School Spirit Handbook."
- All cheerleaders shall be required to attend a professionally run cheerleading camp.

Attending Competitions:

- The coach must accompany the squad to any competition.
- Transportation will be available for competition at sites off-campus. The campus will be responsible for providing a certified driver for the transportation vehicle.

Outside Hired Choreographers/Coaches:

- All choreographers or coaches must be familiar with UIL competition and FBISD guidelines.

Competition Guidelines:

- Competition guidelines shall comply with the regulations outlined in the National Federation High School Spirit Handbook (See safety guidelines and reference material included in this handbook.)

Coach Duties

Coaches Responsibilities and Duties include but are not limited to the following:

- Make schedules for competitions, uniforms, practices, etc.
- Assign duties in all activities.
- Promptly inform all cheerleaders of changes in schedule, upcoming events, etc.
- Provide announcements to campus administration.
- Determine choice of uniforms for games and pep rallies and communicate proactively to cheerleaders.
- Approve all ideas, cheers, stunts, skits, signs, etc.; no cheer will be performed without Coach's approval.
- Recommend to the administration suspension or removal from the squad.
- Follow all District procedures related to procurement, fundraising and collection of money. Be responsible for current inventory of all items ordered.
- Monitor grades, tardies, absences, and conduct of each cheerleader with teachers and grade level Principal.
- Attend all of the following:
 1. Summer camp and competition
 2. Tryouts
 3. Games when cheerleaders are officially cheering or other knowledgeable designated school representative (with Principal approval)

4. Outside training for squad (gym, clinics, etc.)

*In case of Coach absence, a designated school official (with Principal approval) will be in attendance.

- Ensure all routines are safe and that those routines will not cause serious injury.
- Ensure that the equipment is maintained for cheerleaders as outlined in the District's equipment policy. The coach is responsible for issuing and collecting school purchased equipment and uniforms.
- Monitor all activities for compliance with the National Federation Spirit Handbook and the AACCA Safety Certification guidelines.
- Organize and practice an emergency plan that is approved by the feeder HS Campus Head Athletic Trainer.

Expectations

CHEERLEADING IS A TEAM SPORT, AND ALL CHEERLEADERS ARE REQUIRED TO BE PRESENT.

FBISD SUMMER CHEER CAMP IS MANDATORY W/ SAFETY TRAINING.

ALL CHEERLEADERS WILL BE EXPECTED TO FOLLOW ALL THE RULES OF CONDUCT AS OUTLINED IN THE FORT BEND ISD STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT AND STUDENT/PARENT HANDBOOK.

ALL CHEERLEADERS WILL BE EXPECTED TO DISPLAY POSITIVE LEADERSHIP QUALITIES IN ATTITUDE, BEHAVIOR, SPORTSMANSHIP AND SCHOOL SPIRIT ALIGNED TO THE PROFILE OF A GRADUATE.

Smoking/Vaping:

The use or possession of any tobacco or vaping products is prohibited and warrants a consequence as outlined to the Student Code of Conduct.

Unexcused Absence:

An unexcused absence is defined as the failure to attend any scheduled cheerleading activity (sample listing below) as determined by Coach without prior permission from Coach. Any outside activity, including a job and/or participating on another cheer squad, is an invalid reason for missing a scheduled cheerleading activity. Vacations should be scheduled around summer practices and camps.

- After school practices
- Saturday practices
- Evening practices
- Summer practices
- Games
- Pep rallies
- Cheerleader fundraisers
- Cheerleader community projects
- Leaving or arriving halfway through practice
- Any other scheduled activity by the coach

Excused Absence:

Each cheerleader will be permitted five (5) excused absences from the current tryout year to the following tryout year. Any cheerleader who has six (6) or more excused absences will be considered to have excessive absences and will face disciplinary action beginning with the sixth absence. Cheerleading is a team sport, and all cheerleaders are required to be present. An excused absence is defined as follows:

- **School-Related Activity** – A written 48-hour notification to the Coach signed by the school official.
- **Family Death** – Verbal communication to the Coach by parent/guardian followed by written notification.
- **Illness** – Verbal communication to the Coach from the parent followed by written notification, even if the child was not in school. If a cheerleader does not feel well enough to participate, the Coach has the discretion to send the child home under an excused absence.
- **Doctor Appointments** – With written 48-hour notification to Coach signed by parent/guardian.

Note: Verbal communication may consist of personal communications, telephone, voice mail, or notice to the Coach's mailbox by school attendants.

Absences for Religious Holidays per FBISD will be excluded from any count. Verbal communication to the Coach by the parent is required.

Tardies:

Any cheerleader 5 minutes late to any cheerleading activity will be considered tardy. Three tardies shall be considered an unexcused absence.

Appropriate Dress

All cheerleaders shall abide by the proper dress code when at practices, games, school-related events, or any other cheerleader activity. The Coach will determine specific dress in compliance with the FBISD Student Code of Conduct.

Uniforms

All cheerleaders are expected to maintain their uniforms with care and are permitted to perform only in clean uniforms. See AACCA and NFHS safety rules for compliance. When in uniform, cheerleaders should refrain from the following:

- Chewing gum
- Wearing nail polish
- Long fingernails
- Wearing jewelry
- Wrong socks
- Missing hair bow

Stunting without Approval:

For safety purposes, all stunting must be approved in advance by the Coach. Stunting is not permitted without Coach approval and a Coach in attendance.

Inappropriate Behavior/Disrespect

Cheerleaders are expected to be role models and ambassadors of goodwill for their schools and follow the FBISD Profile of a Graduate. Therefore, all cheerleaders are expected to exhibit appropriate behavior. The following shall be considered inappropriate behavior and subjected to discipline:

- Public display of affection (PDA)
- Report of misconduct by other teachers, administrators, and/or parents

- Distractions during practice/game/pep rallies
- Non-spirited attitude
- Unsportsmanlike conduct/Derogatory statements
- Disobedient behavior/non-compliance
- Bullying/harassing behavior
- Cyberbullying
- Fighting
- Disruptive behavior that substantially impacts the educational environment

Deadlines/Responsibilities

Cheerleaders are expected to fulfill all responsibilities and meet all deadlines as established by Coach.

Financial Responsibility

No student will be denied the opportunity of trying out for a Cheerleading squad when the cost of required expenses and fees is a financial barrier. Parents shall be informed about cost of participating prior to tryouts. Parents should contact the Coach to discuss available options to meet financial obligations.

School Provides:

Items determined by the Coach with approval from District Athletic Office to include but not limited to, cheer uniform, equipment, and supplies.

Individual Provides:

- Camp expenses (including travel)
- Clothing and Accessories are not purchased with District funds. Itemized estimate(s) will be provided by the Coach at the pre-tryout meeting.
- Gym rentals/Choreography determined by the Coach.

Fundraisers:

Cheerleaders will have opportunities to participate in program fundraisers to defer additional costs not provided by the school. Please contact Coach prior to tryouts with any additional questions regarding financial responsibilities.

Cheerleader Discipline

All cheerleaders are expected to follow all the rules of conduct as outlined in the Fort Bend ISD Student Code of Conduct, the Fort Bend ISD Student/Parent Handbook - Extracurricular Section, and other rules developed by campus Coach.

These rules apply to all cheerleaders during their selected term.

Loss of Privilege – Deferred Adjudication, Probation, Felony or Class A Misdemeanor:

A student in grades 6 through 8 may lose the privilege of participation in extracurricular activities during any period of deferred adjudication or probation. School Counselors will assist Coaches in obtaining a release of related documentation.

A student in grades 6 through 8 shall lose the privilege of participation in extracurricular activities during any period:

- While under indictment for a felony; or
- While awaiting a final determination of guilt or innocence in connection with either a felony or any offense punishable as a Class A Misdemeanor, whether the felony or offense was committed on or off campus.

Loss of Privilege – Possession, Under the Influence, or Intent to Distribute:

Possessing, selling, or distributing marijuana, alcohol, a controlled substance, a dangerous drug, abuseable glue, aerosol paint, or any other mood-changing, mind altering, or behavior affecting drug such as vape pens containing THC, is strictly prohibited and will result in elimination from further participation in all extracurricular activities for:

- First Offense: one calendar year.
- Second Offense: for the remainder of the student's school career.

Loss of Privilege – Suspension, DAEP, Expulsion:

A student in grades 6-8 shall lose the privilege of participation in extracurricular activities during any period of suspension, placement in Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP), or expulsion.

- DAEP Placement: Any cheerleader receiving placement in DAEP will be ineligible to cheer for the remainder of the cheerleading season.

ISS/OSS Placement:

Any cheerleader receiving a placement in ISS or OSS will lose privileges in extracurricular activities and will be ineligible to cheer for the duration of the placement in ISS/OSS. These consequences shall not be enforced on top of any other loss of privilege or other removals.

- 1st Offense – Minimum 1 game suspension
- 2nd Offense – Minimum 1 game suspension
- 3rd Offense – Removal from the program

Disciplinary Recourse:

Upon determination of a student's removal from participation in school-coached extracurricular activities, the following will occur:

- The Coach will communicate to the student and the student's parents the terms of the removal.
- The Coach will notify the campus Principal and the District Athletic Director in writing of the terms of the removal.
- The student may be referred to counselors, and/or drug and alcohol education programs, as appropriate.
- The student or parent may appeal the student's loss of extracurricular privileges through the process outlined in Policy FNG (LOCAL).
- **If a member of the current cheer squad is removed from the team after tryouts, he/she will forfeit their position for the following year as well. If a candidate makes the squad and later chooses not to be on the squad, he/she also forfeits tryouts for the following year. He/she will only be able to tryout subsequent years after the forfeited year has been served and if the student meets eligibility status.**

Additional Rules of Conduct:

In addition to the rules of conduct specified in the Conduct Rules section, students who participate in the cheerleading squad shall comply with the following rules.

- Comply with rules and expectations outlined by District officials and staff;
- Participate in every practice, competition/performance and event required by the Coach, unless the coach has granted an excused absence;
- Arrive promptly, properly attired, for every practice, competition, etc., unless the Coach has

- granted an excused absence;
- Adhere to the grooming standards provided by the Coach;
- Demonstrate sportsmanlike behavior;
- Demonstrate a positive attitude;
- Be courteous and polite to others.

Failure to meet these and other expectations may result in disciplinary action at the Coach's discretion.

Resolution Process

Concerns should always be addressed first with the coach. If no resolution can be reached, other campus staff may need to be involved. Always follow the proper chain of command when attempting to address a problem:

1. Coach
2. Campus Athletics Coordinator over Cheerleading
3. Campus Administrator over Cheerleading
4. Campus Principal
5. District Athletics Office

Composition of Squad

Cheer candidates must reside within the attendance boundaries of the campus they are trying out. Residency and student transfer information will be confirmed at the campus prior to tryouts to determine eligibility.

Each school will have a cheerleader **squad of at least twelve (12) cheerleaders (NO MORE THAN 16)**, made up of seventh and eighth grade students. Cheerleader eligibility will be based on the FBISD cheerleader requirements and skills and a merit system to include conduct, grades, and citizenship. The top 12 candidates will be selected, with no designated number, from either grade. Teams may consist of less than twelve if the number of candidates trying out is fewer than 12.

Requirement to Tryout

Eligible candidates for cheerleading, mascots, and managers must meet the following qualifications:

Academic Standing

- Meet and maintain University Interscholastic League (UIL) and District academic eligibility standards.
- Must not have received more than two total failing grades on the first (T-1) and second (T-2) nine weeks grading reports for the current school year. Current sixth graders must be academically eligible at the time of tryouts.
- Students must have good attendance.

1. **School Behavior** - See exhibit D - Administrative Seal of Approval for Indicators related to a student's ability to tryout.

Results:

- Each judge will score each candidate's performance using a numeric scale (see exhibit B). The judge must initial any change to a rating or sum of ratings.
- Scores from each judge are tabulated to yield one total score for each candidate.
- Candidate's total scores are ranked in numerical order.
- Candidates with the highest rankings are selected as cheerleader according to cheerleader numbers specified at each campus.
- A tiebreaker system will be utilized when necessary to break ties when it involves making the team or determining alternates. The tiebreaker will consist of taking the scores from the candidate's first tryout, specifically scores from: entrance, voice projection, jumps, motions, and overall impression. If after tabulating the scores the candidate with the higher score, will receive an additional .5 points to break the tie. If after the tiebreaker, scores are still tied, the candidates will then be brought back out to perform for the judges again and will be scored on entrance, voice projection, jumps, motions, and overall impression.
- Results will be released after the completion of tryouts on a date and time determined by the campus.
- Due to federal privacy laws protecting student records, no person is permitted to view the evaluation forms of other candidates.
- Appeals of the cheerleading tryout process, including final results, must take place at the campus level. Grounds for appeal may be made in reference to mathematical calculations or procedural impropriety only. Appeals must occur within five (5) school days, and during school business hours once final results have been announced.
- Appeal results/decisions will be final at the campus level.

EXHIBIT A –Selection Rubric

Scoresheet Categories

Scoring Criteria

Entrance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School spirit incorporation • Energy • Smile
Voice Projection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent/Loud voice projection/Showmanship(4-5 points) • Good medium voice projection/Showmanship (2-3 points) • Fair low voice projection/Showmanship (0-1 points)
Jumps	<p>Toe touch, hurdler, and pike in any order</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hyperextended (4-5 points) • Level (2-3 points) • Below level (0-1 points)
Motions	<p>Based on sharpness and correct motion placement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent technique (4-5 points) • Good technique (2-3 points) • Fair technique (0-1 points)
Tumbling	<p>Potential points are based off of execution of skill and clean technique</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backtucks and above (4-5 points) • Back handsprings series (3 points) • Back handspring single (2 points) • Roundoff, Cartwheel, FWO (0-1 points)
Memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent execution, no mistakes (4-5 points) • Good execution, few mistakes (2-3 points) • Fair execution, many mistakes (0-1 points)
Dance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent technique (4-5 points) • Good technique/placement (2-3 points) • Fair technique/placement (0-1 points)
Overall Impression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent overall impression (4-5 points) • Good overall impression (2-3 points) • Fair overall impression (0-1 points)

EXHIBIT B – MS Tryout Judges Score Sheet

MIDDLE SCHOOL CHEERLEADER TRYOUT JUDGES SCORE SHEET CHEERLEADER

CANDIDATE # _____

IN EACH CATEGORY, CIRCLE THE SCORE THAT BEST REFLECTS THE PERFORMANCE OF THE CANDIDATE BASED ON SELECTION RUBRIC USING THE RATING SCALE PROVIDED BELOW.

IF YOU MAKE A MISTAKE ON THE SCORESHEET, PLEASE CROSS OUT THE INCORRECT MARK AND INITIAL EACH MISTAKE IN THE SAME MANNER AS AT THE BOTTOM OF THIS SHEET.

ENTRANCE	0	1	2	3	4	5
VOICE PROJECTION	0	1	2	3	4	5
JUMPS	0	1	2	3	4	5
MOTIONS	0	1	2	3	4	5
TUMBLING	0	1	2	3	4	5
MEMORY	0	1	2	3	4	5
DANCE	0	1	2	3	4	5
OVERALL IMPRESSION	0	1	2	3	4	5

JUDGE NUMBER _____ JUDGE'S INITIALS _____

TOTAL SCORE _____

EXHIBIT C – MS Tryout Judges Score Sheet- MASCOT

MIDDLE SCHOOL CHEERLEADER TRYOUT JUDGES SCORE SHEET **MASCOT**

1. CANDIDATE # _____

IN EACH CATEGORY, CIRCLE THE SCORE THAT BEST REFLECTS THE PERFORMANCE OF THE CANDIDATE USING THE RATING SCALE PROVIDED BELOW.

RATING SCALE:

0=NOT PRESENT

1=POOR

2=WELL BELOW AVERAGE

3=BELOW AVERAGE

4=AVERAGE

5=ABOVE AVERAGE

6=WELL ABOVE AVERAGE

7=EXCELLENT

8=SUPERIOR

IF YOU MAKE A MISTAKE ON THE SCORESHEET, PLEASE CROSS OUT THE INCORRECT MARK AND INITIAL EACH INCORRECT MARK IN THE SAME MANNER AS AT THE BOTTOM OF THIS SHEET. THANK YOU.

TECHNIQUE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
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STAGE PRESENCE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
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CREATIVITY	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
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SPIRIT / ENTHUSIASM	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
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OVERALL IMPRESSION	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
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JUDGE NUMBER _____

TOTAL SCORE _____

JUDGE'S INITIALS _____

EXHIBIT D – Administrative Seal of Approval

Administrative Seal of Approval

- *The contents of this document should be carefully considered prior to approving a student for participation in campus Cheerleading tryouts.*
- *The Administrative Seal of Approval (ASA) should be completed by the student's assigned alpha split/grade level administrator OR by the supervising administrator over the Cheerleading program.*
- *The Coach for the campus should prepare one copy of the ASA for each candidate with student name and school and then submit all prepared ASAs at the same time to the administrator who will approve/deny.*
- *ASAs should NOT be given to the student to submit to her/his administrator.*
- *In the interest of expediency, it is permissible for the Coach to provide input to the administrator on any areas of concern with a given candidate prior to approval/denial.*

Name _____ School _____

Cheerleaders are a representation of our middle school. They should always adhere to all district/campus rules. If you believe this student would be a good representative and has no serious discipline issues on campus or on the cheer squad, please sign and date below.

Below are the key indicators for whether or not an administrator should approve a student to participate in Cheerleading tryouts:

- This candidate is on schedule to graduate and possesses the credits to meet graduation requirements on time with their graduation year cohort.
- Candidates may not have received more than a total of two failing grades for T1 and T2.
- Candidates must have shown compliance with compulsory attendance laws. This means that, in order to participate in Cheerleading tryouts, a student must have been in attendance at 90% of all classes at the time of the signing of this document in order to be considered as in compliance. Again, due to possible unforeseen circumstances related to the COVID-19 or other pandemic, it is at the discretion of the coaches and/or campus administration to allow leniency in this area.
- All cheerleaders are expected to follow all the rules of conduct as outlined in the "Fort Bend ISD Student/Parent Handbook", "Fort Bend ISD Student Code of Conduct" and other rules specific to that campus's cheer program that may be developed by the campus Coaches with the approval of the campus principal.
- The candidate has not received excessive discipline referrals for the previous Cheer year (ex.: for March 2024 tryouts, student should not have excessive discipline referrals for the 2023-24 school year).

Grounds for NOT signing this document MAY INCLUDE but are not limited to:

- Student has excessive documented discipline referrals in violation of the “FBISD Student Code of Conduct”.
- Student has been absent for more than 10% of any of her/his classes.
- Student has failed more than two classes for the T1 or T2 grading periods.
- Misconduct on the Cheer squad that was not a violation of the “FBISD Student Code of Conduct” (ex.: excessive missed practices, missing major Cheer event(s) with little/no notice, consistent disrespectful behavior with teammates or coaches, persistent violations of other team rules, etc.).
- Student was selected for Cheer squad in a previous school year and quit the team at any point after the teams were named.
- Student was removed from the Cheer squad during the current school year for any reason (ex.: student made the team in the spring of 2023, was removed in the fall of 2023 – s/he cannot try out for Cheer in the spring of 2024).

***Any other rule violation or potential obstacle to a student successfully participating in _____ Cheer for the _____ school year not listed above may be used as grounds for not signing the Administrative Seal of Approval. The student/parent will be notified by the coach if she/he did not receive the Administrative Seal of Approval. If a student/parent wishes to receive clarification or further information on why approval was not given, they may contact their student’s grade level/alpha split administrator.

Administrator: _____

Date: _____

