

LANIER HIGH SCHOOL

Cheerleading Handbook

Longhorn Cheerleading

2024-2025



Purpose and Mission

The purpose of Lanier cheerleading is to:

- * promote and uphold team spirit for those we encounter,
- * develop good sportsmanship by example,
- * promote good relations in the community,
- * support high school athletics

Our mission is to:

- * build character
- * develop habits and desires for self-discipline
- * increase self-esteem
- * establish and develop integrity
- * allow athletes a place to enjoy the feeling of accomplishment

We will help students grow and mature, both physically and emotionally, resulting in citizens who embody the LHS ethical principles. We believe learning these qualities in high school prepares you to succeed later in life. Cheer team members must understand the impact their behaviors, good or otherwise, have on others based on their chosen and earned role as a student athlete. These guidelines are made so we can have fun, be safe, work hard, and develop character qualities that make us successful. Excellence is expected.

Coaches

Linsey Mathews- Linsey.S.Mathews@gcpsk12.org

Jessica Willingham- Jessica.Willingham@gcpsk12.org

Jenna Cwikla- Jenna.Cwikla@gcpsk12.org

Kallie Black- Kallie.Black@gcpsk12.org

Emma Ross- Emma.Ross@gcpsk12.org

Anzlee Erickson- Anzlee.Erickson@gcpsk12.org

Expectations

Section 1: Athlete

- Promote and maintain positive relationships with faculty, administration, the student body, and work cooperatively with all school organizations.
- Show the highest level of respect. Disrespect will not be tolerated. Disrespect may result in disciplinary consequences.
- Adhere to all rules and regulations of the Lanier High School Handbook
- Participate in ALL games or competitions regardless of holidays or breaks
- Participate in ALL fundraisers
- Attend camp(s), practices, and conditioning sessions
- Maintain high academic and moral standards
- Attend all practices
- Represent the school with spirit and pride at various functions
- Keep a positive attitude
- Athletes need to personally notify THEIR COACH of any schedule conflicts well in advance.
- Do not publicly (verbally or electronically) criticize LHS, LHS Cheer, teammates, and/or coaches.
- Cheerleaders must maintain good sportsmanship and will not criticize other schools, teams, or opponents.
- Cheerleaders that do not complete the committed season with the Lanier Cheerleading Program will not have the opportunity to try out the following season for the Lanier Cheerleading Program.

Section 2: Parents

- Review the expectations with your athlete and be sure they understand there will be consequences for unacceptable behaviors
- Provide transportation to and from various events required by the team, if necessary - Support your athlete and team by attending competitions
- Help support the LHS Cheer Booster Club.
- Volunteer in areas where you can make a difference and help keep the program running.
- Participate in fundraisers
- Support the decisions made by the coach even when it does not fall in the favor of your specific athlete.
- Give positive support to their children through success and failure.
- Refrain from negative comments aimed at the opposition, officials, or coaches. - -
- Allow the coaching staff to do their job without interference.
- Coaches WILL NOT discuss issues directly after games, competitions, or practices.
- Come to the understanding that the coaching staff will communicate to each athlete their role on their team.

- Competition: Understand that coaches WILL NOT discuss alternate positions. If there are concerns, the athlete will first discuss in person with their coach. Refer to Concerns/Problems for the procedure process if necessary, to go further.

It is mandatory that parents and athletes follow the rules and expectations of the LHS Cheerleading Handbook as well as those of the LHS Student Handbook and GHSA Guidelines. Failure to do so will result in consequences.

Section 3: Commitment

Being a member of a LHS Cheerleading Program requires major commitment from athletes and their families. We encourage athletes to be well-rounded students and to be involved in multiple extracurricular activities; however, it is important that the athletes understand the necessity of time management. Your commitment to Lanier cheerleading comes first. Absences such as work or all-star events will not be excused. Cheerleaders are expected to attend all practices, games, and competitions. Please make note of the dates on the calendar. It is your responsibility to keep up with these dates. Excused and unexcused absences will be addressed by each coach involved. All athletes are expected to report on the first day of practice and for the duration of the tryout period as well as the entire season of the sport. Without prior approval, if a non-school related activity conflicts with participation on a school sponsored team, the coach will have the authority to remove the athlete from the team for failure to support his/her commitment to the school sponsored program. In addition, coaches may remove athletes they feel are not keeping with the philosophy of the team or the expectations of the program.

Commitment for Football & Basketball Requirements: Must attend 90% of the games in order to letter. See Lettering Policy!

Section 4: Behavior

A. School Behavior- Each athlete is expected to be a leader by maintaining good behavior in all classes and activities. If an athlete is disciplined by a teacher or administrator for any reason, the coach will reference the discipline policy and apply appropriate consequences. Cheerleaders must follow ALL school rules, including the dress code. It is expected that athletes should report any issues to the coaching staff before a teacher notification.

B. General Behavior- The following behaviors are NOT allowed by LHS Cheerleading standards. Violations will be evaluated by the coaches and appropriate consequences will be given. (Consequences may be, but not limited to benching, suspensions, and removal from the team.):

- Profane language
- Undesirable or immoral behavior
- Instigating conflict
- Bullying
- Posturing to Fight and/or Fighting
- Recording and/or encouraging fights
- Overt display of affection

- Plagiarism
- Forgery
- Skipping/AWOL from class, leaving, being out of class without permission
- Stealing
- CHEMICAL USE- A zero tolerance policy for chemical use will be strictly enforced. Such usage violates legal and ethical standards and imposes unreasonable long term health risks on the user. Disciplinary action will be taken against any athlete that participates in the use of, distribution of, or association with other persons in use or possession of any illegal drugs including alcohol. Discipline will range from suspension to permanent dismissal from the LHS Athletic Program and all sports associated with Gwinnett County Schools.

C. Squad Behavior/Appearance-

- Always have a positive attitude
- **Do not wear jewelry while cheering at any time. Body piercings are included** •
- Fingernails should be kept short and should not have color on them. No fake nails. Nails will not exceed the tips of fingers. If you can see your nails with palms facing-they will need to be cut immediately.
- Keep hair pulled up in a high ponytail and away from face with the proper bow.
- Do not make excuses
- Refrain from chewing gum while in uniform or at practice
- Be willing to properly prioritize time, interests, talents, and personal feelings or opinions for the good of the team
- LHS cheerleading must be a priority. Do not accept a job or take on another task that will interfere.
- Public display of affection is not allowed in or out of uniform or school insignia
- Cheerleaders will be pulled from the line-up if they are acting inappropriately, performing below expectations, and/or they do not know material until such time as they are properly prepared and have perfected materials to the LHS standard. This is not an excused absence.
- Cheerleaders are responsible for their FULL uniform to all cheerleading activities.
- Cheerleaders are expected to be COMPLETELY dressed (no-show sports bra, uniform, bloomers, warm-up, white/black no-show socks, cheer shoes, and bow).
- Cheerleaders are required to have proper practice clothes at every practice. This includes shirt, shorts, cheer shoes, hair tie, etc.
- Uniforms and shoes should be well kept at all times.
- No excessive makeup is allowed and cheerleaders should refrain from primping in public (applying lotion, makeup, deodorant). Tattoos cannot be visible. Hair cannot be dyed an unnatural or distracting color.
- Sweats, pajamas, crocs/uggs, slippers are not part of the uniform and should never be worn with uniforms or warm-ups.
- Cheerleaders should exhibit mature and appropriate behavior at all public functions.

You may have extra conditioning, be benched, suspended, or removed from the squad for failure to follow any of the above expected behaviors.

Requirements

Section 1: Participation

As participation in LHS cheerleading is a privilege and not a right, LHS Cheer is authorized to set higher standards for participants than would be set for those students who choose not to participate in these activities. Important goals of the program are to give students direction in developing character, self-discipline, responsibility, pride, loyalty, leadership, teamwork, respect, and healthy living habits.

Section 2: Academics

LHS Cheerleaders are required to maintain academic eligibility per GHSA, GCPS and LHS policies. Simply stated: student first, athlete second! Being a student is why you are at LHS, being a cheerleader is a choice made while you're here. Cheerleading will never be an acceptable reason for grades to falter. Grades are checked weekly by the coaches. Failing one or more classes during or concluding the semester may result in the following consequences: attend a study hall with the academic teacher until the grades are brought up to passing and benched until grades meet requirements. If a cheerleader is benched for academic reasons, she is expected to sit in full uniform, by the coach, not on her phone, and may be required to work on missing assignments during that time.

To be eligible to participate, practice, and/or try out in interscholastic activities, a student must be academically eligible. Although coaches and the athletic department will look at this information, it is the responsibility of the athlete and their parents to be aware of the athlete's academic standing.

A student is required to pass classes that carry at least 2.5 Units counting toward graduation the semester immediately preceding participation.

(a) First-year students (entering 9th grade) are eligible academically. Second semester first-year students must have passed courses carrying at least 2.5 units the previous semester in order to participate.

(b) Second-year students must have accumulated five (5) total units in the first year, AND passed courses carrying at least 2.5 units in the previous semester.

(c) Third-year students must have accumulated eleven (11) units in the first and second years, AND passed courses carrying at least 2.5 units in the previous semester.

(d) Fourth-year students must have accumulated seventeen (17) units in the first three years, AND passed courses carrying at least 2.5 units in the previous semester.

(e) Students may accumulate the required units for participation during the school year and eligibility will be reinstated at the beginning of the next semester.

Section 3: Safety (Per GHSA)

- A. Jewelry cannot be worn during cheerleading activities. You may NOT put a band-aid over new piercings.
- B. Hair must be secured away from the face and off of the shoulders in a medium to high ponytail (No low ponytails). No hard clips, hair decor etc... should be used.
- C. Fingernails must be short (cannot be over the edge of finger; nail salons will not cut them short enough).

- D. No stunting or tumbling unless under the direct supervision of the coach.
- E. Appropriate clothing and shoes must be worn at all times.
- F. No chewing gum, etc... while engaging in cheer activities.
- G. Never perform stunts and/or tumbling during public appearances that have not been practiced to perfection.
- H. There are inherent risks, mostly due to stunting and tumbling, for cheerleaders. All safety guidelines must be followed to ensure the utmost safety of all participants. Therefore, a coach should approve any new stunt and/or tumbling skill before it is attempted.
- I. Cheerleaders must be attentive and focused while engaged in cheerleading activities. This is especially important during basketball games due to the proximity of the cheerleaders to the game.
- J. Cheerleaders must report any physical problems to their coach as soon as the problem arises. Failure to do so could cause further problems and jeopardize the safety of others.
- K. Cheerleaders **MUST** obtain a doctor's release before resuming any cheerleading activity after an injury or illness requiring a doctor's visit.

Attendance

Section 1: General Expectations

- Cheerleaders are expected to be at practice in their practice clothes, unless absent from school (see below)
- In high school, cheerleaders are expected to communicate logistics with their coaches themselves, not their parents unless under extraordinary circumstances the cheerleader is not able to communicate.
- If a cheerleader needs to miss any part of a cheerleading function, she must tell the coach in person (do not send word or send an email unless you are absent from school due to illness, etc...). The coach must approve the miss. Any unapproved misses will result in a one game suspension.
- No other non-school activity may interfere with cheerleading practice. An agreement must be made between the teacher/coach for simultaneous school-related activities.
- Competition cheerleaders are expected to attend every competition, even if the cheerleader is an alternate.
- Additionally, the squads are expected to attend all other required activities including, but not limited to: fundraisers, team building activities, camps, pep rallies, community service, and all other school functions to show unified school spirit to other teams at LHS.
- To be considered present, they must be at school for 3.5 periods or leave after 12:00 pm.

Section 2: Absences

The coach will determine if the absence is excused or not. A cheerleader who must miss a practice and who is NOT absent from school **MUST** discuss the situation with the coach prior to the absence and is responsible for obtaining all information discussed at practice. If you are absent from school, please notify the coach of the absence.

1. A cheerleader must have a doctor's excuse on every missed function after the third absence.
2. In general, if a cheerleader is well enough to be at school, you are well enough to be at practice.

* Missing a function due to a regular check-up does not count. Parents need to schedule regular check-ups around cheerleading activities. Failure to obtain appropriate documentation will result in a one game suspension.

Consequences:

Unexcused absence: from cheer functions (practice, game, competition)

1st offense – Benched for one complete game

2nd offense – 2 full game suspension and/or extra community service

3rd offense – Dismissal from squad

Each situation will be evaluated. This may escalate the consequence of action to immediate dismissal

Excused absence: from practice- run 1 mile and/or extra community service

Late for Practice: Extra running; 1 lap for every minute late, after practice.

Section 3: Tardiness

"If you are early, you are on time. If you are on time, you are late. If you are late you are in trouble!"

1. Athletes who are late to a practice, game, competition, an event, or the bus will receive the proper disciplinary consequence as tardiness is disrespectful to all parties involved.
2. Students are considered late if they are not properly attired when the practice/game/competition/event time is scheduled. If you are late for the bus, you will be left and there will be disciplinary consequences to follow. You may not drive yourself when you miss the bus.
3. What on time means: In the designated area at the assigned time. This means being fully dressed in specific attire, shoes, and socks, with hair pulled back, and absolutely NO jewelry.

General Information

Section 1: Eligibility and Squad Breakdown

An athlete may participate only if all the following requirements have been met:

1. Current physical, Code of Conduct, Concussion Form, Proof of insurance and all other forms on Rank One are completed to the coach or on file in the Athletic Office.
2. All equipment from a previous season of participation is turned in or has been paid for.
3. Students must be eligible in accordance with the Constitution and By-Laws of the Georgia High School Association (GHSAA). See www.ghsa.net > Constitution and By-Laws

Freshman and Junior Varsity teams are an advanced developmental program available for students in grades 9-11. The focus is on learning new skills, improving ability, and practicing at a more advanced level so the athlete can transition to the varsity level. This does not guarantee future placement on varsity teams.

Varsity teams are advanced programs for grades 9-12. Skill and ability are at a high level. These athletes are the leaders of each program in and out of the athletic arena.

Section 2: Lettering Policy

A. Athletes who participate in Varsity Cheerleading can earn a letter. To earn a letter, a cheerleader must complete the following:

1. **One letter:**

90% of all football, PLUS a minimum of 7 hours of cheerleading community service, & at least one run through banner completed during the season.

OR

90% of all basketball games, PLUS a minimum of 8 hours of cheerleading community service.

2. **Two letters:** Cheers approximately 90% of all football and basketball games. A minimum of 10 hours of cheerleading related community service & one run through banner completed during the season.

AND

3. Cheerleader must uphold guidelines outlined in the handbook and finish the season in good standing.

Cheerleaders must maintain athletic and academic eligibility for the duration of the season (including postseason).

*All community service must be pre-approved by the head coach and must be organized through the cheerleading organization (not church, or Beta club, etc...).

B. A cheerleader on the varsity competition squad will earn an additional letter. All participants, including alternates will letter (alternates that have been with the varsity squad for the entire season).

C. A cheerleader on the game day squad will earn an additional letter. All participants, including alternates will letter.

Cheerleaders who quit the squad or are dismissed at any time during the season forfeit their right to any cheerleading award (including lettering).

Section 3: Alternates (Competition/Game Day ONLY)

Alternates are required to attend all cheerleading activities including practices, community service activities, competitions, pep-rallies, etc. Alternates are required to make all payments. Alternates are required to be in full uniform or designated clothing at all activities. Alternates should be prepared to step in at any time to fill another cheerleader's spot.

Section 4: Bullying

Lanier High School enforces a zero-tolerance policy for all types of bullying, including in and out of school, in person or online.

Section 5: Internet Safety

Members of the LHS Cheerleading Program shall refrain from posting questionable material, including pictures and dialogue on social media and/or the internet and will monitor to the best of their ability what their friends post about them on their pages. Cheerleaders with pictures of themselves in compromising situations, clothing, or anything not in line with the standards of the LHS cheer program as ascribed above will result in benching, probation, or removal from the team. Cheerleaders will not have pictures of themselves with any form of alcohol/drugs/tobacco in the background or foreground of the picture as well as not posting any pictures of a sexual nature. Coaches and LHS personnel can and will monitor these web sites and request that inappropriate posts be removed. Failure to follow this policy will result in benching/probation/removal from the team.

Section 6: Uniform

You will be given a uniform to use for the duration of your season. This uniform is the property of Lanier Cheerleading. There is a non-refundable usage fee for the uniform. The cheerleader is responsible for any damage to the uniform. To clean the uniform, wash on a low, gentle cycle and lay flat to dry. Do not dry clean the uniform. The uniform should not be altered by the cheerleader. No one other than the cheerleader to whom the uniform was issued should wear the uniform.

Section 7: Cheerleader Quitting

Once a cheerleader quits a squad or is removed from the squad, she is no longer part of the LHS cheerleading program (any team) and will forfeit the right to booster club gifts, fees paid, and lose all banquet privileges. Failure to complete spirit squad or competitive squad obligations will result in dismissal

Consequences and Discipline Policy

The discipline process begins when each member becomes part of the LHS Cheer Program.

Cheerleaders will receive **consequences decided by the LHS Cheer Coaches and LHS Administration if needed**

Consequences- Consequences may include but not limited to: conditioning, being benched, conference with parents and coach to discuss a discipline plan, or removal from the squad.

Examples of possibility of immediate removal from LHS Cheer Program

- Alcohol
- Drug use
- Smoking
- Deconstruction or vandalism of school property
- ISS/OSS (based on offense)
- Stealing

- Sexual Misconduct
- Inappropriate social media usage.

o PICTURES/VIDEOS FROM FACEBOOK, TWITTER, INSTAGRAM, SNAPCHAT, TIKTOK, ETC. WILL COUNT AND WILL BE USED AS PHYSICAL PROOF

In cases of extenuating circumstances, the coaches have the right to administer the appropriate consequences which can include suspension and/or dismissal from the cheerleading program. .

Financial

The Booster Club handles all financial obligations. All payments should be made to the booster club.

Cheer members will be expected to participate in group fundraising activities in which all money earned will be contributed to the general cheer fund to help alleviate group costs (banquet, meals, gifts, etc.)

All monies collected that have already been paid to vendors through the booster will not be refunded (i.e. clothing, camps, and choreography).

Fundraising

Each cheerleader will be expected to participate in fundraisers decided upon by the coaches, squads, and/or booster club. Fundraising is the responsibility of the cheerleader, not the parents. Please remember that our program would not exist without fundraising!

Concerns/Problems:

If you have a concern and/or problem concerning cheerleading, please follow the chain of command listed below:

1st Cheerleader to Coach(es)

2nd Parent to Coach(es)

3rd Parent/Head Coach(es) to Athletic Director

4th Parent/Head Coach(es) to Principal

Individual concerns/problems should be dealt with after practice/games. Please do not expect the coach to neglect the team during scheduled practice times. Please do not call the coach at home or on the cell phone out of school/practice hours. Only call during emergency situations. Please note: Coaching/cheerleader issues should not be dealt with at a booster club meeting. Booster clubs are created to support the squad and coaches, Coaches coach and boosters support.

