

News Release

New York State Education Department Recognizes Competitive Cheerleading as a Sport

Dobbs Ferry, N.Y. July 28, 2014— Not just pom-poms and rah-rah anymore, the Board of Regents has finally recognized “Competitive Cheerleading” as an official high school sport. The State Education Department and NYSPHSAA (New York State Public High School Athletic Association) will be finalizing the exact rules and regulations that will govern “competitive cheer” over the summer. These two groups have been studying the matter since August 2009 and have encouraged the change for several years.

The athletic style of cheerleading that includes in-air flips, lifts, tumbling, human pyramids and other gymnastics’ stunts has become more commonplace among cheerleading squads across the country. According to NYSPHAA Assistant Director Todd Nelson, some 34 other states already recognize cheerleading as a sport. Because cheerleading was not formally acknowledged as an “official” sport until now, the State Education Department and Nelson’s organization had little authority to set standards for training and certification of coaches or for safety precautions during practices and competitions.

Dobbs Ferry School District Athletic Director Jim Lindsay said, “the competitive cheerleading season will be during the Winter sports season. All competitive cheer squads will have to have a certified coach per SED regulations. We are lucky to have Dobbs Ferry High School science teacher Kelly Rancier onboard, who was a cheerleader herself at Hofstra University and an Assistant Cheerleading coach at Carmel High School,” Lindsay noted. Dobbs Ferry High School has approximately 23-28 girls on its team, which was traditionally a “spirit squad.”

All that will change with the new designation, although schools can choose to be both. Traditional cheerleading squads will not follow the rules and regulations of SED or the NYSPHSAA. However, if a traditional squad incorporates stunting/tumbling into a sideline or halftime routine, they will be considered a competitive cheerleading squad and must follow the prescribed guidelines. The sport’s governing bodies expect a Cheerleading State Championship to be held during the winter season of the 2015-2016 school year.

Co-ed cheerleading squads, which would include teams with even one male participant, will be able to compete only against other co-ed teams in competition. “Presently, the vast majority of cheerleading squads now active in New York are female-only. Although competitive cheer will be categorized as a girls’ sport in New York, it will not be eligible to fulfill title IX parity requirements,” NYSPHSAA officials said.

“We have always had a cheerleading squad that has practiced and worked as hard as any of our other student-athlete teams and this is a very exciting milestone for them,” said Lindsay.

For more information, please contact:

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