

April 11, 2023

Dear Mr. Kendall and Mr. Tessmer,

I, Victoria Peabody-David, head varsity cheerleading coach, am proposing that the district bring back the opportunity of Modified Cheerleading. My goal would be to have modified cheerleading offered in both the fall and winter seasons. However, I believe it would be reasonable to begin with a trial beginning in the winter competition season of 2023-2024. Due to social media and docu-series that have come out, cheerleading is sport that is growing in popularity year after year. This is a trend that I would like to see reflected in our district and continued growth of our program.

Cheerleading is currently the only sport in our district that does not offer the opportunity for 7th and 8th grade students to participate without taking the varsity test. The varsity test, although attainable by some, is not something that can be passed by all students. Due to the ranking of difficulty and level of contact in cheerleading many students have not even reached the level of puberty necessary on the Tanner Scale to play at the varsity level. In addition there are also no long term youth cheerleading programs in our district. Although I try to offer youth activities through our pee-wee fundraisers and the city, students do not have the opportunity to participate in a full cheerleading program until they reach their freshman year. By that time many students who have an interest in cheerleading have chosen to go to private programs such as The Stallions in Redwood, found different hobbies or lost interest completely. I believe this greatly cuts down on the potential number of students entering the program and finding a passion for the sport. As students get older there can oftentimes be a fear surrounding trying something new, therefore if we are able to offer that opportunity sooner without the pressure of an athletic ability test I believe we will see a rise in participation.

In past seasons cheerleading held the minimum number of athletes required for competition at 5, something we could easily meet regardless of year but currently the state is looking to change our divisions entirely. Instead of D1 large and small, D2 large and small and Co-Ed the state is looking to shift our programs to the Class A, B, C or D model. With this they are also introducing higher minimums. Although not finalized if placed in class B it is looking like we will need a minimum of 12 cheerleaders on the mat, without a modified program to funnel younger students in I worry that there could be years in which we are not meeting that minimum leaving our team ineligible to compete. Currently excluding our graduating seniors and athletes that would be at the modified level my team would be left with 8. With this model we will not

only want to have the minimum but as many athletes allowed as possible, more athletes allows for more stunt groups, greater visuals and more volume when cheering. All of which greatly contribute to the impact of our routines.

Lastly, introducing a modified program would require minimal financial and scheduling changes at the district level. With a modified program we would be able to share music, uniforms, buses and other equipment necessary such as tumbling belts, mats and signs. We would also be able to share gym times as I am aware of the tight schedule throughout the winter season. The one cost I believe necessary would be a coach. Although coaching salaries are not substantial amounts, I believe the compensation would give incentive for someone with passion for the sport and school to commit the time and effort necessary to create a strong program.

Overall, I believe that as educators, coaches and administrators in our district, our job is to provide our student athletes with as many opportunities as possible. Adding a modified cheerleading program would simply be adding one more opportunity. Cheerleading is a sport that can bring students out of their shell and teaches dedication, teamwork, trust, self-advocacy, bravery and so much more. Although I recognize a fear may be reduced participation in other programs, cheerleading is a sport unlike any other. If a student enjoys basketball or soccer there are very few parallels that would draw a student away. Therefore, I don't believe that the addition of this program will harm others; instead it will create a new space for students to foster their physical, mental and emotional growth. I look forward to discussing this more in person and would be happy to take any further steps to allow this to come to fruition.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Victoria Peabody-David". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Victoria Peabody-David