

NEWS RELEASE

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Traweek Middle School Revives Cheer Program with First Pep Squad in 20 Years

COVINA, CA – When eighth-grader Lily Morales set her sights on reviving the cheer program at Traweek Middle School, she sparked a movement that led to the school's first Pep Squad in 20 years, giving students new opportunities to lead, connect, and build school pride.

When new teacher Heaven Velasquez introduced herself to her classes last school year and mentioned her lifelong cheer experience, Morales, a seventh-grader at the time, saw an opportunity.

"Every week after class, Lily would come up to me and ask, 'Can we please start a cheer team?'" Velasquez said. "It was my first year teaching, and I wasn't sure at first, but I really believe in giving students a fair shot in life. I saw how passionate she was and realized this could be something really meaningful for her."

With support from Assistant Principal James Coney and collaboration from math and science teacher Krista Marriott, Velasquez helped form the new Traweek Pep Squad for the start of the 2025-26 school year. The team consists of 21 seventh- and eighth-grade students who practice three times a week, led by coaches Velasquez and Marriott. The Pep Squad performed at their first basketball game on Oct. 13.

"My favorite part about Pep Squad is having fun with my friends and being able to cheer for others," Morales said. "I'm really excited to cheer at games and hope to continue in high school. To anyone who wants to start their own team or club, I would tell them it's amazing and lots of fun – start something new and make it happen."

The Pep Squad emphasizes inclusivity, teamwork, and leadership, providing students with a safe space to pursue their interests, be encouraged by classmates, and have an enjoyable time.

"We really emphasize that being inclusive and positive toward each other is crucial," Marriott said. "When I have a tough day in the classroom, I go to cheer practice and my whole mood changes. The girls are so encouraging; it's been a great experience."

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To help prepare students for the next level, the team also collaborates with Covina High School's cheer coach, who shares routines and advice to help Traweek students build their skills. Covina High cheerleaders have also joined practices to demonstrate cheers and mentor students.

Traweek's administration and athletic director have been instrumental in helping launch the new Pep Squad, coordinating uniforms, schedules, and logistics.

"Seeing Traweek's Pep Squad take off is truly inspiring," Interim Superintendent Dr. Jonathan Blackmore said. "This shows what can happen when students and staff work together to create something new. Thank you to Ms. Velasquez, Ms. Marriott, and Lily for making this possible."

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

CVUSD_CHEER1: Traweek Middle School is making history by establishing a Pep Squad for the first time in 20 years, providing students with new opportunities to build school spirit, develop leadership skills, and form lasting connections.

CVUSD_CHEER2: Made up of 21 seventh- and eighth-graders, Traweek Middle School's new Pep Squad performed at its first basketball game on Oct. 13.

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