

TRYOUTS: RECRUITING AND ORGANIZING

by Joyce E. Pennington



In reflecting back on various methods used in preparing and administering dance/drill team tryouts, there are some methods and techniques that have proven most effective. The primary focus is to plan ahead, stay organized and keep good records.

First, schedule your tryout date at the very beginning of the school year in order to get on the school calendar prior to other school activities as well as securing gym space and not interfering with six weeks tests, TAKS tests or other school events. Tryouts can be scheduled in December, if you can obtain your new members at the semester, or March/April, if needed to follow cheerleader tryouts or be close to the end of school. Because interest in the drill team reaches its peak following football season, it is a good idea to meet with all prospective candidates and their parents in late November or early December to hand out some general facts and answer questions about tryouts.

If your tryouts are in the late spring, it is a good opportunity to begin a one afternoon per week "free workshop" for dance/drill team hopefuls that can fulfill two needs in one. Not only will you offer basic training that your drill team candidates will need, but can also be a proving ground for your officer candidates.

Each officer candidate can be assigned to be in charge of one workshop and be able to practice and be judged on her leadership prior to officer tryouts. About three weeks prior to line tryouts, the team members and managers should make posters to put up at school as well as writing announcements for the beginning of school each day. Application forms should be made available in the school office as well as the drill team office.

Once the actual week of tryouts arrives, it is down to business. The following points are important:

- ✓ Secure qualified judges at least 4 to 6 weeks in advance.
- ✓ Assign each candidate a number to wear all week as well as tryout day.
- ✓ Hold a mandatory meeting with candidates and parents to present costs, rules and requirements.
- ✓ Plan each day of tryout week and assign duties for the officers.
- ✓ Impose strict discipline and a "business-like" atmosphere that you will carry on throughout the year.
- ✓ Recruit a fellow teacher or administrator to assist with calculating the scores on tryout day. As the director, your opinion should count at least for 25% of the score, or one of the four judges.
- ✓ Be well prepared for tryout day itself. Make sure the candidates have had a 'walk through' so they will know exactly what to expect. Have score sheets, judges packets, pens, judges checks, refreshments for the judges, etc., all prepared and in its place prior to the actual tryout time. Your organization will pay off and allow you to have the greatest efficiency for tryouts.
- ✓ Duplicate/copy your score sheets and encourage all candidates to pick up copies of *their* comment sheets. (Do not allow students to see other candidates comments or scores). Those not making the team will see why they did not and those that do will see areas in which they need to improve as well as their strengths.
- ✓ Stand firm with your decisions. If you have prepared yourself properly and conducted tryouts accurately, there is nothing to fear or hide.

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." Eleanor Roosevelt.