



The Importance of Dance/Drill Team in School

By Joyce E. Pennington

Dance/Drill Team programs in many states have recently come under fire because of accusations that it takes away from academic studies and creates a diversion from the focus of education. We, as directors and parents, have grabbed our knowledge as ammunition and surged ahead ready for battle. Unfortunately, the critics find a few programs that have abused travel privileges, taken advantage of getting out of academic classes and assume that all dance/drill team programs are the same.

A few years ago, the governor of Texas appointed multi-billionaire Ross Perot to head up an education task force to review the educational system in our state. Mr. Perot made the statement on a national news program, "Students ranked academically low in testing compared to other countries around the world, but if they gave our students a test in drill team, I'm sure they would score well." I wish that Mr. Perot could visit with the thousands of former drill team members, like myself, whose high school drill team activities had a greater impact on preparation for life skills than any academic class.

My drill team experience taught me self-assurance, grooming, good manners, self-discipline, physical fitness and poise. It taught me to share with others, to set goals and work toward them. I learned how to win with grace and to lose with dignity. My director, Dorothy Mize, set an example to us of patience, love, dedicating, determination and pride. I developed good study habits by learning to organize my time. But most of all, drill team reinforced the values that my parents emphasized and that the first and foremost ideal, was to always have integrity and act like a lady.

I dare say that there is not one academic class that is offered in any school in our country that could teach these values to our students. What classroom subject could emphasize good morals, high grade standards, neat appearance, etiquette, perfect attendance and offer a better incentive than to receive the applause and approval from their family and peers?

My appeal goes out to the educators and administrators around the country to take an objective look at our dance teams, spirit organizations, bands and athletic programs before discouraging their importance in our educational curriculum. There are always weak instructors, coaches and directors as there are weak teachers in the classroom. However, 98% of the educators will always lead with dignity and the legacy that came before them.

We should expect and demand the same professionalism in our extra-curricular programs as in our academic teachers. We, as directors and teachers, are molding our students and enriching them with ideals and goals to be better citizens for the future. Let us not let a crime be committed in robbing our youth of the values and quality of like that we teach.

I look up each day and read over my desk a thought that fills me with energy and enthusiasm: ***Things may come to those who wait, but only what's left from those who HUSTLE.***

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