



# Education Support

## Adjusting to the Block Schedule

*By Amy Bourgeois-Lawrence, Former Director of the R.L. Turner Lionettes*

More and more drill teams and directors are inevitably being faced with the block schedule. While this is indeed a challenging adjustment, it is not an impossible one. I have been teaching on the block schedule for five years now. While in the beginning, I was as disgruntled as most about the new schedule, I soon began to realize the benefits.

Perhaps the greatest benefit for me as a director is the fact that I have more uninterrupted time with my team. On the other hand, the biggest drawback is the lack of consistency from meeting every other day as opposed to every day for class. I feel like my team and I worked through the problems created by block scheduling fairly quickly and effectively. Listed below are some of the methods we used. Hopefully, it will be helpful to you as well.

- Organization is the key! All drill team directors are organized by necessity. But the block schedule calls for the director to be even more "on the ball."
- Hold meetings on opposing class days before or after school. When my team was first making the adjustment, I held short, ten minute meetings after school on the days we did not have class. This allowed me to make announcements or reminders and take care of business transactions that could not wait. Once my team and I adjusted to the block schedule, we were able to dispense with the extra meetings.
- Arrange to have an officer planning period. Your officers can really help you stay organized and one step ahead of the team. If your principal will not allow a separate officer period, perhaps they will allow you to have your officers as student assistants during my conference period on alternating days. We really use this time for planning everything we need to have prepared for the team next time we are scheduled to rehearse. While this takes away some of my personal planning time, it cuts greatly on the amount of time spent outside of school hours for both me and my officers.
- Make a practice schedule that is most beneficial to you and the success of your team. (Your students will learn to adjust.) For example, during football season,

my team practiced before school on class days and after school two or three times a week. The days are determined by our band schedule as well. I may or may not see my team every day during the football season. During competition season, I feel like the team needs the consistency of rehearsing every day in order to be productive. Therefore, in the spring semester, we practice before school on class days and after school on non-class days. Yes, this does mean that the practice schedule changes from week to week. As long as I give my students advance notice, there are no scheduling problems. This brings me to my next point....

- Pass out a monthly calendar (at least 2 weeks in advance, if possible) of all upcoming events, rehearsals, fund-raisers, due dates, etc. Post a large version of the calendar in the locker room or bulletin board, or post it online for dancers and parents to access.
- Announce your rehearsal schedule and plan for dealing with block schedule at a meeting held before tryouts. Everyone involved, including parents, will know what to expect.

