Education Support

American Dance

How to Survive Budget Cuts

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There is a common thread running throughout schools, especially fine arts groups, around the country--budgets will be cut and your program will have to do without most of its requests. Directors and advisors from all fine arts fields are struggling to regroup their teams' equipment needs as well as trying to maintain team morale and motivation.

In searching for solutions, we can assume that your team may not win a million playing the Lottery nor receive a small fortune from an anonymous donor, the direction must be 'How to make the money last a little longer.' Here are some ideas that will hopefully help you to survive budget cuts:

Practice Outfits: If your team is accustomed to having several practice outfits, maybe you could get by this year with purchasing one outfit to wear on Monday, all black on Tuesday, bright colors on Wednesday, team T-shirt and shorts or sweats on Thursday (when you go out with the band) and pep rally outfit on Friday.

Uniforms: Maybe you ordered new uniforms and the budget did away with the idea. Perhaps you could give old uniforms or pep rally dresses a new look by adding new accessories, sequin cuffs, neck ties, hair accessories, etc., or possibly ask the parents to help make new costume pieces. You could make a fabric overlay with sequined trim for under $20 each and everyone will think you have a brand new outfit!

Props/Choreography: You may have several new props in mind for your performance season this year. If budget flexibility is not available, perhaps work a trade out with a school in a nearby district to offer the use of your props in trade for theirs that your audience has not seen. Post on the American Directors Corner or TDEA Facebook pages that you want to 'swap props' with a local team. You may even offer to trade out choreography with the neighboring team, too.

Sound Equipment: A performance team cannot function without a sound system, however, if you have to make equipment cuts, perhaps you could approach another organization such as the band, choir or student council that might be willing to share

sound equipment for the coming year until each of you can include it in future budgets. The main point would be assuring the proper care and maintenance so that the sound equipment will always be in working order when either group is ready to use it.
Successful Fundraisers: If you are planning to have special fundraising projects to help compensate for small budget funds, make sure that your time and return are efficient and effective. It is very frustrating to plan a car wash or bake sale that meets with poor weather and brings in less than $500 (I think we have all had this happen at least once!). Make sure the product or service has not been overused or over saturated in your school and community. Make sure that it is appealing and would be something that the community could genuinely find useful instead of buying just to be gracious. A well-planned fundraiser can be a successful annual event for your team if it is well thought out and supported by both your students and the parents. Remember, if you are not receiving a profit return the equivalent of minimum wage for each and every person involved, you are not seeing a successful fundraiser.

Hopefully budget cuts will be only a temporary situation at your school and that upcoming years will paint a brighter picture. In the meantime, never let your team know that they or you are in a hopeless situation regarding budget money. Team morale and enthusiasm can sometimes make up for other things that are lacking.