Education Support

American Dance

How to Win With Drill Team Parents

By: Erin Venable Green

Have you ever had phone calls from parents asking why you, the director, have set certain policies? How many times a week have you received a phone call from a parent inquiring about the times of drill team practice? What did you say the last time a drill team supporter asked to volunteer to help your organization?

These are just a few of the questions most drill team directors are asked at one time or another. Remember when you gain a new member on your team, you also gain a parent(s). Setting the stage with drill team parents and supporters is one of the most important steps you can take to ensure a successful year. Open communication will elevate many misunderstandings in the future as well as keep those involved in the drill team informed.

During the life of a drill teamer, there are key times when communication is critical. Not only is it important to know that communication is needed, but it is equally important to know and use the correct kind of communication.

The following are tips that should be used at the beginning of a new season and continue throughout the year when a situation warrants. Using these tips will ensure that from the time tryouts are announced until graduation, all drill team supporters will be consistently informed.

1. Conduct a drill team orientation meeting. When the new line for the year is announced, have each member of the team attend the meeting with at least one guardian. Review the school and team rules and regulations established for your organization. Be honest and open about your personal philosophies concerning how you run and organize your team. Allow adequate time for questions and answers. Urge parents to call when clarification is needed
2. Obtain written permission for all drill team activities. The first permission obtained should be for participation in drill team. Other examples of written permission should continue throughout the year. Some examples may include special appearances, auditions for a select dance team, and any extra expenses

that may occur. This confirms a constant continuous flow of information to and from the parents

3. Keep good records. Again to keep misunderstandings from occurring, it is best to document phone calls, parents' conferences, and conversations with team members. These notes should be available for drill team members and parents to review whenever requested. Remember to be objective in your note taking
4. Schedule parent conferences. Even though the best efforts have been made to communicate openly and effectively, sometimes a private discussion may be needed. The time and place are critical to accomplishing a beneficial outcome.

- All conferences should be scheduled in advance in a quiet, private business location (This does not mean an empty parking-lot after a football game)
- Allow parent(s) or drill team member to express their thoughts fully before making any comments
- Answer and address each concern and/or question raised
- Focus on the issue and problem, if there is one, and then find a solution
- At the conclusion of each conference, summarize the key points of the meeting
- Always be prepared for parent meetings. Don't be afraid to schedule parent meetings to clarify major decisions when needed. Some drill teams have organized booster clubs. These meetings can be additional opportunities for the drill team director to further communicate and inform. Always compile an agenda of the meetings' topics in advance so that you can be prepared and keep the discussion in focus.

Being a drill team director is a hard, but rewarding, job. Through careful planning and good communication, the relationship with parents can be positive rather than negative. The above suggestions are not specific because each director should develop methods for carrying out these steps. Careful consideration for all those involved by the drill team director should make for a happy and successful year