

The Role of Parents in Interscholastic Athletics

Communicating With Your Children

1. Make sure your children know that win or lose, scared or heroic, you love them, appreciate their efforts and are not disappointed in them. This will allow them to do their best without fear of failure. Be the person in their life they can look to for constant positive reinforcement.
2. Try your best to be completely honest about your child's athletic ability, competitive attitude, sportsmanship and actual skill level.
3. Be helpful, but don't coach them. It's tough not to, but it is a lot tougher for the athlete to be flooded with advice and critical instruction.
4. Teach them to enjoy the thrill of competition, to be "out there trying", to be working to improve their skills and attitudes. Help them develop the feeling for competing, for trying hard, for having fun.
5. Try not to relive your athletic life through your child in a way that creates pressure. Don't pressure your child because of your pride. Athletic children need their parents, so you must not withdraw. Remember, there is a thinking, feeling, sensitive, free spirit out there in that uniform who needs a lot of understanding, especially when their world turns bad. If they are comfortable with you win or lose, then they are on their way to maximum achievement and enjoyment.
6. Don't compete with the coach. If your child is receiving mixed messages from two different authority figures, he or she will likely become disenchanted. Criticism of the coach to your child puts the athlete in a terrible "No Win" situation.
7. Don't compare the skill, courage or attitude of your child with other members of the team.
8. Get to know the coach(es). Then you can be assured that his or her philosophy, attitudes, ethics and knowledge are such that you are happy to have your child under his or her leadership.
9. Always remember that children tend to exaggerate both when praised and when criticized. Temper your reaction and investigate before overreacting. Many times athletes will define all coach criticism as being "yelled at".
10. Make a point of understanding courage and the fact that it is relative. Everyone is frightened in certain areas. Explain that courage is not the absence of fear, but a means of doing something in spite of fear and discomfort.

Communicating With The Coach

Communication You Should Expect From Your Child's Coach

- Philosophy of the coach.
- Expectations the coach has for your child as well as all players on the squad.
- Locations and times of all practices and contests.
- Team requirements (fees, special equipment, off-season conditioning, etc.).
- Procedure should your child be injured.
- Discipline that results in the denial of your child's participation (eligibility, substance abuse, etc).

Communication Coaches Expect From Parents

- Concerns expressed directly to the coach.
- Notification of any schedule conflicts well in advance.
- Specific concerns in regard to a coach's philosophy and/or expectations.

Appropriate Concerns To Discuss With Coaches

- The treatment of your child, mentally and physically.
- Ways to help your child improve.
- Concerns about your child's behavior.

Issues Not Appropriate to Discuss with Coaches

- Team strategy.
- Play calling.
- Other student athletes.

Appropriate Procedure for Discussing Concerns With Coaches

- **The very first step in discussing a coaching concern is to meet with the coach.**
- Call to set up an appointment with the coach (contact the athletic administrator to set up the meeting if unable to reach the coach).
- Do not confront a coach before or after a contest or practice. These are emotional times for all parties involved and do not promote resolution.

What If The Meeting With The Coach Did Not Provide A Satisfactory Resolution

- Call to set up an appointment with the athletic administrator.
- Determine the next step at this meeting.

Reprinted with permission from the Ohio High School Athletic Association