

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. 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.
3. Try your best to be completely honest about your child's athletic ability, competitive attitude, sportsmanship and actual skill level.
4. Don't compare the skill, courage or attitude of your child with other members of the team.
5. Be helpful but don't coach them. It's tough not to, but it is a lot tougher for the child to be flooded with advice and critical instruction.
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.
7. 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.
8. Always remember that children tend to exaggerate, both when praised and when criticized. Temper your reaction and investigate before overreacting.
9. Make a point of understanding courage and the fact that it is relative. Some of us climb mountains and are afraid to fly. Some of us will fly but turn to jelly if a bee approaches. 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.
10. Try not to relive your athletic life through your child in a way that creates pressure: you lost as well as won. You were frightened, you backed off at times, you were not always heroic. Don't pressure your child because of your pride. Athletic children need their parents, so you must not withdraw. Remember, there's 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.

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)

Procedure should your child be injured

Discipline that results in the denial of your child's participation

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

Playing time

Team strategy

Play calling

Other student-athletes

Appropriate Procedure for Discussing Concerns With Coaches

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 can be 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 or activities director

Determine the appropriate next step at this meeting