



The Post-Tryout Parent Meeting

By: Kerry Wall

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Congratulations! Your team's tryouts are over and your team is ready to start a new season! Before you do, it is important to hold a post-tryout parent meeting to help inform returning parents about any program changes and to help new parents become familiar with all of the things that their child is going to be a part of during the year. The best time to schedule this meeting is for a weekday evening or on a weekend morning, as close to the auditions as possible. The longer you wait to hold this meeting, the more questions and emails you are going to receive beforehand. It is also a good idea to put this meeting date and time right on your tryout packet, so parents know that it is coming and can plan ahead for it. As far as a location goes, it is best to hold it somewhere without distractions. You will have a lot of information to go over, so it is important to choose a quiet and isolated room or building. Libraries will sometimes rent out larger reading rooms or else you could hold it at the school. A good place is the teacher's lounge, so talk to your athletic director or principle to see if it could be opened for your meeting. The nice thing about holding it at the school is that it gives new parents a chance to figure out the school's layout. Make sure you remember to post signs directing your parents to your meeting spot so that no one gets lost. Once you have your date, time, and location set, it is time to start planning what you are going to talk about at the meeting.

When planning your meeting, try to think from a parent's point of view. What are they most concerned with at this moment? Summer? Camp? Football Season? Money? It is good to touch upon basketball and competition season, so that your parents know what is ahead of them, but it is also important to not overwhelm them. Keep this meeting focused on the near-future and on what you expect from the dancers as well as the parents. As you plan your meeting, make an outline. You do not have to bullet point every single topic, but make an ordered list of things to talk about so that the meeting stays on track. It is a good idea to start by introducing yourself. By doing so, parents will be able to know where you are coming from when you start making decisions for your team. Also list your expectations for the year. It is important to find out what the parents and dancers expect as well, so it is a good idea to present this as an open-forum type of conversation. Allow your parents to go around the room and discuss what they expect from you and from their dancers. If you start the season on the same page, you have a much better chance of not running into problems later on down the road.

Some things to also bring up during this meeting are: team calendar, team goals, team and school policies, parent committees, and fundraisers/budget. This is a perfect time to introduce your team constitution or handbook. Most parents just want to feel like they know what is going on in their child's life, so explain to them how a normal practice works, what they can do to help throughout the year, and how to go about contacting you. Communication is the key to running a successful dance team. Whether it is by phone, email, or website forum, let them know not only how to contact you, but also when they can contact you. Boundaries need to be set or else some parents will feel that they are in charge of the team and can walk all over the coach. Remind them nicely that you are the coach. That is your

job. Their job is to be their child's biggest supporter. Remind them that their child will have bad days, bad practices, and stressful times while on dance team, but also that all of these bad days are made up for with amazing opportunities, friendships, and experiences. Create a bond with the parents right away to avoid a negative division between the coach and the parents. As long as you remind them that you are on the same team, the year will be that much easier. Remember, you do not need to explain every little detail about the year, simply discuss the big issues, ask for questions, and get the parents pumped up for the year ahead!