



# Building Relationships with Parents for Positive Sport Environments

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# Building Relationships with Parents for Positive Sport Environments

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

-Benjamin Franklin (1706 – 1790)



# Why do parents get upset?

- Child did not get his/her number
- The players on my child's team are not good enough
- There is not enough skill work being done in practice
- The team does not run enough plays and lacks organization
- One of the players on the team hogs the ball
- There are too many players on the team
- Either the competition is too good or not good enough
- The other team ran the score up on us
- Not enough playing time for my son/daughter
- My child is not getting enough touches of the ball in games
- I do not want my son/daughter to lose interest in the sport because the team is weak
- I am concerned about my child's development because the skill level of his/her team
- The coaches' son/daughter is being favored
- The referee was terrible and favored the other team
- My child's coach stinks and does not know what he/she is doing
- Think school sports are club sports and should be treated as such



Screaming at the coaches and  
players won't make them  
perform any better.  
Shut up and go get  
some nachos. You'll feel  
better soon.



som<sup>ee</sup>cards  
user card



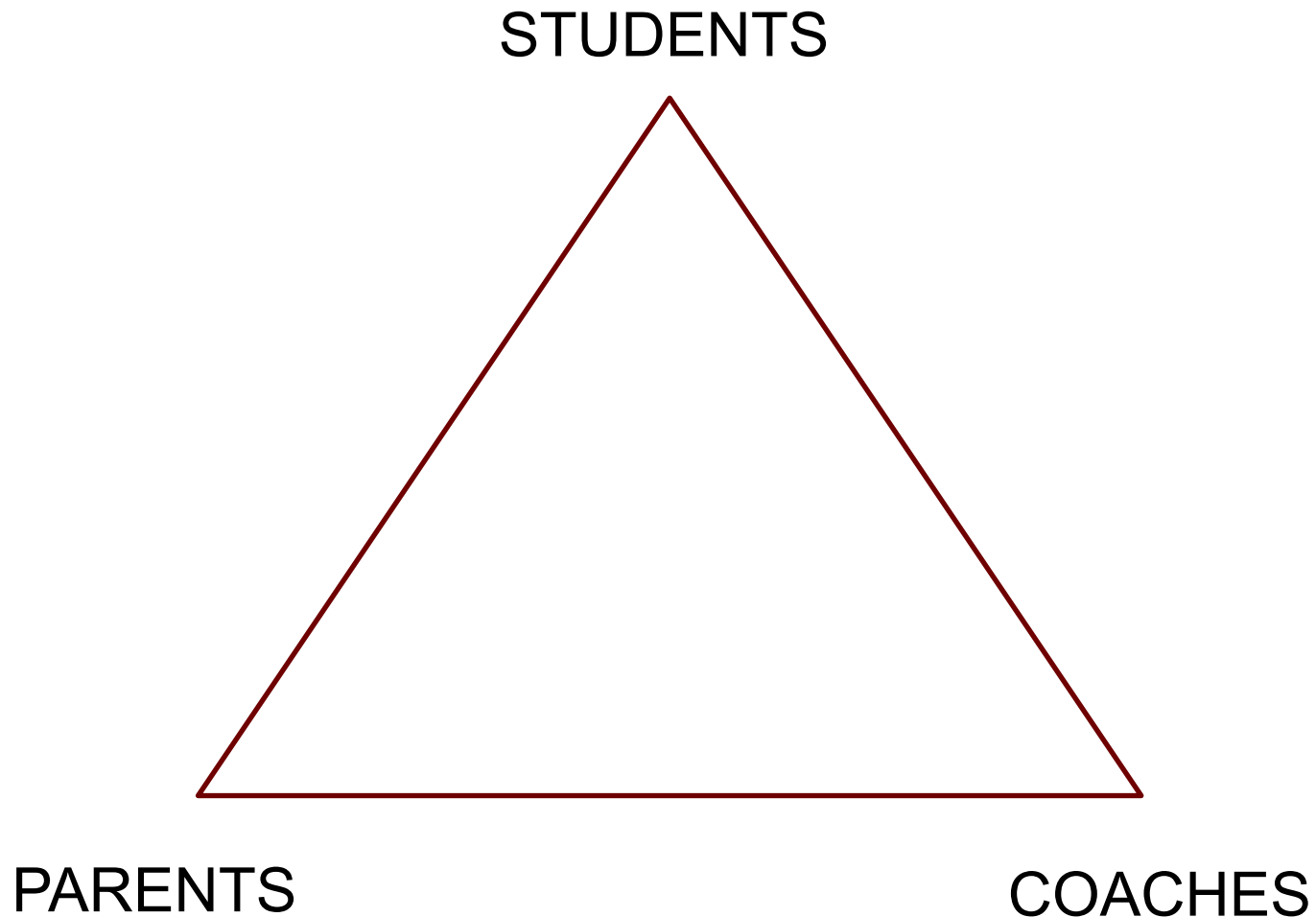
# Importance of Parent Engagement

When dealing with parents, teachers/coaches in general, you have three options. Which would you choose?

- A. Actively involve them as members of the team in a purposeful and planned fashion
- B. Ignore them and hope they will learn how to behave appropriately or simply disappear through some divine intervention
- C. Deal with them only when a crisis occurs, when there is no option or alternative



# Athletic Triangle



# Building Relationships with Parents for Positive Sport Environments

At one point during a game a teacher/coach called over one of his basketball players and asked “Do you understand what good sportsmanship is? Do you understand what educational athletics is all about?”

The young player nodded in affirmation

“So,” the teacher/coach continues, “I’m sure you know that when a foul is called you shouldn’t argue, curse, attack the referee or call them names. Do you understand that?”

Again the young male student nodded

The teacher/coach continued. “And when I take you out of the game so another student gets a chance, it’s not good sportsmanship to call your coach a stupid idiot is it?”

Again the student nodded

“Good.” said the teacher/coach. “Now go into the stands and explain all of this to your mother and father.”



# Communication

- Must be about opening and strengthening the lines of communication
- Parents have the right and the responsibility to inquire about all aspects that involve their kids, including athletics
- It is through communication that respect, credibility, and trust are built or the lack thereof.





# Open Communication

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- ≠ Disrespectful Words or Actions
- = Genuine Interest and Concerns



# Communication

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“It’s not what you say, it’s  
how you say it.”



# Parent Engagement

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Importance of Parent Engagement

Effective Engagement = a better experience  
for everyone



**YOUR KID IS THE BEST  
ON HIS LITTLE LEAGUE TEAM?**



**TELL ME MORE ABOUT  
HIS FUTURE IN MLB.**

imgflip.com



# System of Communication

Implementing a verbal and non verbal communication system

- Seek out opportunities
- Success will happen if we try to do this purposefully



# System of Communication

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When should we be communicating

- Pre season
- In season
- End of season



# Pre-Season Communication

## Key Tasks

- Define rules and procedures
- Present your coaching philosophy and educational mission through verbal and written forms

## Tryouts

- can be emotional and challenging
- clear process of evaluation



# System of Communication

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“Nobody is more powerful than a passionate leader, particularly in terms of his or her impact on others.”

-Peter Senge, MIT Professor





# Pre-Season Communication

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- Mandatory pre season meeting for parents
- Give advance notice
- Educate parents about mission and purpose
- Explain your student centered coaching philosophy



# How would you handle this?

**SCENARIO 1** - ANTICIPATING A VERY CONTENTIOUS MEETING WITH A CHALLENGING PARENT

**SCENARIO 2** – FACED BY A PARENT MAKING AN UNREASONABLE DEMAND

**SCENARIO 3** – CHALLENGED BY A PARENT CONCERNING YOUR DECISION INVOLVING STARTERS, PLAYING TIME OR EVEN A STUDENT'S POSITION ON THE TEAM?

**SCENARIO 4** – CRITICIZED BY A PARENT WHO MAKES DISPARAGING COMMENTS ABOUT YOUR COACHING OR PROGRAM BEHIND YOUR BACK?

**SCENARIO 5** – CONFRONTED BY AN ANGRY PARENT

**SCENARIO 6** – BLOCKED FROM REACHING YOUR CAR IN THE PARKING LOT AFTER A CONTEST



# Dealing with Difficult Parents



# 6 Suggestions

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- Email
- Witnesses
- Feedback
- Avoid Comparisons
- You are not alone
- Stay positive



# Keep it in Perspective

Dear Mom and Dad,

Thanks for screaming at  
the umpires and other  
parents the entire game.

You're the best!!!



your  cards  
someecards.com



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“Speak when you are angry and  
you will make the best speech you  
will ever regret.”

-Ambrose Bierce



# Resources

- Coach Relationships
- Guidelines for expressing concerns to a coach
- Fifteen tips for dealing with difficult parents
- Sample: Coach's Guidelines for Preseason Meetings
- NFHS Pre-season Meeting Handbook
- Coach-Parent Communication Guide
- Expectations for Parents and Fans at Indoor Contests
- Sample Sportsmanlike Expectations
- Code of Conduct
- Coaches Stop Dealing With the Parents – Start Engaging
- LTP 714C: Preventing, Managing, and Transforming Challenging Behaviour



National Federation of Sports (Handouts)

<https://thecpsu.org.uk/resource-library/tools/parental-involvement-in-sport-scenarios/>

ASAA – Course – Engaging Effectively With Parents – course material and videos

<https://changingthegameproject.com/coaches-stop-dealing-parents-start-engaging/>

