

# HOW TO ENGAGE WITH PARENTS

Engaging with parents is crucial for creating a supportive and successful environment for the athletes. It is important to effectively communicate the mission of high school sports to parents in order to avoid conflicts and ensure their understanding of the program's objectives.

## **Explain to Parents the Mission of High School Sports**

The mission of high school sports should be presented as an opportunity for personal growth and skill development. Emphasize that athletics serve as a vehicle to promote a positive learning environment. In the context of triathlon, highlight the goal of creating a community of young athletes who can progress to high school triathlon and potentially compete at the collegiate level, whether in NCAA or Collegiate Club competitions OR even to the age group level after graduation. This connection to a vibrant young adult triathlon community will resonate with parents and demonstrate the long-term benefits of their child's participation. It will also remind them that there is a strong community of multisport after HS that will reward them with the joys of a lifetime.

## **Importance of Parent Engagement**

Parent engagement holds great significance in the high school program. Parents are valuable assets to the team, as they can model good sportsmanship and offer their support through volunteering at practices and events. It is essential to encourage parents to contribute positively to the club and enhance the overall experience for everyone involved. Every HS model around sports has parent engagement as a critical, same will follow for High School Triathlon.

## **Understanding Communication**

Understanding the different components of communication is vital. Communication involves the sending, receiving, and interpretation of messages. Both verbal and non-verbal forms of communication should be considered when interacting with athletes, parents, and coaches.

Promoting effective communication within the club will ensure parents and coaches can collaborate to support the athlete throughout their journey. Parents should be supportive rather than destructive communication. Positive parent communication in sports is when parents offer support and encouragement to their children,

regardless of the outcome of a game or competition. Instead of focusing solely on winning or losing, positive parents emphasize effort, improvement, and enjoyment of the sport.

They communicate with their children in a supportive manner, praising their hard work, resilience, and sportsmanship. They avoid excessive criticism or pressure, and instead, provide constructive feedback and suggestions for improvement. Positive parents also maintain open lines of communication with coaches and demonstrate respect for their expertise and decisions.

Overall, positive parent communication in sports fosters a healthy and positive environment for children to develop their skills, enjoy the sport, and learn important life lessons.

A negative example of parent communication in sports is when parents excessively criticize, belittle, or berate their children for their performance or mistakes. These parents may place excessive pressure on their children to win at all costs and prioritize outcomes over the joy of playing the sport. They might yell, use derogatory language, or publicly embarrass their children during games or practices. Negative parents may also confront coaches, questioning their decisions or even undermining their authority.

Such behavior can create a hostile and stressful environment for the child, leading to a decline in self-esteem, motivation, and enjoyment of the sport. It can also strain relationships between parents, coaches, and other players' families. Negative parent communication in sports is detrimental to the child's development, and their love for the game, and can have long-lasting negative effects on their overall well-being.

### **The Athletic Triangle**

The "athletic triangle," which comprises the student, parents, and coaches, forms the foundation of the athlete's experience. In the context of a multi-sport like triathlon, providing adequate support to parents is as crucial as supporting the athlete. The athletic triangle fosters an environment where the athlete feels empowered to be their best self. By working collaboratively with parents, respect can be promoted both within and outside of the competitive setting. Effective communication and a balanced relationship among all parties involved in the athletic triangle contribute to a positive high school sports experience for the student-athletes.

### **Team Concept**

Consider all those you are working with as part of the team of support and influence.

If you treat them as being on the outside, that can negatively impact the build. If you create the position of the parent relative to the program and how they can be part of the success, that supports a different mindset. Yes, parents do need boundaries as do coaches and others, but by being more inclusive than exclusive, we can create some amazing team synergies around the program.