

Improving Parent and Player Communication within Your Program

Brian Blackburn M. Ed

Head Boys Basketball – Boswell High School

One of the most important, yet sometimes difficult, aspects of building and maintaining a successful high school sports program is the parent involvement. This aspect of coaching has also changed dramatically over the last 15-20 years. Parents used to side with the coach and teacher in trying to improve the child's ability to succeed. That is no longer the case in many situations. We must walk a fine line with how we include parents and families into our basketball team. Some questions to ask may include:

“How much access do we give parents?”

“What do we need parents to help with in our program?”

“How do we communicate with parents so it is not coach vs. parent?”

Each school district is different in the expectations of parents and team interaction, but I wanted to share a few things we started doing post-COVID to try and “build our army” (so to speak) with our basketball families.

After losing a few players to the infamous “high school transfer portal”, we took time to re-think how we relate to parents and families within our program. This led to what we are calling our “Build UP” Program. Most of the activities listed below work for us here at Boswell High School. You may want to include these in some form with your program but understanding the needs of your team/program is vital to getting the most out of parent engagement and interaction.

The Build UP Program- Bos Hoops

Program Goal: To Build UP better relationships with players, parents, and coaches so that all stakeholders have a positive and successful experience in our program.

Activities:

1. (Late September) – **Team Meal**
 - a. Potential Varsity Players, Parents, and Coaches meet at Coach Blackburn's House for a team meal. Very casual and relaxed interaction for parents to meet and players to hang out.
2. (Late October) - **Bos Hoops Season Prep Meeting**
 - a. Whole program meeting to discuss schedules, practices, program norms, and investment expectations. This is where we share our player/parent packet along with all practice and game schedules for the whole season.
 - b. There is also a PowerPoint with important information about Booster Club and our expectations of building a successful 6A Basketball Program
3. (Early November -Prior to First Scrimmage) – **Individual Player Meetings**
 - a. Meet individually with varsity and JV players. Parents are invited to this meeting if they would like to attend. We discuss 1) what is your role with the team right now 2) what you have done really well 3) what is important to your individual success 4) what is important to our team success

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- b. We have found that appointment only meetings with 9th grade players is better because most of our 9th graders are still adjusting to HS basketball. The meetings may not be effective this early in the season.

4. (Late November Prior to Tournament Season) – **Basketball Night with the Pioneers**
 - a. Open Practice for all parents, friends and middle school players, parents, and coaches. This is a great community event where parents can be a part of our workout. We run a varsity practice for roughly 45 minutes so that all stakeholders can see how we work on a daily basis. One of the best aspects of this practice is that parents get to see their son in action in a non-game environment. We pride ourselves on having competitive tough practices, so the parents now see our expectations and how they translate to the game.

5. (Late December Prior to District Play) – **“Quick 10”** minute meeting
 - a. The first 5 minutes of the meeting I ask questions then the second 5 minutes the player asks questions. Parents are not invited, and we do this meeting with varsity players only.

6. (Early February Before Playoffs) – The **“Take 5”** meeting
 - a. This meeting usually takes place during the second round of district play a quick five- minute review individual meeting before our playoff run. This is a very informal meeting and does not include the parents. I had this meeting while our guys were shooting free throws and finishing their 50 makes after practice this year.

7. (Late February/Early March) - **End of Season Meeting**
 - a. This is our big formal individual meeting with all players. All Players in our program grades 9th – 12th answer questions focused on the season that just concluded and plans for future improvement in the spring, summer, and fall. We encourage parent involvement during this meeting so that there is no miscommunication about what our “plan” is for each player during the off-season.

8. (Late April/ Early May) - **End of Season Basketball Banquet**
 - a. Great Food, Fellowship, and Season Celebration for all stakeholders in our program. All players and parents are invited, and we get to recognize and celebrate the previous season. This is the last Boswell Pioneer Basketball event for the 2022-23 teams and our focus then turns to building our teams for the next school year.

This plan has really helped our coaching staff keep an open line of communication as well as build bridges with our players and parents. All the aspects of our program work together and having good players and parents can improve the experience for coaches as well. This past season (the first implementing this plan) our varsity team won the most games since 2012-13 and competed in the 6A playoffs. Our players were also more connected off the court and I do believe our “Build UP” plan contributed to the success of the 2022-23 season.