

Tips for Parents When Communicating With Your Student/Athlete:

Most people, no matter how old they are, want to make their parents proud. Kids are keenly aware of their parent's judgments and opinions. Even the highest level athletes are sensitive to the verbal and non-verbal praise and critique of their parents. Know this, you have the power to help them or hurt them more than anyone else in the world. You certainly do not want a sport to interfere with the quality of your relationship. It is often best to leave the coaching to the coaches as it is to leave the parenting to the parents.

1. Verbally & Non-verbally communicate you believe in them. I fondly remember how my mom would remind me daily that I was capable of achieving anything. Don't forget that kids can read your body language and the tone of your voice as well to determine if you are genuine.
2. Verbally & Non-verbally communicate that you accept them, love them, & are proud of them NO MATTER WHAT. Reinforce that winning and success are much lower on your priority list than their happiness and well-being.
3. Praise their performance, not their outcome. Focus on their attitude and effort. You want to compliment kids for positive qualities like competing hard, taking chances, being a good teammate, staying positive, maintaining composure, never quitting, etc. The athlete mastering these qualities will eventually be the one who succeeds. Complimenting them too much for winning teaches them that winning is all that matters, and by default losing disappoints you.
4. Ask your kid permission before giving your opinion/criticism about a game/tournament. I.e. Would you mind my opinion... (This gives the kid a sense of power during a sensitive interaction). This can be surprisingly effective.
5. Don't always talk about sports at home. Let your kid bring it up first most of the time. Let your home be a place of peace, positivity, & mental recovery. Many experts recommend not speaking about competition results/criticisms in the car or at the dinner table unless the kid brings it up.
6. Be positive & supportive. 9 out of 10 times, this is what your kid would like.
7. If you read the rankings, forums, predictions, social media, box scores, DON'T talk about it with your kid. This will rarely help them and will often lead to more anxiety and stress.
8. Know your role. Athletes compete. Coaches coach. Refs officiate. Parents parent. And there should be very little overlap between them. Most athletes prefer that you are just mom and dad most of the time. If you are a coach and parent, make sure to leave most of the coaching to designated practice time.
9. Don't make game/tournament day special. Kids can sense their parent's nervousness and it usually leads to them feeling the same. You want them treating every competition the same and so should you. Don't make game day much different than any other day.
10. When in doubt- LAY OFF! This is tough to do, but it is often the right thing to do, especially when you know your kid is already serious about the sport. Most times it is best to leave the sports talk for coaches.

Parent and Coach/Advisor Communication Guidelines:

River Valley School District provides purpose-based activity programs. All of our co-curricular programs are an extension of the school day. Our coaches/advisors are teachers, and the sport or activity is the curriculum. For some of our students, we are the most important class of the day. We have every intention to positively impact your child's life. Your child will become a better person through their participation in our programs. Your child will undoubtedly experience highs and lows along the way. Mistakes and adversity are part of the growth process. We will plan, prepare, and play to win games but we will define the success of our programs beyond the scoreboard. We strive to empower our student-athletes with a sense of belonging through their participation by establishing meaningful relationships that will inspire personal growth and development.

Communication Parents Should Expect From Their Child's Coach/Advisor:

- Coach/Advisor Purpose Statement
- Program Philosophy
- Expectations for Athletes to Participate (attendance, behavior, etc.)
- Location/time of all practices and contests.
- Team Requirements; fees, special equipment, eligibility, attendance, etc.
- Injury protocol
- Letter Requirements

Communication Coaches/Advisors Expect From Parents:

- Any concerns should be expressed privately and directly to the coach first.
- Notification of any schedule conflicts should be made well in advance.
- Specific concerns should be expressed that are directly related to the program.

Appropriate Concerns to Discuss with Coaches/Advisors:

Participants who become involved in the various athletic teams/programs at River Valley High School will experience some of the most rewarding moments in his/her life. It is important to understand that there also will be times when things do not go the way you or your child wish. At these times, discussion with the coach may be desirable to clear up the issue and avoid any misunderstanding. The following items are examples of issues that are appropriate for discussion.

- The treatment of your child, socially, emotionally, and physically.
- Ways to help your child improve.
- Concerns about your child's behavior or grades.

Issues Not Appropriate to Discuss with Coaches/Advisors:

We understand that it is difficult to accept the fact that your child is not playing as much as you may want. Our coaches/advisors are caring educators who make judgment decisions based

upon what they believe to be best for the team and the individuals that make it up. The following items must be left to the discretion of the coach/advisor.

- Playing Time/Position Assignment
- Team Strategy/Play Calling
- Matters Concerning Other Student-Athletes

6 Tips For Effectively Communicating With A Coach/Advisor:

1. **Check your Motive:** Why are you doing this? Have you asked your child what they want? Are you contacting the coach because you want to vent your frustrations? If you want to do what's best for your child, then talking to them first is probably the best first step. Work with your child to find an internal solution by talking about what they can do to deal with or resolve the issue.
2. **Show Appreciation:** There is always something to appreciate about a coach - sacrifice of time, enthusiasm, or even a recent win. Try the sandwich method where you say something positive, add in your issue/criticism, and then end with something else positive.
3. **Don't Surprise Them:** Make an appointment with the coach after you exercise the 24-hour rule. Be sure to inform the coach about the topic of conversation.
4. **Seek to Understand:** If you walk into a coaches office with a concern and your goal is to understand the situation better so the result is what's best for your child and the team, you'll be more effective.
5. **Strive for Improvement:** Don't ask a coach why your child isn't playing, instead, ask what they can do to improve.
6. **Coaches are People Too:** Coaches are human, they make mistakes, they are not perfect, just like you!