

Setting the Tone for Recognition

Make a Plan

Even if you do have a series of things you do at your school to recognize individual athletes, teams, coaches and others, it is a good idea to revisit your program each year to see if it is meeting the needs you have defined

If you do not have a well organized program or plan for recognition in place, the AD should meet with the school principal to discuss their suggestions for an Athletics recognition program. With general support for the concept in mind, the AD should then meet with coaches to discuss options – to get their thoughts and feedback. You may also include student athlete leaders in the discussion.

Suggestions:

- Make sure you have school administration support and budget for your recognition plans
- Have a yearly plan, with schedule on what recognition will be provided when and who will coordinate it.
- Inform parents of recognition criteria during pre-season parent meetings
- Ensure equal recognition for girls and boys
- Do something during season for each sport
- Recognize publicly (Wall displays, announcements, social media etc)
- Have an end of season or end of school year awards banquet (depends on size of school and # of teams)
- While students are the first priority, don't forget the importance of also recognizing coaches, volunteers, parents, officials, custodians, secretaries, etc. you have many supporters and you will maintain that support with a simple thank you (although gifts help too!)

Recognizing Individual Athletes

- **Athlete of the week ideas (or, could be a monthly award)**
 - Determine criteria: various options possible, but should usually involve coach in discussion with AD
 - Buy lunch for *Athlete of the week* (get a sponsor to cover)
 - T-shirt awarded
 - Post picture in Hallway and on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
 - Recognize during morning announcements
 - Tickets to local university/college game (try to have them donated by the post-secondary institution to build good relationships with local high schools)

- **Other Individual awards**
 - Heart of the Game award (every game): hustle, never quit, teamwork, sportsmanship. Winner to wear firefighter's helmet
 - Celebrate Graduating Seniors in their last home game: introduce, PA recognition, gift item, team poster
 - Pep rally for individual sport athlete accomplishment or "send off" to championships
 - Wall of Fame in the school: pictures/stories of students who achieve at local or provincial/state level
 - Citizenship Points Awarded to students community and school service. Points tracked and used in scholarship and job applications
 - Rookie of the year
 - For Athlete of the week or showing exceptional leadership, sportsmanship, etc. as determined by Athletics Department/Administration: water bottle, lanyard, backpack, etc.
 - Area in school for photo/name/story recognition of students who play post-secondary, national team,

professional sports. One school has called this their "Next Level" Wall.

- For each game: Team members vote on MVP and Grinder. Noted next day during Announcements
- Wall display for Athlete of the Year (male and female)
- Wall display for "*Character Award*" Winners
- Points system in place where students at a certain level of points receive: school letter, Proficiency Bar, Excellence Bar



General Recognition/General ideas (individuals)

- Headshot photo/name of each individual sport athlete posted in school (trophy cabinet, cafeteria, hallways, gym entrance, etc)
- Always recognize equal number of female and male athletes
- At last game of season, coaches/parents get up to say something about each graduating player. Give them a cool team poster as a parting gift

Team Recognition

Team Sports

- Make a point of highlighting/recognizing each athlete individually at least once during the season; regardless of being a starter or benchwarmer. Find a reason to celebrate them all
- “Played every year of high school in same sport”:
certificate of some other form of recognition
- Parade all team members through school with students out of class cheering them on as they navigate the

hallways – for first game of season or other special games/playoffs

- One school has a “high 5” Hallway where all students line the hallway and athletes run in between them taking high 5’s and cheers all the way
- Homecoming Game for Football; includes tailgate party
- Wall of Honour
- Pizza team(s) of the month. Once a year, each team gets a Pizza party
- Team Schedules/games posted on monitors all around the school
- Pep rally with music and introductions for each team at start of season: whole school and parents attend
- End of season in each team sport: staff/student game
- “Celebrity” Game: against Police/firefighters/paramedics, etc – could be a fundraiser game
- In Gym, have large board where names of players on teams in season are posted (post all season)

Making it to Provincials/State

- Student body lines hallways to “send off” the team
- In a K-12 school, the team tours every class
- Recognition at front of whole school assembly
- Pep Rally: whole school
- Banners: Any banners won at championships are presented to the team in front of student body
- Banners: All team members sign the banner they won; banner hung in gym in perpetuity

Other Ideas

Other General ideas

- Put a large TV screen in entrance Foyer to school and post weekly pictures, results etc. of the previous day/week competitions.
- Consider investing in a school athletics archive project – there are companies at the conference who provide the software to facilitate this.
- Faces in the Crowd: Take a picture of a crowd at a game, circle one student and give them a prize, like free access to future games, movie pass, special seating, school apparel
- Live Stream home games
- Feature Teams/individuals on school website, school Athletics website, Facebook Page, Twitter, Instagram, etc.
- Rotate in season pics of teams/individuals on school hallway TV's
- Team Sports: Senior team plays teachers prior to home tournaments
- Work closely with local media to ensure good coverage of school athletic teams. Much easier in smaller rural communities
- One BIG picture made and posted: shows all school teams for that year (individual and team sport)
- Acknowledgement in school newsletter
- Each Team has its own Instagram feed; successes posted throughout season
- Small coffee shop cash cards as random or end of season thank you's to coaches
- Scholarship in recognition of important contributor to the school athletics program or a team. May be living or memorial award
- Learn the favourite Starbucks (or local coffee place) treat for each coach. Occasionally surprise them with their

- favourite treat. Pay for from vending machine money or out of athletics budget
- Create PSA's using current school athletes (picture with slogan of some sort)

Banquet Ideas

What you do depends on many factors including funds available, number of teams in the school, size of facility etc. Try to ensure each team gets equal recognition. Some ideas:

- Individual Team Awards Banquets
- Complete School Athletics Awards Banquet
- Sport Season Award Banquets
- Cross-Sport Awards like: most improved team, most sportsmanlike team, most successful team, most community minded team, etc.
- Could be a Breakfast, Luncheon or Supper – all shown to work well
- Recognize "athlete of year" (both genders)
- Recognize "coach of the year"
- Team Captains to prepare and give speeches; thank coaches etc

Student Athlete Council

- Consider starting one to allow student athletes to be more involved in the athletics program, and to be seen as leaders in the school. Great leadership building opportunity.

Long Standing Traditions

Note: In Canada, coaches are not paid in school sports

- Honorarium given to coaches
- End of year gift given to volunteer coaches/managers
- School Sport Apparel given to coaches
- Coaches Breakfast at least once a Season
- "Westwood Wednesdays" – every Wednesday, students wear the school sports colours
- Teacher Jersey Day: before certain games, each senior varsity athletes asks a teacher to wear their jersey for the day to help promote school attendance at that night's game
- Hall of Champions: A special room in the school set aside to recognize past and present athletic history/success
- Special awards for multi-sport athletes
- Hosting a huge annual tournament completely coordinated by students with oversight from teachers
- Take coaches out for 9 holes/golf or disc golf followed by a meal
- Special award for long standing coaches (you can choose how many years is long standing for you). Might be brief case, bag, apparel, plaque or other gift item
- Create a Coach Wall of Fame at the school
- Coach Jackets given out each year