

# Leading Your Program: A Guide for High School Basketball Coaches

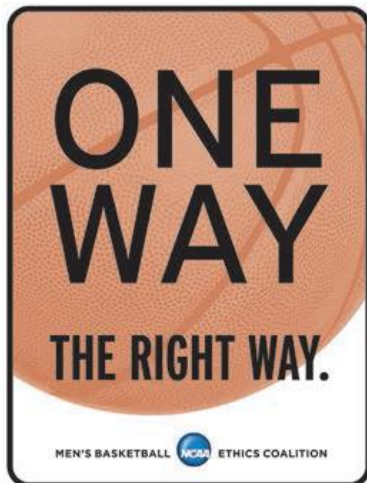


Developed by the Basketball Coaches Association of New York.  
Based on a publication by the NCAA Ethics Coalition



# Managing Your Program

This guide is designed to promote ethical conduct among New York State High School Basketball Coaches through education, leadership and mentoring.



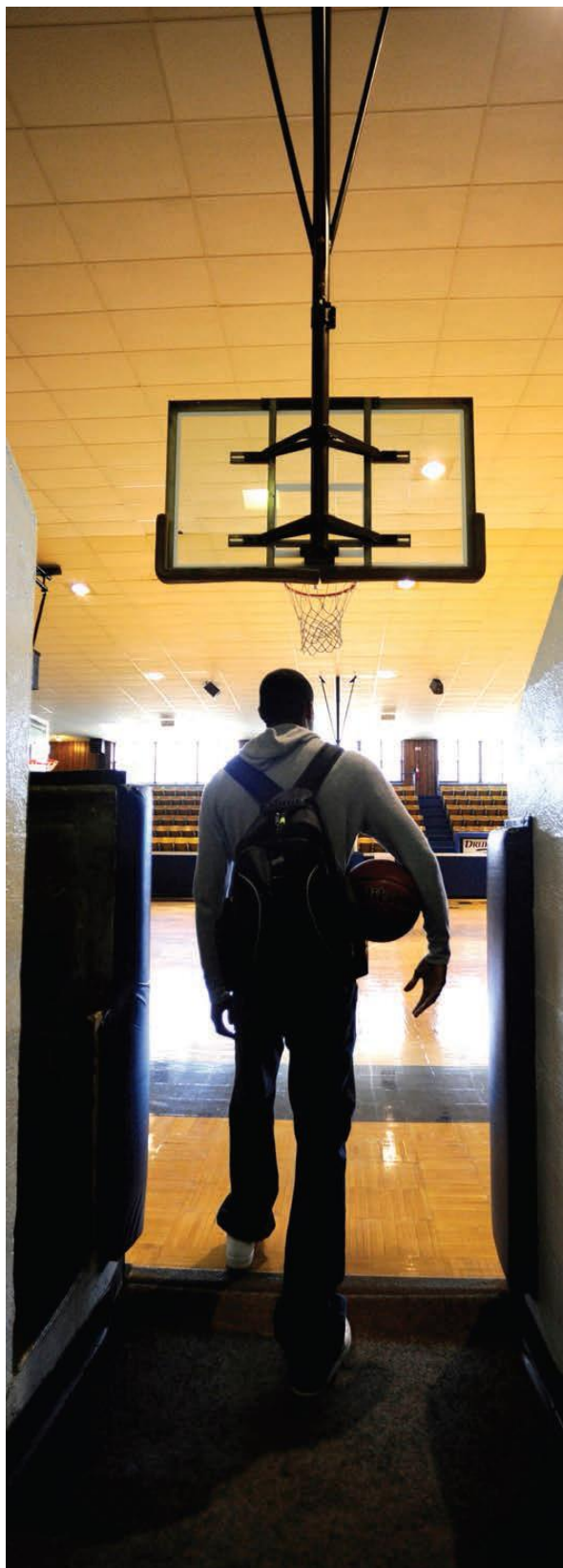
This guide is an adapted version of “Managing Your Program: A Coaches Guide” produced by the NCAA Men’s Basketball Ethics Coalition. BCANY has formatted the guide to better suit High School Coaches. We thank the NCAA Ethics Coalition for allowing us to use their material



*Any comments and/or suggestions can be emailed to [bcanyinfo@gmail.com](mailto:bcanyinfo@gmail.com)*



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# Welcome Letter

Dear Coach:

This guide has been designed as a resource to assist you in your role as head coach. One function of BCANY is to mentor coaches of New York State basketball. As we thought about our early years in coaching, we realized how success can change drastically depending on the decisions made early in a career.

With that in mind, we wanted to provide you with some insights as you strive to make good decisions.

## **1. Your integrity defines you.**

You will be faced with challenging situations in the years to come and you must make the right decisions. It is essential that you make good decisions and **NEVER** knowingly compromise your integrity on these matters.

Remember this quote: "Some people are born great. Some people achieve greatness. Some have greatness thrust upon them. Nothing determines your legacy like your integrity."

## **2. Show great leadership in your bench decorum.**

Many eyes will be on you for a lot in the years to come and how you conduct yourself on the bench will be the primary way most people will get to know you. You never know who will be looking at you so show strong patience and confidence. Also, remember that there are words that you do not have to be a lip reader to understand.

## **3. Strive to have a positive relationship with players.**

You must build lasting and caring relationships with every player. Rules without relationships will lead to rebellion. Your players will run through a wall for you if they have a positive relationship with you. Having positive, healthy relationships with your players will allow you to become a much better coach.

Also remember that every player will have an opportunity to speak about your program on their way out the door. Regardless of how much success they have had throughout their careers, some will have an axe to grind with you. What they divulge to your director of athletics, Principal, Superintendent etc. in terms of your rules, approach and ethical conduct could impact your coaching career.

#### **4. Know that someone is always watching.**

What you do and how you conduct yourself on and off the court is so important. You are special. You are a leader in your school and/or community whether you realize it or not. As a result, you will be held to a much higher standard in terms of your own conduct. Whether you are on the bench, in a restaurant, or at a family outing, you are representing yourself and your program. In this age of social media, a small error in judgment could end up on YouTube, Facebook, or Twitter, and in a matter of moments, drastically change the public's perception of your character. Do not compromise in this area.

**Exemplify integrity and character even when no one is watching.**

#### **6. Put academics first.**

Today having players succeed in the classroom is just as important as your win-loss record. Demand strong academic performance from all of your student-athletes and show them you care by knowing the courses they are taking, what their plans are after High School, and how you can help them achieve those goals, even those not related to Basketball.

#### **7. Be honest and forthright with parents.**

Be very polite and honest with parents about the status of their son or daughter. The way you conduct your business every day affects the perception of your basketball program. Always set clear expectations and provide understanding of where their son or daughter fits within the program. Not everyone can be the star of the team, and it is important to not only make that clear to your players, but parents as well. This especially relates to playing time.





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# Top 10 Mistakes

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***A well-intentioned new coach may concentrate so much on “the big picture” that he could overlook small details that can derail the effectiveness of leadership.***

***Try to avoid the following mistakes:***

1. Hiring the wrong staff.
2. Poor scheduling.
3. Not setting clear goals or vision for the program.
4. Not remaining positive through “growing pains”.
5. Not being yourself. Don’t try to copy someone else.
6. Not being patient with your team; especially young players.
7. Trying to do too many different things at one time.
8. Not spending enough time with your team.
9. Not establishing relationships with:
  - a. Administration.
  - b. Teachers.
  - c. Student body.
  - d. Staff
  - e. Community.
  - f. Media.
10. **Thinking that you have arrived. You can always learn and improve.**



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# Hiring a Staff

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*It is important to surround yourself with the right people. This doesn't necessarily mean personal friends; but rather individuals what to help young people grow as people and basketball players.*

## Preferred qualities for an assistant:

- 1. Experience:** The ability to teach and coach.
- 2. Communication:** The ability to share information; good or bad and the ability to speak effectively while sharing a head coach's vision.
- 3. Leadership:** The ability to step up, take charge and make good decisions when needed.
- 4. Loyalty:** Someone who is willing to voice their ideas and perspectives while always upholding your decisions.
- 5. Chemistry:** The personality and demeanor to fit in with the head coach, staff and players.
- 6. Work Ethic:** Self initiative, motivation and a commitment to the hours and demands of the job.
- 7. Adaptability:** The ability to relate to different types of people and adapt to different environments and situations.
- 8. Character:** The ability to do the right thing even when it is difficult.
- 9. Integrity:** Honesty, morality and truthfulness.



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# Recruiting

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*As College Basketball continue to become more and more competitive so does the recruiting process. This is another example of why strong relationships with your players are important; as you can advocate and guide them through this process.*

*Here are some tips:*

- 1. It's not about you:** Remember this process is about your player and their family, not you. It can be hard not to 'promote' yourself when big name coaches come around, or to push your player towards the program with the "biggest name". It's not about you; it's about what is the best for them.
- 2. More than Basketball:** Help them realize this is the next four years of their life. They need to look at more than just basketball.
  - Distance from home
  - Would you want to be there if you didn't play
  - Academics
  - Social aspects
- 3. No Special Treatment:** Don't start treating them differently just because they are being recruited; this will lead to animosity and problems within your program.
- 4. Integrity:** Be mindful of NCAA compliance rules and careful of Coaches that break them. Is that the type of program you want your athlete playing for?
- 5. Respect:** Treat all involved in the process with respect. Understand that this is a major decision for your player and their family. As far as Coaches go, while it may not work out with a player this year for one reason or another, you do not want to burn any bridges or hurt a future players chances. It's a small world you never know!





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# Communicating with Your Team

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***As coaches, we ask our players to be great communicators. Likewise, a head coach must make a commitment to being a great communicator, both on and off the court. Make your expectations clear and communicate about those expectations every day. Your team will be better and your players will be even more prepared for life after graduation if you communicate effectively.***

## BEST PRACTICES

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### **Establish a culture of honesty and respect:**

1. Pat Riley: “My job is to continually define reality.” Be very candid in dealing with your players – let them know whether they are meeting expectations on the court, off the court and in the community.
2. Thoroughly define classroom expectations, behavioral expectations
3. Communicate team values and individual expectations and remind them of these ALL THE TIME.
4. Always operate with an open door policy. You have to make yourself available to your players.
5. Meet with each individual player during the offseason and talk only about nonbasketball specific topics – e.g., career ambition, educational pursuits and interests off the court. Get to know them on a personal level before the season begins.

### **Communicating with parents:**

1. Have a meeting to thoroughly define expectations of your program and answer any questions regarding academic expectations, recruiting process, schedule, team rules
2. Use this phrase: “I’m always available to speak to you about where your son stands in terms of playing time, but in those circumstances, there will be no sugarcoating or discussion about other players. Be prepared for nothing but the truth.”

### **First meeting of the academic year:**

1. Review program expectations – who we want to be-on a daily basis.
2. Thoroughly communicate your goals/ambitions for the upcoming year – DON'T SELL YOUR TEAM SHORT.
3. Take the opportunity to reinforce your commitment to integrity and team rules.

### **In-season communication:**

1. Every practice is an opportunity to teach and communicate your values/goals – plan and use it wisely.
2. Prepare your key messages. Don't speak off the cuff.

### **Post-season meetings:**

1. Team – Review the season's statistics in very objective terms. Be very blunt on where improvement can be made as a team. Create strength/conditioning and individual development programs around those areas to improve.
2. Individual:
  - a. Discuss status of academic progress.
  - b. Provide honest assessment of performance from the past season (statistical and subjective).
  - c. Discuss specific areas for improvement.
  - d. Set goals for both academic and athletic performance.

## **PITFALLS**

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1. Not being honest and upfront with your team can lead to mistrust between players and the coaching staff.
2. Not providing clear expectations for players leads to confusion.
3. Not encouraging open communication between the coaching staff and student-athletes.



## Your Program & Community

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### **Administration:**

1. Each athletics program is expected to operate as an integral part of the institution. The head coach of any program must know the mission and goals of the school and consistently convey them to his staff and players.

2. Taking the time to understand and support the mission and vision of the school will help you find ways to incorporate that mission and vision in the basketball program. An open and trusting relationship between the Principal, the director of athletics (AD) and the head basketball coach is essential to the success and progress of the team. Relationships and trust take time to build, but are vital for future growth and support of the basketball program.

3. Above all, the basketball program must operate with integrity and a firm commitment to academic achievement, athletics achievement, and the personal development of the players. Take the time to emphasize and communicate your commitment to these ideals.

### **Director of Athletics:**

1. Establishing a trusting and strong relationship with your AD is vital to your success. There will inevitably be challenging times, and the relationship with your AD must be built on solid ground in order to overcome these challenges.

2. Invest time in developing this relationship with the AD. Get to know his/her priorities and look for ways to support him/her. Hopefully, they will look for ways to support the basketball program in the same manner.

3. Do not embarrass the AD by allowing him/her to be surprised. Blindsiding an AD with news or a crisis is something you must try to avoid. Make sure you communicate with him/her so that they have notice in advance of good and bad news.

4. Make an effort to spend time with the AD both in the office and outside of the office.

5. If a minor issue arises, do whatever you can to deal with the issue and propose a solution to alleviate unnecessary burdens on the AD. Every problem has a solution.

6. A great program consists of everyone being on the same page and working together toward common goals.

**Basketball staff:**

1. Make sure your staff and everyone connected to your program understands your goals and philosophies. Never assume that people know your priorities. State them clearly and often so that everyone is clear.
2. Inform your staff that they must keep you updated on significant areas of the program. The buck stops with you as head coach, and no one wants surprises.
3. Establish clearly defined roles for your staff so that everyone on your staff and in the department of athletics knows who is responsible for specific duties.
4. Establish a solid relationship with your staff and everyone involved with your program. Having a good relationship with everyone involved makes things run smoothly and allows problems and issues to be resolved a lot quicker.
5. Take the time to thank people around you and recognize their contributions to your program.





# Quick Hitters

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1. Always show a great deal of gratitude to all of those who support your program. This includes players, coaches, parents, fans, teachers, support staff and bus drivers to name a few.
2. Keep your finger on the pulse of the community to know what your programs reputation is in the community. If it is anything other than positive and respectful, take the necessary steps to change it.
3. Make sure you develop a balanced off-season program that focuses on skill development, physical conditioning, team chemistry, as well as balancing the personal development of your student athletes and respecting their other commitments.
4. Encourage your student athletes to be involved in school activities and the community. Again think about what kind of words you want people to use when they talk about your program.
5. Be involved yourself. Support the other sports and activities at your school. You want their support, led by example and give them yours.