

TIPS FOR BUILDING A HIGH SCHOOL ROWING PROGRAM

At the 2008 ROWONTARIO Training Conference, club representatives were asked to provide ideas for **getting in the door**. The ideas presented here came from that meeting and from the survey conducted over the 2008 rowing season. Some club representatives requested that this information be made available to everyone while they are waiting for the completion of this project.

How do clubs with successful high school programs, **create interest** in the school in the first place?

For the staff...

- If your club has a corporate program, adapt it to the school staff.
- Start with erg events so staff/administrators/parents become interested without fearing the water aspect.
- Is there a member of your club on staff? Even if that person doesn't have time to coach, s/he might be able to help you find someone or help you get your foot in the door.

For the students...

- Use video available on *YouTube* to promote rowing to the students.
- RCA is working on a video aimed at high school students, but it won't be ready in time for this season.
- One of the best ways to create interest is through word-of-mouth. Make sure students enjoy themselves in summer programs so they'll encourage their friends to participate when the program is offered at school.

First and foremost, you must have an administrator (i.e., principal, vice principal) on side.

Be patient. This could take a long time....maybe even a whole year.

The principal is ready to listen. **NOW WHAT?**

Be prepared. According to the surveys, these are the issues that are most likely to arise. Make sure you are prepared to address them.

What about insurance? Is the program safe? It costs how much? Who's going to run this thing?

What follows is advice from school administrators and clubs with successful programs:

- **Insurance:** Most school boards have insurance through OSBIE (Ontario School Board Insurance Exchange), but not all administrators know about it or understand it. Outside coaches are covered by OSBIE once they have been accepted as coaches by the principal. For a list of school boards that are members of OSBIE, see <http://www.osbie.on.ca/about/membership.aspx>. Also, be familiar with the RCA insurance policy.

- **Safety:** Require each participant pass a swim test. View or make available the RCA safety video. Remind the administration that your coaches are qualified and had to study risk management as part of their certification.

- **Expense:** Make sure you are clear about who pays for the program. Consider whether the school can afford the program. If not, should the participants pay? What if the school doesn't charge for other sports? Make sure the principal doesn't have to justify these decisions to the parents.

- **Responsibility:** Make sure you have a plan for assigning the responsibility for the program. Will the program be run by the school or the club? Which one will be responsible for the registration and other paperwork? Who will provide the coaching? Some school boards have policies on this; in some boards it varies from school to school. Again, make sure you have the support of a school administrator.