

SAMPLE LETTER ASKING PARENTS FOR SUPPORT IN DYSFUNCTIONAL TEAM SITUATIONS

To the parents of [list team members' names]

I am truly sorry to have to write this letter, but as our situation stands now, I see no alternative. I'll come straight to the point. Our Odyssey of the Mind team is not functioning in a satisfactory way. I have spoken many times with the children about this. I have explained that I could not and would not coach a team that continued to show disrespect for each other and for the team meetings. Odyssey is an organization for which I have a great deal of respect and to which I give a lot of time. The team members need to have an equal amount of respect.

This year I have seen a big split in the team. Some of them are eager to work, while others seem to be marking time. I don't have the time to spend several hours each week meeting with kids who cannot focus and work together as a team. This is not to say that I am not interested in them. I am. I care about each of them. It is because I care that I do not want to see this experience wasted. This group deserves better than what is currently happening.

Will you please talk with your children about their interest in Odyssey? Find out if they really want to participate. I am concerned about their commitment because [give examples of behavior that has been unacceptable]. This behavior is not fair to the team, and I will not be able to coach this team under these circumstances. They know that the Spontaneous portion of the competition is worth 100 points. Nevertheless, many of them are not willing to work on this. The acting may be the most fun, but the work behind the scenes, the stuff that no audience will see or clap for, is what makes a successful team. In fact, this is the work that gives the children the greatest lifetime rewards. Your children need to be willing to do it all, to accept responsibility for it all, and to accept my decisions if they want to remain on the team.

Before we go any further, I need a firm renewed commitment from each team member. I really have been asking for this at each meeting and don't like some of the attitudes displayed at our meetings. I need your help. Please talk to your children and make a decision so that we can get to work. Odyssey means commitment, it means working as a team, it means being willing to do what needs to be done for the good of the group, and it means hard work as well as fun.

I am sorry that this comes to you as a letter. I don't have time to make individual telephone calls to talk about it, and I didn't want to take up your valuable time trying to schedule a meeting of all of the parents. I am very frustrated, but not yet ready to give up. Please let me hear from you by letter, e-mail or phone call by _____(date). Thank you.