

Pep Rally Choreography Tips

by Diane Craig, Director, National Champion Hebron High School Silver Wings

My principal always tells me that pep rallies make him nervous. "I am old fashioned; you get close to that line...but you never cross it". I tell him it is my job to keep him on his toes. Seriously, the key to creating a great pep rally hip hop dance the students will love and the teachers and administration will enjoy is to "not cross the line". Below you will find tips and boundaries for pep rally choreography.

1. Choose a piece of music that is appropriate. Today it can be very difficult to select pep rally/contest music with clean lyrics, especially hip hop. You may have to be creative with the computer and slice sections of songs in order to create music that relates to your audience.
2. Recognize your audience. Make sure your music, style of dance and costume selections relate to your audience. At Hebron High School, the Silver Wings are known for our hip hop style so I would not perform a field pom routine for a pep rally. At the same time, my administration would not look too highly upon a pep rally hip hop for a half time performance.
3. Select your formations first. Choose the first formation and write it out on paper. Place the paper so you can have a bird's eye view of the form in order to see how the form could rotate, spin or be split without traffic problems from the dancers. Having a bird's eye view will also allow you to see what formations would be effective with parts and levels.
4. Now that your music and forms are selected, chart your music, designating each eight count. Note any unusual sounds, noises, booms or voices in the music. Note where you feel the music is signaling a formation change, a solo debut, unique choreography to words.....
5. Keep your team mind while creating the choreography. Do you want to challenge them or stay in a comfort zone? Is this for a teenage audience or a PTSA performance?
6. Create movements that look good on everyone, not just your officers.
7. Movement: When choreographing a pep rally think what would the 17 year old boys in the audience think of that move? This rule will keep your dancers hip and trendy yet ladylike at all times.
8. Use levels and parts so the audience never knows what direction the movement is going to come from. If you choose side, middle, side for this eight count, use front middle back for the following. The audience won't be able to keep up.
9. Be careful with pelvic and rib movements. Pushing the pelvic area back rather than forward and adding arm motions allows for acceptable movement. Rolling the ribs and/or opening them out rather than popping is also an alternative.
10. My principal does not have a problem with our "cutting edge" hip hop body movements because the girls are always covered (for example, basket ball shorts and a tank top with a jacket).
11. Choreography for one venue may not be appropriate for another venue.
12. Always keep in mind your administration, parents and team. Challenge your students without jeopardizing the integrity of your program.

I hope you find these tips helpful. Remember all of your hard work can fall apart in a short time. Always put the integrity of your program first and remember do not cross the line.

"When in doubt....leave it out."

