

# **Concerned about music content and crowd control?**

## **So are we.....**

At Music Express, we are very much aware of today's concerns of youth dances. Following is a discussion of various aspects, some ideas of what can be done to curtail such activities, and our position on each topic. We always welcome correspondence from faculty, staff, parents, advisors and chaperones. It is with such feedback that we can continue to be pro-active in addressing such concerns so we may continue to provide exceptional entertainment to schools and youth groups across the country. Our goal is not to complicate the issues, but to simplify them for your event coordinators. Following are topics that are of the biggest concern at today's school events.

### **1. Appropriate attire**

Each and every generation adopts new styles and trends to push the envelope of acceptable dress. Today's youth are no exception. Clothes that are tight-fitting, low cut and bare midriff are ever more the expression of teens trying to make a statement.

#### ***what can you do?***

We perform at many schools that have established dress codes for all school events. This is not an infringement on students' rights; the dance is a school function and it is more than reasonable to expect students to dress and act appropriately at such events. Sample dress codes may include any of the following:

long pants, no mini-skirts, no clothing showing bare midriff, no clothing expressing profanity or offensive slogans (ie 'Big Johnson' tees, liquor tees, etc)

Wearing jeans instead of shorts in no way impairs a person's ability to have a good time at a dance. Do make sure your guidelines are clear in advance, and you will have few problems establishing and enforcing such guidelines.

#### ***what can we do?***

Unfortunately your DJ can offer no assistance in enforcing or limiting this problem. This is an issue that needs to be addressed prior to the dance, and monitored on arrival.

### **2. Style of dancing**

There are three basic concerns common to style of dance; grinding, moshing and crowd surfing. Grinding is just as implied, and includes more intimate body contact and implied sexual connotation. Moshing tends to be an out-of-control slamming of bodies; pushing and shoving. Crowd surfing is exactly as it sounds; riding the wave atop audience hands.

#### ***what can you do?***

First, make the students aware of what behavior is acceptable and what consequences will be. Second, the visibility of chaperones is already a good deterrent. There is nothing wrong with tapping a student on the shoulder and indicating that their behavior is inappropriate. Much like the 'talk to your kids about.....' commercials, it really does work. Kids respect adults who give them a certain amount of responsibility and respect. This means laying out expectations and allowing them the opportunity to choose to respect them or ignore them and suffer the consequences (such as expulsion from the

dance). It is difficult for chaperones or faculty to curtail moshing or surfing; this is best addressed primarily by the entertainer, with some assistance of chaperones.

***what can we do?***

While the DJ does control the overall energy of the room, they are not in a position to do much to curtail grinding. To some extent they can choose music that discourages such dancing, but it is important to realize that students can grind or mosh to ANY style of music. Your DJ can play a very important, and essential role in curtailing moshing & surfing. The DJ is in a position to make the room VERY QUIET and BRIGHT. This is an immediate energy drain to the dance floor. It is not practical to stop such behavior without the assistance of your DJ. The DJ is the person who controls the energy of the room, and should be able to shut down such activities in a very short time. Your entertainer can spot a problem brewing, and stop it before it gets out of hand. A good entertainer will be able to control the audience without throwing insults or placing blame on faculty or chaperones, and get the event back on track quickly. Music Express entertainers will always be keeping an eye out for such behavior and will halt that activity immediately, then resume the dance. If a particular style of music tends to cause a problem we will simply no longer play those requests.

**3. Music & video content**

Music content and its effect on youth has been an issue for decades. There is no doubt that music can contribute to inappropriate behavior, however it is never the sole cause. A healthy, stable mind does not heed the instructions of a popular artists' lyrics any more than they jump off a cliff because a 'friend told them to'. Yes, music can influence people, but no, it does not control them.

***what can you do?***

Express your concerns to your entertainer. Some regions are sensitive to particular songs for various reasons. Sometimes inter-school chatter has brought awareness of a particular song to the forefront, or perhaps students have been aggressively promoting an underlying theme or concept, *which may not be the actual content, or intent, of the music in question.* The best pro-active move you can make is to discuss your concerns prior to your event so your entertainer knows where to draw the line.

***what can we do?***

Listen. Our best tool is listening to each school's concerns and limits. We will always respect your comments, concerns, and levels of acceptable music, and adhere to those standards throughout your dance. It is our job to deliver the entertainment that YOU expect, and that does include content in a large way.

Now is a good time to mention the oft-too-heard First Amendment rights. You will hear many people argue that students are entitled to listen to the style of music they desire. We strongly disagree with this premise. We are hired by a particular individual or group. That person will set the appropriate level of music. Our response to the argument of First Amendment rights is simply that we will play music as requested by our employer.

We whole-heartedly acknowledge that large sound, lighting and video systems exaggerate content of both audio or video. What might not be noticeable on a 27" TV seems a lot

more bold on a fifteen foot screen. Similarly, a particular individuals' particular music style may not be offensive on a large sound system, but nobody likes to listen to music they don't like at ANY volume! We would be happy to provide chaperones and faculty with earplugs upon request. While we do keep volume levels safe, earplugs tone down the music to a more tolerable level.

Music Express feels that when students are involved in the dance, they are not causing mischief; either on school grounds or elsewhere. This means the chaperones job is easier; it means kids aren't driving around town, aren't attending parties, and aren't consuming alcohol or other drugs.

Tolerance and acceptable levels vary by each individual; parents, chaperones, students, and faculty. Communication is the only way that WE can know exactly what you want (or do not want) at your event. In realizing this, you will also then note that school functions, be they dances or any other event, *do* cater to the majority. A school and its parent body need to accept that it is ok that some students will choose not to attend, and some parents will choose not to allow their child to attend. It is a parental responsibility to determine what is appropriate for their children. While the school makes every attempt to make activities family-friendly, it is not realistic that every event they produce appeals to 100% of the student body and their parents.

In planning youth events, keep in mind that it is better to establish guidelines in advance for appropriate behavior and activities than to diminish the experience for the students. The reality is, that if the school does not offer activities that are engaging to the students, they will find other activities on *their own terms*. Music Express will assist in any way that we can to ensure your event is family friendly and appropriate. As always, we welcome your calls at any time. Feel free to refer concerned parents, chaperones, staff.....we would be happy to talk to them about any concerns.

Valerie Ruste  
Manager  
Music Express  
<http://www.medj.com>  
Brookings, SD  
888-999-MEDJ  
605-697-5326

**Copyright Music Express 2004**

This article may be reproduced and distributed appropriately to assist in planning and discussion of your events. It may not be published or publicly distributed without express consent of the author.