

# Build a Dynamic Program – Incorporate Song and Pep Flag

## I. What is Songleading?

- History - In 1960, Robert Olmstead, the founder of USA offered the first camp for songleaders (pom pon girls). In order to expand into cheerleading, Robert called upon his friend Lawrence “Herki” Herkimer, founder of NCA, to personally teach and later provide cheer instructors. In turn, Olmstead introduced Herkimer to songleading and drill teams, prompting Herkimer to develop and manufacture the first poms.
- Song/Pom teams are a part of a Spirit program. They cheer at games with cheerleaders on the sidelines, so their first priority is to support the school (the same as cheerleaders).
- Songleaders not only do cheers on the sidelines, but they also perform routines on the sidelines, during time-outs, half-time and rallies. The main style that Songleaders are known to perform is Pom, but they also perform other styles that are typical to be seen in a game environment (hip hop, jazz, novelty).



## II. What is Pep Flag?

- Pep Flags also known as short flags or twirl flags is the performing art of twirling one or two flag(s) as part of a choreographed routine. Pep Flag teams can either be a part of a spirit program or a part of a band program. Those affiliated with a spirit programs cheer at games along with their cheer teams.
- Pep Flag teams perform routines for on the sidelines, during time-outs, half-times and rallies.

## III. How do Song and Pep Flag teams coordinate with Cheer teams?

- For Spirit programs that have a unified spirit program with cheer, mascot, song and pep flag teams, they coordinate for their sideline material. On occasion, they also will do “Unity routines” where they incorporate all programs into one big routine that can be used for the first football game, for a rally or homecoming.
- Coordinated Cheers – All teams have cheers that have “motions” that are either the same or coordinate to visually complement each other. Songleaders usually do a “Pom Step” which is a traditional prance step. They do the arm motions for a cheer along with the pom step. Pep Flag teams perform cheers with their flags in their hands, and do movements and motions with their flags that are similar to the cheer & song motions.



#### **IV. How do Song teams differ from Dance Teams?**

- It is ideal to have a good relationship with the dance team coach/director on campus. Understand the difference between the two programs and support each other.
- Song Team vs. Dance Team
  - Song teams are spiritleaders, so their main difference is they cheer at games. They typically perform in a skirt and vest uniform similar to cheerleaders.
  - Dance teams are usually a part of the dance class on campus or performing arts program. They typically hold dance concerts (Winter and Spring) and may also perform at rallies and do half-time performances at games. They usually wear a dance team outfit which may include pants.
  - Song/Pom = College Dance Team or Pro Cheerleader/Dancer (NFL or NBA) – they are part of game experience.
  - Dance Team = So You Think You Can Dance – They focus on artistic meaning and interpretation, performance quality.



**Song/Pom**



**Dance Team**



**Song/Pom or Dance?**





## **V. The benefits of adding Song and Pep Flag to your Spirit Program**

- More students involved will be a part of the spirit program which means more spiritleaders on the sidelines!
- Song and Pep Flag teams are visually appealing and will enhance the game experience – which in turn, bring more excitement to the game and will help boost overall school spirit.
- Students with a dance background can utilize their dance skills and also learn about spiritleading.
- Song/Pom is the perfect preparation for a college dance team, professional dance team (NBA, NFL) or camp instructor.
- If you have a competitive program, your teams can compete at regional and national competitions representing your school. Not only could you compete in Song/Pom and Pep Flag divisions, your entire program can compete in the crowdleading division!



## **VI. How to start a Song and/or Pep Flag team?**

- Budget for a song coach and/or pep flag coach (If you don't have the additional budget, maybe a cheer coach can start it until there is a budget for a coach?)
- Promote the new team and hold a tryout
- If there is no interest, maybe current cheerleaders are interested in crossing over. They can attend a one day clinic to test it out.

- Some teams send a few cheerleaders to song camp to learn material if they don't have a song team. This gives an opportunity for cheerleaders that are interested to do both.
- Pep Flag can a little more challenging – Must send team to a one day clinic and camp. Must have a coach that is educated in twirling flags.
- Reach out to USA for help with finding coaches or clinic instructors. Contact Carina Olis [colis@varsity.com](mailto:colis@varsity.com)
- Attend CAMP!

## VII. Q & A

