

Building a Successful Knowledge Bowl Foundation -- Jamie Jurkovich, Saint Thomas Academy  
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1. *Recruit*: "If you build it -- they will come": Find a core group. Build around a few die-hards. Recruit. Talk to teachers. Talk to the kids. Have a little in-school tournament. Advertise. Make announcements. Pick out leaders -- get them to take ownership -- get their ideas -- make it their club. Try to build with the younger players. Get them hooked with some success at a MS or Jr. High tournament. Build team unity with a service outing. Have a parents' meeting/party. Secure support from principal, activities director, and purse strings. Support important.

2. *Positive reinforcement*: Post photos on bulletin board, on the web, through emails. Email list serve to congratulate and recognize students. Be a haven for the geek squad: Opportunity to feel safe, have fun, talk smart, make friends. Recognize accomplishments. Order T-shirts or the like. Have an end of the year potluck or pizza party with some fun awards. End of the year booklet with stats/results/roster/senior awards. Work towards lettering status.

3. *Goals*: Set goals. What are you trying to accomplish? Set some little ones in rounds ("see if you can win this room, this round"), in tournaments ("see if you can get into the top \_\_\_"), and for the season (e.g., "make subregions, or regions, or state" or whatever). And goals for the program -- # of kids involved, go out of town, maybe a national tournament some day.

4. *Coach*: Coach them on the little things. If you care and pay attention, the kids will do the same. Track what they do well, what they don't, encourage, cajole -- Knowledge Bowl takes mental and physical endurance. Several levels to KB: learning how the questions are worded and when to buzz in; knowing the answer; adjusting to the competition in the room, etc. Need to work on, make kids aware of these nuances.

5. *Practice*: Practice, practice, practice. Set up a reliable, predictable, sustainable schedule. No substitute for hard work. Builds confidence. Give some study assignments on the side. Go to some invitational tournaments, too. Competition makes you better. If you want variety, try a Quiz Bowl tournament. Knowledge Master Exam. Knowledge Master database.

Summary: Find good people, be positive, set the bar high, care, and work hard.

Good luck and have fun!