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## WHAT A TEACHER CAN LEARN FROM A COACH

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Successful coaches are tremendous motivators. A look at one of the greatest coaches of all time, John Wooden of U.C.L.A., reveals his philosophy and strategy for success. It is our thesis that teachers can model successful coaching techniques in the classroom and increase student motivation.

One of the GREATEST challenges facing the classroom teacher is motivating students. It is common to hear teachers say, "Billy is lazy, won't listen, and can not be motivated." Then later that day, Billy will go out to the football field, hustle, be very attentive, and show a tremendous amount of motivation. It wasn't that Billy could not be motivated, but rather, Billy was not motivated. What was the coach doing that the teacher wasn't? Let's take a look and see.

For a period of twelve years the Green Bay Packers had one of the worst football records in the National Football League. Then in 1959 the Packers hired Vince Lombardi to coach the team. During his nine years the Green Bay Packers had nine winning seasons, won the NFL championship five times and two Super Bowl championships. It wasn't that Lombardi knew more than his predecessors, but rather he had the ability to motivate his players (McGinnis, 1985).

Another coach, John Wooden of U.C.L.A., one of the greatest basketball coaches of all time, pointed out that coaches are first of all teachers. He listed ten criteria needed for a successful teacher: 1) knowledge of your subject; 2) general knowledge; 3) teaching skill, 4) profes-

sional attitude; 5) discipline; 6) classroom organization; 7) school and community relations; 8) teacher-pupil relationship; 9) warm personality and genuine consideration of others; and, 10) a desire to improve. Who can argue with a man who won 10 NCAA championships (7 consecutive), 88 consecutive victories, 4 undefeated seasons, and 8 undefeated conference seasons. These are successes of a man at the top of his profession and who may be an excellent role model for teachers to use in applying coaching principals to the classroom (Wooden, 1980).

As a coach, Wooden developed a pyramid of success in regard to coaching and playing basketball. He defined success as a "peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best that you are capable of becoming." At the foundation of his pyramid was enthusiasm. Coaches generate tremendous enthusiasm for their sport and this enthusiasm is contagious because motivated people influence those with whom they come in contact. Successful coaches, according to Wooden, have their hearts in their work (Wooden, 1980).

Like Wooden and other successful coaches teachers need to exhibit this same

type of enthusiasm. Research indicates that teenagers described influential teachers as those who had the ability to generate enthusiasm for learning, and possess a positive attitude toward their job, subject matter, and their students. A classroom with a positive atmosphere will generate more learning. So, a key to better success for a classroom teacher is to create an environment where learning is a joy (Csikszentmihalyi and McCormack, 1986).

Another important ingredient in coaching and part of the foundation of Wooden's pyramid of success is friendship. There is a certain closeness that develops between a coach and player which comes from mutual respect. They spend extra time together, thereby getting to know each other better. This generally leads to loyalty, a third segment of Wooden's foundation to success (Wooden, 1980). It is not uncommon for a coach to stay after practice and work on certain skills with players that need help. Classroom teachers should not hesitate to initiate close personal relationships with their students. Pupils want a teacher they feel comfortable around. According to Csikszentmihalyi and McCormack (1986), students like teachers that are approachable, easy to talk to and ready to listen.

A fourth ingredient to a coach's success in motivating players is an emphasis on team work, i.e. cooperation. No championship or goal was ever obtained by a one-man effort. Team work leads to unity. Cooperation is so important that Wooden also included it as part of the foundation of his pyramid to success (Wooden, 1980). Cooperation is also obtainable in the classroom and can prove very effective. Research indicates that cooperative learning methods in the classroom can increase "student achievement, positive race relations in desegregated schools, mutual concern among students, student self-esteem, and other positive outcomes" (Slavin, 1980;

Sharan, 1980).

Another vital part of Wooden's pyramid of success is industriousness. Wooden (1980) concludes that objectives are obtainable through careful planning and hard work. Coaches set team goals and challenge their players to work toward them. A team without goals lacks the incentive required to succeed, and good coaches re-evaluate these goals as the season progresses so the team will always have something to work for. The same approach should prove very effective in the classroom. Students need to know the purposes of the class and have input into developing these goals, then be challenged to meet them. Periodically teachers should re-evaluate course objectives and revise those that are unattainable by the students. McGinnis (1985) noted that "effective motivators do everything they can to get the other person to state clear-cut, specific objectives."

Probably better than any other coach, John Wooden taught his players to win. But more than that, he taught his players to do their best and that doing their best was victory in itself. He constantly stressed that players give their best effort in practice because he knew that the way a team practiced would generally be the way they would play. He wanted his players to get more satisfaction from knowing that they and the team had done their best rather than the victory itself. He was convinced that those who did their best would more often than not win the game (Wooden, 1980). Teachers in the classroom should use this philosophy to help motivate their students. Students, according to Csikszentmihalyi and McCormack (1986), need more from the teacher than just information, they need meaningful feedback and knowledge that makes sense and will help them understand why being in school and living in general are worthwhile.

Now that we've looked at John Wooden's philosophy of coaching, what are some of his coaching strategies that might be applicable to the classroom? Tharp and Gallimore (1976) analyzed John Wooden's practices and identified several teaching techniques that may be more effective than the traditional ways of classroom teaching. They observed that he spent over half his time giving instructions, i.e. verbal statements about what to do and how to do it. They found that 75% of his teaching techniques carried information. Much of the information Wooden transferred to his players was repetitious because he believed that repetition was the best teacher.

Coaches often blow a whistle to stop action if something goes wrong during practice. An explanation of what goes wrong and why it went wrong follows. Tharp and Gallimore (1976) noted that one of Wooden's most effective teaching techniques was his use of modeling. He would stop practice, then correctly demonstrate the desired behavior, then imitate the incorrect behavior of the player, and finally demonstrate the correct behavior again. We are not suggesting that the classroom teacher carry a whistle, but a typical coaching technique of demonstration, prompt, and practice is an effective teaching technique.

As Stevens and Rosenshine (1981) indicated, the most efficient process for teaching a clearly defined skill involves three steps: 1) a demonstration of the skill or rule; 2) practice of each component of the skill with the teacher providing guidance; 3) independent practice. The implication for the classroom teacher is that the use of modeling correct and incorrect responses or actions by the students will lead to more effective teaching and greater success by your students. Your pupils will not only hear what they have done wrong, but will also be able to see the correct procedure to

follow and the incorrect procedure to avoid. This type of reinforcement coupled with more practice will keep students on task and hopefully generate a higher level of motivation.

It was also found by Tharp and Gallimore (1976) that Wooden used verbal statements to encourage intensity in his players. These statements would remind players of previously taught behaviors. In the classroom, teachers might use quick little motivational statements to keep students on task, e.g. "Johnny, keep your mind on your reading!" McGinnis (1985) noted in his book *Bringing Out the Best in People* that he remembered his old swim coach yelling all the time at the swimmers, but he yelled with a purpose. He was always yelling encouragements to the swimmers like, "you can do it, you can do it." McGinnis contributed his coach's motivation technique to his success.

A final teaching technique observed by Tharp and Gallimore (1976) during Wooden's practice sessions was the scold/reinstruction technique. This was a verbal response to a player's act which contained a clear scold and Wooden immediately restated previous instructions; e.g. how many times must I tell you to pass with both hands. These were often used during group activities where it was not aimed directly at the guilty party so everyone made an attempt to improve his behavior. This technique may contradict what teachers have learned about praise and positive reinforcement, but on the contrary Wooden's strategy only suggested that there is a place for scolding students as a means to reinforce certain objectives that are important to learning the content you are teaching. Graham (1984) suggested that scolding students about poor academic performance might improve performance in the classroom. She found that scolding exhibited by teachers because of low student achieve-

ment tended to arouse the students' feeling that they could control their actions.

McGinnis (1985) noted that one of his 12 rules for bringing out the best in people was to employ a mixture of positive and negative reinforcement. There are several ways of using negative reinforcement effectively: 1) teach students to avoid certain behavior rather than to avoid you as the teacher. Students that are afraid of the teacher will not produce. So teachers must maintain a trusting relationship with their students which will allow them, like Wooden, to scold but maintain a warm relationship. 2) Follow the undesired behavior with correction as quickly as possible. Wooden scolded his players often but he followed the scolding with reinstruction so quickly that the behavior could change immediately. He was successful in changing the bad habits of his players as teachers can do in the classroom. Students need to know that you are not pleased with their actions or behavior when they are unacceptable. So, the key to intrinsic motivation and achievement may be meaningful feedback to students in the classroom.

McGinnis (1985) also noted that coaches use models to encourage success and teachers might do well to follow that example. Coaches talk about previous athletes and school accomplishments and players like to hear about these because it stirs their emotion. Teachers could tell students about successful pupils of the past or even bring in former graduates to talk to the class. Try to put into the student's mind visions of great persons like Abraham Lincoln who overcame tremendous adversity to become one of our greatest Presidents. Talking about legendary heroes seems to inspire people to do better things. Your classroom students are no different. They want a hero--suggest them.

Some teachers reading this article are saying to themselves that coaches are work-

ing with students who want to be there, while classroom teachers deal with whom-ever the principal puts in their classes. Also, coaches don't have as many students to supervise, therefore allowing more time for individual instruction. However, rather than criticizing or rationalizing the difference between the two positions, perhaps teachers should look more closely at coaching methods and give the techniques a chance. Don't teachers want students who are highly motivated, attempt to overcome deficiencies, and practice to perfect a skill? Wouldn't it be great to have history students staying after class or school to master a concept not understood during the day's lesson?

Teachers must take the position that students can be motivated. All of your great coaches, like John Wooden, expected and demanded the best possible effort out of their players. Teachers need to approach students in the classroom with the same attitude. Promote enthusiasm, friendship, cooperation, loyalty and industriousness in your classroom. Don't be afraid to accentuate the positive but don't completely eliminate negative reinforcement in your dealings with students. Encourage your students to do their best and applaud achievement whenever the opportunity arises. Try to expose your students to the successful people who may inspire them to do greater things. These strategies have worked for successful coaches and they will work for you; because after all, coaches are first and foremost teachers.

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## A Primer on Choice in Education: Part I - How Choice Works

Every year, America spends increasing sums on education, yet it seems to be without much noticeable impact on the diastrously low academic achievement of the nation's youngsters. For this reason, a growing consensus is emerging that doubts whether more spending and more tinkering will improve the performance of schools.

What will improve it, say increasing numbers of liberals and conservatives, are reforms that give parents the freedom to choose the best schools for their children. This would create competition among schools that would improve the schools and schooling. Last year alone, 23 states considered some form of education-choice proposals; three enacted choice legislation.<sup>1</sup> In fact, there are already an estimated 10,000 schools which students attend as a matter of choice rather than assignment. Reports *Fortune* magazine: choice in education "is simply the hottest item on the education reform agenda today."<sup>2</sup>

**Harlem Success.** Choice in education must not be limited to the wealthy or well-off who can afford either to pay for a private school or move to a good school district. Choice is needed most by financially poor parents whose children are trapped in the most inferior schools. When given a choice in schools, as is now available in New York City's Harlem school district, for instance, test scores rise dramatically.