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LEARNING THE GAME



OUR GAME PLAN

Why Teach with Sports

When you connect learning to what kids do, need, want, and imagine...they understand advanced concepts, retain information, and are motivated.

I'm lead-off in the family line-up. My brothers arrived 5th and 6th in the order. I accompanied my dad and male cousin to the ballpark. My petite, eight-year-old self, learned the game by observing on-the-field action and noting the continuous commentary of cigar-smoking, seasoned NY sports fans seated across from our designated box. They argued plays, calls, pitching, fielding, weather, opposing players, and management decisions. I took it all in, never imagining that their "schooling" would serve my future career.

STUDENT INSTIGATED THE CURRICULUM

Years later, one of my second-grade students (at a boys' school in Greenwich, CT), initiated a card trade during a literacy lesson. From the corner of my eye I observed the transaction-in-progress: Mint future HOFer for Dodger All-Star. (Reggie Jackson for Ron Cey) Not on my watch. **"Give him back the card. It's not a fair trade,"** I stated with detailed rationale including player stats. Michael argued: **"I almost had the card. What did you have to put your two cents in for? And besides, You're a girl, what do you know about baseball?"** Silence permeated the room.

Stunned by the insult, I eventually managed a response: **"You guys will see what I know about baseball - tomorrow."** On the drive home I considered why they assumed that **girls/women** didn't know sports. More importantly, I reflected on how and what I was pitching – I mean, teaching. The next day, every required curriculum skill, subject, and standard, was taught through baseball. The materials/lessons developed for that class were a hit and boosted concept retention - and student test scores. The program was a hit!

TEACHING WITH BASEBALL

Baseball's unique lens served as the thematic curriculum core from which teacher and student materials were created. The game of baseball aligned to every discipline and motivated my students in the process. My passion evolved into a unique niche. As an adjunct education faculty at a suburban college, I taught teachers using some of my strategies, refined my pitch, and met with Leonard Coleman in his NY office. The former MLB Director of Marketing, NL president, and Co-chairman (Emeritus) of the Jackie Robinson Foundation, focused on youth fan development with his first question: **"How do we reach the kids?"** I responded without hesitation, **"You reach the kids through their teachers."**

Len arranged for **Phillies (NL)** and **Orioles' (AL)** fan development personnel to meet us in NY to work out logistics. The **Phillies' seminar**, scheduled for mid-March in the visiting clubhouse, attracted over 100 teachers. I offered specific content activities (Idioms at the ballpark/ seating capacity math) and noted how **"We don't pick our players. Teachers (Classroom Managers) transform a roster into a team."** Sr. Trudy a skeptical NE Philly principal shared a compliment on the way out, "Yes, You really are a teacher." Attendees urged The Phillies to bestow an official team hat on the baseball educator - and they did. I stood on the pitcher's mound wearing the hat. I was beaming!

Then, the season started and The Phillies started winning. A few of the seminar teachers realized that students' grades were moving up in the standings, too. They contacted me and shared how their kids were feeling the Phillies' mojo. The hat evolved into superstitious lore, and before I knew it, The Lucky Hat was tied to a Phillies winning streak.

Students from the baseball classes include Michael M. UK-based investment banker; John B. former CFO Shutterfly, Walker S. CO gubernatorial candidate, & Gonzalve B. CEO of BIC Corp.

Baseball is infamous for the superstitions, rituals, tokens, curses, and beliefs regarding streaks (both winning and losing). Crash Davis (Kevin Costner) reprimanded Annie in the film, *Bull Durham*, "**You never mess with a streak. You should know that.**" I wore the Phillies hat everyday, but then traveled to Baltimore and presented the Baseball seminar for Educators on June 2nd. I received their hat and wore it to mix things up, not realizing that The Phillies posted consecutive losses in June. Then, I got the call:

"Are you wearing the hat?"

"The Orioles gave me their hat." I admitted, "I've been wearing it to change things up."

"STOP! Wear our hat - It's lucky."

The Phillies surged and were battling to represent the NL in the World Series. I was, by default, part of the unwritten streak belief.:

If you think you're winning because _____, then you are!

I felt responsible, so I wore the hat while teaching evening grad classes for future teachers during post-season games in October. I received curious looks, but tied wearing the hat to required anthropology content on cultural beliefs. Students acknowledged family /sports superstitions. One game went into extra innings, and I was so tired that I ditched the hat and went to bed. The next day, a call came in.

"Did you wear the hat? For the entire game? We lost in the late innings. We're in the playoffs! Please wear the hat."

"I fell asleep and the hat fell off," I apologized.

"Use a rubber band to keep it on. It's lucky!"

I can't say for sure if the hat was on when Joe Carter nailed a Mitch Williams pitch for a home run to win the World Series for the Blue Jays, but the Phillies were NL champs! It's a rare accomplishment for a team (or any of us), to go from last to first in one season. Researchers might ask, "What changed? What was the intervention?" The initial Educator seminar fired-up the fan base of teachers prior to the season's opener, and passed it on to their students. Did we all have something to do with it? We believe we did!

The Phillies, Rob Holiday, suggested Powerhitter® as the name for my education program and company, during a mid-summer game at The Vet. It's been my trademarked brand and domain name ever since. My unique, teach with baseball strategies were well received by audiences of educators across the league. The Phillies, Pirates, Mets, Mariners, Braves, and Twins hosted teachers at their ball park and **AVANTA, BIC, PIMCO, RYDER, SODEXO** and **ST. PAUL PIONEER PRESS** sponsored student materials and/or educator seminars. The program was featured in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *WFAN*, *Lifetime*, *The Greenwich Time*, local Philadelphia papers and others. The MLB strike impacted my stadium presentations, but district programs were still a hit!

Teachers (3-8) recognized that this unique, sports-themed, professional development training - **Power Hitter® Classroom: Teach Enrich, Remediate, with Baseball**, was easy to implement, aligned to grade/subjects/standards, 3rd-6th, SPED 4-8, ELL, after-school, summer enrichment and tutoring. Kids were attentive and motivated when they supported their teammates. A live ESPN morning show on-site in a NYC studio featured a 10-minute segment with me and two 4th graders from the Powerhitter® full immersion pilot summer site in **Port Chester, NY**, a multi-ethnic, Spanish-speaking community. Pretty cool!

Powerhitter® Grad Course at Arizona State University

After completing a cultural exchange field study in Arizona among Native American communities with my NY/CT graduate education students, I read an article about ASU baseball team's project with Yaqui elementary schoolers in Tempe. I wrote a note complimenting the coach and his team. The reply letter from then, Sun Devil Coach, **Pat Murphy** (Milwaukee Brewers Manager,) changed my life with one question,

"What is it that you do at the college back East, that you can't do here?"

I viewed it as a sign. And, in baseball, you don't shake off signs. I made the move, accepted a full time ASU faculty associate position teaching graduate courses for teachers, enrolled in a doctoral program, reviewed research on student learning, motivation, and curriculum models, and presented Powerhitter® Game Day at both MLB's All Star Game Fan Fest and academic conferences.

ASU offered *Powerhitter® Classroom: Teach, Enrich, Remediate Through Integrated Sports-Themed Curricular Strategies* as a graduate level course (ELEM EDU/SPED). David C. Berliner, Ph. D (Dean Emeritus, Mary Lou Fulton College of Education and Regents' Professor), noted that the curriculum was original and motivated kids, stating, "*Just because it's fun, doesn't mean it's not intellectually rich.*" He wisely advised that my dissertation research focus on educational policy, and retain my sports-themed intellectual property. During MLB playoffs and World Series, a group of **Teach For America** teachers, my ASU Graduate students, were trained by me and coached on-site in their classrooms on how to implement Powerhitter® curriculum and successfully integrate the program with their 4th-8th & SPED classes (featured in *The Arizona Republic*).

WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US

A Stanford University team of researchers, led by Dr. Sean Riordan (2024) explains the Education Recovery Scorecard, "Students in the most disadvantaged communities had test scores decline the most. School districts are the first line of action to help children catch up. The better they know about the patterns of learning loss, the more they're going to be able to target *their resources effectively*. <https://educationrecoverycorecard.org>.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is known as the nation's report card. Every two years, 4th, 8th and 12th graders are assessed in every state across all demographics. In 2022, Math and Literacy scores declined to 25-year lows, and 4th graders' loss was most significant. The Brookings Institute's 2022 study entitled, "**The pandemic has had devastating impacts on learning. What will it take to help kids catch up?**" sums up what Educators already knew. Learning requires practice and honing each player's academic and social fundamentals.

In her article, "**Motivation in Education: What it takes to Motivate Our Kids**," published in *The Journal of Positive Psychology* (2022), Beata Souders, Ph. D. research suggests, "learning activities offer choice, provide challenges, opportunities for success appropriate to students' level of skill, and create interest through discovery." Knaupp (1995) asserts, "Students' abilities are not simply inherited aptitudes, but developed through both pedagogical and social interventions in place, over an extended period of time."

Carnoy & Garcia (2017), Mc Laughlin & Sheridan (2016), and American Psychological Association (2022) assert that the two most statistically significant negative predictors of high academic achievement in the United States today are: low family income and ethnicity. If these predictors are combined, as so often happens, the probability that a student will be academically successful, let alone a high achiever, diminishes even more.

POWERHITTER CLASSROOM - IT'S NOT JUST FUN, IT'S INTELLECTUALLY RICH!

Sports' themes connect to academic disciplines and real-life applications. Kids buy stuff, travel, and sustain injuries - so do players. One of the Powerhitter® centers, Equipment Manager aligns with math operations & measurement standards, as "players" record sizing data prior to ordering supplies. Kids, like adults, want gear to fit! Can you really measure the span of your dominant hand (for a batting glove or mitt) by yourself? You need a teammate! The Powerhitter® game plan offers real-world economics.

- Kids "get" teaching advanced concepts from supply chain, to unit pricing that includes taxes. Students understand, retain, and apply the knowledge through baseball. Set up is easy and teachers can build their own clubhouse culture. The Powerhitter® Classroom Curriculum promotes enrichment and reinforcement of literacy, numeracy and technology skill sets for all players. Centers-based teaching emphasizes "the team" aspect of learning, borrowed from *Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development* and *Lave's Legitimate Peripheral Participation* theories that encourage Teammates Teaching their peers, and coaching from cross-grade-level mentors. (An ASU linebacker served as a Powerhitter® coach for 4th graders every Monday afternoon, prior to Football practice. It didn't matter to the kids he coached if he made a bad play during Saturday's game, they were thrilled to see him.) The Power Hitter® Game Plan provides consistent practice, coaching, modeling, team meetings, and opportunities for collaboration through engaging activities that deepen kids' curiosity and concept understanding while they have fun.

Citations:

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McLaughlin, K. A., & Sheridan, M. A. (2016). Beyond cumulative risk: A dimensional approach to childhood adversity. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 25(4), 239–245. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721416665883>

National Assessment of Educational Progress (October 2022). <https://www.nagb.gov/news-and-events/news-releases/2022/report-card-score-decline-4th-8th-grade-math-reading.html>.

Souders, B. (2022). "Motivation in Education: What it takes to Motivate Our Kids," *Journal of Positive Psychology*

Sparks, S. (October 24, 2022). "Two Decades of Proficiency Nearly Gone: National Math, Reading Scores Hit Historic Lows." *Education Week*. <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/two-decades-of-progress-nearly-gone-national-math-reading-scores-hit-historic-lows/2022/10>.

Spector, C. (2024) <https://ed.stanford.edu/news/new-report-shows-historic-gains-pandemic-recovery-many-us-school-districts>.

EVERYBODY NEEDS A COACH

The Powerhitter® Ground Rules: **Focus on Today, Be a Dependable Teammate, Take a Risk, Work Towards Your Personal Best**, offer management "assists" to classroom teachers and Teammates Teaching® coaches. Teammates Teaching® engages "players" as they **think, reason, and communicate** with their peers. This shifts habits of mind in a classroom setting from *Teaching to Coaching*. Players organize, lead and support other players through Team Meetings, while teachers- as- coach, participate and facilitate small group teaching sessions.

Years ago, after a doctoral class, I attended an ASU baseball game. Coach Pat Murphy stood on top of the Sun Devil's Dugout his regular post-game recap. This time, however, he chastised a group of fans. **"Our players are college kids, here to learn, play as a team, and compete. If you want to blame me for a loss, okay, but if you are upset about a play on the field and want to yell at players, go yell at the pros."**

There was no room in his playbook for onlookers to insult his players. His message resonated and led me to reflect on why we are so quick to make calls on other people's performances instead of **working towards our personal best**.

Players and coaches either **expand (learn & grow), or contract (play small & withdraw)** multiple times a day. How can you shift your habits of mind from *managing to coaching* through messaging? A classroom coach has the ability to transform names on a roster into a team, develop relationships, assess player potential and 'coach-ability,' or, erode player confidence and team morale. Coaching styles, similar to leadership styles, are either transformative, static, or debilitating. Just consider how certain rosters over or underperform based upon the manager, coach or team leader.

Power Hitter® Classroom Training at Educator Conferences

ASCD Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development

MLB Major League Baseball All-Star Game

NMSA National Middle School Association

AZCSS Arizona Council for the Social Studies

NMAC National Multi-Age Conference

NAGSA Native American Grant School Association Symposium

Districts/Schools

Seattle (WA), Scarsdale (NY), Stamford (CT), Port Chester (NY) Minneapolis (State Educator Convention)

Arizona: Isaac, Roosevelt, Gilbert, Scottsdale, Casa Blanca Indian Community, Salt River Indian Community

Attendees receive professional development in cross-discipline, content-rich themes that integrate original, standards-based curriculum that supports multi-age learners as it boosts academic, social, and linguistic confidence. During the seminars, teachers learn strategies for instructing with Powerhitter® Classroom's 30+ subject area centers-based learning 'bases' covering math/literacy/geography/ physical education/anatomy that align with **Power Hitter® Baseball Classroom Curriculum Package in a tote bag**.

Professional Development & Consulting

Seminars for schools/districts/ are priced at \$3,000 (per day)

Teacher/student materials are sold separately. (\$350.00 per curriculum) Sponsored by corporate partner, teams, teacher, or district funds.

Pro Teams: \$8,000 per day + travel. Teacher curriculum kits provided. *Special pricing (additional\$0

MLB & Corporate Consulting:

Reach Teachers with Powerhitter® Classroom Educator Seminars at your ballpark (any time of year - even off season!)

Reach and Teach Young fans through their teachers - Powerhitter® Team specific educational giveaways and Educator Seminars

Reach and Teach Future Fans (globally) through their teachers.

International communities prioritize education. Dr. Veltri's team includes tri-lingual grant writer and colleagues who co-present to audiences in their native countries: **Dominican Republic, Japan, and Italy. Powerhitter® can partner with MLB's World Baseball Classic!**

HERE'S THE SEMINAR GAME PLAN (9 innings) for TEACHERS/COACHES

- (1) Be a Classroom Manager – Shift habit of mind from Teaching to Coaching, Examine Your Coaching Style
- (2) Everybody Needs a Coach, a Mentor, and a Venting Buddy
- (3) Ground Rules: **Focus on Today -Take a Risk- Be a Dependable Teammate - Work Towards Your Personal Best**
- (4) Powerhitter® Classroom Curriculum: ELA, MATH, SCIENCE & SOCIAL STUDIES**
- (5) Project-Based Centers: Infuse Real-Life Content Applications into Meaningful, Transferable Learning
- (6) Teammates Teaching® – Expand Player Potential Through Peer Collaboration
- (7) 7th Inning Stretch: Movement/Music
- (8) Recap/Assess/Accountability - Connect practice with theory and data to impact students.
- (9) High Five, Plan for a New Game Day

Seminar Attendees **receive training in Powerhitter® Curriculum (sold separately) that contains 30+ integrated Baseball-themed centers, 36 student pages (reproducible or digital) (\$350.00)**

ABOUT Barbara Torre Veltri, Ed. D. Creator/Owner Powerhitter® LLC/ Sportsballkids®

- Teacher Certification (CT/NY N-6, 7-12 Social Studies, NY);18-year classroom teacher public, private, parochial
- Associate Education Professor (Emerita) Northern Arizona University, Arizona State, UTexas Arlington, Manhattanville**
- Ed.D. Arizona State University, Powerhitter® Teach, Enrich, Remediate was offered as a Graduate Education Course**
- Created unique *Teach With Baseball* curriculum to reach and teach students
- Educational consultant, Major League Baseball, Consultant, Citizens For Strong Schools, FLA,
- Owns copyright for (18) sports-themed educator curricula, student materials, classroom charts, assessments**
- Owns trademark for (10) kid-friendly, sports' character/logos registered with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.**
- Owns domain name for (1) www.powerhitter.com and (2) www.sportsballkids.com**
- Powerhitter® Classroom Curriculum/Training key component in two **FUNDED (multi-year 350K) 21st Century Grants** in two states, through university/district LEAs. The Congresswoman Nita M. Lowey Grant is named in honor of the NY Congresswoman, who viewed Powerhitter® summer-program site at the Edison School in Port Chester, NY.
- Dr. Veltri authored an award-winning book on education policy, ***Learning on Other People's Kids: Becoming a Teach for America Teacher*** (Information Age, 2010), peer-reviewed book chapters/journal articles, and peer-reviewed national/international conference presentations: AERA (American Educational Research Association), AACTE (Association for Accreditation of Colleges of Teacher Education), ASCD Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, (ECER (European Conference on Educational Research), NCSS (National Council for the Social Studies), NMSA (National Middle School Association), and NAGSA (Native American Grant Schools Association). Her work spans five states and two countries mentoring teacher candidates, doctoral students from Turkey, Iraq and Indonesia, and teaching NAU doctoral students from China's Tianhua University, via zoom.
- In 2014, Dr. Veltri was selected to direct the first Education Abroad with teacher candidates in Siena, Italy, who co-taught in PK-8 schools to support English Language Instruction, while themselves, Italian language learners. In 2018 and 2019, 20 teacher candidates joined her teaching PK-7th graders.

To Schedule via e-mail by contacting: admin@powerhitter.com or admin@sportsballkids.com

To arrange a zoom meeting with Dr. Veltri to discuss program/products contact

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