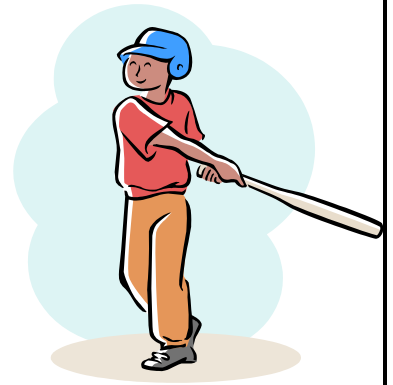


A Message from Sr. Shirley Anne....

1-2-3 Strikes, You're Out! Or Are You?

Invariably, with spring comes the 'call of Little League' to a great many of the youth before us. Seemingly emerging out of nowhere comes that focused, competitive, energetic and determined child we'd all long for in our reading, math and religion classes. "How can we get some of this?" we ask ourselves as we are even more challenged by those students coming to school too tired from later evenings and that infectious Spring Fever showing up in homework or projects being incomplete or poorly done. Add to this their lethargic responses to our well-prepared lessons that we are convinced are essential to their education.



In a recent article in the journal **Educational Leadership** (February, 2010), Robyn Jackson recounts the story of one teacher responding differently. When a student was late and did not hand in homework and was asked why, his response was the classic "I forgot". She countered asking him if he knew what he now owed her and again, the classic answer – "detention". Imagine his surprise when she said no and indicated that the next class he had to be early, hand in his missing work and give her a Snickers bar. He did all three! Her point was that we need to know the right currency, the medium of exchange, in dealing with the students before us.

We work hard to prepare lessons because they contain content and skills students need as they progress through life and in the latest jargon from the Federal level, to make them college and career ready and we might add, informed and active members of the Church. Many of our young people do respond with their participation and attention because they value the adult opinion. However, there is a significant group who do not and they are the ones to whom we would like to say, "Three strikes and you're out". On a whole lot of levels, this is not an acceptable way out. In fact, it is these very students who may in turn be a blessing to us because they force us to move our focus from the content and the skills to the learner, to leave the world of ideas to the world of application in real life activities and experiences. In fact, they force us as teachers to practice and model some of those 21st century skills that are necessary to be college and career ready – interpersonal communication which enables each participant to create real life meaning and further personal responsibility for themselves and the community. One of the ways to do that is to take the time to understand the learner and the currencies that give meaning to *their* world at this particular stage of their life. Once having the currencies in hand, then put them at the service of interpersonal communication that will accomplish the goals of learning in a framework that makes sense to the learner.



We could take the easy way out. After all there are only 10 more weeks of school or 6 or 7 more Religion Christian Formation classes. The loss would be ours for we would have failed to rise to the challenge of modeling our belief in each child and we will have lost a whole group of our young people who challenge us to not only use all the right books and present all the right content but to engage in the interpersonal relationships necessary to understand real life application.