**Striking and Fielding**

**Capable team members are reflective and self-aware**

**Lesson 1: Pre-Assessment**

I started this unit with a simple activity called Strike and Run. It’s a very simple version of cricket essentially. In keeping with my love for small-sided games (see blog for more information) I broke the class up into 4 teams and divided the field into 4 playing areas.

Playing area 1 has a tee, a ball and a bat (we use the Gopher Phenom Big Bats for accessibility)

Playing area 2 has a tennis racket and a dodge ball

Playing area 3 has a foam ball on top of a cone and a paddle

Playing area 4 has a baseball/softball (this has no striking, rather the ‘striker’ throws the ball.

Each team goes to their designated areas

These teams are not against other teams but rather against each other

One person is the striker the rest are fielders

Once the ball is struck, the striker runs to a base that is about 20 meters away

If they touch the base that is one point

If they manage to make it back, that is two points, etc.

The fielders need to get the ball back to the starting position to stop the striker from running and scoring points

Once the ball is back, rotate strikers so everybody has a go at striking and fielding.

I explained the rules but I deliberately did not talk strategies, positions, technique, etc. But I did emphasize safety. Before striking, the striker holds the bat in front of them and slowly spins around to ensure their striking zone is clear.

After 2 rotations, I gathered the students around and opened with a broad question, “how’s it going?” This enables me to see if the kids actually know what is going on. Usually kids say, “bad, good, okay,” and blame someone for not being proficient in their team or not doing their job, etc. If you feel the discussion is going towards blame, stop them and find solutions. Open the discussion to the floor, “how can we improve?” Here is when you can start finding strategies.

I sent the kids back with some new strategies – one of them being positions. Fielders, catchers, etc.

Once we did all 4 rotations, I got the kids to fill out the reflection below. This enables me to find out how they went and also gives them a chance to think back on the day’s activities and figured out where they need to improve.

**Lesson 2:**

I got the kids to do one rotation of Strike and Run again as their warm-up. After about 5 minutes or so I gathered the kids and introduced them to the Central Idea. We broke down what it meant to be capable and how we can become capable. We connected the two terms reflective and capable. A person who is good at something needs to start somewhere – they reflect on previous experiences in order to improve. I pulled out one of the student’s reflections from the previous class and discussed with them how that reflection could be used to improve their skills. That reflection was their starting point – let’s try and get better.

I handed out their reflections again so the kids could find out areas they needed to work on. Was it fielding, or striking or all of the above?

The kids went out for 2 rotations and I continually reinforced them to focus on what they needed to work on. I also encouraged them to give each other feedback to improve. At this point, I still did not give any explicit pointers, this was still all ‘tuning in.’

After the 2 rotations, the students gathered around and again I asked, “how’s it going?” I then asked a few students specifically what they were focusing on and whether there has been any improvement. I then opened up the floor to a specific skill – fielding, how could we improve. The kids threw out a few words, “catching, throwing, positions, etc.” I then broke down catching, what did we need to do to catch effectively. I wrote down on the board some pointers the kids wrote down and also a few of my own. With all of this in mind, I sent the kids out for a further 2 rotations but with a new rule: There is no running with the ball. I left it at that for them to determine how to get the ball to the starting point without running with the ball.

The new rule tested their fielding skills but I encouraged feedback and enthusiasm. I also reminded them of the steps we discussed about catching.

This was a great lesson, the kids reflected on their own skills and made strides to improve. Reviewing the reflections is absolutely essential as it demonstrates to the kids that they are doing it for a purpose – it is not just another worksheet, it is a benchmark for improvement.

**Lesson 3:**

I started the lesson with a team run and gathered the kids with a review of the lesson completed so far. This time we broke down what it means to be self-aware. Referring to the Core Planning Document, I wanted to look at the outcome of “reflect on inner thoughts and self-talk.” We broke down what it means and then explored ways it could relate to our unit. There was a bit of silence with this one since it is quite deep for grade 3 students, but not impossible to reach. We went outside to put it into context.

Our activity was 3 shot and it is layered 3 times.

My love of small-sided games prevails and we had 2 games happening at once with 4 teams.

One team are the strikers and the other team the fielders.

There are 3 tees all lined on one side of the field.

A boundary about 5 meters from the tees is set up.

The fielders cannot cross that boundary once all the balls are struck.

Once all 3 balls are struck, the striker runs to a base (20m away) and back again as many times as possible until all the balls are returned to the tees.

A changeover occurs once all strikers have had a turn to bat.

There is no running with the ball.

For the first layer, we used Gopher Phenom Big Bats.

Once both teams had a turn to bat and field, I gathered the students around to discover how they thought inner thoughts and self-talk played a role in that activity. A couple students mentioned that they were going through steps to strike a ball, or how many points they needed to get to win. They were all viable points. I then asked them how could their thoughts affect their performance. After this discussion, I gave some pointers to the kids on batting.

We went back for the second innings but this time we used Gopher Phenom Medium Bats.

By the time both teams had a chance to bat and field we were running out of time. I gathered the students and we reviewed the day’s lesson and what the big idea was – being self-aware, inner thoughts and self-talk.

**Lesson 4:**

We continued from the previous lesson, touching on the same big ideas and the a few more clarifying points for striking effectively. We started with the Medium Bats and then progressed onto the normal sized bats.

**Lesson 5:**

A key component of striking and fielding games is learning how to run the bases. From my past experiences, the young kids especially, just run as fast as they can regardless of whether it is safe to run or not. So, to really emphasize what it means to be spatially aware, I thought combining dodge ball with base running was a great way to encourage smart base running.

Run the Bases:

This activity is best played in a gym as if it was outside, you would probably lose quite a few dodgeballs.

I separated the class into 4 teams.

Lay out 4 bases about 20 meters apart to form the diamond.

Allocate one team to each of the 4 bases, that is their “home”.

Nominate one team to be the fielders, they move to the center of the diamond.

The remaining 3 teams are the base runners.

This will then be run similar to a relay.

One person from each team prepares to run.

The next person on the team cannot run until the first person tags them.

The object of the game is to try and get as many points as possible within a certain time limit, usually 3-4 minutes.

One point is scored if all 4 bases are touched without getting hit by a dodge ball.

The fielders can only get the runners out if the runners are off a base and get hit by the dodgeball.

The runner cannot get out if they are stepping on the base.

To keep things fair, I laid out a smaller diamond within the large diamond to keep the fielders in that area to avoid them crowding the bases.

The kids absolutely loved the game. I gave them 2 rounds to get acquainted with the game. I then did the usual procedure and had a discussion then asked if anybody had any strategies to share with the class. I then asked, “what do we do to run the bases safely and successfully?” One student said, “watch the ball”, another said, “watch the fielders,” and “wait for someone else to go and use them to block the ball.”

After the final round, I asked the students how this can connect with our previous discussion on inner thoughts and self-talk. They mentioned that you need to believe in yourself and had to try your best to get the points for your team. I liked that response and it is showing that the kids are starting to understand the importance of positive self-talk.

**Lesson 6:**

For this lesson, I modified the previous activity to include strikers. I creatively called this game: Run the Bases WITH strikers. I laid out two playing areas so two games could be played at one.

Run the Bases WITH strikers:

Lay the playing area as you did with “Run the Bases”.

Add in two tees between bases 3 and 4.

2 players from the striking/running team get ready to strike the ball.

The remaining players on the team are the runners.

The fielders position themselves around the playing area as they see fit.

Once the balls are struck the runners run the bases – but the strikers do not run. Having this rule encourages the strikers to focus on their swing.

The runners have 1-2 minutes to get around all the bases.

Same rules as “Run the Bases” from here on.

A changeover occurs once all people on the team have had a chance to bat.

We stopped about halfway through the lesson and discussed how things were going and investigated on how positive self-talk can help them in this activity. After several minutes, we went back out but got the teams to play a team they hadn’t played yet.

**Lesson 7:**

This lesson was a review of everything we covered so far. After a quick warm-up, I gathered the kids around and went through all the activities and big ideas covered so far.

Afterwards, I sent the students off to play Run the Bases with Strikers.

**Lesson 8:**

This lesson was dedicated to introducing the kids to Tee Ball. The layered activities we did for the first half of the unit introduced them to the basics of Striking and Fielding games. Furthermore, a reason I put this unit at this time of year was a way for us to get prepared for a school tee ball tournament that the school is hosting later in the year.

I showed the kids a video of Tee Ball – we discussed the skills required, the positions, etc. Afterwards, we went out to play a game. I separated the class into 4 teams and let them go. Fortunately, I had a couple of students who were in the tee ball team last year so I let them help me run one field and I worked on the rules on the other field.

After about 10 minutes I gathered the class around to fine-tune the rules of the games and inquired into what they needed to work on. Fielding was the biggest problem but also base running strategies. I got the teams to discuss with each other strategies for the next innings. I posed several questions for them:

 Can two runners be on the base at once? How can we avoid that?

 If a runner is on third base, where should the ball be thrown?

 Find each other’s strengths, how can you use these best for the team?

We went back out there.

With 5 minutes to spare, we discussed what were areas we needed to work on. We concluded that we needed better fielding skills – some short drills need to be introduced for the next lesson.

**Lesson 9:**

We started this lesson with some simple throwing and catching drills. I asked the class to break down the term fielding and what we need to do to be successful at it. We determined: overhand throwing, underhand throwing, rolling, catching. I broke the class up into 4 teams and they went off and designed their own throwing and catching drills.

After 5-10 minutes the class came back together and we shared each other’s drills. We then decided on one drill for each of the 4 skills and as a class executed them.

With 20 minutes left of the lesson, we went back to Tee Ball and tried to implement our new skills.

**Lesson 10:**

This lesson started with a discussion on how we can use self-talk in Tee Ball – essentially the same as before. This is more to keep this big idea explicit and to demonstrate that this skill can be used in multiple settings. We then went off to our throwing and catching drills we designed last lesson.

Afterwards, Tee Ball.

Halfway through the lesson, the students gathered to reflect on shared and collaborative performance – an outcome for this unit. We determined what this meant and how it relates to this unit. We determined some criteria to assess this:

Everyone needs to know their role in the team

We encourage each other

We are open-minded to other people’s ideas

Find ways to get better

With this in mind, we went back to our game. With 5 minutes left, we gathered to conclude the lesson and determined whether we met our criteria.

**Lesson 11:**

This is the final lesson of the unit and it has been great fun to work on. I particularly liked the way the students determined their own success criteria for their shared and collaborative performance. Furthermore, their chance to create their own catching and throwing warm-up/drills was awesome.

We reviewed the entire unit – this took 5-7 minutes. We touched on the big ideas and some milestones achieved.

We did our catching and throwing warm-up drills and went to play Tee Ball.

With 20 minutes left of the lesson, the students started on their summative assessment: Tell me everything you have done and learned so far in this unit.

With this type of assessment, I encourage creativity and originality. They can collaborate with their peers but ultimately, their work is their own. They could use iMovie, Pages, BookCreator – it is their choice. I gently hinted that they should take a photo of the whiteboard as it had everything we discussed at the start of the lesson.

Questions, comments, anything I can do to improve? Please click here.