“Talent is a gift from God, but you only succeed with hard work.”

 Jean Beliveau

Once again hockey fever has overtaken Montreal. It permeates our homes, work places and of course our schools. Ignoring it is impossible and resistance is futile. Good teachers can turn any event into a teachable moment. Imagine classes where the learning is based on the Stanley Cup series. The lessons plans almost write themselves. The NHL hockey finals produce heroes that can be inspirational to students and teachers alike. As the school year winds down, we could all use a little motivation. Here are fourthings teachers can learn from watching hockey:

**Practice.** P.K. Subban is notorious for his work ethic and come game time, it is apparent. In fact all the players on the Montreal Canadiens hockey team take practices seriously. It does not guarantee that they will win every game but it certainly increases the odds. Preparing for each class will make you confident and will signal to your students that you care about them enough to put together an awesome class. You will find that things run more smoothly when you practice your lessons prior to class-time. Of course, coach Michel Therrien always throws in some fun and so should you.

**Attitude.** If all teachers were like Brendan Gallagherour schools would be incredibly productive and a lot more exciting. There is something contagious about his can do attitude and the way he bounces back with an impish smile on his face, after being flattened by some goon. Bad things happen during the course of each school day. A parent, an administrator, or a student disagrees with your approach to teaching. The amazing lesson that took hours to prepare, falls flat. The student who was making great progress, drops out of school. These events can really deflate us. Teachers must adopt Gallagher’s attitude and come out on their next shift like it is the first game of a new season, with all the energy and spunkiness that has made him a force to be reckoned with.

**Teamwork.** Carey Price often has to act on his own. In each game there is an occasional breakaway and from time to time opponents get past our solid defensemen. At these times Price is called on to save the day. However, he is the first one to credit his teammates for each win. One of the most exciting elements in hockey games is the frenetic changes from offence to defense and back to offence. This requires that all the players have a full toolbox of skills and that they depend on their teammates when they find themselves out of position. Today’s teacher needs to be flexible and versatile. A generalist is more employable than a specialist. And team players are always the most sought after.

**Most pucks in the net win.** Max Pacioretty knows what it takes to win – put the puck in the net. Teachers occasionally mistake teaching for a popularity contest. They compete with other teacher to gain their students’ admiration. This works until the students have to produce. They might love you all year but if you have not taught them the material they will hate you when they are in summer school. If you are able to get them to work all year, they will be successful. The students may not enjoy the pressure you put on them but once they pass your course they will admire you forever. (Being liked and being a great teacher are not mutually exclusive options – just difficult.) Keep your eye on the goal. If you have taught the material successfully, your students will graduate and each graduate is a win!

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