



Outstanding Youth in Education Award

IN TOP FORM

By Joel Prathiev Vinson

PE teacher Mr Joel Vinson takes a no-nonsense approach to discipline to teach his students the value of teamwork, personal responsibility and sportsmanship. And he does all this without taking the fun out of sports and games.

I was an introvert as a child and it did not make things easier when I transferred to another school at the age of ten. I had gotten into trouble at the previous school and my parents thought that sending me to a school nearer to home would be a better choice.

It turned out that they were right. Time flies, it seemed like yesterday when my Physical Education (PE) teacher let us loose on the basketball court to play any game of our choice. It was then that I discovered my passion for basketball and I have never looked back since. Throughout primary school, despite my parents' disapproval of my joining the school's basketball team, I worked hard at improving myself outside school hours.

It was only in secondary school that I could put my skills to the test. It took our basketball team four years to transform from losing every game by more than thirty points to pushing through to the zonal semi-finals. That was the defining moment of who I am today—a Physical Educator, Basketball Coach and Teacher. Basketball became more than just putting the ball through the hoop. It became a way of life; an outlet to express my happiness, sadness and anger. I have come a long way from being the basketball team captain armed with an unyielding curiosity for the game to becoming a coach, teacher and mentor.

Hat of a Coach

My philosophy as a coach is based on my own experiences as a player. I take pride in coaching students by building their skills and understanding of the game, and instilling the importance of discipline, integrity and sportsmanship. Passing on my passion and knowledge of the game to the younger generation as a coach is my way of giving back to society. I always look to nurture young children as students first, and basketball players second. Getting to play basketball is a privilege, and that is what I want my

students to understand.

I have always believed that students can perform well in both the academics and sports. The values attained through sports, such as dedication, discipline and effort, can be applied in their academics. I always tell my students that they can achieve their goals if they stay focused and put in their best efforts.

I crafted the Fundamental Disciplined Basketball programme as a primary school teacher-coach. It is grounded in having students learn the basics of the game and apply what they have learnt in various platforms such as scrimmages with other schools and external basketball clubs. Discipline is the next big component of my programme, as I believe all sportsmen must display discipline on and off the court as they are role models to the rest of the school. Every player on my squad knows that every action has a consequence and every action they do is based on the choices they make.



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I have benched key players in a crucial quarter-final game, all because they had skipped remedial lessons that were meant to help them keep up with the lessons they were missing due to their games. I have suspended training sessions and conducted revision and study groups instead, when students were not able to keep up with their school assignments. This is one way for students to learn responsibility and take ownership of their mistakes. Basketball is a team sport so the actions of one player will affect the whole team. Players bond better and help each other on and off the court when they understand the importance of team spirit.



Mr Joel Vinson cheers on his basketball team during every practice session.

Hat of a Teacher

Growing up, I never had the ambition of becoming a teacher. I had a brief stint working with adults and youths to help them with their fitness regimes. From these sessions, I realised that the cognitive aspect of sports amongst students was deteriorating. It hit me hard one day when I saw a group of primary school students playing football, as I observed that the children were not thinking strategically. For them, it was all about scoring the goal, so wherever the ball went, the children would flock to it instinctively. It struck me that the reason why I was having difficulties with the adults and youths I was training was because they were not taught the fundamentals in schools.

I read about PE and got some insight from my former PE teachers. I felt that I would be able to contribute to the teaching fraternity and believed that cognitive aspects of the games could be translated to various sports.

As a PE teacher, my pedagogical approach is to break down the cognitive aspects of any game, such as moving into space to receive and support a team mate, or sending an object over a net into an open space where the opponent would find difficulty

returning the object. In addition, I provided small-sided games for students to apply these concepts and achieve success. Giving students time to practise a particular skill extensively is not what a PE lesson is about. My ultimate aim is grant them opportunities to apply what they have learnt and have them apply that knowledge to the different games.

My goal is to develop efficient, effective and versatile students in games and not just in particular sports.

Hat of a Mentor

My experience coming from a broken family with financial issues has made me become more independent and responsible for my decisions. I made many mistakes growing up, from bullying to joining the wrong group of friends. It was because of my experiences that I am able to relate to students who have little guidance at home. I take it upon myself to steer them in the right direction. While it is not entirely their fault that they are in this situation, the choices that they make will affect them in the long run.

This is part of character development that at-risk students need in order to break the cycle that they are in. I tell them that their family environments do not determine how they will turn out. I build rapport with my students by listening to them and sharing my own stories. My students know that I will always be there to help them make better choices. The rapport I have with them breeds mutual respect.

Being an educator has given me fresh perspectives in life. Not everything is about numbers and awards. There are other ways that one can find fulfillment. For instance, I get a great sense of satisfaction when my ex-students visit me on my birthday, or let me know how they are doing. Some parents text me to thank me for the effort and work I put in. Some students tell me that they enjoy my lessons. All these and more have made my career as a teacher very fulfilling.

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