



EDUCATION AND SOCCER TRAINING

By Mike Barr, Regular contributor to Soccer Journal, Special Education Teacher and Head Coach of Men's Soccer Strath Haven High School at Wallingford-Swarthmor School District, and Director of Coaching at Eastern Pennsylvania Youth Soccer.

It is difficult sometimes to distinguish a successful teacher from a teacher who has little effect on the students. The best source for examining a teacher's value may be the students.

The Gates Foundation is currently funding a \$335 million project in an effort to overhaul the personnel systems in various school districts. Statisticians began the effort last year by ranking teachers using a statistical method known as Value-Added Modeling, which calculates how much each teacher has helped students learn based on changes in test scores. It seems like a simple process, but now they are looking for correlations between value-added rankings and other measures of teacher effectiveness, especially student response. Their research has produced very clear results.

Students who reported "our class stays busy and doesn't waste time," were led by teachers with high value-added scores.

Students also said, "We learn by correcting our mistakes," or "My teacher has several good ways to explain topics we cover in class."

Dr. Ronald Ferguson, a Harvard researcher who developed the questionnaire for the students says, "Kids know effective teaching when they experience it." Vicki Phillips, a director of education at the Gates Foundation, also found that teachers who incessantly drill their students to prepare for standardized tests

have lower value-added learning gains than those who simply work their way methodically through key concepts of literacy and mathematics.

Soccer coaches who keep the players active and busy and allow players to make mistakes and learn from their mistakes will have a much greater impact on a player's success and development. Players who are guided through training with high-level questioning will have a greater understanding and tactical knowledge of the game of soccer.

If a soccer coach were concerned solely about winning rather than development at younger ages, he or she would be pretty much the same as the teacher who practices each day for the test rather than allowing creative thought and imagination to play a major role in a child's education.

Parents, talk to your children about their training. One night, sit and observe a practice and look for the same qualities we want in our teachers. Letting the game grow within the child may take longer but the average player will show marked improvement.