



Landing Learning Theory on Ice

Teacher Expectations on Skater Achievement (TESA)

TESA (Teacher Expectations on Skater Achievement) principles provide coaches with an overview and framework of a time-tested program. Imagine if we could tap into the research of Dr. Thomas Good from the University of Missouri, who has been successfully using these ideas for more than 20 years. This model was further developed by the Education Department Lab School at UCLA.

TESA can assist coaches create solid expectations for lessons, skating skills and long-term goals for all of their skaters. *Creating clear expectations for skaters opens the door for increased opportunity and excellence in shorter time periods so skaters can improve more quickly. It also reduces discipline issues and/or negative behavior.*

Research shows that instructors' interactions with skaters whom they perceive as "lower achievers" are frequently less supportive and less motivating than interactions with skaters perceived as "higher achievers." **TESA** encourages raising the bar of expectations for **all** skaters.

"Megan, I know you've been frustrated since returning from vacation. Just before you left you mentioned some of your juvenile skating friends are landing more doubles than you are landing. Let's review the basics of the double jump positions and timing. I'd like us to set specific goals to work on to create success in landing them. Please log the time you spend working on these basics daily and also mark your successes along the way. I know we can do this in short order."

TESA:

- Sensitizes coaches to the expectations of all skaters.
- Shows how expectations affect skaters' learning.
- Involves coaches in reflection and careful, attentive practices of new behaviors.
- Helps coaches practice talking more to lower achieving skaters both in and outside of lessons.
- Encourages coaches to ask more questions of all skaters but especially those who may not normally perform at top levels.

"Christy, what do you hope to get out of this lesson? Here is how we will get there."

Coaches act on their expectations. Good's research has shown that having different expectations usually leads to different results. How does one person convey expectations to another person? There are four factors:

1. *Climate:* The mood or spirit created by the coach is often communicated nonverbally (e.g., smiling and nodding more often, providing greater eye contact, leaning closer to the skater).
2. *Feedback:* Providing more praise and less criticism to skaters. It also includes more detailed feedback as to the correctness of skaters' responses such as, "This was good now how can we make it better?"

3. *Input*: Coaches tend to teach more to skaters of whom they expect more.
4. *Output*: Coaches encourage greater responsiveness from those skaters they hold in high regard through their verbal and nonverbal behaviors (i.e., providing skaters with greater opportunities to seek clarification).

Transferring TESA to the Ice

1. Skaters will rise to meet the expectation placed upon them. Raising expectations needs to be done carefully though, in order for those expectations to be reasonable for each skater. Set your expectations slightly above the skater's ability.
2. Coaches may have noticed that if they expect a skater to be resistant, resistance usually follows. Coaches can begin to expect more from their skaters regarding their cooperation and attitude. Skaters should understand the rules and consequences for misbehavior or negative attitudes and know that their coaches will follow up as stated.
3. Coaches can become desensitized to poor skater achievement or attitude and as a result expect too little from those skaters. Raising expectations is tricky because skaters who struggle or have difficulty learning in some areas can be pushed too far and fail. At the same time skaters who are capable of reaching higher levels of success should be pushed to meet these higher expectations.
4. Coaches should make a habit of expecting just a little more from their skaters each day. Pick a skill or element (or attitude adjustment) and push the skater a little more. It is important that these expectations are not portrayed in an angry, frustrated or impatient tone. Expectations should be conveyed with patience, confidence and in a calm manner
5. Reward skaters for the small actions that show they are meeting expectations by acknowledging the achieved goal.

"That was great Mark and Shelly. I am so proud and impressed by that effort."

TESA Feedback

- *Affirm/Correct* – Do you tell all skaters equally why and how they were correct when practicing various elements? Do you do this more with some skaters than others?
- *Praise* – Do you praise all of your skaters equally giving the reason they were correct or improved on various elements when practiced?
- *Listening* – Do you listen attentively to all of your skaters as they talk to you?
- *Accepting Feelings* – Do you acknowledge the feelings of each skater you teach equally?

The Bottom Line? The research is proven – Increased expectations raise skater achievement and increase each skater's responsibility for learning.

TESA Case Study: Faith in a Skater Can Help Overcome Fear

A skater mastered a jump she struggled with for almost a year. Prior to an injury that kept her off the ice for a month, she developed a habit of practicing the jump twice safely on the harness. She was then able to complete the jumps easily in her programs. After returning from her injury she wanted to try out a few jumps on the harness to get her rhythm back. The harness was unavailable. Her coach smiled and told her that they would review the technique and practice that first. She told her coach she was afraid. He acknowledged her feelings and smiled, "It's OK to be afraid but I am asking you to be brave. I know you are ready to land this jump now."

She did – easily. The coach's expectations and faith in her helped her face her concerns and reminded her she could successfully land the jump on her own without the aid of the harness.

About **Increase Coaching Success Using the Secrets of Master Educators**© 2014 TESA

Merry Neitlich, M.A. in Education, is the Director of the Coach's Edge, a marketing consultant, presentation skills coach and educator. She is also a competitive figure skater who has earned four national gold medals at the U.S. Adult Figure Skating Championships. Since 2009, Merry has been developing enhanced strategies working with coaches to apply proven educational theories and research to the teaching of figure skating to increase the rate and degree of the success of their athletes. This article strives to codify and expand upon the way many coaches organically utilize the principles of the educational models presented herein.