

The Home Run

Protecting Learners and Learning

Case Overview

Background

Teacher: Mr. Jevon Kennedy
Experience: 2 Years
Class: 11th Grade Applied Science



Storyline

A second-year science teacher struggles to maintain his students' interest as the school year winds down. It is May, and Jevon Kennedy is introducing his last unit of the year, Introduction to Physics. In an effort to increase student engagement, he responds to the students' and his own fascination with sports and designs a new instructional unit he calls "The Physics of Sports." Using the gym, athletic field, and running track as "sports laboratories" seems to be working well until Jevon is summoned to the principal's office to explain why he and his students are not in their classroom. Instructed by the principal to cancel all future outside activities and return to his classroom and lab, Jevon is forced to decide how to break the news to his students.

Star Teacher Function: Protecting Learners and Learning

Some of the key beliefs and behaviors that comprise this function are:

- ❑ Star teachers often involve their students in learning activities that go beyond a textbook and the four walls of a classroom.
- ❑ Star teachers often use their own "life interests" as the basis for generating class enthusiasm for learning.
- ❑ Star teachers often find themselves in conflict with school authorities who request or require that an instructional activity be stopped. Stars react to such conflicts by negotiating a compromise, or by simply moving on to another form of stimulating instruction.

For a more detailed description of this function, see pages 29-41 in *Star Teachers of Children in Poverty* (Haberman 1995), which accompanies this series.

Other Topics and Issues

Although the main purpose of *The Home Run* is to stimulate reflection on the star teacher function of *protecting learners and learning*, the case provides the opportunity for examining several other issues and topics. These include authentic learning and assessment, using student ideas to shape instructional experiences, hands-on science

instruction, student team learning, student and teacher rapport, classroom discipline, and teacher and administrator relationships.

Scene Summaries and Questions

Scene 1: A Day in May. Jevon's Applied Science Classroom.

Summary: Jevon Kennedy is in the process of introducing the last instructional unit of the school year in his Applied Science class. The students are less than enthusiastic as he struggles to engage their interest in a unit called Introduction to Physics. After a springboard question about moving a piano gets less than the desired response, Jevon pauses in thought as the scene ends.

Possible Questions:

1. What are some other approaches that could be used to introduce a new unit of study and to build class interest?
2. (TQ) What would you do at this point in time if you were Jevon?

Scene 2: Moments Later.

Summary: Jevon turns to baseball in search of an interesting example of physics that might engage the class. Student interest increases as the conversation about hitting a baseball continues. The scene ends with a student asking Jevon if the class could go to the baseball diamond instead of just talking about it.

Possible Questions:

1. Would you take the class to the baseball diamond? Why or why not?
2. If yes, for what reasons and for what purposes? What plans would you make, if any, for managing the class outside of the school?
3. (TQ) If you were Jevon, what would your next step be in thinking about the student's proposed idea to take the class to the baseball diamond?

Scene 3: Later the Same Day. Jevon Meets with a Colleague.

Summary: Jevon confides in Harold, a veteran teacher, to share his frustrations with his Applied Science class and obtain feedback on his developing idea to use sports as the unifying theme for the physics unit. Jevon tells the veteran teacher that he has decided to give the idea a try and then asks if he should run the idea by administration.

Possible Questions:

1. Would you inform administration if you were in Jevon's position?
2. If yes, who specifically would you inform and why?
3. If no, what is the rationale for your decision?
4. (TQ) What do you think Harold's advice will be?

Scene 4: Moments Later.

Summary: The veteran teacher advises Jevon not to inform administration but to seek the support of other teachers in general and Coach Wallace specifically.

Possible Questions:

1. Are your previous thoughts on informing administration influenced by the veteran teacher's advice?
2. What are the implications of Jevon's decision to give the sports idea a try?
3. (TQ) What kinds of plans will Jevon need to make in preparation to implement the idea?

Scene 5: The Next Day. Applied Science Class.

Summary: Jevon makes a proposal to his Applied Science class that shows considerable thought. He proposes that they do more than just go to the ball field, suggesting that four different "sports laboratories" be created. He then allows the students to vote on the four sports they would most like to study.

Possible Questions:

1. What is your analysis of Jevon's plan and his method of introducing it to the class?
2. In your opinion, what will be the keys to turning the idea into a successful unit of instruction?
3. (TQ) Do you think the plan is going to lead to meaningful instruction for students? Why or why not?

Scene 6: One Week Later. The Practice Field.

Summary: This scene finds Jevon conducting his third in a series of four sports laboratories. He has the class on the ball field, where he and his students are running an experiment on the mechanics of the baseball swing. The scene concludes with Jevon being taken aside by a fellow teacher who informs him that the principal has requested to see him in his office before sixth period.

Possible Questions:

1. What were your impressions of how the baseball lab was going?
2. Why do you think the principal wants to see Jevon?
3. (TQ) What advice would you have for Jevon during the meeting with the principal?

Scene 7: Thirty Minutes Later. Principal's Office.

Summary: The principal summarily informs Jevon that he has had complaints from a fellow science teacher and a parent regarding his class not being in the physics lab. The scene concludes with the principal mentioning that he contacted Mrs. Caudill, the science supervisor, and discovered that she knew nothing about his outside activities.

Possible Questions:

1. What feelings would you have at this point in time, and how might they influence your future professional practice?
2. (TQ) How would you respond to the principal's concerns?

Scene 8: Moments Later.

Summary: Jevon apologizes for not informing administration and then explains what his motives were in setting up the Sports Physics unit. He then tells the principal that he has one more lab scheduled for Monday on the school's running track. The principal's response is clear. It has to be canceled, and Jevon and his students are to return indoors.

Possible Questions:

1. What are your opinions of the principal's position and the rationale supporting it?
2. (TQ) What would you do if you were Jevon? Specifically, what would you do on Monday when you have to inform the students that the final lab on the track has been canceled?

Scene 9: The Following Monday. Applied Science Class.

Summary: Jevon informs his Applied Science students that they are not going to the track. The students are clearly disappointed and frustrated by this news. Once he has the attention of the class, he explains that while they will not be going to the running track, they are still going to go to a track. He then uses a videotape of a stock car race to generate class interest in auto racing. The scene concludes with Jevon asking the class to follow him to another room.

Possible Questions:

1. Do you support his decision not to tell the class that the school's administration required him to stop the sports labs?
2. (TQ) What are your impressions of how Jevon handled the business of having to cancel the outdoor lab?

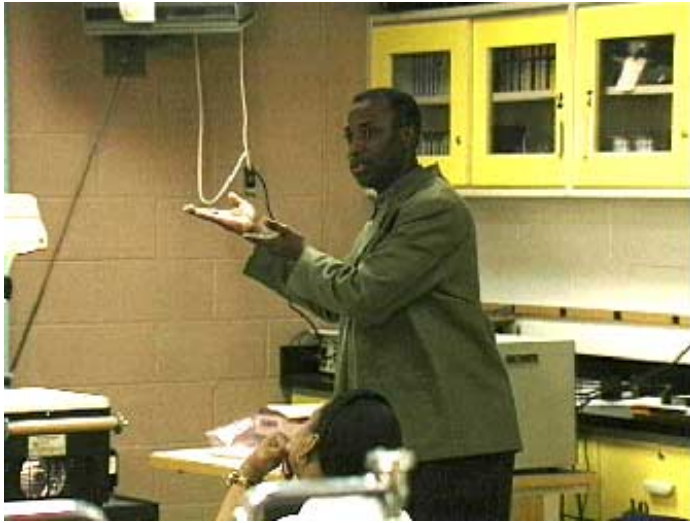
Scene 10: Moments Later

Summary: Jevon introduces the class to a model race car track that he first became familiar with as a Cub Scout. He goes on to explain that they are going to turn their attention to "race track physics" and describes the details of a laboratory experience that involves analyzing, designing, building, and finally racing a derby car.

Possible Questions:

1. What do you think of Jevon's new idea?
2. Were there specific aspects of his new plan that you particularly liked or were particularly concerned about?

The Home Run Video Case Transcript



Scene 1: A Day in May. Jevon's Applied Science Classroom.

Jevon: Okay, I've have something special for you today. We are going to get into one of my favorite areas.

Students: What's that, talking?

Jevon: Hah hah. That's your favorite area, talking. Introduction to Physics, okay. We are going to discuss the mechanics involved in physics. Wake up, Ricky. Sit up. Physics is very important. We use it every day. There's all kinds of areas that we use physics in. Let's say, Ricky, say you were going to move a piano. Let's say the back of the truck you are going to use to move the piano is about this high (*indicating waist high*), but the piano sits down here. Pianos are very heavy, as we all know. Now, how are we going to get this heavy piano up and into this truck?

Bruce: Jack it up.

Jevon: Jack it up. How else could we do it?

Michael: Use a smaller truck.

Jevon: Smaller truck.

Erin: I'd get my boyfriend to do it.

Jevon: Ask your boyfriend to do it? Okay, so you guys aren't taking me very seriously.



Scene 2: Moments Later.

Jevon: Let's see. Something else I like to talk about. We have some baseball players in here. We have some of the people on the baseball team in this class.

James: Just call me Deon.

Jevon: Okay, Deon.

Keith: Baby Ruth. Baby Ruth (*class laughs*).

Jevon: Did you know that the average high school baseball player, the average, good, high school baseball pitcher, throws the ball at about a speed of 85 miles an hour? Okay, now at 85 miles an hour it takes the ball about six-tenths of a second to go across the plate after it leaves the pitcher's hand. Okay, it takes about four-tenths of a second for that batter to get the bat around. Okay, that leaves you two-tenths of a second to make up your mind. Either you are going to swing at the ball or you are going to take a strike. Or, it might be ... Yeah (*acknowledging a student's hand in the air*)?

James: Take it over the fence.

Jevon: Or take it over the fence, but to take it over the fence, James, you better understand the physics of swinging.

James: Talk is cheap, Mr. Kennedy. Let's go to the baseball diamond and we'll see who's the best. I've got the physics right here (*pointing at his head*) to take it all the way over the fence.



Scene 3: Later the Same Day. Jevon Meets with a Colleague.

Jevon: Oh, there you are. Harold, can I bug you for a minute? I have a question here. This Applied Science class is really starting to drive me nuts. We've had warm weather now, and I'm trying to introduce a new unit, and all they want to do is play around. I guess it's the weather. I don't know what it is. They want to be outdoors. They want to do all kinds of things. One good suggestion came up in our discussion in class, and that was trying to tie in sports with the unit. I don't know if that is a good idea or not, but I'm searching for anything that will work right now. I was kind of thinking, in the back of my mind, about taking them out to the baseball diamond and trying to apply some things there, and maybe on the track or in the gym. Do you have any ideas on that? Do you think that's a good idea?

Harold: You know, I know what you're telling me about the problem. When you take them outside and you go out on a baseball diamond, or wherever you're going to go, you're liable to create more problems than you realize. When you take them outside, some of the kids are going to say, "I'm no longer in the classroom. I'm out playing. I'm out playing games." There's going to be some students who will buy into it, but others aren't going to buy into it. Some of them are going to take the opportunity to cut out on you. So, you are creating some more problems for yourself by doing that. I don't mean to be negative about it. It's just a fact. Once you get out there, they're going to be spread out and you could really have more problems than what you have now.

Jevon: I can't see any more problems than what I'm having now, to be honest about it. No disrespect to you, Harold, but I think I am going to go ahead and try this. I just wanted to run it by you to brainstorm. I've got to change something, and I think it's an okay idea. One last question, though: Should I run it by administration?



Scene 4: Moments Later.

Harold: You know, don't get me wrong. It is a good idea. I think you have a good idea going for you. As far as administration goes, I wouldn't run it by administration. It is your classroom. You have to do what you have to do to get the information across. Administrators have other agendas. I can remember years ago, 20 years ago, I was in a very similar situation, and I had an idea that I wanted to try. I went to administration and they said, the assistant principal said, "You know you've got a good idea. I just wish you hadn't asked me." It was like, you know, "If I hadn't known about it, but since I know about it, I've have to tell you no." If I were you, I'd just do it. There are some people who'll help you, like Coach Wallace. These people may have an open period and can go out with you and help, help you supervise out there. You're going to have equipment. You're going to have a lot of stuff out there. So, when you're talking about applied physics, that really is a good idea. I just think you need some people out there with you. Okay?

Jevon: All right.

Harold: Don't get discouraged, you're young. I've been here a long time, and I have a tendency, older teachers have a tendency to let down. We have a tendency, some of us, to almost feel beaten down. We need young ideas. We need guys like you.



Scene 5: The Next Day. Applied Science Class.

Jevon: Okay, let's settle down and come together here.

Students: Mr. Kennedy, Mr. Kennedy, are we going to go to the baseball diamond?

Jevon: Hold on. I'm going to talk about that. Ladies and gentlemen, may I have your attention, please. Okay, I'm pretty excited about what I have to share with you today. I've done a lot of thinking overnight about what we were saying about sports and physics and going outside and things like that. What I was going to do was use this laboratory physics book here, but you prompted me to get rid of that (*students clap as Jevon tosses the lab book aside*). What we're going to do... Listen up. We're going to talk about the physics of sports. We're going to get into that. We're really going to get into it. We're also going to get into exploring the mechanics of competition.

Class: (*reacting noisily to the idea of competition*)

Jevon: Oh-oh, I hear you. You can walk the walk, but talk the talk and do all that. Our goal is to explore the basic concepts of and principles of mechanics through a series of experiments conducted in sports laboratories. We are going to use experiments, and we're going to talk about a lot of the terms we were discussing here the other day. We're going to get into discussing speed and velocity, force, inertia, and Newton's Laws. We'll get into all of that. But instead of using this laboratory, we're going to expand and go outdoors, okay? We're going to go outdoors. We're going to maybe go, this is just a proposal okay, we'll have to work on it. Maybe we'll go out to the football field and do some things. Maybe we'll go to the baseball diamond and do some things we discussed the other day. There's a lot of physics involved in running, you know.

Student: Can we play some basketball?

Jevon: Basketball, there's a lot of physics there. Golf. There are a lot of areas. Listen up. There's a lot of areas, but I can only use four. Everybody hear me?

Another Student: What about volleyball?

Jevon: Okay, this is how we're going to settle this. Everyone get a piece of paper out (*students get out their notebooks or borrow a sheet of paper from a classmate*). When you get your paper, what I want you to do is write the four sports that you want, the four different labs that you want to develop, okay. So pick out of these (*pointing to the list of sports on the overhead screen*) or maybe make up another suggestion, but just four. Only four.

A few minutes later...

Jevon: Okay, listen up. Listen up, gang. All right, we have a decision up here. This is what you all voted on. Listen up. This is what you all decided on. I didn't do this. We have track and field. We have basketball. We have baseball and volleyball. We have a good start. We have a foundation to work with, but we still have a lot of work to do to get this accomplished. This is a good start. We'll look at the rest of this, and I'll give you more information tomorrow.



Scene 6: One Week Later. The Practice Field.

Jevon: We're going to get everything started in just a minute. There's a few details we need to work out, but first of all there are some people missing. Where's Shawn, and Ricky, and Doug?

Students: There they are. They're over there looking at that car.

Jevon: Hey, guys. Get over here.

Students: They are always over there.

Jevon: I know it's a nice car, but come on. Come on, get back over here. Okay, here is what we're going to do. We have the two teams separated up here. We have another team that's waiting in the background. We're going to rotate you all around. Okay, you guys are going to be first up at bat. You're going to hit a couple of balls. You're going to hit the balls using the tape (*pointing to the tape that is wrapped around the bat about six inches up the handle*). You're going to hold your hands choked up where the tape is. Okay? The other team is going to come up, and they're just going to hold the bat normally. That will have a different effect on your swing and how far you can hit the ball. We'll measure that and then take calculations, and then we'll make some analysis. We will have some data to record. So, this team needs the bats with the blue tape on them. We have two young ladies over there, and they're going to videotape everything. They're going to record your swing. We're going to talk about the mechanics of your body when you swing and all that as well. So, why don't you give them some room. You guys back up over here. You guys have your camera ready?

Tasha and Charanda: Yeah.

Jevon: Okay. You want to put your hand up here (*pointing to the tape*). Your bottom hand goes right here. Choke, really choke up on the bat. Here we go. That's pretty good (*referring to the student's hitting the ball*). All right, now, Shawn, you start while we're getting ready (*referring to Shawn, who has a measuring wheel to check the distance of the hit ball*). Start from right here. I want you to go to the farthest ball he has out there. Take it right to that and bring it straight back. Okay, we'll get you set up. We're going to all take turns. I'm going to have some of you taking some data down on the data sheets. Some of you I will have working... (*interrupted by another teacher*).

A Teacher: Mr. Kennedy.

Jevon: Oh, yes, ma'am. What can I do for you?

Teacher: Jevon, Mr. Nealon would like you to stop by the main office before sixth period today.

Jevon: Mr. Nealon wants to see me? Did he say what it was for?

Teacher: No, but I picked up it is quite serious.

Jevon: Thanks, thanks for letting me know.

Teacher: You're welcome.



Scene 7: Thirty Minutes Later. Principal's Office.

Mr. Nealon: Jevon, thanks for coming into today. I had some concerns that I needed to review with you.

Jevon: Okay.

Mr. Nealon: And it does concern some of your activities in science class. I did have a concern from one of your coworkers, a science teacher, who was concerned about your class when it was scheduled to be in the physics lab and was out on the ball diamond. I believe it was, no pardon me, it was in the gym playing basket ball when you were supposed to be in science class. I think that was Monday. Wednesday I get a call from a parent. Her daughter came home quite concerned about her class and is of course raising the question of "Why isn't the teacher teaching science?" I come back Thursday to the campus from a board meeting and I see your kids out playing baseball on the diamond and have to wonder what's going on. I called Mrs. Caudill, your science coordinator, and asked her. She drew a blank. She knew nothing of what was going on.



Scene 8: Moments Later.

Jevon: Well, I need to apologize to you for that, Mr. Nealon. I took it upon myself to kind of involve my kids in an activity to make the class a little more interesting. This time of the year, it's hard to keep them in their seats. The weather was nice, and I tried to do some applied things in the outdoors with my science class.

Mr. Nealon: I appreciate all that. With regard to the...

Walkie-talkie: 61

Mr. Nealon: Excuse me one second. Go ahead.

Walkie-talkie: Mr. Nealon, there is a report of a fight in the south parking lot. Can you handle this, or do you want me to call security?

Mr. Nealon: Please call security. Thank you.

Walkie-talkie: Ten four.

Mr. Nealon: Where were we? Okay, with regard to this time of year, you know we have this big levy going on. I don't think our community is going to be real tolerant of not using equipment, materials, and board resources appropriately. It seems like you are heading into some 21st century vision of science instruction, and I don't think our community is going to really be at that point at this time. I don't think we can afford to ruffle any feathers and get anybody upset and catch any more heat than we already have. You realize there are a lot of self-interest issues involved. You're a young teacher, and there could be proposed cutbacks. Money is the big bottom line. The other piece is, we do have \$2,500 dollars

invested in these labs. We just had a little gift, and certainly there's a lot of goodies in those labs you could certainly use to energize your program. So, keep it indoors. Keep it in the room. Stay off the fields, and let's cut our losses at this point in time.

Jevon: Okay.

Mr. Nealon: Thanks a lot, Jevon. I appreciate you coming in.

Jevon: I do have one thing scheduled for Monday on the track.

Mr. Nealon: Let's bag it. Let's cut it. I just don't think we can't afford to take any chances. Okay?

Jevon: Okay.

Mr. Nealon: Okay? Thanks.



Scene 9: The Following Monday. Applied Science Class.

(Students are talking enthusiastically about going to the running track as Jevon enters the room.)

Student: We're going outside, right?

Other Students: No, c'mon, we're going outside, right?

Jevon: Hold on, hold on. Find your seat for me.

Student: I'm going to beat him *(referring to a race he had planned against another student)*.

Student: Mr. Kennedy, I have the equipment. It's downstairs, and it's all packed up and ready to go.

Jevon: The equipment that you're getting for me? Thanks, I appreciate that. Have a seat, and tell your buddies to be quiet back there. Listen up.

Classroom noise ...

Jevon: Listen up! Listen up! I need you to... Okay this is what we're going to do. I've done a lot of thinking over the weekend, and I've changed my mind *(students react noisily)*. Wait a minute. Listen up. We were going to go to the track, but we're going to go to a different type of track. Let me show you something here real quick.

Students: *(Sarcastic comments from students... Race car noise as videotape of stock car race is activated.)*

Jevon: As a lot of you know, I'm very interested in race car racing. I always carry a magazine with me about race car driving. I enjoy it, the Brickyard 400 and all those races. I love them, and there are a lot of things in race car driving that we can study as far as physics goes. So, what we're going to do, let me turn this off *(the videotape of the car race)* so I can keep your attention.

Students protest...

Jevon: Hold on. What we're going to do is we're going to go to a different type of track instead of the outdoor track. I have something I've been working on that I'm going to share with you. So gather up all your equipment.

Student protests...

Jevon: No, you don't need to change *(your clothes)*. Come on, you're going to have fun. Just come with me.



Scene 10: Moments Later.

Jevon: Come on in (*entering another classroom down the hall*). Come on in. I'm going to tell you all about it. There's not a lot of space in here, so spread out. Some of you need to come over on this side. Watch your step. This is something I used to make when I was a Cub Scout (*holding a small wooden race car*). It's a derby car. I used to race them many moons ago, okay? What we're going to do is have each of you come up and analyze a couple of these cars. In fact, Katesha, why don't you come on up here. (*Students engage in racing the cars on a long wooden track.*)

Jevon: Let's get scientific about this. In the lab, you have everything you need to take measurements. You can use all the equipment you need. Let's take a scientific approach to this and put some good things down on paper. Remember to look in Chapters 8 and 9. Don't forget that, because I'm going to be looking for some key things, and I'm not going to tell you what the answers are. What I'm going to allow you all to do in your groups is to design a car. I'll give you a sheet tomorrow that has the design parameters and all that. So we'll go over that tomorrow.

Student: We have to do it on our own time?

Jevon: You'll do it on your own time. Okay, I will allow you to come after school ... (*interrupted by protests*). Listen up. Listen up. This is an assignment. This is part of a grade. Therefore you need to make sure you get it done. You can use after-school time, you can use study time. I'll be available for you to answer questions and so on and so forth. Make sure you get deep into Chapter 8 and 9. This is how your grading is going to go. For your data sheets, you're going to get 25 points.

Students: Who said we have...

Jevon: Okay listen up, your data analysis will count for 25 points. Here is where the rubber meets the road. That's pretty good. Okay, First Place is going to get 50 points, and it's going to go on down like that with Fourth Place getting 35 points. So, some of you have a good opportunity to bring up your grade and have a good time at the same time, okay?

One Group of Students: We already won it (*one group proclaims*).

Jevon: They've already claimed it. You guys better get busy.