Tip #1124: Creating Safe and Inclusive Recreation Spaces

Overview

Creating safe and inclusive recreation spaces supports teachers to design play and movement environments that prioritise access, risk-managed challenge and social belonging. Practical application of movement competence and health literacy ensures spaces promote active participation for students of diverse abilities and backgrounds while reducing injury risk through considered design and supervision. Emphasising inclusive signage, adaptable equipment and flexible activity structures helps students build confidence and independent decision-making as part of everyday learning through play. This approach aligns with curriculum expectations to use movement contexts to develop capability and wellbeing for all learners.

Key Teaching Ideas

Plan learning spaces so they intentionally develop movement skills and learning through movement while embedding personal and social capability in routines and task structures. Use activities with different challenge levels, explain safety expectations clearly, and involve students in setting the rules. This helps them make safe decisions, include others, build confidence, and develop skills they can use beyond HPE. Regular environmental audits with student input and liaison with school facilities staff ensure compliance with local guidance and maximise usable space for varied ages and abilities. Assessment captures participation, decision-making and skill progression rather than only performance outcomes, supporting broader health and education goals.

Practical Application

- **Student Voice Audit:** Run a ten-minute circle or exit slip asking students which spaces feel welcoming, what barriers they notice and one change they would suggest. Use responses to prioritise small, low-cost adjustments such as moving a bin, adding shade or re-zoning ball games.
- **Station-Based Modifications:** Set up three activity stations with easy, moderate and challenging options. Let students choose the level that suits them, then provide support and feedback to help them build their skills.

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- **Inclusive Role Rotations:** Allocate roles such as safety checker, inclusive coach and equipment manager during warm-ups to distribute responsibility and increase supervision without needing extra staff.
- **Pre-Class Safety Sweep:** Spend five minutes before students arrive checking surfaces, equipment stability and clear lines of play. Document one fix or mitigation and communicate it to students as part of your safety briefing.
- **Visual Choice Boards:** Use pictures to show activity choices and different equipment options, such as ball size, throwing distance or modified rules. This helps all students, including those with different communication or cultural needs, make confident choices on their own.

Next Steps

Active Education Australia has resources on designing safe and inclusive recreation spaces in schools. Anywhere PD covers environmental audits and student-led space improvement strategies.

References and Research

1. Australian Sports Commission. (2019). *Australian Physical Literacy Framework* - How supportive movement environments develop physical, psychological, social and cognitive capabilities while building confidence, competence and lifelong participation.

2. Sport Integrity Australia. *Safeguarding Sport Resources* - How safe, inclusive environments, effective supervision and safeguarding practices create positive participation experiences for all students.

3. Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. (2022). *Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education (Version 9.0)* - How inclusive movement environments develop movement competence, personal and social capability, and support active participation for all learners.

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