



Active Insight: Evidence in Action



Tip #1145: Building Confidence Through Recreation

Overview

Confidence in physical activity develops through repeated positive and supportive movement experiences. Students bring a wide range of previous experiences into recreation settings. Thoughtfully designed programs can help every student experience success, build trust and develop a more positive connection with movement. Recreation programs that offer achievable challenges, reduce highly visible moments of pressure and recognise effort, progress and participation create strong conditions for confidence to grow. Over time, these experiences can help students feel more capable, included and willing to engage in physical activity.

Key Teaching Ideas

Building confidence through recreation begins with sequencing activities so students can experience early success before progressing to more complex challenges. Teachers can also strengthen inclusion by using fair and supportive grouping strategies. Teachers can pre-organised teams, use random groupings or teacher-selected groups can help students feel valued and avoid unnecessary pressure.

Feedback is most effective when it highlights specific effort, improvement and persistence. This keeps the focus on personal progress and helps students recognise their own development.

Small-group formats can further support confidence by giving students opportunities to work with familiar peers across several sessions. This consistency builds trust, strengthens social connection and creates a supportive environment where students feel comfortable trying new activities and developing their skills.

Practical Application

- **Achievable Challenge Sequences:** Design activity progressions so that students experience clear success at each stage before moving to a more demanding version of the task.
- **Team Selection:** Use teacher-assigned or random team formation methods rather than public selection processes.



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- **Effort-Based Feedback:** Frame all feedback in terms of specific effort and observable improvement rather than comparison with other students or absolute performance standards.
- **Consistent Small Groups:** Keep small-group compositions stable across multiple sessions so students build social trust within their group before being asked to perform in front of a wider audience.
- **Celebration of Firsts:** Acknowledge when students try a new activity or attempt a skill for the first time, regardless of the outcome, reinforcing that trying is valued.

Next Steps

[Anywhere PD](#) includes resources on strengths-based coaching and building student confidence through structured recreation. Visit [Active Education Australia](#) for broader student wellbeing frameworks in HPE.

References and Research

Australian Sports Commission: Physical Literacy Framework - Research on confidence and motivation in school physical activity contexts.