



Active Insight: Evidence in Action



Tip #1168: Developing Leadership Observation Opportunities

Overview

Structured observation gives students a way to study leadership in action before they are asked to practise it themselves. Watching peers and adults lead in physical activity contexts builds a practical understanding of communication, decision-making, and group management that is difficult to develop through instruction alone. When observation is guided by clear criteria, students develop the analytical skills to identify what makes leadership work in different situations and how they can apply those insights in their own practice.

Key Teaching Ideas

Observation becomes a genuine learning experience when students have a specific focus and a structured way to record what they notice. Teachers can provide observation checklists that direct attention toward communication style, how the leader manages transitions, or how they respond when something goes off plan. Debriefing observations as a group connects individual insights to shared principles and prepares students to apply what they have seen in their own leadership practice.

Practical Application

- **Observation Checklists:** Provide students with specific criteria to focus on during a peer-led activity, such as how the leader explains rules, manages a disagreement, or adjusts the activity for different ability levels.
- **Video Analysis Sessions:** Record short clips of student leaders in action and review them as a group, using the footage as a prompt for discussion about decision-making and communication.
- **Leader Shadowing:** Arrange for emerging leaders to shadow an experienced student or adult leader during a school event, gaining first-hand insight into the responsibilities involved.
- **Reverse Observation Roles:** Ask student leaders to observe a teacher or coach during a lesson and offer one piece of feedback on what they noticed, building analytical confidence and a reciprocal learning culture.



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- **Observation Reflection Logs:** Have students record key observations after each shadowing or viewing experience, noting what they would apply to their own leadership and what they would do differently.

Next Steps

The [Active Education Australia website](https://activeeducationaustralia.edu.au) has resources on developing leadership observation frameworks for school settings.

References and Research

Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education (v9) – Supports observation and reflection as tools for developing personal and social capability in physical activity contexts.