Tip #1203: Creating Leadership Opportunities Through Inclusive Sport

Overview

Positioning student leaders as champions of inclusive participation shifts physical education toward a more equitable and responsive environment. When students are tasked with adapting games and modifying equipment to ensure access for all ability levels, they develop empathy and a practical understanding of what inclusion requires. This approach moves beyond traditional competitive models, measuring success by engagement and collaboration rather than results, and builds a school culture that genuinely values diversity in physical activity.

Key Teaching Ideas

Teachers can provide student leaders with practical frameworks for inclusion, such as the TREE model, which guides modification of teaching style, rules, equipment, and environment. Challenging leaders to critically evaluate traditional sports and identify barriers to participation shifts the focus toward movement skill development over elite performance. Facilitating reflective discussions on accessibility helps students internalise the importance of equity and builds their capacity to advocate for inclusive physical activity well beyond the school setting. When students design and run an inclusive event, they experience first-hand how thoughtful planning changes who gets to participate.

Practical Application

- **Adaptive Game Design:** Task leadership groups with researching and presenting modified versions of traditional sports that cater to diverse physical abilities.
- **Inclusive Equipment Audits:** Have student leaders assess the sports shed to ensure the availability of inclusive gear and advocate for necessary additions.
- **Mixed-Ability Peer Support:** Train students to act as peer supports during practical lessons, providing individualised encouragement and modified tasks.
- **Cooperative Games Festivals:** Have students organise a sports festival where scoring is based on teamwork, fair play, and inclusion rather than goals scored.
- **Accessibility Mapping:** Guide leaders to audit the school's physical environment for accessibility and present findings and proposed solutions to school management.

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Next Steps

For practical resources on inclusive game design and student-led accessibility advocacy, the Active Education Australia website is a strong starting point. Anywhere PD also has resources on the TREE model and adaptive sport.

References and Research

Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education – Fostering equity and inclusive participation through adapted movement contexts.

Australian Sports Commission. *Using TREE*. The TREE model (Teaching, Rules, Equipment and Environment) provides a practical framework for modifying activities to maximise participation and inclusion for students with diverse abilities.

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