Active Insight: Evidence in Action

Tip #276

Fair and Fun Competition

Overview

Competition can add **energy, challenge and excitement** to Physical Education lessons when it is structured appropriately. Fair and fun competition focuses on creating opportunities for students to **test skills, apply strategies and enjoy participating in activities.** The way **teams are formed, points are awarded and success is recognised** can influence the experience of competition. Well-designed competitive activities place **equal importance on learning, challenge and enjoyment.**

Key Teaching Ideas

Consider how competition is introduced and whether students have a **reasonable chance of experiencing success and challenge.** Use **team selection methods** that avoid the same students consistently being advantaged or disadvantaged. Vary the way **points are earned** by recognising skill execution, teamwork, improvement and tactical decision-making alongside game results. Monitor the **tone of competition** and adjust activities when winning becomes more important than the learning focus. Reflection and discussion can help students consider how competition influenced **performance, teamwork and decision-making.**

Practical Application

- **Use different team selection methods.** Eg: Create teams randomly or use teacher-selected teams rather than allowing students to choose teams.
- **Reward a range of outcomes.** Eg: Award points for teamwork, communication, skill execution or strategy use alongside the final score.
- **Build personal challenges into competitions.** Eg: Include individual goals that students can achieve regardless of the game result.
- **Use short competition formats.** Eg: Run multiple brief games or challenges so students experience different opponents and situations.
- **Debrief competition after activities.** Eg: Discuss decisions, strategies and teamwork rather than focusing only on who won.
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Next Steps

Focus on fairness and enjoyment. Game Sense approaches support inclusive competition and help students develop positive attitudes toward teamwork and participation.

The Game Sense model is informed by Teaching Games for Understanding (Bunker & Thorpe, 1982), the Game Sense approach (Light, 2013), and contemporary skill acquisition research including ecological dynamics (Davids & Renshaw).

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