Active Insight: Evidence in Action
Tip #286

Maximising Participation

Overview

Maximising participation involves designing lessons where more students spend more time **moving, practising, applying learning and making decisions.** Long queues, elimination activities and extended teacher talk can **reduce opportunities for students to participate. Lesson organisation, activity design and equipment availability** all influence participation levels. Small changes to how activities are structured can **increase movement opportunities across an entire lesson.**

Key Teaching Ideas

Review lessons from a **student perspective** and identify where participation stops or slows. Consider how often students are **waiting, watching or listening** compared to moving and practising. Look for opportunities to increase **repetitions, touches, attempts and decision-making opportunities** within activities. Use lesson organisation strategies that **reduce transition time** and allow equipment to be distributed quickly. Small adjustments to activity structure can often **increase participation without changing the learning focus.**

Practical Application

- **Reduce queues.** Eg: Create multiple activity stations so students are practising rather than waiting for a turn.
- **Replace elimination formats.** Eg: Modify games so students remain involved after mistakes or unsuccessful attempts.
- **Increase equipment availability.** Eg: Provide one ball between two students rather than one ball for an entire group.
- **Use small-sided activities.** Eg: Reduce group sizes to increase touches, attempts and decision-making opportunities.
- **Prepare equipment before lessons begin.** Eg: Set up activity areas in advance to reduce transition and organisation time.
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Next Steps

Plan for high activity levels intentionally. Game Sense approaches support continuous engagement and meaningful participation across diverse physical education lessons.

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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