



Active Insight: Evidence in Action

Tip #345



Strengths-Based Language in PE

Overview

The language used in Physical Education can influence **what students notice about themselves and their learning**. Strengths-based language shifts attention towards **what students can do, what they are developing and the strategies they are using** rather than focusing solely on mistakes or limitations. This does not mean avoiding challenges or corrections. Instead, it involves **recognising existing strengths and using them as a foundation for future learning**. The words teachers choose can help students identify progress, **recognise capabilities and understand how to move forward**. Over time, the language used by teachers can also shape **the language students use when reflecting on their own learning and supporting others**.

Key Teaching Ideas

Strengths-based language is about **identifying what students are doing well and using those strengths as a starting point for further learning**. Consider the difference between **generic praise and specific observations**. Identifying a **decision, action or strategy** helps students understand what contributed to success. Strengths-based language can also be used during **questioning, reflection and peer discussions**, helping students recognise strengths in themselves and others. The goal is to **build awareness of strengths while continuing to challenge students to develop**.

Practical Application

- Start with a strength. Eg: Before offering a suggestion, identify something the student is already doing well.
- Describe what you noticed. Eg: "I noticed you created space before receiving the pass" rather than "Good job".
- Focus on strategies. Eg: Highlight the decisions, actions or approaches that contributed to success.
- Use strengths-based questioning. Eg: Ask "What helped you be successful?" or "Which strategy worked best for you?"
- Build from strengths. Eg: "Your passing was accurate. Now let's see if you can make the decision earlier."
- Encourage peer recognition. Eg: Ask students to identify strengths they observed in a partner or teammate during activities.

Next Steps

Listen to the language being used throughout your lessons and consider what students hear most often. Look for opportunities to replace generic praise with specific observations that identify strengths, decisions and successful strategies. Explore Active Education Australia Resources for examples of questioning, feedback and reflection approaches that support strengths-based teaching in Physical Education.

