Tip #524: Building Student Voice

Overview

Student voice gives students a chance to contribute to lessons in practical ways. They can share ideas, make choices, suggest changes and reflect on their experiences. This helps teachers understand what students enjoy, what they find challenging and which activities encourage everyone to join in. It also gives students a greater role in shaping lessons without removing the teacher's guidance. Small opportunities to contribute throughout a unit often have more value than asking for feedback only at the end. Over time, students become more confident sharing ideas, discussing movement and working with others to improve activities.

Key Teaching Ideas

Teachers can embed student voice throughout planning, teaching and reflection. Ask students for ideas before starting a unit, while activities are taking place and after lessons have finished. Give them opportunities to modify games, choose between activities and suggest different ways to complete movement challenges. Encourage students to explain why they made a particular choice and discuss how it affected participation, challenge or enjoyment. Trial suitable ideas with the class and reflect on the results together. Not every suggestion needs to be used, but students should see that their feedback influences future lessons. Short discussions held throughout a unit often provide more useful information than a single survey at the end.

Practical Application

- **Choice Within Activities:** Offer two or three ways for students to practise the same skill or complete the same activity in the classroom. Discuss why different students made different choices.
- **Game Modification:** Ask small groups to adapt an activity in the classroom or if in HPE change one rule, the playing area or the equipment to improve the game. Trial each idea and discuss what changed.
- **Pause and Discuss:** Stop activities at different points during a lesson and ask students what is working, what could change and why. Restart the activity so they can test their ideas straight away.
- **Student-Led Tasks:** Invite students to explain a task or game, demonstrate a skill or organise equipment. Rotate these roles so everyone has a chance to contribute.
- **End-of-Unit Review:** Ask students which part of the lesson they enjoyed most, which helped them improve and what they would change next time. Use their responses when planning the next unit and explain which ideas have been included.

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Evidence in Action

Next Steps

Explore Active Education Australia Resources for further resources to help teachers build student voice through practical movement experiences.

References and Research

1 Mitra, D. L. (2004). *The Significance of Students: Can Increasing "Student Voice" in Schools Lead to Gains in Youth Development?* – Demonstrates how authentic opportunities for student voice build agency, belonging, confidence and meaningful participation in learning.

2. Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). *The "What" and "Why" of Goal Pursuits: Human Needs and the Self-Determination of Behavior* – Explains how autonomy, competence and relatedness strengthen motivation, engagement and participation in learning.

3. Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education (Version 9.0) – Encourages students to make decisions, reflect on learning, collaborate with others and take increasing responsibility for their participation in movement and physical activity.

4. Australian Sports Commission. (2019). *Australian Physical Literacy Framework* – Highlights the importance of developing confidence, motivation, understanding and positive engagement through meaningful participation and student-centred movement experiences.

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