



Active Insight: Evidence in Action



Tip #529: Celebrating Personal Bests

Overview

Celebrating personal bests helps students focus on their own progress rather than comparing themselves with others. It gives them a clear way to see how practice, effort and feedback can lead to improvement over time. A personal best does not always mean a faster time or a higher score. It might be completing a skill with more control, staying involved for longer, making a better decision during a game or showing greater confidence in an activity.

When teachers recognise these small improvements, students are more likely to keep trying, respond positively to feedback and see that progress is possible.

Key Teaching Ideas

Set goals that are realistic, clear and linked to the student's current level. Students should understand what they are working towards and how they will know they have improved. Keep the focus on individual progress. Personal bests are most useful when students compare their current performance with what they could do before, not with the performance of others. Use specific feedback to help students understand what has improved. For example, "Your balance was more controlled because you slowed down and kept your eyes forward."

Give students time to reflect on what helped them improve. This may include practising regularly, changing their technique, listening to feedback or trying a different approach. Recognise different types of progress. Improvement can be seen in skill, confidence, effort, decision-making, teamwork, consistency or willingness to take part.

Practical Application

- **Use Personal Best Charts:** Give students a simple way to record their own results across several lessons. Keep the focus on progress over time rather than class rankings.
- **Set One Clear Goal:** Ask students to choose one skill or area they would like to improve. Help them break it into a small and achievable next step.
- **Build in Reflection Time:** At the end of a lesson or unit, ask students what improved, what helped and what they will work on next.
- **Recognise Milestones:** Acknowledge when students reach a goal or make clear progress. Name the effort, strategy or persistence that helped them get there.
- **Keep a Progress Record:** Use short notes, photos, video clips, self-assessments or teacher feedback to help students see how their skills have developed.
- **Revisit Previous Results:** Give students opportunities to repeat a challenge so they can compare their current performance with an earlier attempt.



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Next Steps

Choose one activity where students can track their own progress over several lessons. Keep the goal achievable, provide clear feedback and recognise improvement in different forms. Personal bests work well when students can see how their effort and choices have helped them move forward. Explore [Active Education Australia Resources](#) to find practical ideas for supporting goal setting, tracking progress and celebrating personal bests.

References and Research

1. Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education (v9) – Emphasises students refining movement skills and demonstrating persistence in physical activities.
2. Australian Physical Literacy Framework (Australian Sports Commission, 2019) – Highlights personal progression in the physical and psychological domains.