



Active Insight: Evidence in Action



Tip #839: Collaborative Challenges Through Games

Overview

Collaborative game challenges shift the focus of physical education from individual athletic performance to collective tactical understanding and shared problem-solving. When students work together to maintain possession, complete a cooperative task, or navigate a constraint-based game, they develop communication, strategic thinking, and mutual support alongside movement skills. These experiences are most powerful when teachers use structured questioning to draw out the tactical thinking happening within the game and connect it to broader strategic thinking.

Key Teaching Ideas

Teachers can make teamwork an essential part of game play by designing activities where success depends on everyone working together rather than individual performance. Pause play at key moments to discuss tactics, asking questions such as, "How can you create more space?", "Who is available to support the player with the ball?" or "What could your team try next?" The discussion after the game is just as valuable as the game itself. Ask students which communication strategies helped their team work well and what they would do differently next time so they can apply these ideas in future games.

Practical Application

- **Consecutive Pass Challenges:** Teams score points by completing a set number of consecutive passes rather than by scoring in a goal, requiring constant communication and spatial awareness to maintain possession under pressure.
- **Uneven Team Challenges:** Play games with uneven team numbers or varied constraints to challenge students to adapt their strategies collaboratively, developing flexibility and creative problem-solving under pressure.
- **Tactical Time-Out Discussions:** Pause gameplay at regular intervals to ask teams open-ended questions about their strategy, give them two minutes to discuss and implement a change, then resume play.
- **Connected Role Games:** Assign specific roles to team members that require them to rely on each other to succeed, for example, designating players who can only score if they receive a pass from a specific teammate.



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- **Cumulative Score Challenges:** Design target games where the whole group works toward a shared cumulative score rather than competing against each other, building collective investment in every player's contribution.

Next Steps

Resources on cooperative game design and constraint-led approaches are available at the [Active Education Australia website](#). [Anywhere PD](#) covers Game Sense facilitation and tactical questioning strategies for HPE.

References and Research

1. Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education (Version 9.0): Establishes curriculum expectations for developing movement competence, personal and social capability, and lifelong participation in physical activity.
2. Breed, R., & Spittle, M. (2021). Developing Game Sense in Physical Education and Sport: Explains how Game Sense develops tactical understanding, decision-making and movement competence through game-centred learning.
3. Bunker, D., & Thorpe, R. (1982). A Model for the Teaching of Games in Secondary Schools: Introduces Teaching Games for Understanding as a model for developing tactical awareness through modified games.
4. Australian Sports Commission. Playing for Life: Promotes game-based, inclusive and student-centred approaches that maximise participation, enjoyment and skill development.