



Active Insight: Evidence in Action



Tip #854: Structuring Distributed Leadership Through Movement

Overview

Distributed leadership models in physical education spread responsibility for physical activity across a wider group of students, building a more resilient and inclusive school sport culture. When leadership roles are shared across the class, more students have the chance to contribute and take responsibility. Roles such as organising equipment, leading small activities, officiating games or supporting classmates give students practical leadership experience. Sharing these responsibilities helps build a positive movement culture where students take ownership of activities and support one another.

Key Teaching Ideas

Introduce leadership roles gradually so students can take on new responsibilities over time. Begin with simple roles such as organising equipment before moving to leading small groups, supporting classmates or helping run activities. Give each role a clear purpose and explain what success looks like before students begin. Rotate responsibilities regularly so everyone has the chance to experience different leadership roles. Over time, this helps create a class where leadership is shared and every student has opportunities to contribute.

Practical Application

- **Equipment Check Teams:** Give a small group responsibility for preparing equipment before the lesson, checking that everything is safe to use and returning resources at the end of the session.
- **Rules Managers:** Ask students to explain the rules of a game to their group, answer questions and help everyone understand how the activity will run before play begins.
- **Encouragement Leaders:** Rotate the role of encouraging teammates, celebrating effort and helping everyone feel included throughout movement activities.
- **Problem-Solving Teams:** Challenge small groups to modify a movement activity by changing the equipment, space or rules so it remains enjoyable and achievable for everyone.
- **Reflection Leaders:** Invite different students to lead the class discussion after an activity by asking questions about teamwork, strategies that worked well and ideas to try in the next lesson.



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Next Steps

[Active Education Australia](#) has resources on distributed leadership models in school physical activity programs. [Anywhere PD](#) includes tools for assigning and rotating student leadership roles across teaching and learning units.

References and Research

1. Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education (Version 9.0) – Supports the development of leadership, collaboration, communication and personal and social capability through active participation in movement contexts.
2. Australian Sports Commission. (2019). *Australian Physical Literacy Framework* – Explains how physical, psychological, cognitive and social capabilities develop through movement experiences that build leadership, responsibility, communication and confidence.
3. Mitra, D. L. (2004). *The Significance of Students: Can Increasing "Student Voice" in Schools Lead to Gains in Youth Development?* – Demonstrates how shared leadership opportunities and authentic student voice strengthen agency, responsibility, engagement and positive school communities.
4. Australian Professional Standards for Teachers – Encourages teachers to create inclusive learning environments that develop student leadership, collaboration and active participation across diverse learning experiences.