

# CONTEXTS

**BREAK THE MOULD AND TRY SOMETHING NEW!**

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Historically, Physical Education (PE) in primary and intermediate schools in New Zealand has been dominated by sport-based, team-based, skill-based activities. This is despite innovative curriculum design in 1999 and in 2007 that allowed and encouraged balanced programmes that offered a variety of context and experiences for student to learn in, through, and about movement.

So how do we break the mould of doing what we have always done to provide our students with a wide variety of experiences that meet their needs and facilitate learning?



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## **Tip 1: Review the 'variety' of contexts your students have access to**

When we look at traditional PE overviews or programmes in primary and intermediate schools we often see: Term 1 – Swimming, Term 2 – Large Ball Skills, Term 3 Gymnastics and Cross Country, Term 4 – Athletics. Looking at this programme over one year we can agree that the students are accessing a variety of contexts. What we often see however is that this programme is then repeated year after year after year. This is where the 'variety' becomes stale and repetitive over the 6-8 year period a student is at school.

Variety in its true form means considering all the possible physical contexts that can support learning in PE. This could be sport and exercise, but it could also be recreational, leisure, expressive movement, adventure, play and games, environmental activities. We know the enjoyment and challenge that comes from trying something new and different.

We want students to experience the enjoyment of moving in all ways for all purposes. To do this we need to actively consider (and reconsider) the contexts we offer.

[See "Implementing Physical Education in Practice" - pg 21 for more details](#)

## Tip 2: Plan based on student needs

When we plan driven by a context, we often narrow the skills taught to the skills that are needed by the context. For example, if we are teaching netball, we focus on the physical skills required in the sport of netball (throwing, catching, bounce pass, finding space etc).

When we base our teaching on the needs of our students, not only do we open up the range of skills (physical, social, games based), but we open up the opportunity to choose from a wider range of contexts to support those skills. For example, if your students need opportunities to learn about identifying risks and making safe choices, then they could learn that through a wide variety of contexts from sports, games, leisure, or other activities (hockey, playground, pool, rock climbing etc).

## Tip 3: Ask students for their input

Research and experience tells us the more ownership a person has over their choices, the more committed they are to those choices. Physical Education can be the perfect learning area for students to exercise some agency over the contexts they may partake in.

If we find out what they enjoy most and make a conscious effort to include that in our programming then we know we can increase the fun and engagement of our students. Often, we assume we know what they like, or we are driven by our more vocal students. But it is important to acknowledge the response of all our students.

This doesn't mean giving them free reign. Once you have identified the need and structured the learning, having students as part of the context decision making can be a valuable experience for both student and teacher. This process will take some learning if students are not familiar with it. You may start small by identifying two contexts of which they can choose one, working you way right up to letting them consider the needs and the learning and working out what context might be best matched for that.

Traditional contexts	Possible contexts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Small ball skills/games</li><li>• Large Ball skills/games</li><li>• Winter sports</li><li>• Athletics</li><li>• Cross country</li><li>• Gymnastics</li><li>• Striking and fielding</li><li>• Invasion games</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Te ao kori and cultural games</li><li>• Dance - creative, cultural, expressive, hip hop</li><li>• Leisure based activities - mini putt, surfing, table tennis, frisbee, kubb</li><li>• Circus games</li><li>• Skateboarding, scootering, biking</li><li>• Boardgames, card games</li><li>• Varied environments - playgrounds, bush, sandpits, rivers, local parks, local clubs</li></ul>

*This context article relates to other Explore articles on our website*

- *Planning doesn't need to look different*
- *Effective planning in physical education*
- *Student agency in physical education*

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