

IMPLEMENTATION TOOL: Ball Talk (Peer Assessment Re-imagined)

Overview of the Activity:

Maybe calling it “reimagined” is a little dramatic—but let’s talk about peer assessment for a minute.

Back in my undergrad days, we spent an entire section of a course designing peer assessments. Each of us created a different one, then shared them through the cloud. By the end, we had a nice, organized file full of Excel sheets, each with its own layout, font choice, or rating system. The problem? Despite their formatting differences, they were all the same: rigid, overly critical, and—if we’re being honest—the kind of thing that makes most PE students feel insecure or disengaged.

This approach to peer assessment is different. Instead of focusing on evaluation, it shifts toward meaningful, constructive interaction between students.

Objective: *Students will enhance their dribbling skills while developing their ability to observe and describe movement in detail.*

Instructions:

Pair Up: One student is the Dribbler (executing the dribble), and the other is the Observer (describing in detail). After each round, partners switch roles.

Skill Execution & Observation:

Each Dribbler performs a basic stationary dribble while the Observer describes their movements.

*Students should focus on **ALL** the little details: Examples - hand position, ball height, stance, rhythm.*

Encourage the dribbler to perform a variety of dribbles, even ones they are still developing their skills at. Observer provides a real-time description.

Examples include Basic Dribble, V-Dribble, In-and-Out Dribble, Crossover Dribble, Between-the-Legs Dribble, Behind-the-Back Dribble, etc..

Guided Observation Prompts:

Encourage Observers to describe in full sentences, avoiding vague words like "good" or "fast."

Examples:

"Your knees are slightly bent, and you're keeping the ball low to maintain control."

"Your crossover is quick, and the ball stays close to your body."

"Your hand is cupping the ball slightly as you push it through your legs."

Variations & Extensions:

Silent Round: Observer writes down their descriptions instead of speaking.

Blindfolded Dribble (Advanced): Observer must give verbal cues to guide the Dribbler without vision.

Why It Works:

✓ **Engagement:** Instead of passively receiving feedback, students take ownership of the learning process by discussing their performance with peers. This interactive approach makes assessment feel like a conversation rather than a critique, reducing anxiety and increasing participation. When students analyze each other's skills in a non-threatening way, they become more invested in both their own progress and their classmates' success.

✓ **Literacy:** Verbal analysis forces students to move beyond surface-level observations and articulate their thoughts using sport-specific terminology. By describing techniques, strategies, and performance details, they build a deeper understanding of the game. This also reinforces their ability to process and communicate critical thinking—an essential skill both in and beyond PE.

✓ **Application:** Mimics real-world team dynamics where players analyze and adjust based on feedback. Teachers can reinforce that providing the verbal cues prepare students for the end of unit assessment.

IMPLEMENTATION TOOL: “Habits People Have” Exit Slip

Overview of the Activity:

It’s no secret that students notice things about their peers—whether it’s movement habits, common mistakes, or patterns that emerge when performing a skill. The **“Habits People Have”** exit slip taps into this natural observation, asking students to reflect on the trends they saw during class. It pairs well with **Ball Talk** or any other skill-based drill, reinforcing the idea that movement isn’t just about doing—it’s about noticing, analyzing, and understanding.

Rather than simply executing a skill and moving on, students step back, process what they observed, and articulate their thoughts. And if they have another class after PE, this brief shift from physical activity to cognitive reflection can help them transition smoothly—something their math teacher will definitely appreciate.

Objective: Students will develop observational skills and reinforce their understanding of movement patterns by identifying and describing habits seen during class.

Instructions:

1. Introduce the Task:

At the end of class, students will complete a short written response to the following prompt:

“What habits or patterns did you notice when observing others dribbling?”

2. Encourage Specificity:

Instead of general statements like “Some people are good at dribbling,” push students to write with detail. Examples:

- “A lot of students kept their eyes down instead of looking up while dribbling.”
 - ○ “Many people tended to dribble with their dominant hand and struggled to switch to their weak hand.”
 - ○ “Some students had a rhythm to their dribbling, while others bounced the ball inconsistently.”

Why It Works:

✓ **Engagement: Active, Not Passive Learning** Instead of just going through the motions, students are required to analyze and reflect, which keeps them mentally engaged beyond the physical activity. When students are asked to notice and articulate movement patterns, they become more aware of their own technique and those of their peers. This fosters curiosity and helps them stay connected to skill development, even

after class ends. Plus, writing about what they observed gives them a sense of ownership over their learning process.

✓ **Literacy: Translating Movement into Words** Describing movement in writing forces students to shift from vague observations (“they dribble well”) to specific, detailed analysis (“they keep their dribble low and controlled, using their fingertips instead of their palm”). This not only strengthens their ability to communicate effectively but also deepens their understanding of skill mechanics. The process mirrors what athletes do when breaking down film or analyzing game strategy, reinforcing that literacy and movement are naturally connected.

✓ **Application: Real-World Skill Transfer** Pattern recognition is an essential skill in sports and fitness. By identifying common habits, students develop the ability to self-correct their own technique and recognize strengths and weaknesses in others. This skill extends beyond PE—whether it’s identifying patterns in a soccer match, adjusting technique in a dance routine, or even recognizing movement trends in personal fitness training. Plus, by turning observations into written reflections, students practice the critical thinking skills necessary for game strategy, coaching, and lifelong movement proficiency.

✓ **Classroom Culture: Shifting Focus from Talent to Growth** When students become aware of movement habits, they start to see improvement as a process rather than a natural talent someone either has or doesn’t have. By making this a regular practice, you reinforce the idea that skills can be developed with effort, observation, and self-awareness. Over time, this can help shift classroom culture away from “some people are just good at this” to “everyone can improve with practice and focus.”

IMPLEMENTATION TOOL: Sideline Signal-Callers (Skill-Focused Card Edition)

Overview

Sideline Signal-Callers turns students into real-time technique coaches by giving them simple cue cards focused on fundamental skill execution. Instead of calling full plays or game tactics, students pull a card that highlights a **key technical focus** — like balance, footwork, passing form, or body posture — and call that cue out at the **right moment** during drills or modified gameplay.

Students rotate cards every round, meaning each practice period becomes a new opportunity to watch movement, anticipate skill windows, and communicate like a developing coach.

This tool pairs naturally with any skill-development unit and seamlessly extends into your courtside commentary assessments in **basketball, volleyball, soccer, ultimate frisbee, baseball/softball**, and beyond.

How It Works

1. Print and cut skill cue cards (see prompts below).
 2. Students draw a card before drills or scrimmage.
 3. Their job: listen, watch, and call out their cue when it fits — not randomly.
 4. Rotate cards halfway through class or each drill block.
 5. Teacher reinforces tone and specificity (positive, purposeful, concise).
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Student Prompts

Encourage students to deliver cues like coaches — short, supportive, and focused.

Universal Skill Cues

- Athletic stance
- Stay balanced
- Quick feet
- Eyes up
- Brace your core
- Soft hands / ready hands

- Slow it down — master the skill
 - Smooth and controlled
 - Finish the movement
 - Form first — power second
 - Breathe + reset
 - Hold your finish
 - Check your stance before starting
 - Same rhythm — same form
 - Reset and repeat
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Basketball Skill Cues

- Low dribble — fingertips
 - Eyes up on the dribble
 - Set your feet — follow-through
 - Step into the pass
 - Aim high off the glass
 - Quick jab step
 - Land soft — hold your finish
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Volleyball Skill Cues

- Base stance — ready platform
 - Angle your platform
 - Move your feet — don't reach
 - Beat the ball to the spot
 - Diamond hands — soft lift
 - Toss first — eyes on ball
 - Call it early
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Soccer Skill Cues

- Small touches — stay close
- Soft first touch
- Inside of the foot — accuracy first
- Open your hips
- Quick touches — light feet
- Plant foot beside ball

- Move to support
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Ultimate Frisbee Skill Cues

- Step into the throw
 - Flat release — controlled flick
 - Two hands when possible
 - Strong pivot — stay balanced
 - Fake with your body
 - Cut with purpose — sharp first step
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Baseball / Softball Skill Cues

- Step — point — throw
 - Glove low — body behind ball
 - Two-hand secure
 - Hands back — eyes on ball
 - Smooth swing — head still
 - Explode out — lean forward
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Positive Coaching Tone Options

- One strong rep at a time
 - Quality over speed
 - Try that again — smoother
 - You've got the right idea
 - Build control before power
 - Focus and breathe
 - Say your cue before you move
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Why It Works

Engagement

Sideline Signal-Callers puts students in a meaningful coaching role that feels empowering, authentic, and fun. Drawing cards adds surprise and gamification, while calling cues in real-time gives students a sense of responsibility and involvement in the

practice environment. Instead of passively going through drills, students lean in — watching movement closely, anticipating opportunities, and feeling like part of a real training staff. The result: heightened focus, sustained effort, and a classroom culture buzzing with positive energy and purposeful talk.

✓ Literacy

This tool develops technical language and verbal precision without ever leaving the gym floor. Calling cues forces students to choose meaningful words, deliver them with timing, and communicate tone in a supportive way. They learn to speak like coaches — concise, confident, and constructive. This mirrors the real communication demands of sport performance, athletic instruction, and your commentary assessments. Students sharpen vocabulary, command phrasing, and real-time narration skills — all while breaking a sweat.

✓ PE-Friendly

No instructional time is lost — students practice literacy **inside the movement**, not instead of it. Signal calling layers onto drills, warm-ups, stations, and scrimmage reps without slowing down physical engagement. The cards require zero setup, minimal prep, and no lengthy explanations. You get more coaching behaviors, more awareness, and more intention — but the gym still moves like a gym.

✓ Culture Builder

This tool democratizes leadership. Instead of only the loudest or most skilled students directing peers, every learner gets a structured way to communicate and contribute. Quiet students gain confidence through purposeful voice. Developing athletes get vocabulary to match their effort. Advanced players refine their instruction ability. The tone becomes growth-oriented and collaborative — students don't just play next to each other; they **coach with each other**.

✓ Authenticity & Ownership (Bonus)

This feels like real sport — calling cues at the right moment, supporting teammates, and sounding like athletes they see on broadcasts, sidelines, and social clips. Students take pride in using authentic language and demonstrating real tactical awareness. They're not parroting vocabulary — they're applying it in real time.

✓ Equity & Psychological Safety (Bonus)

Because communication is structured, brief, and positive, every student has an entry point. Players who might avoid speaking in front of a group now have a low-pressure platform to use their voice. The emphasis on support, not critique, ensures a climate where feedback is empowering, not intimidating — building confidence and belonging alongside skill.

IMPLEMENTATION TOOL: Coach's Ear

Overview

Coach's Ear transforms students into real-time micro-coaches who quietly support a partner during drills or modified gameplay. Instead of shouting or over-directing, the "coach" offers **whispered cues, reminders, or feedback moments** — just like assistant coaches and captains in real competition settings.

The goal is to build **timing, clarity, confidence, and positive communication**, all while reinforcing core movement skills and game habits. Students practice noticing technique, encouraging peers, and giving short, useful cues that help improve execution.

This tool works in **basketball, volleyball, soccer, ultimate frisbee, baseball/softball, and fitness settings**.

How It Works

1. Pair students: one player, one whisper-coach.
 2. During drills or scrimmage, the whisper-coach gives **4–6 short cues** total — only when it makes sense.
 3. Feedback must stay **positive, specific, and actionable**.
 4. Switch roles halfway through class or by drill segment.
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Cue Examples (Multi-Sport)

- "Eyes up — see your target."
 - "Set your base before moving."
 - "Nice effort — reset your stance."
 - "Soft hands — control first."
 - "Breathe and reset."
 - "Quick feet — stay balanced."
 - "Step into your pass/throw."
 - "Great idea — try again slower this time."
 - "Stay ready — be first to react."
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Tone Starters

- “Look for _____.”
 - “Try _____ next rep.”
 - “Great _____ — keep doing that.”
 - “Your best cue right now is _____.”
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Why It Works

✓ Engagement

Coach’s Ear gives students a meaningful sideline identity. Whisper-coaching feels authentic — like being part of a real staff or team leadership group. Students enjoy supporting teammates, reading the flow of practice, and feeling trusted with responsibility. The low-volume format lowers social pressure while raising focus, creating strong buy-in and presence.

✓ Literacy

Students practice **concise, encouraging, technique-based language** — exactly how coaches communicate. They must think, “What matters right now, and how do I say it quickly so it helps?” This builds clarity, instruction language, tone control, and vocabulary naturally within movement. It’s oral literacy grounded in performance and timing.

✓ PE-Friendly

This tool layers into activity, not on top of it. Nobody stops moving. Nobody pulls out of play. Coaches stay active mentally; players stay active physically. It requires no equipment, minimal setup, and keeps class flowing while increasing quality reps and focus.

✓ Culture Builder

Students learn that feedback is normal, welcome, and supportive — not judgmental. The gym shifts from “everyone for themselves” to “we make each other better.” Whisper feedback helps quieter students practice leadership, and builds trust, empathy, and shared accountability.

✓ Authenticity & Ownership (Bonus)

This mirrors real environments — sideline assistants, captains whispering to teammates before free throws, catchers talking to pitchers, setters guiding hitters, defenders repositioning teammates. Students feel like insiders, not participants in a school exercise.

✓ Equity & Psychological Safety (Bonus)

Quiet voices matter here. Students who typically avoid speaking in sports settings find a

safe leadership lane. Feedback is supportive by design, building confidence and belonging. Everyone has a voice — and every voice improves the team.

✔ IMPLEMENTATION TOOL: Good Call / Tough Call

Overview

In Good Call / Tough Call, students watch gameplay and track **smart decisions** and **challenging decisions** using neutral language. Rather than focusing on mistakes or outcomes (“we scored,” “we missed”), students learn to notice and describe **decision-making, timing, spacing, technique, and strategy choices**.

This builds game IQ and reflection skills in **basketball, volleyball, soccer, ultimate, baseball/softball**, and other team-based settings.

How It Works

1. Assign a small group or rotating pair as sideline observers.
 2. Observers tally:
 - ✔ **Good Calls** — smart decisions or strong skill choices
 - ⚠ **Tough Calls** — rushed, risky, or less effective decisions
 3. After each segment (1–3 minutes), students share **one of each** using positive language and solutions.
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Student Language Frames

✔ “A smart choice was _____ because _____.”

⚠ “One tough moment was _____. Next time they could _____ instead.”

Examples Across Sports

Sport	Good Call ✔	Tough Call ⚠
Basketball	Extra pass to open teammate	Driving into traffic
Volleyball	Calling “mine” early & moving feet	Reaching with arms instead of moving feet
Soccer	Switching the ball wide	Shooting from far with no angle
Ultimate	Dump → swing reset	Forcing a throw into coverage
Baseball/Softball	Hitting cut-off player	Throwing home when no play available

Why It Works

✓ Engagement

Students get excited to play the role of analysts and decision-spotters. Instead of drifting on the sideline, they stay invested, watching for key moments and rooting for smart choices. It feels like doing what sports commentators and teammates actually do, not sitting out.

✓ Literacy

This task builds **cause-and-effect language, justification, vocabulary, and reflection phrasing**. Students must describe moments accurately and fairly, offering constructive next steps. This mirrors coaching talk, film-room dialogue, and color commentary language — authentic communication, not school jargon.

✓ PE-Friendly

No stoppages, no worksheets, no equipment — just clipboards or tallies and active observing. Students rotate in and out quickly, staying physically and mentally engaged. Scrimmages retain flow and speed, and the activity lifts the cognitive rigor without losing game energy.

✓ Culture Builder

Students learn to value smart decisions over hero plays. Feedback becomes neutral, supportive, and solution-oriented, reducing fear of errors and increasing confidence to try new skills. The gym becomes a place where learning and trying are celebrated, not perfection.

✓ Authenticity & Ownership (Bonus)

This mimics real sideline analysis: players breaking down rallies in volleyball, catchers reviewing pitch calls, defenders reading shape in soccer, handlers analyzing cuts in ultimate. Students feel like real thinkers in sport — not just performers.

✓ Equity & Representation (Bonus)

Game IQ gets celebrated alongside physical skill. Students who may not be the fastest or strongest still shine by recognizing smart play. Everyone has meaningful contribution lanes — thinkers, talkers, movers, strategists — and every perspective matters.

IMPLEMENTATION TOOL: The Announcer Effect

Overview

The Announcer Effect invites students to experience a sports moment in two different ways: first through the action alone, and then through the action paired with professional commentary. By watching the same play both silently and with the announcer's narration, students begin to see how language shapes the way we experience sports.

Students quickly realize that the commentator isn't just describing what happened — they are guiding the audience's attention, adding context, highlighting key decisions, and turning a simple play into a story. This realization helps students understand how communication, interpretation, and observation work together in sports.

The activity works well as a quick literacy moment during warm-ups, cooldowns, or transitions. It can also serve as a powerful entry point into your **Courtside Commentary** assessment.

How It Works

1. Select a short, high-interest sports clip (15–45 seconds works best).
2. Prepare two versions of the clip:
 - Version A: video only (no sound)
 - Version B: full broadcast version with commentary.
3. Play Version A first so students focus only on the physical action.
4. After a brief pause for observation, play Version B so students hear the announcer's reaction and explanation.
5. Ask students to compare the two experiences and reflect on how the commentary influenced the moment.

Students can respond through quick-writes, partner discussion, exit slips, or small-group conversation depending on grade level and class structure.

Student Prompts

Encourage students to think about how the announcer's words shaped their understanding of the play.

Examples include:

- “How did the commentary affect the moment? What did the announcer say that supports your thinking?”
- “What did you notice the second time that you didn’t notice the first time?”
- “How did the announcer change the way you understood the play?”
- “What words or phrases made the moment feel bigger, clearer, or more exciting?”
- “What did the commentary help you notice that you might have missed without it?”

Elementary classes can use sentence frames such as:

“The announcer made the play feel _____ because they said _____.”

Why It Works

✓ Engagement

Students immediately notice the contrast between the silent version of the play and the narrated version. That difference sparks curiosity and discussion because the moment genuinely feels different the second time. Even students who may not be passionate sports fans become interested because the activity focuses on perception, storytelling, and interpretation rather than just the sport itself. The comparison encourages students to look closer, listen more carefully, and actively think about what they are watching.

✓ Literacy

This activity provides an authentic opportunity for students to practice important literacy skills that often challenge them in traditional classroom settings. Students must listen carefully, interpret language, and explain how specific words or phrases influenced their understanding of the moment. In doing so, they practice citing evidence, explaining cause-and-effect relationships, and supporting their ideas with details from the commentary. Because the task is rooted in a real sports moment, the literacy work feels purposeful and meaningful.

✓ PE-Friendly

The Announcer Effect is short, flexible, and easy to integrate into the rhythm of a PE class. It can be used during warm-ups, transitions, or cooldowns without significantly reducing movement time. The setup is simple, the instructions are clear, and the discussion that follows often leads to deeper observation during gameplay. Rather than pulling students away from activity, the tool enhances how they watch, understand, and talk about sports.

✔ **Culture Builder**

Over time, students begin to see sports communication differently. They become more aware of how announcers highlight strategy, explain decisions, and shape the story of a game. This awareness naturally prepares them to think more like analysts and commentators themselves. When students later participate in activities like **Courtside Commentary**, they already understand that describing sports is about helping others see why the moment mattered.

✔ **Elementary Entry Point (Bonus)**

For elementary physical education teachers who may not have time for a full commentary assessment, The Announcer Effect can stand alone as a powerful literacy activity. The comparison between silent and narrated video is easy to understand, requires minimal writing, and still provides meaningful opportunities for students to observe, discuss, and reflect on sports moments.