Game On:

Sport Participation as a Vehicle for Positive Development for Youth Facing Barriers

by Corliss Bean & Sara Kramers

YOUTHREX
Research &
Evaluation eXchange

MLSE LAUNCHPAD

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ABSTRACT

Sport is the most popular extra-curricular activity for youth across Canada and has been identified as an important environment to foster psychosocial development in youth. It is particularly important for youth who face multiple barriers and vulnerabilities, as identified in *Stepping Up: A Strategic Framework to Help Ontario's Youth Succeed* by the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services. This Research to Practice report summarizes the current state of research on youth development within community-based sport and/or physical activity programs for youth, both theoretically and empirically. Moreover, we identify strategies and best practices for fostering youth development within community-based sport and/or physical activity contexts. Finally, we provide recommendations for community-based youth sport programmers to incorporate positive youth development (PYD) frameworks, approaches, and strategies into their programs. This report provides information for youth sport programmers and practitioners, particularly those working with youth facing barriers, on how to deepen the impact of sport programs by intentionally structuring these programs to support psychosocial development.

KEYWORDS

youth sport; physical activity; community-based; program evaluation; positive youth development; life skills

RESEARCH TO PRACTICE REPORTS

Moving the Dial on Youth Wellbeing is a series of multi-source plain language Research to Practice reports that selectively review, synthesize and translate practice-relevant research, evaluation and experiential evidence applicable to the work of youth sector stakeholders across Ontario.

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FOREWORD

The anthem plays, the whistle blows, the clock starts, and it's game time! Sport participation is energizing and engaging, but it is more than fun and games.

As this report highlights, sport has the potential added benefit of providing a vehicle for positive youth development. After a long day in a classroom with little to no activity, it is not surprising that sport is the most popular afterschool activity. Afterschool sport programs can be competitive or recreational; both have the potential to do more than get bodies moving and adrenaline flowing. They can also support the holistic development of youth in areas related to self-esteem, leadership and basic life skills, and 21st century skills. It's not just how you play the game that matters, but as you will learn in this report, how the game is structured and supported.

At MLSE LaunchPad, we provide sport-based learning and development opportunities to youth facing barriers to participation. Although sport holds promise and potential for youth development, we recognize that many youth are unable to access these opportunities for a variety of reasons. The most common barrier to participation is poverty. The recent *Toronto Child and Family Poverty Report Card* (2016) found that "48 percent of children in families with an income below $30,000 do not participate regularly in out-of-school sports and arts activities" (p. 14). The cost of participation can be a barrier but, as this report identifies, there are other barriers to consider such as: "accessibility, transportation, and perceived safety concerns; parental/guardian support and commitment; and cultural barriers related to knowledge, access, and language" (Downward, 2007; Gould & Carson, 2008; Holt et al., 2011; Lauer et al., 2006; Wicker, Hallmann, & Breuer, 2012).

Therefore, when we design our programs at MLSE LaunchPad, we take care to consider how we are creating opportunities that are not only accessible, but also support positive youth development. MLSE LaunchPad adopts an integrated service model which means that we build connections and resources between four core programming areas: Healthy Body, Healthy Mind, Ready for School and Ready for Work.

We are deeply concerned that "youth today will not be healthier than their parents with less than 10% of Ontario's young people getting the recommended hour of daily physical activity". Through our programs, we intend to play a role in reversing this trend. In our model, we understand the interconnectedness of physical and mental health, as well as the critical importance of social and economic inclusion. MLSE LaunchPad works to create conditions that support healthy and active citizenship across a lifetime.

'Game On: Sport Participation as a Vehicle for Positive Development for Youth Facing Barriers' makes an important contribution not only to our work, but to that of our fellow youth sport programmers and researchers, by reviewing and describing evidence-based strategies and examples of fostering life skills, positive development, and wellbeing through youth sport.

Let's get moving!

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Director of Measurement and Evaluation
MLSE LaunchPad

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"A community where youth have space, support and freedom to play tends to be one with less crime and more post-secondary graduates."

1 Play Works, 2016, p. 2.

01 // INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE CONTEXT

Every year, youth development programs serve millions of youth across North America,[2] reportedly engaging 86 percent of youth in Canada.

Within these programs, sport is considered the most popular extra-curricular activity for youth across Canada.[5] However, youth from lower income households tend to participate in sport less than those from higher income households.[4]

Additionally, a recent report revealed that very few (only nine percent) of Canadian youth aged five to 17 are meeting the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines, which recommends 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity per day.[5] The after-school period has been identified as an important time to increase physical activity,[6] as youth tend to be inactive approximately 60 percent of the time between 3 and 6 p.m., attaining only 14 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity in this three-hour period.[7]

The infographic on page 9 outlines the breakdown of youth across Canada and Ontario who are physically inactive by age group, gender, and ethnicity. As outlined in the infographic, those who are most at risk for inactivity include youth who are older, female, and non-White.

The Government of Ontario has identified opportunities for developing youth physical health as an area of concern and investment. For example, initiative it offers is called **Ontario's After-School Program**. This initiative provides funding to help sport and recreation organizations deliver quality programs for children and youth in priority neighbourhoods across the province.[8] The initiative provides funding to support after-school programs that offer activities in three core areas: physical activity, healthy eating, and health and wellness. These programs are often run between 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. and aim to help children and youth get active, develop

healthy eating habits, gain confidence and do better in school, all of which helps to decrease childhood obesity and youth violence. Additionally, the Ontario Government offers the Children's Fitness Tax Credit that launched in 2006. This credit allows families to claim eligible fees paid for registration or membership in a prescribed program of physical activity (including sport), up to a maximum of $1,000 per child.

As youth-serving organizations and programs consistently offer the most out-of-school time youth development programs,[9] they are an important avenue to address high sedentary and inactivity levels among youth. Arundell and colleagues (2015) argue, "interventions should target reducing after-school sedentary behaviour and increases in physical activity during the after-school period as the behaviours performed during this period make a large contribution to daily levels and to achieving the associated guidelines" (p. 8-9). Small changes to youth's behaviours during the after-school period can have a large impact on their physical activity and sedentary levels.

Because youth physical and psychosocial development are both important, the question then becomes, can sport and physical activity programs foster both developmental outcomes for youth?

Research demonstrates that sport and physical activity not only supports physical fitness outcomes, but can also serve as a vehicle to facilitate psychosocial outcomes and wellbeing for youth.[10] Specifically, sport and physical activity has the potential to yield both physical and psychosocial benefits. [11]

Sport contexts inherently involve physical exertion and competency development, but also relationship-building, effective communication, and perseverance; recent research

[2] Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Mahoney, Larson, Eccles, & Lord, 2005; National Collaboration for Youth, 2011

[3] Guèvremont, Findlay, & Kohen, 2008

[4] Clark, 2014

[5] Canadian Health Measures Survey, 2013

[6] Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2011; Arundell, Hinkley, Veitch, & Salmon, 2015

[7] Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2011

[8] Government of Ontario's Ministry of Tourism, 2016

[9] Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, 2008; The Bridgespan Group, 2005

[10] Damon, 2004; Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner, 2005;

[11] Gould & Carson, 2008; Holt & Jones, 2008

1.1 Understanding the Terminology

Positive Youth Development (PYD)
An intentional and proactive approach to youth development that is facilitated by engaging both external assets (e.g., schools, families, extra-curricular programs) and internal assets (e.g., cognitive, social, physical, emotional) that holistically support young people to develop relationships, skills and experiences and enable them to become successful and contributing members of their society.[12]

Life Skills
"Skills that enable individuals to succeed in the different environments in which they live, such as school, home, and in their neighborhoods".[13] These skills can be physical, behavioural, or cognitive and can also be considered interpersonal (e.g., sportspersonship, honesty, teamwork, respect) or intrapersonal (e.g., focus, perseverance, goal setting, emotional regulation).[14]

Youth Sport
A competitive activity containing specific physical skills and physical exertion involving young people between 12 to 25 years of age which, unlike physical activity, occurs within an institutionalized setting that tends to be adult organized and/or supervised.[15]

Physical Activity
Any movement of the body that results in energy expenditure above that of resting level.[16]

has found that youth are more likely to foster developmental outcomes through engagement in sport and physical activity compared to other extra-curricular activities.[17] Additionally, participation in sport not only helps to foster positive developmental outcomes, but can also diminish negative behaviours.[18]

How youth develop physical and sport skills within these contexts is quite similar to how life skills are developed: through demonstration, modeling and practice.[19] However, the same opportunities to engage in sport and physical activity are not afforded to all youth.

Consistently, youth with the lowest levels of sport participation are those who face barriers related to poverty.[20, 21] For example, according to the *Toronto Child and Family Poverty Report Card* (2016) "48 percent of children in families with an income below $30,000 do not participate regularly in out-of-school sports and arts activities" (p. 14). Moreover, 82 percent of Canadians know a child who cannot participate in organized sports due to the cost. [22] Statistics Canada (2014) identified that in 2013, the average Canadian family with children spent $778 on sports and recreation equipment, services, and fees. These financial barriers create challenges for youth to develop both physical and psychosocial skills, and participate in safe and supportive sport environments where they can grow as individuals. This issue has become so problematic that Canada Parks and Recreation has developed an initiative called "**Everybody gets to play™**". This program aims to eliminate barriers to recreational participation specifically for low-income families.[23]

Economic challenges are not the only barriers youth experience related to sport participation. Additional barriers that restrict opportunities to participate in organized sport programs [24] include: environmental barriers, including accessibility, transportation, and perceived safety concerns; parental/

[12] Damon, 2004; Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner, 2005; Weiss & Wiese-Bjornstal, 2009

[13] Danish, Forneris, Hodge, & Heke, 2004, p. 40

[14] Danish et al., 2004; Papacharisis, Goudas, Danish, & Theodorakis, 2005

[15] Coakley & Donnelly, 2009; Duda & Ntoumanis, 2005

[16] Caspersen, Powell, & Christenson, 1985

[17] Bean & Forneris, 2016b; Forneris, Camiré, & Williamson, 2015; Jones, Edwards, Bocarro, Bunds, & Smith, 2016; Zarrett et al., 2008

[18] Samek, Elkins, Keyes, Iacono, & McGue, 2015

[19] Gould & Carson, 2008

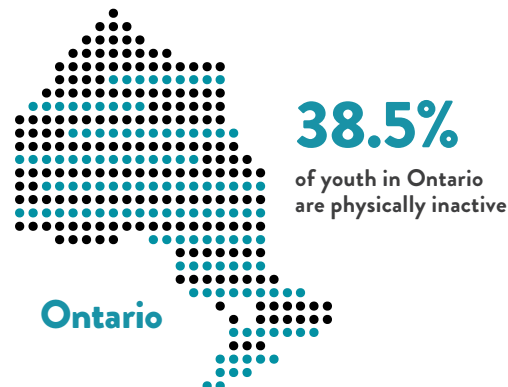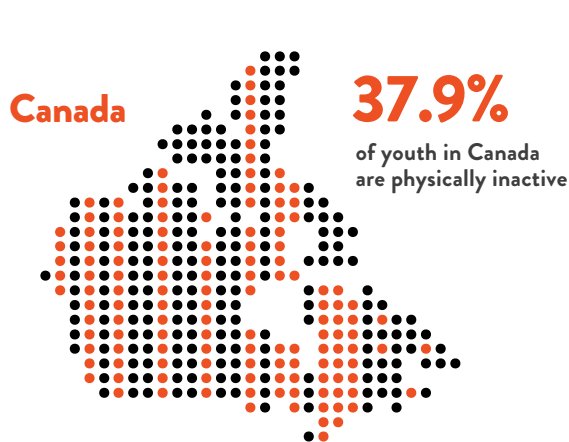[20] Poverty often intersects with other barriers including: race, disability, involvement with the criminal justice system, geographic location, immigrant status, gender and sexuality, and involvement with the child welfare system. Click here for more information.

[21] Gray et al., 2014; Polanyi, Mustachi, Kerr, & Meagher, 2016

[22] KidSport, 2014

[23] Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, 2016

Youth across Canada and Ontario who are physically inactive by age group, gender, and ethnicity

Canada

37.9%
of youth in Canada are physically inactive

Ontario

38.5%
of youth in Ontario are physically inactive

AGE

15-19 years	32.1%
20-24 years	42.1%
25-29 years	40.5%

GENDER

Female	45.1%
Male	32.1%

RACE

White	36.4%
Non-white	42.3%
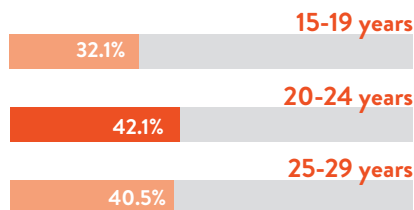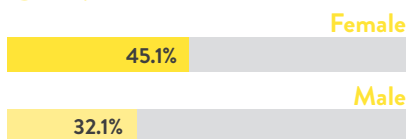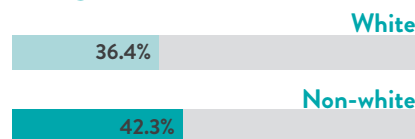
Source: 2014 Canadian Community Health Survey - Annual Component

guardian support and commitment; and cultural barriers related to knowledge, access, and language.[25]

When youth are not involved in sport or physical activity, it may increase sedentary (e.g., watching television, playing video games)[26] and risk-taking behaviours (e.g., drinking, drug use, violence).[27] Inclusive sport activities provide youth, who are considered socially vulnerable, with a nurturing and safe environment for participation.[28] Therefore, providing youth who face barriers to access with a positive alternative environment can potentially reduce these behaviours and help youth develop physical and psychosocial skills, values, and assets.[29]

[24] Holt, Kingsley, Tink, & Scherer, 2011

[25] Downward, 2007; Gould & Carson, 2008; Holt et al., 2011; Lauer et al., 2006; Wicker, Hallmann, & Breuer, 2012

[26] Fairclough et al., 2009

[27] Botvin, 2004; Coakley, 2011; Damon, 2004

[28] Hermens, Super, Verkooijen, & Koelen, 2015

[29] Coakley, 2011; Gould & Carson, 2008

1.2 PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

The purpose of this report is to present existing best practices within community-based youth sport and physical programming, so that grassroots youth programmers and practitioners can design and deliver deliberately structured sport-based programming that supports the positive development of youth participants. This report:

- Provides an understanding of frameworks and best practices that can be used to structure these program environments so that youth can develop skills, which will ultimately help facilitate opportunities for wellbeing; and

- Offers strategies for youth sport programmers to learn how to best structure community-based sport contexts to support youth psychosocial wellbeing.

With high participation rates in community-based youth sport and physical activity programming, there is a need to understand best practices[30] for facilitating these programs in order to support positive youth development (PYD) outcomes. Mere participation in youth programming, and more specifically within youth sport and physical activity programming, does not necessarily mean that positive developmental outcomes will occur for youth. Therefore, it is critical to understand what program features contribute to the positive development of youth participants.[31] This report focuses on how such programs can be structured to ensure that youth who are facing barriers to participation can access quality community-based youth sport and physical activity programming that will support their development. The report provides program staff working in community-based and/or after-school youth sport or physical activity programs with research-informed strategies and best practices to foster an environment that supports positive psychosocial outcomes for youth participants. It focuses on non-competitive, community-based youth sport and physical activity programming (hereafter referred to as 'sport programming' for simplicity).

This report reviews the following:

- The current state of research on supporting the development of youth facing barriers within community-based programs, with a focus on sport and/or physical activity, both theoretically and empirically;

- The strategies and best practices outlined in the literature that foster development within community-based sport and/or physical activity initiatives for youth facing barriers; and

- Recommendations for programmers and frontline youth workers who are involved in sport and physical activity-based youth programming for youth facing barriers.

From the current best practices within the literature, this report works to "move the dial" by providing valuable information for program staff on how to best structure youth sport and physical activity programming to support PYD outcomes, specifically for youth facing barriers to participation. This report also helps to address calls in the literature for greater understanding of the processes that contribute to the psychosocial development of youth within sport.[32]

1.3 WHO IS THIS REPORT FOR?

This report is relevant for youth program stakeholders who are responsible for designing, developing, and/or delivering sport programming within the grassroots youth sector. There is useful information for those that are specifically interested in utilizing a PYD approach within their program. Additionally, stakeholders who are responsible for hiring and training program staff who work on the frontline of community-based sport, recreation, and/or physical activity programs can benefit from the information outlined in this report, which explains the important role frontline staff can play in facilitating youth development.

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[30] A best practice is defined by the Public Health Agency of Canada's Canadian Best Practices Portal as an intervention, program, service, or strategy that has, through multiple implementations, demonstrated: high impact, high adaptability, and high quality of evidence. A best practice is one that is most suitable given the available evidence and particular situation or context.

[31] Holt & Neely, 2011

[32] Holt, Deal, & Smyth, 2016; Holt & Jones, 2008

1.4 METHODS

The literature synthesized in this report draws on an array of sources. These sources include academic, peer-reviewed journal articles, books and book chapters, and grey literature and open sourced articles, which includes policy documents, reports, and case examples. Three search databases were used, including York University and University of Ottawa library databases (e.g., PsychINFO, PubMED, Social Work journals, Education Resource Information Centre), as well as Google, including Google Scholar. The following search terms were used when navigating through the databases: positive youth development; youth sport; physical activity; program quality; life skills; community-based, deliberate; intentional; evaluation; physical activity; low-income; barriers; low socio-economic status; Ontario; Canada(ian); at-risk

It should be noted that priority was given to recent studies (those published within the last five to ten years), though this report does include seminal papers that were published outside of the past ten years, due to the continued and significant presence of these papers in the literature. Extra weight was also given to studies that were conducted in a Canadian context (empirically and theoretically) and those that took place in an after-school setting. Additionally, extra weight was given to studies that also utilized multiple research methods, included youth-voice, and are applicable to grassroots and community-based groups. Finally, research was omitted if it focused solely on competitive, professional, intercollegiate, and elite (youth) sport programming.

1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THIS REPORT

This report is organized into three main sections. First, we review a PYD approach to youth work and outline how this framework can be usefully adopted in the context of community-based sport and physical activity programming. We then summarize current literature on youth outcomes associated with participation in community-based sport programs that adopt a PYD approach. Third, we review identified best practices within the field of youth sport in order to understand how youth workers can best structure community-based programs to support PYD outcomes. Finally, we provide recommendations on how these best practices can be applied. These strategies can be adapted across individual, organizational, and community levels. This Research to Practice report focuses on exploring what PYD outcomes are associated with participation in community-based youth sport and physical activity programs, as well as understanding how frontline youth workers can structure this context to best foster PYD outcomes for youth facing barriers to participation.

02 // WHAT ARE THE ISSUES? A CRITICAL REVIEW

Within this section, we review the current state of research on supporting the development of youth facing barriers within community-based programs with a focus on sport and/or physical activity, both theoretically and empirically.

Secondly, we review the strategies and best practices outlined in the literature that foster youth development within community-based sport and/or physical activity contexts for youth facing barriers.

2.1 POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT WITHIN SPORT

The positive youth development (PYD) framework is a strength-based approach that aims to provide all youth with the necessary assets, strengths, and skills that will aid in their present and future successes in adolescence and adulthood.[33] A critical shift within Positive Psychology facilitated the movement from a "deficit-reduction" approach to a positive strength-based and community-driven approach.[34] This shift enabled youth to be viewed as 'resources to be developed' instead of as 'problems to be solved'.[35]

When youth are not provided with opportunities to achieve optimal development they may fail to reach adulthood as healthy, resilient, socially responsible, and contributing individuals.[36] A PYD approach aids in the holistic development of all youth by building on existing cognitive, social, or academic competencies.[37] Specifically, the PYD framework is an intentional and proactive approach to provide opportunities for youth to develop personal skills or assets, including cognitive, social, physical and emotional skills, that are necessary to become successful and contributing members of their society.[38] This framework can

be facilitated by external assets within one's community, such as through schools, families, and youth-serving organizations. These skills and assets are strengthened within PYD-based youth programming through the development of various life skills. Life skills are defined as behavioural and cognitive skills that enable individuals to succeed in different life domains.[39]

Over the past few decades, youth programs have begun to purposefully and proactively incorporate a PYD approach into program models with the goal of yielding positive psychosocial outcomes.[40] The PYD framework also informs *Stepping Up*, the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services' strategic framework for helping youth to succeed,[41] the work of the Youth Research and Evaluation eXchange (YouthREX) and many other youth policies in regional, municipal, and organizational contexts.

Research has demonstrated that programs using a PYD framework are important for enhancing youth development.[42] Utilizing a PYD framework within the contexts of sport and physical activity combines the opportunity for both physical and psychosocial developmental outcomes associated with participation.[43] Fundamental movement skills, such as agility, balance, and coordination are considered to be the building blocks for lifelong physical activity.[44]

As these fundamental skills are developed, more complex physical skills can be refined and provide youth with the physical capabilities to participate in various sports and activities (e.g., run, jump, swim, skate, throw, dribble, skip, and catch). Psychosocial skills can be classified as either intrapersonal or interpersonal.[45] Intrapersonal skills, such as learning how to focus or manage one's emotions, are considered to be internal in nature, whereas interpersonal

[33] Damon, 2004

[34] Catalano, Hawkins, Berglund, Pollard, & Arthur, 2002; Lerner, Almerigi, et al., 2005; Snyder & Lopez, 2002

[35] Lerner, Brown, & Kier, 2005

[36] Public Health Agency of Canada, 2011

[37] Snyder & Lopez, 2002

[38] Damon, 2004; Weiss & Wiese-Bjornstal, 2009

[39] Danish et al., 2004

[40] Holt & Jones, 2008; Petitpas et al., 2005

[41] Ontario Ministry of Child & Youth Services, 2014

[42] Education Alliance, 2007; NRCIM, 2002

[43] Danish et al., 2004

[44] Lubans, Morgan, Cliff, Barnett, & Okely, 2010

[45] Danish et al., 2004

Providing sport programming that adopts a PYD framework helps youth to meet their daily physical activity guidelines and fosters the psychosocial skills that will prepare and support them to navigate and transition into adulthood.

skills, such as the ability to work with a team, are useful during social interactions. Providing sport programming that adopts a PYD framework helps youth to meet their daily physical activity guidelines, and fosters the psychosocial skills that will prepare and support them to navigate and transition into adulthood.

The youth sport context has been identified as an optimal environment that can aid in fostering numerous life skills. Extensive research studies have outlined the development of fitness, physical activity, and/or sport skills and associated competence related to these skills.[46] Moreover, various researchers have identified a number of intrapersonal skills that have accrued from sport participation, including fostering confidence[47]; effort, perseverance, and self-regulation[48]; initiative[49]; problem solving skills[50]; and respect.[51] Lastly, the sport context has been identified as an avenue for youth to develop interpersonal skills surrounding improved social relationships and skills.[52] For example, youth participants have identified the development of friendships,[53] communication[54] and leadership.[55] In order to foster such skills, many researchers advocate for the use of a particular program structure or framework that can act as a catalyst for life skill development within the sport context.[56]

2.2 FRAMEWORKS IN YOUTH SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROGRAMS THAT SUPPORT PYD

Within academic literature, there have been recent calls for a deeper examination of best practices within youth programming.[57] Over the past few years, researchers have asserted that sport and physical activity programs for youth must be deliberately structured to foster positive psychosocial development.[58] One way to facilitate PYD outcomes is to adopt an intentional program structure. The following section outlines some of the most popular

frameworks and models that have been utilized within youth programming, and specifically within sport programming. All of these program structures have been successfully implemented within a grassroots youth sport and/or physical activity context.

A. Eight Program Setting Features
Eccles and Gootman (2002) outlined eight program setting features, which when present, have been proposed to be useful within all youth programming to foster positive developmental outcomes. These features are:

1. Physical and psychological safety;
2. Appropriate structure;
3. Supportive relationships;
4. Opportunities to belong;
5. Positive social norms;
6. Support for efficacy and mattering;
7. Opportunities for skill building;
8. Integration of family, school, and community efforts.

Current research demonstrates how incorporating these setting features into sport programming can provide an optimal environment for positive psychosocial development outcomes (see Table 1 for further details on the eight setting features). As these features have become more popular in both the applied and academic fields, youth sport researchers have advocated for using them in youth sport programming.[59] Specifically, the authors' advocate for prioritizing the physical and psychological safety of youth athletes over performance and success, and for respectful peer interactions within sport to help ensure enjoyment and build confidence.

Within Ontario, HIGH FIVE® (Ontario Parks and Recreation) has adopted various components of the eight setting features into their national initiative to educate

[46] Barker, Halsall, Forneris, & Fortier, 2016; Bean, Kendellen, & Forneris, 2015; Holt et al., 2013; Neely & Holt, 2014

[47] Armour & Sandford, 2013; Bean et al., 2015

[48] Barker et al., 2016; Armour & Sandford, 2013; Bruening et al., 2009; Harrist & Witt, 2012

[49] Bean & Forneris, 2013

[50] Goudas & Giannoudis, 2010; Newin et al., 2008

[51] Harrist & Witt, 2014; Holt et al., 2008; Vella et al., 2011; Walsh et al., 2010

[52] Holt et al., 2017

[53] Bean et al., 2014

[54] Riley & Anderson-Butcher, 2012; Camiré, Trudel, & Forneris, 2009

[55] Armour & Sandford, 2013; Bean et al., 2014; Harwood, 2008; Riley & Anderson-Butcher, 2012

[56] Hellison, 2011; Petitpas et al., 2005

[57] Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2015

[58] Bean & Forneris, 2016b; Gould & Carson, 2008

[59] Côté, Strachan, & Fraser-Thomas, 2008

Table 1. Program Setting Features Proposed to Foster Youth Development

Program Setting Feature	Description
Physical and Psychological Safety	An environment that allows youth to feel free from being physically harmed, accepted, and respected
Appropriate Structure	Clear and consistent rules and expectations, including behavioral guidelines and age-appropriate monitoring
Supportive Relationships	The presence of adults and peers who demonstrate concern and support for youth
Opportunities to Belong	Providing experiences that allow youth to develop a sense of belonging; feelings of value as an individual and part of a group
Positive Social Norms	Fostering clear, healthy, ethical standards, beliefs, and behavior guidelines that promote prosocial behavior and minimize health risks
Support for Efficacy and Mattering	Providing opportunities for youth to develop leadership, efficacy, autonomy, mattering, and responsibility
Opportunities for Skill-Building	Opportunities for youth to develop physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional, and social skills that will prepare them for the future
Integration of Family, School, and Community Efforts	Incorporating family, school, and community to increase opportunities for synergy and positive relationships

Source: Adapted from *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development* by the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2002, Washington, DC: National Academy Press

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youth programmers on the skills necessary to ensure high quality programming for youth. Specifically, HIGH FIVE® includes the following core principles in regards to PYD-based programming: (1) caring adults (supportive quality relationships); (2) opportunities to play (fun, creativity, cooperation); (3) making friends (inclusion, acceptance, prosocial skills); (4) mastery of skill (success); and (5) participation (autonomy, self-expression).[60]

B. Framework For Planning Youth Sport Programs.
Petitpas and colleagues (2005) developed a framework for planning youth sport programs that promote psychosocial development in youth participants. This framework is made up of four major components:

1. **Context** refers to the environment of the program, being that it is a psychologically and physically safe environment. Activities within the program are to be intrinsically motivating, are to help with determining valued roles for participants, and are to be voluntary in nature. There are to be clear rules, goals, and incentives over a consistent time period for fostering positive development of the participants.

2. **External assets** refers to the opportunity for developing close relationships with programmers and associated adults, as well as the opportunity for parental monitoring and community service engagements.

3. **Internal assets** refers to the participant's personal development, through the practice of goal-setting and problem solving within social interactions. The participants are to have opportunities for planning for their future as well as developing a sense of identity

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[60] Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2016; HIGH FIVE®, 2016

within and outside of the program. Overall, confidence is to be developed in one's abilities to transfer and successfully use the learned life skills outside of sport.

4. **Research and evaluation** refers to standardized evaluations that can longitudinally assess program outcomes, processes, and implementation.

C. Teaching Personal Social Responsibility (TPSR) Model.
The Teaching Personal Social Responsibility Model [61] was developed from after-school sport and physical education programs that were incorporated in schools for youth facing barriers. There are four themes within the model: [62]

1. Integration emphasizes that reaching life skills and values must be integrated within physical activities;

2. Transfer refers to the notion that lessons learned in the program must be taught in a way that participants' understand how the learned skills can transfer outside of the program;

3. Empowerment means there must be an intentional and gradual shift of responsibility from the program leader to the participants; and

4. Staff-youth relationship refers to the notion that each participant is to be respected and recognized through their own strengths, opinions, and capacities for decision making). A strong staff-youth relationship is at the forefront of this model, as it allows for the gradual empowerment of youth and displays a youth-centered approach to the programming structure.[63]

There are five main levels of the TPSR model that staff progress through during the duration of a program. These components arose as practical guidelines for youth programming as they are shown to lead to positive outcomes for youth:[64]

1. **Personal Responsibility or Self-Control:** one's ability to control behaviour and conduct

2. **Effort:** one's ability to apply him/herself to a specific task

3. **Self-Coaching:** one's ability to utilize goal setting and planned practice to improve in a specific area

4. **Leadership:** one's ability to successfully direct a group towards an agreed upon goal

5. **Transference:** one's ability to use the skills outlined above in various contexts not within the program (e.g., school, home, community).[65]

The goal of a TPSR model is to enhance these five levels of responsibility over the course of the program. To help facilitate this process, the TPSR model uses a specific program structure, as each session of a TPSR program uses the following format that is divided into four components:

First is relational time where time is taken at the beginning of each session to check-in with the youth. Next is the awareness talk, where one of the skills outlined in the TPSR levels is discussed. As the program progresses, leaders provide opportunities and activities that allow youth to increase personal responsibility, effort, the ability to self-coach and to take on greater leadership roles.

The sport or physical activity is the next component. This is where youth engage in the specific sport or physical activity of focus in the program, or where youth are provided with choice as to what type of activities they wanted to engage in. Finally, there is a group discussion that occurs at the end of every session where staff and youth discuss the progress and challenges of the session, as well as what was learned and how the skills can be used beyond this program.

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[61] TPSR; Hellison, 1995; Hellison, 2011

[62] Hellison & Walsh, 2002

[63] Hellison, Martinek, Walsh, & Holt, 2008

[64] Hellison & Walsh, 2002; Martinek, Schilling, & Hellison, 2006; Walsh, Ozaeta, & Wright, 2010

[65] Hellison, 2011

How to Intentionally Teach a Life Skill in a Youth Sport Program*

Meet Hannah, leader of a local community youth basketball program.

Hannah decides to update the basketball program for the upcoming season to integrate life skills learning along with the existing technical and tactical basketball activities. Her first step is to select a few life skills that align with the sport of basketball. Hannah decides that teamwork, communication, goal setting, and respect are all life skills that are relevant to basketball and will be integrated into the program. She decides to only focus on one life skill per session to ensure a balance between sport and life skills, and so that youth will not feel overwhelmed.

Program Day: Integrating Life Skills with Sport Activities

The first day of the program has come and Hannah feels well-prepared. She has selected communication to be the first life skill to focus on. She introduces this concept at the beginning of the session and asks for youth input on what 'communication' means to them. Additionally, she asks the youth: "How can you communicate with your teammates within basketball? Why is this important?"

Throughout the rest of the session, Hannah uses strategies to teach the life skill of communication in a way that is integrated with the physical and basketball skills. She integrates the life skill into the program activities in two ways:

1. By incorporating communication into the specific basketball activities that she designed (e.g., passing, plays). For example, while doing the three-man weave she notices a breakdown in the drill among participants. Hannah uses this as a teachable moment and tells the youth that it is crucial that they communicate both verbally and with their body so that this drill can be successful. She discusses with the youth how this can be done.

2. By using a life skills activity to further emphasize the importance of communication. Hannah has the youth engage in the Human Knot activity, which encourages the youth to communicate and work together as a team to achieve the goal of becoming untangled.

At the end of the session, Hannah holds a short 2-5 minute debrief with the youth as a way to reflect on how they communicated effectively throughout the session and discuss with youth how communication can be applied in various contexts of life outside of basketball (e.g., school, home, with peers). Specifically, she asks the youth: "What did you learn today about the life skill of communication? Can you give some examples of how you demonstrated good communication in today's session? How can you ensure good communication at school? At home?"

Summary and Guiding Questions

1. Introduce the life skill at the beginning of the lesson
- We are working on our communication today.
- Why is communication important in basketball?
- Can anyone tell me what good communication includes?
- What would happen if you had poor communication with your teammates?

2. Integrate strategies to teach the life skill throughout the lesson
- Utilize intentional life skill activities
- Highlight teachable moments with participants

3. Debrief the life skill at the end of the lesson and discuss transfer
- Who do we communicate with outside of this program?
- Why is good communication important with teachers? Parents? Friends?
- How can improving your communication in sport help you in the classroom? At home?

D. Sports United To Promote Education And Recreation
The Sports United to Promote Education and Recreation (SUPER) program was created to teach life skills to youth through the development of 18 modules based on various life skills (e.g., goal setting, managing emotions, communication, respect, seeking help from others).[66] This program is effective as it provides practical and tangible activities that can be used when teaching various life skills within a sport or physical activity context.

Each program session that uses SUPER is broken into three activities: (1) learning the physical or sport-related skill; (2) learning about life skill related in a general context; and (3) playing the sport and/or physical activity with the life skill of focus integrated and emphasized through its engagement.

These models and frameworks were all developed with the sole purpose of providing program staff with a youth-centred program structure to foster positive psychosocial development. Despite the differences in the implementation of these models or frameworks, there are consistent similarities that cluster around the importance of providing a safe and supportive environment, providing youth with voice or empowerment, and intentionally teaching life skills. Program staff who are intentional in their approach towards life skills development provide youth with the best opportunity for learning, internalizing, and transferring such skills. The following section will dig deeper into these three main strategies to help foster psychosocial development within youth sport.

2.3 STRATEGIES FOR FOSTERING PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT WITHIN COMMUNITY-BASED YOUTH SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROGRAMMING

This section provides a series of strategies that recent academic literature has identified as playing a role in successfully fostering psychosocial development in youth who engage in sport programming, and particularly those youth facing barriers to wellbeing.

Specifically, this section outlines three main strategies that can be incorporated into sport programming: (1) provide a supportive environment that fosters relationships; (2) intentionally teach life skills; and (3) incorporate youth voice into programming.

Understanding how to structure youth sport programs is important so that program staff can provide a quality program environment that is conducive to PYD and supports youth wellbeing. Many of the programs and literature summarized in this section adopt one or more of the four aforementioned program frameworks.

2.3.1 Provide A Supportive Environment That Fosters Relationships
It has long been known that an important component of delivering a sport program is creating a safe environment, ensuring that youth find a valued role within the group.[67] More recently, research has identified the importance of structured after-school programs that provide youth with access to caring non-familial adults.[68]

Research conducted within a number of youth sport and physical activity-based contexts has shown that these programs tend to be more effective at enhancing development when youth can build supportive relationships with adult leaders.[69] One study found that providing a supportive atmosphere helped to facilitate the healthy development of youth participants.[70] Specifically, the youth felt satisfaction in the program because they had program leaders who they felt they could count on.

Similarly, in a study by Martin et al. (2009), youth discussed how the social support they received from coaches and teammates was critical in facilitating various outcomes, including positive social self-concept, physical self-concept, and attitudes towards healthy living. In a research review, Dubois et al. (2002) found that when youth have frequent contact with mentors, more emotional closeness, and longer lasting relationships, this contributed to significant

[66] Danish, 1997, 2002

[67] Eccles & Barber, 1999; Petitpas et al., 2005

[68] Armour, Sandford, & Duncombe, 2013; Eccles & Templeton, 2002

[69] Bean, Forneris, & Fortier, 2015; Mitchell, Gray, & Inchley, 2015; Ullrich-French & McDonough, 2013

[70] Ward & Parker, 2013

and positive results related to various outcomes including emotional/psychological, problem/high-risk behavior, social competence, academic/educational, and career/employment.

An empowering and supportive environment that is physically and psychologically safe provides youth with an opportunity to develop a range of competencies.[71]

A recent study by Bean and Forneris (2016a) found that fostering a sense of relatedness through appropriate adult support and structure was the only element that contributed to psychosocial development in youth within a physical activity program. This finding further speaks to the importance of establishing relationships between mentors and youth.[72] The study also indicated that program leaders were able to successfully foster these relationships through individualizing interactions with youth and spending time each session to check-in and make personal connections with youth.

Capitalizing on the opportunity to do a formal check-in with youth has also been identified as a significant strategy in other programs to help facilitate relational time and foster these positive relationships.[73] Youth are more likely to thrive within a social environment that supports their need for relatedness; program staff can play a predominant role in fostering these relationships.[74] Lastly, social support has been identified as a factor that influences continued participation within sport and physical activity-based programs and those programs should be inclusive to all participants regardless of their differences (i.e., body weight, family income).[75]

Over the past decade, many programs have emerged that are available for female youth only (e.g., Girls on the Run, Go Girls, Girls Just Wanna Have Fun). Within various

programs for female youth, the importance of a "girl's only" environment has been recognized as a context that enables psychological safety, offers an environment that facilitates a higher comfort level for young women to engage in physical activity, and provides a safe and trusted environment where they can develop positive relationships with each other and their program leader.[76] Markowitz (2012) identified two main ingredients that can help female youth increase their self-esteem: (1) providing program activities that focus on skill-building; and (2) providing a supportive environment for the participants. These are important considerations for programmers when developing and implementing programs in a community-based setting for female youth.

2.3.2 Intentionally Teach Life Skills

Research has only recently begun to examine life skill development in youth sport programs. Recently, Bean and Forneris (2016b) conducted a study to examine if there were differences in life skill development outcomes across youth programs. Specifically, sport programs were dichotomized into two categories based on whether or not program staff intentionally integrated life skills into their sport program. Additionally, youth community-based leadership programs were used as a comparison group because the main focus of such programs tends to be on life skill development. Findings from this research outlined that sport programs that are considered to be of higher quality, based on adopting the eight program setting features described above, [77] are more likely to foster positive developmental outcomes than lower quality programs that don't.[78] Further, this research found that programs that are intentionally structured to teach life skills may be better suited to foster positive youth development outcomes when compared to sport programs that are not intentionally structured.[79]

[71] Ward & Parker, 2013

[72] Eccles & Gootman, 2002

[73] Bean, Forneris, & Halsall, 2014; Hellison, 2011

[74] Armour et al., 2013; Deci & Ryan, 2012b

[75] Ullrich-French & McDonough, 2013

[76] Bean et al., 2015; Bean et al., 2014; Forneris, Bean, Snowden, & Fortier, 2013; Martin et al., 2009

[77] Eccles & Gootman, 2002

[78] Bean & Forneris, 2016a

[79] Bean & Forneris, 2016b

When program staff are deliberate in their planning and explanations to youth on how and why such skills are important for their development, there are more opportunities for youth to experience PYD outcomes.[80]

Specifically, recent research has outlined that taking advantage of "teachable moments",[81] role modelling desired behaviour,[82] and providing mentoring opportunities[83] have been helpful in intentionally fostering the development of identified life skills.

In line with this notion of intentionality, providing deliberate opportunities for fostering leadership within sport is one specific life skill that has received substantial attention in the literature.[84] For example, Martinek et al. (2006) explored how leadership evolved within two programs serving low-income minority youth. These authors found that if provided with intentional opportunities within a program, youth who were 'veteran' program participants were able to develop from being 'self-serving' participants to being caring and compassionate leaders. The ability to progress through various stages of leadership is related to the youth leaders' personal needs and their levels of moral development. The authors developed a framework from which program developers can envision paths of leadership development for youth within the sport context.

Similarly, Bean, Forneris, and Halsall (2014) outlined that providing intentional leadership opportunities is valuable for youth. Specifically, they observed that youth who had the opportunity to develop their own cooperative game, incorporate a life skill and facilitate this activity to younger members of the club, developed leadership skills. Additionally, Bean and colleagues (2015a, 2015b) found that providing leadership and mentoring opportunities to youth that was supported by program staff, is useful in fostering leadership and other life skills. In contrast, this was also believed to hinder programming if these opportunities were provided to

youth, but were not supported by program leaders. Therefore, ensuring that program staff encourage youth, ask and answer questions, and provide positive reinforcement is important to allow youth to develop confidence in their abilities to lead and mentor. Intentional mentoring or opportunities for peer-leadership helps to not only foster an important life skill that is highly valued within North American society,[85] but also to foster strong peer relationships with a program.[86]

A related study that examined intentionality in youth sport initiatives,[87] used a qualitative approach to gain an understanding of youth sport and physical activity programmers' perceptions of life skill development, particularly those who did not intentionally integrate the teaching of life skills.[88] Interviews with coaches and programmers revealed that although they recognized the value of life skill development, other perceptions inhibited the process of facilitation.

First, life skill development and transfer were considered to be by-products of participation in these programs; there was an assumption that mere participation would yield PYD outcomes and that youth would be able to transfer these outcomes to other life contexts. Second, coaches outlined that if they were to take a more explicit approach to life skill development, it tended to be in reaction to a negative behaviour that a youth exhibited. Specifically, within these contexts, the inability for youth to manage their emotions was seen as a frequent opportunity for programmers to step in and have a discussion with them. Lastly, it was identified that the perceived barrier of time and lack of formal education and training were two challenges related to using an explicit approach to life skills. These challenges are at the forefront for many programmers, highlighting the importance of training for frontline staff surrounding the intentional teaching of life skills.

It is important to note that a major component of life skill development includes the necessity of skill transfer and application of the skill to other contexts outside of where it was learned, such as at school, home, work, and/or in

[80] Holt, 2016

[81] Trottier & Robitaille, 2014; Wright & Burton, 2008

[82] Trottier & Robitaille, 2014; Turnnidge, Côté, & Hancock, 2014

[83] Bean & Forneris, 2016a; Olushola, Jones, Dixon, & Green, 2013

[84] Bean & Forneris, 2016a; Bean et al., 2015; Hayden, Baltzell, Kilty, & McCarthy, 2012; Martinek et al., 2006

[85] Larson, 2000

[86] Holt et al., 2017

[87] Bean & Forneris, 2016b

[88] Bean & Forneris, 2016c

community.[89] Therefore, a critical component of this explicit process not only surrounds the intentional teaching of life skills, but also the importance of life skill transfer.

Based on the study outlined above, many practitioners believed this process occurs naturally, where youth draw their own connections about what they learned through sport and/or physical activities and apply it to other life domains such as school, home or work; however, researchers have recently argued against this implicit process.[90]

Taking time in a program to explain to the youth how the life skills they've learned can be transferred to other areas of their lives can help them draw connections between these life domains and internalize the skill.

For example, explicitly developing communication at a basketball program can be transferred to effectively communicating with peers during a group project (e.g., delegating tasks, taking a leadership role in the project, and working together to complete the project). Helping youth to make such connections is critical. Youth's ability to develop and transfer life skills does not always occur without direction or support. However, many programmers in this study felt they did not have the necessary tools to explicitly teach transferable life skills within the sport context.

Results from a study conducted by Hayden et al. (2012) on a youth physical activity program indicated that although the goal of transferring the life skills to other domains was considered the most important by program leaders, it was the least visible within the program. Therefore, more opportunities need to be available for programmers to be able to learn such strategies.

2.3.3 Incorporate Youth Voice

A program's atmosphere has a big influence on facilitating PYD-based sport program outcomes. One critical component of the program atmosphere is ensuring that it is youth-centered and allows for opportunities for youth choice and voice.[91] This can be fostered through positive and engaging interactions between program staff and youth participants. Incorporating youth voice has been documented as an important component for PYD outcomes within youth programming literature.[92] Hellison's (2011) Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR), described above on page 16, integrates youth voice into programming and empowers youth to be responsible for their actions and learning.

More sport programs have taken on this youth-driven approach and it has become more common for program leaders to encourage youth autonomy, which acknowledges self-rule, self-initiation, and self-volition.[93] Youth who have a voice in program development and/or program implementation tend to be more motivated to engage with the program.[94] This is important because participation in many community-based programs is voluntary.

In one study, Ward and Parker (2013) found that the amount of control exercised by the program staff was balanced by the opportunities for youth autonomy, which led to a feeling of psychological and emotional freedom, and physical safety for youth participants. Providing opportunities for youth voice allows them to experience a sense of empowerment; this is critical in order to maximize the potential benefits for youth related to enjoyment and psychosocial development. Moreover, this provides an opportunity for youth to express their ideas and interact positively with the adults in the environment.

[89] Bruening, Clark, & Mudrick, 2015; Danish et al., 2004; Gould & Carson, 2008; Papacharisis et al., 2005; Petitpas et al., 2005

[90] Bean, Kendellen, & Forneris, 2016; Trottier & Robitaille, 2014; Weiss, Stuntz, Bhalla, Bolter, & Price, 2013

[91] Bean et al., 2013; McDonahough et al., 2013; Ward & Parker, 2013

[92] Serido et al., 2011; Mitra, 2003; Perkins & Borden, 2006; Pittman, Irby, & Ferber, 2000

[93] Deci & Ryan, 2012

[94] Mitchell et al., 2013; Ward & Parker

Program leaders can provide youth with choices by asking for their opinion related to the content (what) and processes (how) of the program.[95] Youth involved in Ward and Parker's (2013) study appreciated that their input was taken into account and that the staff abided by the decisions made by both parties in the group. Further, a study by Amour et al. (2013) explored various factors that contributed to the sustainability of the positive impact of successful youth programs. These successes were attributed to working closely with youth, providing choice of activities, for setting targets, and for reviewing personal progress in an ongoing manner throughout the program. Therefore, youth voice was incorporated not only in the program implementation stage, but also in the program planning and evaluation phases.

This research provides promising evidence for a integrating a variety of strategies, including providing a supportive environment that fosters relationships, intentionally teaching life skills, and incorporating youth voice into sport programming. It is important to acknowledge that these three strategies should not be considered in isolation. As outlined above, many of these strategies are interrelated (e.g., providing youth voice in a program helps to foster a psychologically safe environment where youth feel valued and can develop trusting relationships with program leaders).[96]

 A number of applied research studies have explored practical challenges and barriers to implementing PYD-based sport programs. Challenges are common among many who are trying to deliver and sustain sport programming that supports PYD outcomes.[97] These studies provide sport programmers with strategies and tools for navigating and overcoming challenges associated with program delivery and sustainability, as well as evaluation. The next section provides practical strategies on how to structure and implement program sessions in order to optimize opportunities for youth to develop life skills within community-based youth sport programming.

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[95] Bean & Forneris, 2016a; HSERF, 2005

[96] Serido, Borden, & Perkins, 2011

[97] Bean, Kendellen, Halsall, & Forneris, 2014; Forneris, Whitley, & Barker, 2013; Iachini, Beets, Ball, & Lohman, 2014; Whitley et al., 2014, 2015

It is critical to ensure that both frontline youth workers and program administrators involved in community-based youth sport and physical activity programming have access to appropriate resources, education, and training opportunities that can support them to apply these strategies within their program contexts.

03 // MOVING THE DIAL: GOOD YOUTH WORK PRACTICES

In recent years, research on PYD in sport programming has extended beyond merely identifying the psychosocial outcomes of participation in these contexts,[98] to working to understand the strategies and best practices needed to structure these programs in order to foster psychosocial development and support youth wellbeing.

The next two sections of this report offer practical strategies based on these findings. The first section offers strategies within five program-related areas that are useful for program staff when developing and implementing a sport-based program that supports PYD for youth who are facing barriers. The second section emphasizes the need for capacity building, which includes education and training programs that support youth workers' abilities to intentionally develop and deliver their programs to maximize PYD outcomes.

3.1 STRATEGIES FOR FOSTERING PYD OUTCOMES IN SPORT PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH

1. Program Structure

- Integrate a concrete program structure for your program (See examples including TPSR and SUPER on pages 16 - 18).

- Allow your structured program to have flexibility in order to adapt to inevitable changes that occur as part of community-based youth programming. This flexibility allows program staff to be constantly listening, learning, and adapting the program to best meet youth's needs.

2. Relationship with Youth

- Check-in with youth regularly at a personal level, whether formally as part of an icebreaker activity at a program session's commencement, or by simply having informal conversations with youth.

3. Youth Voice and Youth Engagement

- Incorporate a youth-centered approach that includes opportunities for youth voice and the development of youth's autonomy. This can be done by asking for youth's input regarding both program process (i.e. how things are done) and program content (i.e. what things are done, such as program activities or outcomes they hope to achieve). Moreover, youth voice should be incorporated throughout program planning, delivery, and evaluation.

4. The Importance of Intentional Incorporation of Life Skills

- Intentionally incorporate life skills as a regular part of the sport or physical activity program, rather than assuming that life skill development is a by-product of participation for youth in these programs.

5. Leverage the Power of Reflection and Evaluation

- Utilize teachable moments, open-ended questions, and reflection periods to not only attain feedback from youth, but also help to instill life skills development. Ensure discussions occur around how life skills development within the sport programming context can be utilized in other areas of youth's lives (e.g., school, home, and one's community).

- Build evaluation into regular programming so that program staff can learn from previous actions and adapt new actions for the program to best attend to youth's needs. For example, you can conduct a 'post-game' interview with youth to gain their feedback, which also doubles as a program activity (i.e., will save time, is fun, engaging, and creative).

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[98] Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2011; Hellison, 2011

3.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF CAPACITY BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE YOUTH SECTOR

Capacity building opportunities that offer education and training that support youth workers to put these strategies into practice are needed. It is critical to ensure that both frontline youth workers and program administrators involved in community-based youth sport and physical activity programming have access to appropriate resources, education, and training opportunities that can support them in applying these strategies within their program contexts. Such training would provide program staff with more strategies to intentionally shape programs and activities to maximize PYD outcomes.[99] Unfortunately, of the few training programs that exist, the majority of the training programs that exist are geared towards organized sport coaches and teachers,[100] not frontline program staff in community-based sport programming. Therefore, there is a need for capacity building programs that specifically support the professional development of grassroots youth program staff.

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[99] Bean & Forneris, 2016b

[100] Kendellen et al., 2016; Strachan, MacDonald, & Côté, 2016

04 // CONCLUSION

As noted, sport and physical activity are considered to be the most popular types of extra-curricular activity for youth across Canada, with more than 80% of youth participating in at least one organized sport.[101]

Because of this, sport has been identified as an important environment to foster psychosocial development in youth, not only because it is so popular and has the ability to reach a large number of youth, but also because sport is an activity that they tend to be motivated to engage in – it is an ideal hook to attract youth.[102] The best practices for sport programming include integrating a deliberate program structure that focuses on providing youth with opportunities to develop life skills and internalize motivating attitudes towards being physically active. Further, programmers should ensure that the youth are in a safe and supportive environment that is not only inclusive, but also challenges youth to a point of progression and development in their skills.

PERSISTING QUESTIONS

- Are some strategies better suited to fostering positive developmental outcomes than others within community-based youth sport programming?

- Are there specific strategies that are more pertinent for youth facing specific barriers?

- What are the realities experienced by program staff related to facilitating these strategies and best practices in this context?

This report outlines the best practices and key strategies program staff can implement into new and existing youth sport programs. It is evident that adopting a PYD approach in youth sport programming can not only help to provide a space for youth to be physically active, but also aid in the development of life skills, and help to minimize risk and problem behaviours that may be more commonly experienced by youth who face barriers to participation.

As outlined by **Play Works**, an Ontario Partnership for Active and Engaged Youth, "a community where youth have space, support and freedom to play tends to be one with less crime and more post-secondary graduates".[103]

This report outlines and supports the importance of deliberately structuring community-based youth sport programs, providing explicit opportunities for youth to develop life skills in a psychologically safe and supportive environment that allows for youth voice.

Research indicates that youth facing barriers often experience numerous challenges that not only prevent them from participating in these programs, but also prevent access to resources that support holistic development and wellbeing. Therefore, if community-based youth sport and physical activity programs are to be successful in fostering the holistic development of youth, program staff need to extend their focus beyond solely sport-specific and physical skill development, but also psychosocial development.

Moving forward, youth sector stakeholders should not only provide an environment that supports these strategies, but also one that educates youth on the transferability of such life skills into other domains, such as school, home, work, and the greater community. This transfer from the sport context to other important life contexts is essential for positive development and for contribution to society, particularly for youth facing barriers. As youth are vital to our communities and greater society, the important contributions of youth work in community-based sport and physical activity programming are essential for the positive development and overall wellbeing for our youth of today.

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[101] Guèvremont et al., 2008

[102] Le Menestrel, Bruno, & Christian, 2002

[103] Play Works, 2016, p. 2

05 // LEARN MORE:
RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Below is a series of recommended resources that can support community-based youth sport programmers to incorporate positive youth development (PYD) frameworks, approaches, and strategies into their programs.

FUNDING PROGRAMS

Ontario's After School Program

http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/sport/afterschool/after_school.shtml

Canadian Jump Start Program

http://jumpstart.canadiantire.ca

INFOGRAPHIC

Golf Teaching Life Skills

http://exchange.youthrex.com/infographic/golf-teaches-life-skills

TOOLKIT

Everybody Gets to Play™ Ontario Supplement

http://exchange.youthrex.com/toolkit/everybody-gets-play

FACTSHEET

How to Intentionally Teach a Life Skill in a Youth Sport Program

http://exchange.youthrex.com/factsheet/how-intentionally-teach-life-skill-youth-sport-program-case-study-example

FACTSHEET

Strategies for Fostering Positive Youth Development (PYD) Outcomes in Sport Programs for Youth

http://exchange.youthrex.com/factsheet/strategies-fostering-positive-youth-development-pyd-outcomes-sport-programs-youth

REPORT

Making Healthy Connections With Racialized Communities: Girls And Young Women's Experiences With Sport, Physical Activity And Healthy Living

http://exchange.youthrex.com/report/making-healthy-connections-racialized-communities-girls-and-young-womens-experiences-sport

SPORT PROGRAMS, ORGANIZATIONS OR FRAMEWORKS WITH A PYD FOCUS

Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Canada Go In-school Mentoring Programs

http://www.bigbrothersbigsisters.ca/en/home/mentoringprograms/

Positive Sports: Promoting Positive Youth Development through Sports

http://www.positivesports.net

PYD Sport Net

https://twitter.com/pydsportnet

Public Health Agency of Canada—Tips to get Active

http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/hl-mvs/pa-ap/06paap-eng.php

Motivate Canada

http://www.motivatecanada.ca

Active Circle – Pathways for Active Aboriginal youth

http://www.activecircle.ca

HEROS (Hockey Education Reaching Out Society)

http://heroshockey.com

SENS Sport and Leadership League

http://www.bgcossll.com

TPSR (Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility) Alliance

http://www.tpsr-alliance.org

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