

The Power of Physical Literacy

A 2-year study on the impact of Intentional Youth Sport Programming



Context

Physical activity levels for youth remain alarmingly low in Canada. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, only 39% of 5- to 17-year-olds were meeting the 24-hour movement guidelines for children and youth and on average youth participated in only 15 minutes of unstructured play each day.

Purpose

At MLSE LaunchPad, we're committed to helping youth develop the tools to be physically active for life.

We see physical literacy as a life skill as vital to a youth's positive development as self-esteem, social competence, and resilience.

We argue that youth that are physically literate are more physically active in both the short and long-term, and are more likely to experience the myriad benefits associated with healthy levels of physical activity and sport engagement. From this perspective, physical literacy can be viewed as a powerful social determinant of health, and access to quality sport programming becomes an issue in racial, economic, and gender-based justice.

Physical Literacy

Physical literacy – is a term used to describe the confidence, physical competence, motivation, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for physical activities throughout life.

Youth that are physically literate:

Have more motivation to be move	"I want to go outside and play today."
Have more confidence in their movement	"I believe that I can make a lay-up."
Demonstrate competence in their movement	"I can catch the ball!"
Know the benefits of movement	"I feel better about myself after playing a game of tag with my friends."
Understand how to be safe while moving	"I need to take a break for a bit so I can recover."

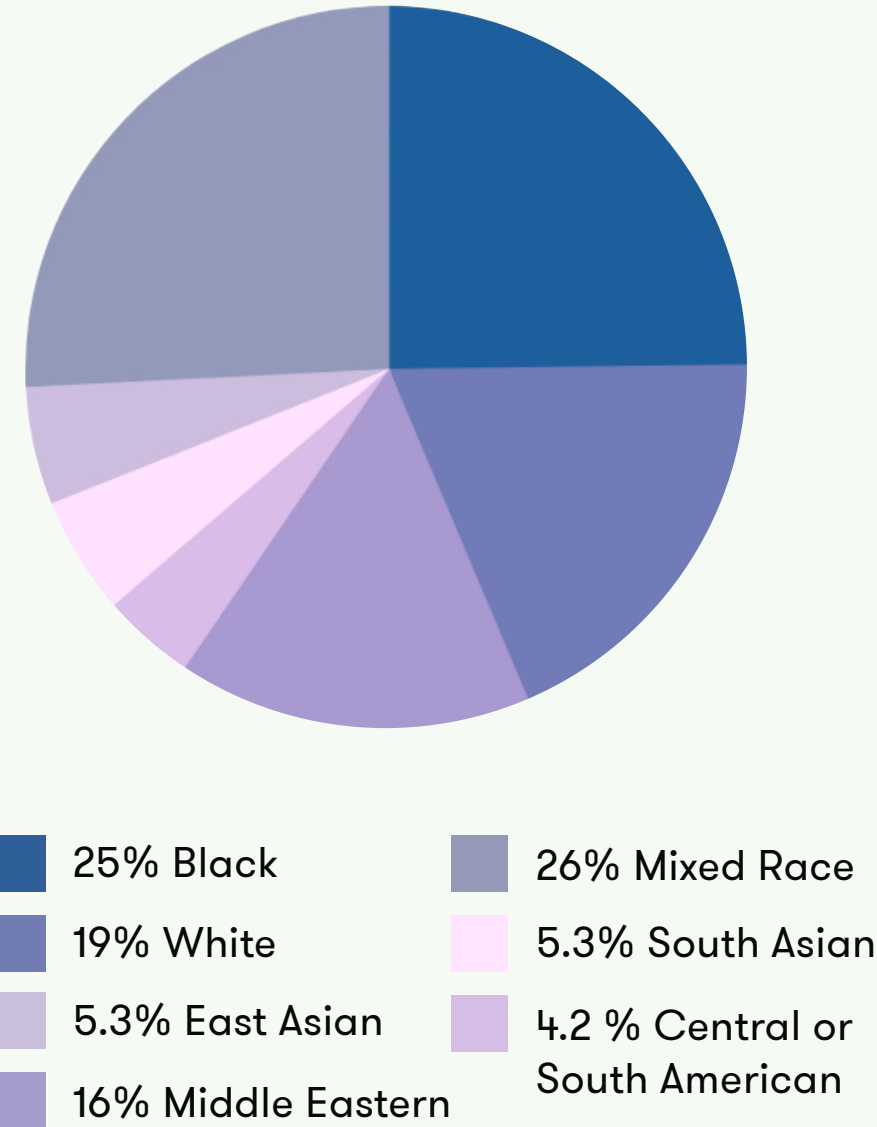
As part of a 2-year research study, we invited MLSE LaunchPad members between the ages of 6 and 12 to help us determine the impact of SFD programs on physical activity and physical literacy.

Method

Youth completed their first survey within the first three weeks of joining MLSE LaunchPad.

We then checked in with participants 6-months, 1-year and 2-years after their first program session. At each follow-up, youth answered questions about the confidence and motivations towards physical activity, as well as their physical activity habits. Youth were given pedometers for a week at each follow-up that recorded the duration and intensity of their physical activity.

Sample



124 MLSE LaunchPad members between the ages of 6 & 12 participated in this research study.

Average age **9 y.o.**

47% female

87% were born outside Canada (Average 7.8 years in Canada)

Median household income between **\$30,000** and **\$50,000**

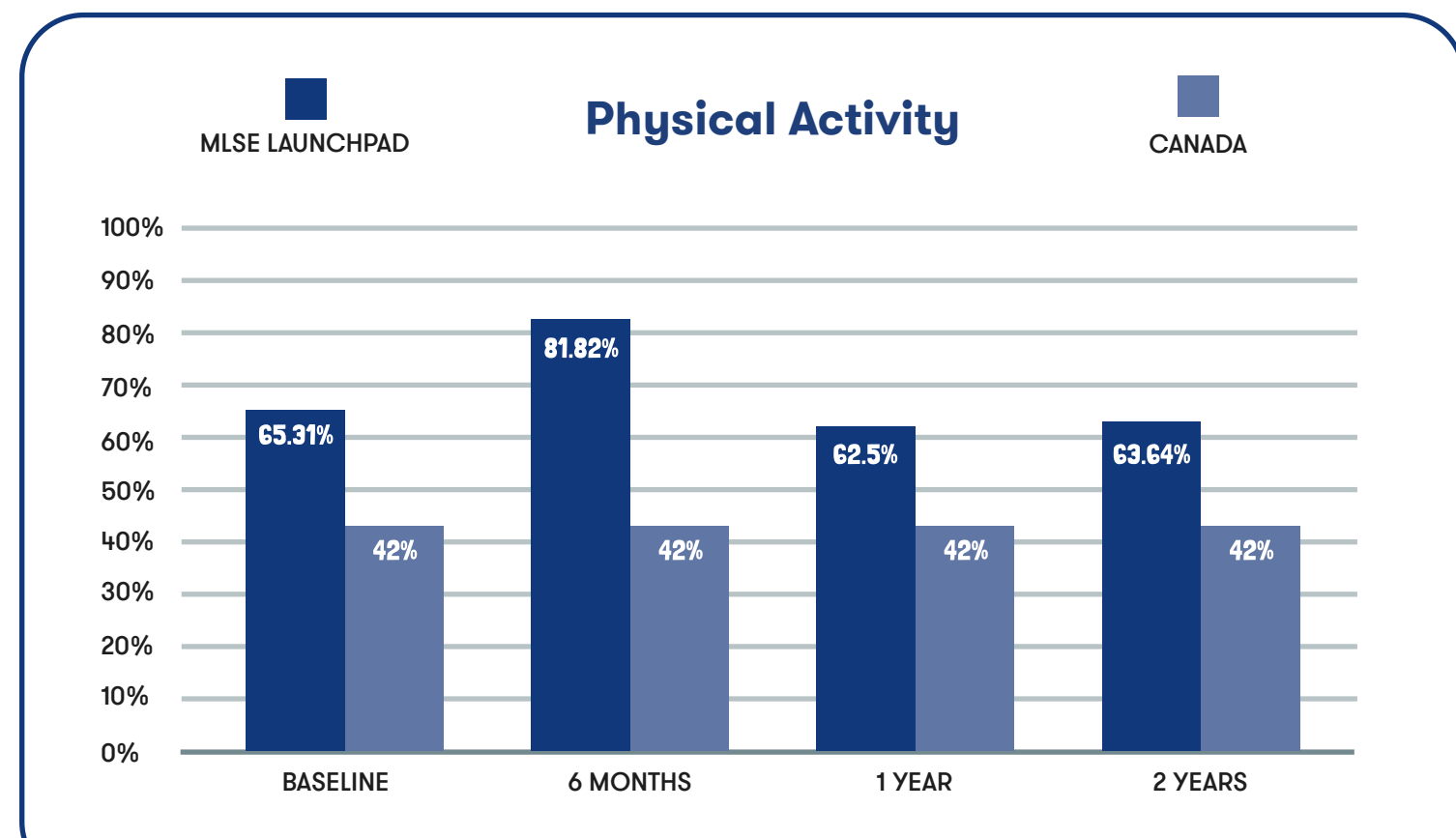
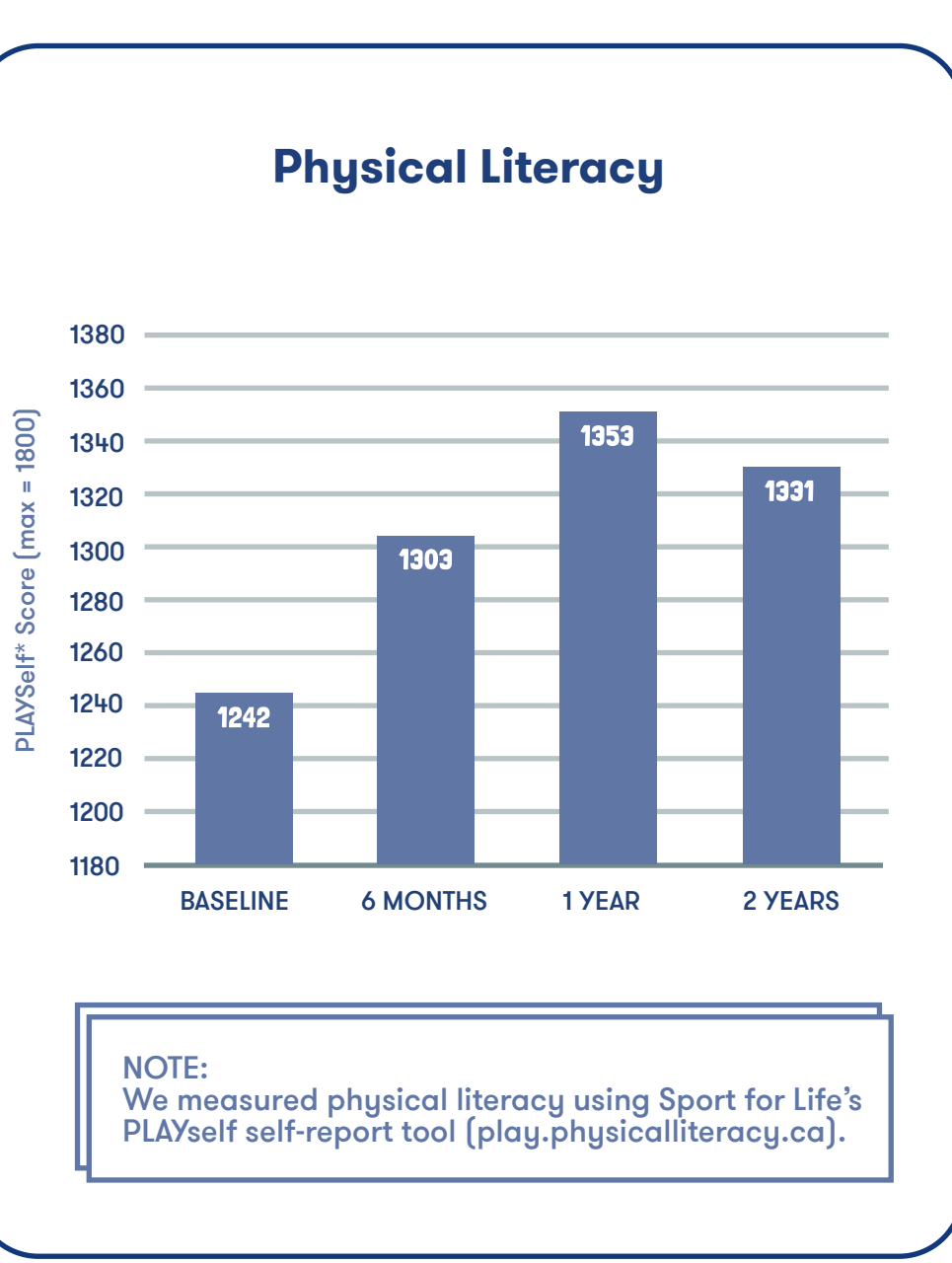
Results

#1 Focus on Physical Literacy

Youth in MLSE LaunchPad programs demonstrated increasing physical literacy over time, with the most dramatic impact occurring in the first 6-months to 1-year of participation

#2 Provide Girls-only Opportunities

Girls demonstrated a greater increase in physical literacy than boys over the 2-year period. Most female participants in the study attended the weekly girls-only programs in addition to co-ed program opportunities. Girls have told us that girls-only opportunities provide a space where they can feel safe to build their confidence and enjoyment of movement.



#3

Set a strong foundation for lasting change.

Youth that participated in MLSE LaunchPad Sport-Plus programs were more physically active than most Canadian youth. At least 2/3 youth achieved 60 minutes or more moderate to vigorous physical activity per day, and these habits were maintained over the 2-year study period.

Sport for Development programs help youth to be more active for life.