

County of Middlesex Healthy Kids Community Challenge

Theme 1 Project Summary Report

December 2016



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Background on the Healthy Kids Community Challenge

Healthy Kids Community Challenge (HKCC) is a province-wide initiative funded by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC). The Challenge is a community-led program where partners from different sectors (e.g. public health, education, recreation and local businesses) work together to implement activities to promote healthy living for children aged 12 years and under.

The Challenge as issued as part of the Ontario governemnts Healthy Kids Strategy, in response to the report "No Time to Wait".

Under the leadership of municipalities, selected communities have received funding and support from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC). The County of Middlesex is one of 45 communities in Ontario selected to participate.

The funding received will be used over the next 3 years to facilitate new, and enhance existing, projects and initiatives within the County. Communities are asked to develop Theme-Based Action plans. These plans will be based on one specific theme related to healthy eating, physical activity and adequate sleep every 9 months. Themes selected will address the risk or protective factors that are known to lead to or prevent childhood overweight and obesity. Various community partners, including health, education, recreation and local business, will work together to plan, implement and evaluate these projects and activities.

About the Themes

- Theme 1 (October 2015 to June 2016): **Run. Jump. Play Every Day**. The goal of this theme was to promote physical activity through active play, organized physical activity such as organized sport, active transportation, physical education, and other organized school and community activities.
- Theme 2 (July 2016 to March 2017): Water Does Wonders. This theme encourages choosing water as the first choice of drink throughout the day and limiting intake of sugary drinks.

For more Information

For more information on the evidence to support Theme 1 and Theme 2 you can visit hkcc.middlesex.ca:

- Theme 1 Quick Facts
- Theme 2 Quick Facts

For more information on the Healthy Kids Community Challenge, visit the MOHLTC website.



Local Steering Committee

Each community is expected to establish a Local Steering Committee to coordinate, plan and implement The Challenge. Steering Committee Partners in the County of Middlesex include representatives from the following agencies:

- Thames Centre
- <u>Strathroy-Caradoc</u>
- <u>Lucan-Biddulph</u>
- North Middlesex
- Village of Newbury
- Southwest Middlesex
- Middlesex Centre
- Adelaide-Metcalfe
- County of Middlesex, Library
- County of Middlesex
- Middlesex-London Health Unit
- London District Catholic School Board
- Thames-Valley District School Board
- Ontario Early Years Centre, Perth-Middlesex
- Ontario Early Years Centre, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex
- <u>Strathroy-Caradoc Chamber of Commerce</u>
- United Way
- YMCA Strathroy-Caradoc

Partnerships

Theme 1 was a tremendous success in terms of fostering County-wide partner support for the Healthy Kids Community Challenge in Middlesex County. These partnership have spanned across sectors and across all 8 municipalities.

We fostered 72 unique partners in our community. As well, we have established relationships with 3 academic institutions that have supported our work to-date, as well as aspirations for these institutions continued support. These academic institutions include:

- University of Western Ontario
- McMaster University
- Mount Royal University

In addition, we have garnered political support for HKCC, both at the County-level (upper tier) and municipal level (lower tier). We have had lower tier municipalities invite HKCC to present at council meetings. As well, we have had municipalities pass resolutions in support of Healthy Kids initiatives. The work of HKCC has been well received at County Council meetings and is supported and endorsed by its members.

While we have not formally evaluated, we have perceived that the increased partnerships and political support of HKCC has established healthy eating and physical activity-related interventions as a priority for local agencies and in the political sphere. One example of this is that the Middlesex Children's Services Network has identified healthy eating and physical activity as a priority area in the strategic plan. Having this as a priority of this network will help ensure sustainability of healthy kids' initiatives.

These partnerships and strong political buy-in will support future implementations of HKCC interventions. Such support will help maintain the level of energy and enthusiasm throughout the funding period and beyond for initiatives focused on supporting healthy kids.

Community Needs Assessment

Each community was required to complete a Community Needs Assessment and submit it to the MOHLTC as one of their first program deliverables. It was aimed at providing communities with the necessary information to build targeted and evidence-informed Theme-Based Action Plans. This Community Needs Assessment is intended to help communities to identify needs, gaps, resources, opportunities, and assets to support planning and delivery of the Healthy Kids Community Challenge to achieve the program's target outcomes.

County of Middlesex Community Needs Assessment Report

The County of Middlesex report was prepared by the Human Environments Analysis Laboratory at Western University in collaboration with the County of Middlesex Healthy Kids Community Challenge. Additionally, Data Analysis Coordinators with the Ontario Early Years Centres of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Perth-Middlesex, and Elgin-Middlesex-London provided insight into the Early Development Instrument.

The report was reviewed by Steering Committee partners. The <u>final report</u> was uploaded to hkcc.middlesex.ca in October 2016.

The report contains for the County of Middlesex the following information represented as an infographic:

- Socio-cultural
- Built environment (physical activity, food, social)
- Healthy eating and healthy living statistics for children aged 9-13 years

As well, the report contains for each Municipality the following information represented as an infographic:

- Socio-cultural
- Early Development Instrument
- Built environment (physical activity, food, social)

This report also provides maps per Municipality visually displaying locations of the following:

- Food (including variety stores, fast food restaurants, grocery stores, seasonal fruit and vegetables)
- Physical Activity (including sports fields, conservation areas, parks, and recreation centres)
- Health Resources (including primary care providers)
- Social Environment (including places of worship, libraries, schools, early years and child care centres)

Theme 1 Action Plan

In the County of Middlesex, in collaboration with local communities, five overarching strategies were identified as part of the Theme 1 Action Plan.

- 1. County Events and Community Consultations
- 2. Family Education
- 3. Early Years Education
- 4. Pilot of Move 2 Learn, in Collaboration with McMaster University
- 5. Naturalization of School Playgrounds

The overall goal was to create environments and opportunities across the County of Middlesex that promote active play, to spark a child's curiosity and exploration, and motivation to move, aiding in their physical literacy and overall health and development.

The implementation of these strategies began in December 2015. In total there were 25 interventions spanning the five previously mentioned strategies, aimed at supporting the Theme 1 goal.



Brief Summary of the Evidence to support the Theme 1 Action Plan

- Children accumulate their physical activity through engaging in: active play; organized physical activity such as organized sport; active transportation; physical education; and other organized school and community activities. However, 93% of children do not meet the Canadian guidelines for activity (Colley et al., 2011).
- Regarding active play, it has been estimated that 46% of Canadian children aged 6-11 get 3 hours or less of unstructured, physically active play a week, including weekends (*ParticipACTION, 2015*). Contemporary children are also reported to play outdoors less frequently than previous generations.
- Over the last decade there has been a 14% drop in the number of Canadian kids who
 play outside after school. Children who spend most or all of their afterschool time
 outdoors get approximately 20 more minutes of movement per day and are 3 times
 more likely to achieve the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines. This additional
 movement translates to an approximate 15% reduction in the risk of being overweight
 or obese (ParticipACTION Report Card 2015)
- Researchers have noted declining rates of physical activity in children could signal a
 growing lack of what they call physical literacy (ParticipACTION Report Card 2015).
 Physical Literacy has been defined as a barrier to physical activity (Healthy Kids
 Community Challenge, Ministry of Health & Long Term Care
- According to data collected through the Early Development Instrument, 12% of Middlesex County children are considered "vulnerable" (in the context of Physical Health and Wellbeing), with slightly higher rates in North Middlesex (16%) and Adelaide-Metcalfe/Strathroy-Caradoc (15%). This domain included gross and fine motor skills (which relates to fundamental movement skills) (Community Needs Assessment, Healthy Kids Community Challenge).



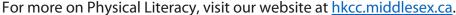
 In terms of gross and fine motor skills, 35% in North Middlesex are meeting few or none of the skills, with 29% in Adelaide-Metcalfe/Strathroy-Caradoc. This is compared to 21% of the County kids as a whole, and 22% of Ontario kids (Source: local Data Analyst Coordinators) (Community Needs Assessment, Healthy Kids Community Challenge).

For more information on the evidence to support Theme 1 visit hkcc.middlesex.ca.

Physical Literacy

"Physical literacy is the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life." - The International Physical Literacy Association, May 2014

- Children are born with the capacity to move, but not the skills! Just as learning the alphabet is a step in learning to read, the development of fundamental movement skills are steps towards an active life. These skills include learning to hop, jump, throw, catch and more!
- Children who are given daily opportunities to actively play are more likely to develop these skills! As well, they need support from their parents and providers to learn these skills and guide them on their journey to becoming physically literate.
- Children who are physically literate are more likely to stay in motion throughout their life! When kids do not have physical literacy, they may report a lack of interest, skills, confidence or motivation as barriers to being active.





County Events and Community Consultations

The goal of this strategy was to partner with Municipalities to attend scheduled Municipal events that are successful in drawing in families in order to promote HKCC and the theme 1 messages. After the events, we broadcasted stories, pictures and videos to increase profile of the Municipality, of HKCC and the theme 1 messages.

As well, these opportunities aimed to support the development of our Community Needs Assessment, as described earlier in the report. At these events, we invited residents to identify what they see as priorities in the County and their respective community to support the promotion of physical activity and healthy eating.

As well, this strategy supports our objectives in our **Family Education Strategy**

Objectives

- 1. To partner with Steering
 Committee municipal partners on
 selecting upcoming municipal
 events between December 2015
 and June 2016 to showcase HKCC
 and the theme 1 messages, and to
 incorporate a communityconsultation component
 (Community Needs Assessment);
- To increase awareness among families of HKCC and of the theme 1 messages, and to highlight municipal assets in the County that can support families in encouraging physical activity;

 To engage the community (public and leaders) in identifying gaps, need and opportunities (programs, activities, policies and supportive environments).



Implementation

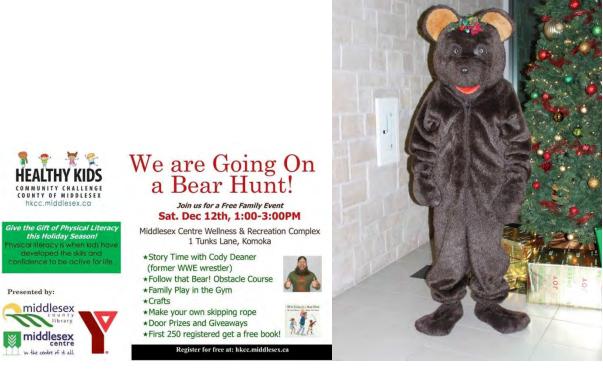
We worked with our municipal partners throughout the duration of Theme 1 on identifying opportunities to reach families. We commenced with our Launch Event on December 12, 2015 in Komoka. Our final event for theme 1 was April 30, 2016 in Lucan.

As well, we created and launched an online community consultation survey in January 2016.

Accomplishments

Launch Event

On Saturday December 12, 2015, Middlesex County Library, in partnership with the Komoka YMCA and Middlesex Centre, held an event to launch The Healthy Kids Community Challenge for Middlesex County. The theme was "**Give the Gift of Physical Literacy**". To celebrate, we went on a Bear Hunt! We had approximately 100 children enjoy the event.



Invitation to Launch Event and Bear Promoting Launch Event at Holiday Hoopala, Komoka

Families visited stations, all built around the book "We are Going on a Bear Hunt"!

- **Family Story Time** –in the gym, our guest speaker, Cody Deaner (Chris Gray), engaged families in reading *Going on a Bear Hunt* while combining movement like jumping and balancing. Chris Gray, whose stage name is Cody Deaner, and is a resident of Parkhill, has wrestled in front of millions of people on television for the WWE and Total Non-Stop Action Wrestling. He was very engaging and entertaining,
- **Craft** children were invited to design a Bear Hunt face to help them on their quest to 'Find that Bear':
- **Obstacle Course** families were invited to 'Follow that Bear!' through an obstacle course around the playground;

• **Free Play** – in the gym, families were invited to visit three stations, trying out a variety of movement skills: A – Agility, navigating through the markers; B – Balance, on the beams; and C – Coordination, using the climb wall.

Children were also able to make their own skipping rope with Diane McGuire from *The Music Spot* (Strathroy).



Making a Skipping Rope with Diane McGuire from The Music Spot (Strathroy).

All children received a copy of the book 'We are Going on a Bear Hunt' as well as a bookmark and magnet and other material. All children were invited to enter their 'station passport' into our prize box. Nine children received prizes, including snow board, tennis racket/balls, basketball, snow stoppers and more.

For more pictures, watch our video on YouTube showcasing highlights from the <u>Launch</u> Event.



Enjoying story time

Cody Deaner leading story time



Kurtis Smith, Mayor Adelaide-Metcalfe, helping his nephew with balancing

Additional Municipal Events

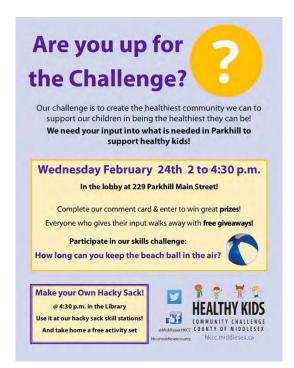
We attended 5 additional municipal community events between January and April 2016, where we communicated with families about HKCC and the importance of "Run, Jump, Play Every Day". These events were held in the following locations:

- Thorndale
- Glencoe
- Parkhill
- Strathroy
- Lucan

At these events, HKCC entertained children in making their own hacky sack and then encouraged them to use it to try out different fundamental movement skills. This activity was a huge hit with kids. Children went home with a Healthy Kids Community Challenge hacky sack and a card set that outlines 9 creative ways to use a hacky sack to develop fundamental movement skills.



Making and using our Hacky Sacks in Glencoe

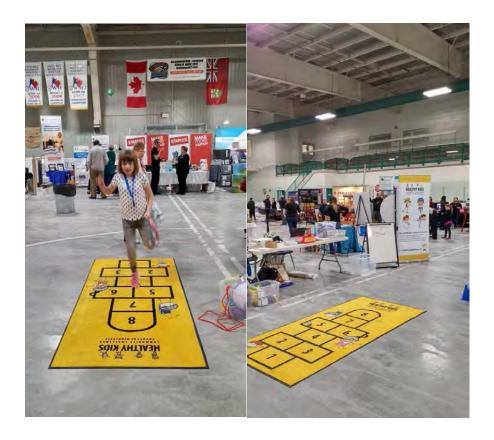




Parkhill



Lucan



Strathroy

We also invited parents to share what priorities they see for their community to support healthy eating and active living for their children. This was achieved through comments cards as well as the ability to identify priorities on a large poster. Approximately 75 parents participated in this method of consultation from February to April 2016.



Lucan participants

Parkhill participants

Online Community Consultation Survey

We opened up an online survey in January 2016 and had 62 participate. The survey was promoted through social media and through our community partners. You can access the survey on <u>Survey Monkey</u>.

Outcomes

In total, we estimate that we reached approximately 600 families via these County-events. As well, we estimate we distributed over 1000 each of HKCC hacky sacks and beach balls and accompanying activity sets. These sets were designed to provide parents with ideas on how to use these active play tools to foster physical literacy. HKCC fridge magnets were also provided, as well as other supporting educational tools.

As for the community consultations, we estimate that we consulted with approximately 140 parents. This is not a representative sample of Middlesex County parents, but does provide a snap shot of some identified interests/needs.

The following were identified as the top 3 priorities for promoting physical activity as identified in the online survey (N=62):

- 78% indicated need/interest for free drop in activity programs
- 65% indicated need/interest for programs for children 2-6 years of age that are nonsport specific, to develop moment skills

• 60% indicated need/interest for physical activity family-focused events

The following were identified as the top 3 priorities for supporting healthy eating as identified in the online survey (N=62):

- 76% indicated need/interest for food/cooking skills programs
- 65% indicated need/interest for fruit/vegetable snack program at schools
- 65% indicated need/interest for healthy food concession/vending policy

In summary, findings from County event consultations and online are presented as "top 10 priorities" below. The difference in the order can be attributed to the location of the consultation (e.g. Thorndale vs. Lucan) and number of respondents in that particular location. For example, we had the largest number of responses at a County-event in Thorndale, followed by Lucan, with the least from Parkhill and Strathroy.

Physical Activity Top 10

- 1. Free Drop in Activity Programs
- 2. Play programs for children 2-6 years that are non-sport specific
- 3. Recreation Facility
- 4. Physical activity focused family events
- 5. Natural Play Spaces
- 6. Recreation space (pool)
- 7. Playground
- 8. Trail/park signage or equipment
- 9. Acti-Pass
- 10. Bring Back Play Education Campaign

Healthy Eating Top 10

- 1. Food Skill Programs for Kids
- 2. Year Round Farmers Markets
- 3. Fruit and vegetable snack program at schools
- 4. Farm to school program
- 5. Fruit/vegetable stands
- 6. Healthy Food Concession/Vending Policy
- 7. Fruit/Vegetable Education for early years
- 8. Community Gardens
- 9. Potable drinking water parks, playground etc.
- 10. Donations of fresh food to food banks

Community Partners

- Municipality of Middlesex Centre
- YMCA of Middlesex Centre
- Komoka Branch, Middlesex County Library

- Municipality of South West Middlesex
- I Love Thorndale
- Municipality of North Middlesex
- Lucan-Biddulph Parks & Recreation
- HEAL, University of Western Ontario
- The Music Spot (Strathroy)









Family Education

Statistics indicate that our kids are not meeting guidelines for physical activity. In fact, only 5% are meeting the <u>Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines</u> of 60 minutes of activity per day. Researchers have noted declining rates of physical activity in children could signal a growing lack of what they call physical literacy (*ParticipACTION*). Physical Literacy has been defined as a barrier to physical activity (*Healthy Kids Community Challenge, Ministry of Health & Long Term Care*).

The main focus of this project is targeting parents and caregivers of children in the Early Years (0 to 6 years of age). This is based on evidence that physical activity levels in the early years of childhood are predictive of activity levels later in life (O'Dwyer, 2012). As well, 21% of 2 to 5 year old children are overweight or obese (Shield, 2006). Children who are overweight when they start school are far more likely to be obese by the time they become teenagers. In one study, overweight five-year-olds were four times more likely to be obese by age 14 than children who started kindergarten at a healthy weight. If we can help children not become overweight by age five, their chances of becoming obese are so much lower (Cunningham, 2014).

Studies investigating the correlates of physical activity in children have found parent attitudes, behaviours, parenting styles and practices to have a profound influence on children's health behaviours. For example, one study found that children whose parents received information on how, when, and where to encourage their child's physical activity, spent more time playing outdoors in comparison to children whose parents received no information (*O'Dwyer*, 2012).

This strategy was supported by activities implemented as part of our **County Events and Community Consultations Strategy.**



Objectives

- 1. To educate parents on the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for the Early Years (0 to 5) and for children 6+, fundamental movement skills, the role active play has in developing these skills, the importance of outdoor play, the concept of physical literacy and its role in supporting activity for life and in overall health and development;
- To support families with tools and creative ideas to engage children in active play, outdoor play, and fostering the development of fundamental movement skills/physical literacy;
- 3. To highlight to families municipal assets such as open skates, playgrounds, parks and trails that families can access to support fundamental movement skill development and support outdoor active play.

Implementation

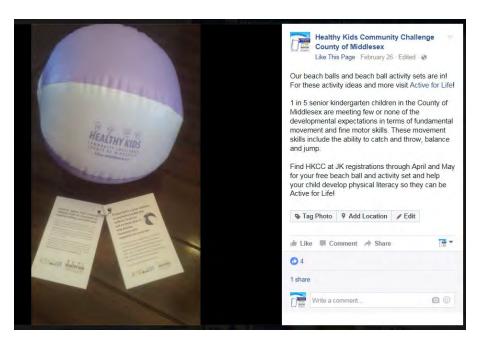
Our objective is to provide education, resources and tools to parents through various channels and activities, such as:

- 1. Social Media and Website
- 2. Through our community partners (via websites, resource distribution, events etc.)
- 3. Educational tool developed to support efforts of the Middlesex Children's Services Network (MCSN) Early Literacy Working Group initiative, "From the Start: Sing, Read, Dance, Play" book bag initiative

Accomplishments

Website and Social Media

- Website was developed in December 2015. Content of the website continues to be updated.
- Social media platform developed in December 2015, including Facebook Page, Twitter account, and YouTube channel.
- As of October 2016, we have 256 followers on Facebook. 81% of our followers are women, 37% of these are between 35-44 years of age, followed by 21% in the 25-34 year range. The largest percentage are from Strathroy, followed by Ilderton and Lucan, and Parkhill.
- As of October 2016, we have 186 followers on Twitter and have issued 491 tweets.
- Our YouTube channel, as of October 2016, has had approximately 2800 views, and has 18 videos uploaded.



Example Post on Facebook

Acquisition of Resources and Equipment

- Purchased hopscotch mats for each of the libraries. These were intended to support
 efforts in creating movement rich environments in the libraries, as well as create a
 lasting legacy for HKCC in these sites. We as well used these mats at many events
 HKCC attended.
- Our hop scotch mat also visited the County Council Chambers.



Komoka Library Branch County Council Chambers

- Purchased hacky sacks and beach balls to support education efforts at events. As well, developed activity sets to accompany beach balls and hacky sacks. These sets were designed to provide parents with ideas on how to use these active play tools to foster physical literacy
- Distributed over 1000 hacky sacks, beach balls and corresponding activity sets.



 Distributed 50 Outdoor Adventure Back Packs, containing items to support young explorers including bug catcher, magnify glass, and binoculars.



Events and Opportunities

We also had 29 opportunities whereby we were able to reach families. In total, we estimate approximately 1300 families reached. Below are some highlights:

- We held a launch event for the Healthy Kids Community Challenge in December 2015, where the focus was around physical literacy and ways families can foster fundamental skill development at home and in the community. As well, as mentioned in <u>County Events & Community Consultations</u>, we attended 5 additional municipal events, reaching in total, approximately 600 families.
- Attended 10 Junior Kindergarten registration events between April to May through the TVDSB; we built in information in the bag about Physical Literacy and Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for the Early Years into kits provided to families.
- We similarly built in information into welcome kits provided to families in the Move 2
 Learn program.



Example resources handed out at events

Physical Literacy Bag Project

The "From the Start: Sing, Read, Dance, Play" book bag is a program of the Early Literacy Working Group of the Middlesex Children's Services Network. Both an infant and a toddler bag has been designed. These bags contain information and resources for parents that are engaging, practical and promote the importance of early literacy and interaction with their children. Since initiation of the program in 2011, 750 book bags have been made and available to agencies to give to families in Middlesex County. Recipient families include those from the Healthy Baby Health Children program, tykeTALK and Women's Rural Resource Centre. The majority of book bags are distributed through our community OEYC programs.

Leaders distribute the book bags to any family with a child 0 to 3 years of age that is a resident of Middlesex County. It is preferable that the bags be handed out to parents one-on-one or in small groups, and that some form of education and key messaging be provided regarding children, literacy, parent's role, resources etc.

We expanded this successful program and developed both an infant and toddler active play & physical literacy bag to support our Family Education Strategy objectives. The contents of the bag were developed in collaboration with leaders from the Early Literacy Working Group. These bags are also accompanied by education provided by a leader on the intent of use.

The infant bag contained bubbles; O-ball, corresponding activity booklet; additional material including Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for the Early Years and information on Physical Literacy, as well as an introductory letter for parents on how to use the bag.

The toddler bag contained movement cube; cube cards (with visuals of active play activities that can be inserted into the cube); corresponding cube card activity booklet; additional material including Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for the Early Years and information on Physical Literacy, as well as an introductory letter for parents on how to use the bag.



Accomplishments

- Purchased items to support the development of 500 Infant and Toddler Bags. The majority of the bags were assembled over the summer of 2016.
- Bags were distributed to OEYC and MLHU leaders and distribution immediately began
- As of October 2016, approximately 300 of each the Infant and Toddler bags have been provided to partner agencies, with approximately 200 distributed in total.
- Additionally, we have had requests for bags from other partner agencies, including Child Reach to support their Teen Mom program.
- We continue to assemble and distribute bags to meet the need of leaders.
- Evaluation of the bags commenced immediately via an online survey with parents whom consented to follow up. This evaluation commenced in September 2016 and will be ongoing.
- Evaluation of the bags from the leaders' perspective occurred in September 2016.

Outcomes

We were able to conduct an evaluation of our Physical Literacy Bag project. We were able to follow up with parents via an anonymous online survey. As well, we invited leaders to provide feedback on the contents of the bag via an anonymous online survey. Collection of feedback will be ongoing as bags are distributed via our supporting leaders.

Infant Physical Literacy Bag

- Parents found the o-ball to be most useful in engaging their infant in daily active play, followed by the bubbles and activity booklet. 90% reported the activity booklet provided them with ideas on how to engage their toddler in active play, with 10% reporting somewhat.
- Parents reports using the o-ball daily, while the bubbles and activity booklet weekly.
 The information sheets were reported to be used at least once.
- 80% reported being more aware of the importance of active play every day and the role it plays in supporting the development of movement skills.
- Leaders found the contents of the bag to be very useful in supporting their discussion with parents in engaging their infant in daily active play and the role it plays in supporting the development of movement skills. The leaders also reported a desire to see the continuation of the development and distribution of the bag.

Toddler Physical Literacy Bag

- Parents found the activity cube and cube cards to be most useful in engaging their toddler in daily active play. 60% reported the activity booklet provided them with ideas on how to engage their toddler in active play, with 20% reporting somewhat.
- Parents reports using the cube and cube cards weekly, while the activity booklet and information sheets were reported to be used at least once.

- 80% reported being more aware of the importance of active play every day and the
 role it plays in supporting the development of movement skills, with 20% reporting
 somewhat.
- Leaders found the contents of the bag to be very useful in supporting their discussion with parents in engaging their toddler in daily active play and the role it plays in supporting the development of movement skills. The leaders also reported a desire to see the continuation of the development and distribution of the bag.

Next Steps

- Increase total number of followers on Facebook. As well, we would like to increase reach on Facebook across municipalities. For example, followers in Glencoe are minimal, therefore we can investigate ways to increase reach in this area.
- There is support for sustaining the Physical Literacy Bags. We will investigate funding
 opportunities to continue the development of this bag. We will consider the feedback
 from families on individual useful of the bag content and adjust content accordingly.

Community Partners

- Ontario Early Years Centres Perth-Middlesex
- Ontario Early Years Centres Lambton-Kent-Middlesex
- Middlesex London Health Unit
- Middlesex Children's Services Network
- London Catholic District School Board
- Thames Valley District School Board

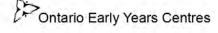














Early Years Leader Education

The goal of this strategy was to educate providers/leaders working with children in the Early Years on the concept of physical literacy and the importance of supporting children in developing physical literacy through physical-literacy enriched opportunities and movement-rich environments.

The focus on educating Early Years providers/leaders stems from research indicating that many child care providers are unaware of the Canadian Physical Activity and Sedentary Guidelines for the Early Years (*Tucker et al, 2016*). As well, the concept of physical literacy is a relatively new term.

Additionally, these leaders are gatekeepers to parents and caregivers and are an integral part in sharing the message about physical literacy with families. They can also be role models by providing creative active play opportunities and modeling fundamental movement skills.

Objectives

- 1. To provide training to early years providers/leaders on the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for the Early Years, fundamental movement skills, the role active play has in developing these skills, the concept of physical literacy and its role in supporting activity for life, and in overall health and development;
- 2. To provide training to early years providers/leaders on how they can promote and support active play and outdoor play in their respective centres in efforts to support the development of fundamental movement skills and to actively engage/teach providers examples of activities that can support these efforts;
- 3. To support leaders across the County with tools and creative ideas to help foster fundamental movement skills/physical literacy through their everyday programming;
- 4. To encourage leaders to promote the message of fostering the development of fundamental movement skills/physical literacy and importance of active play and outdoor play to parents/caregivers.

Implementation

On March 9th, 2016 the County of Middlesex Healthy Kids Community Challenge hosted an event called *Physical Literacy and Early Childhood: Bringing it to Life!* It brought together leaders in the County working with children 0 to 6 years of age, including health, education, library, recreation, child care and sport. It is intended to advance knowledge and application of physical literacy across the County of Middlesex.

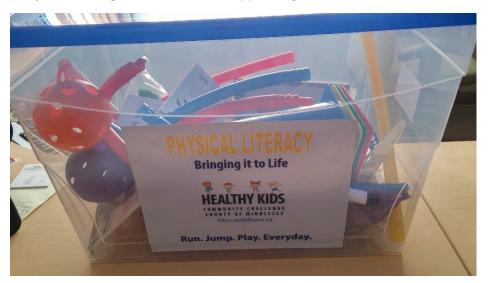
The event drew key experts in the field including Drew Mitchell, Director of Physical Literacy from Canadian Sport for Life, Dr. Dawne Clark, Director of the Centre for Child Well-Being from Mount Royal University and Dr. Trish Tucker, Research Director with the Child Health and Physical Activity Lab from the University of Western Ontario. These speakers provided a

broad introduction to the concept of physical literacy, helping participants define what it means, why it is important, and how to integrate its concepts to improve programs.

In the afternoon, leaders were taught how they can increase active play opportunities and foster the development of fundamental movement skills through interactive activities.



A Tool Kit was also provided to these leaders/providers which includes a number of creative play tools (e.g. scarves, bean bags, movement cube, skipping ropes, balls) to support their story time and games/activities, supporting manual, and resources/ideas to engage parents.





Accomplishments

March 9th Training Session and Tool Kit Distribution

- A training session was conducted on March 9, 2016. 150 local leaders were in attendance, representing all municipalities across the County. A total of 48 agencies were represented. This included: JK/ECE teams, library staff, Ontario Early Years, YMCA, municipal, government, health unit and child cares.
- A total of 100 Physical Literacy tool Kits were distributed at this event. Since then, an additional 25 have been distributed.
- An adaptation of the kits distributed on March 9 was developed and distributed to 25 home child care sites in late spring 2016.
- In January 2016 we worked with Western University to develop a pre and post assessment tool. This tool was posted online and pre assessments of participants were conducted the week preceding the event. Post assessments were conducted 1-month post event.
- We uploaded the recordings of the March 9th event to our YouTube channel and have promoted as an opportunity for continued professional development.
- In June 2016, we visited 5 agencies to collect stories of integration of physical-literacy enriched opportunities into existing sites and programs. These stories were compiled into a video called Bringing Physical Literacy to Life in Middlesex County.

Links to Recordings from March 9th Training Session

- Session 1 of 3 Physical Literacy and Early Childhood: Bringing it to Life!
- Session 2 of 3 Physical Literacy and Early Childhood: Bringing it to Life!

Session 3 of 3 - Physical Literacy and Early Childhood: Bringing it to Life!

Outcomes

- Prior to the event, 60% of the attendees were *familiar* with the term "physical literacy", 8% were *not familiar*, and 32% were *somewhat familiar*. After the event, over 90% of the attendees were *familiar* with the term.
- There was a significant increase in knowledge on the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for the Early Years.
- 83% reporting that their perspective of the relationship between Physical Literacy and Physical Activity changed.
- 72% reported they feel more knowledgeable on how best to engage children in Physical-literacy enriched opportunities, with 28% reporting somewhat.
 Approximately 80% reported feeling very confident in engaging young children in physical-literacy enriched opportunities.
- Participants felt the training provided them with tools and ideas to help foster fundamental movement skills/physical literacy through their everyday programming;
- Leaders felt they could promote the message of fostering the development of fundamental movement skills/physical literacy and the importance of active and outdoor play to parents/caregivers through various means, including: role modeling; communications; workshops, and via programs like story time.
- General verbal feedback from a selection of participants is that the Physical Literacy kits provided have been very useful in their centres and that they continue to be used regularly.

For the full evaluation of the training, you can visit hkcc.middlesex.ca.

Next Steps

We will be sharing our <u>Bringing Physical Literacy to Life in Middlesex County</u> video more widely to rally continued support for the integration of physical literacy in community programs.

We plan to continue to work with Canadian Sport for Life and Mount Royal University on supporting the use of a physical literacy assessment tool (currently in pilot phase).

Lack of indoor space, lack of training, and lack of resources and equipment were noted by participants as the biggest barriers to engaging young children in physical activity during care hours. It was noted that additional resources and training, such as activity DVDs, mini workshops, regular discussions at staff meetings, and training on how to instruct children on basic skill developmental continuums, will help lead to mastery. We plan to work with experts in Physical Literacy, including our partners at Middlesex-London Health Unit, on considering ways we can help sites overcome these barriers and how we can continue to support them.

Community Partners

- Middlesex-London Health Unit
- University of Western Ontario
- Various providers, including via HKCC Steering Committee and Middlesex Children's Services Network, supported the planning and implementation of the leaders education day

We also thank the following for their support:

- Drew Mitchell, Director of Physical Literacy from Canadian Sport for Life
- Dr. Dawne Clark, Director of the Centre for Child Well-Being from Mount Royal University
- Dr. Trish Tucker, Research Director with the Child Health and Physical Activity Lab from the University of Western Ontario
- Ms. Chloe Bedard, Infant and Child Health Lab, McMaster University
- Ms. Lindsay Siple, PARC Consultant & Health Promotion Consultant, Best Start Resource





Pilot of Move to Learn with McMaster University

Move to Learn is a program for children 2 to 6 years of age that was developed by students in the Department of Family Medicine at McMaster University. It was originally pilot tested in Boys & Girls Clubs in Hamilton with great success and acceptance. Middlesex County is the first community outside of Hamilton to pilot the program.

The objective of the program is to develop fundamental motor skills (FMS) and early literacy skills, while simultaneously supporting their social, psychological and cognitive development. The program placed special emphasis on parent involvement to build their capacity to support their child's overall development.

Objectives

- 1. To work with McMaster University on planning, implementing and evaluating an evidence-informed motor skill and pre-literacy program in select pilot sites in the County;
- 2. To recruit and support pilot sites in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the pilot;
- 3. To improve motor and pre-literacy skills in young children involved in the pilot;
- 4. To increase parental engagement in motor and reading activities (of those parents participating in the pilot);
- 5. To explore opportunities for sustainability such as a train the trainer model.



Implementation

The Move 2 Learn program was designed to run one hour once per week for 10 consecutive weeks. It consisted of three components: direct movement skill instruction, unstructured exploratory free-play, and an interactive storybook reading activity.

The first segment of the program each week focused on a specific movement skill by introducing new skills one-by-one. The movement skills covered included balancing, underhand rolling, leaping and galloping, underhand throwing, jumping, overhand throwing, catching, hopping, kicking and striking. A parent or guardian is involved in the direct instruction.

The second segment of the program consisted of free play to allow children the opportunity to practice the newly learned fundamental movement skills and begin to develop fine motor skills as they manipulated smaller play items (e.g., puzzle pieces).

The final segment of the program was an interactive storybook reading circle with all the children and their parents. Each week a new book is used to develop one-to-two pre-literacy skills. Specific strategies and books were selected from evidence-based curricula. The pre-literacy skills included print awareness and text directionality.

Each week involved the same 7 activities: warm-ups, 2 movement skill instruction activities (beginning with the easier variation of the skill, progressing to the more challenging variation), obstacle course, free play, clean up, and the reading circle.

At the end, parents received handouts that outlined the week's activities and how they could do it at home.



Thorndale Pilot

Accomplishments

- Four pilot sites were selected to implement the program in February 2016.
 - o Ontario Early Years Centres Perth-Middlesex, Lucan site
 - Ontario Early Years Centres Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Strathroy site
 - o Middlesex County Library, Parkhill Branch
 - o Middlesex County Library, Thorndale Branch
- In collaboration with McMaster University, training sessions with local leaders were conducted on March 9th and March 15th. March 9th was a community-wide leader's education session on physical literacy, with March 15th a session specific to the Move 2 Learn program.
- Each of the pilot sites received a tool kit of resources and equipment to run the program successfully in their respective site.
- Each pilot site also received 10 of each of the 5 books used in the program to give to families for use at home. Families were allowed to keep the books for continued use after the program.
- We were able to recruit 31 families to participate in the pilot.
- We were able to secure space for the Strathroy pilot thanks to in-kind contribution through the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc.
- As well, to support the objectives in our <u>Family Education Strategy</u>, we provided each family with a "Welcome" kit. This kit included information about Physical Literacy and the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines, as well as an HKCC beach ball and beach ball activity set.
- The first pilot site began implementation in April, with the remainder beginning the first week of May.
- Pre-assessments were conducted by McMaster with 31 families between April and May 2016. This involved an assessment of fundamental movement skills and preliteracy skills as well as parental engagement in movement and pre-literacy activities at home.
- We completed implementation of all 4 pilot sites in June 2016.
- A total of 10 session per site were offered, for a total of 40 sessions offered and 40 hours of intervention time.
- We held a graduation ceremony at each of the sites. Families were able to view
 pictures taken throughout the program. Children as well received a certificate of
 completion. Our Theme 2 message, Water Does Wonders, was also shared. We
 enjoyed fresh fruit and flavoured water, and families went home with a new water
 bottle.
- We conducted a focus group with leaders in July 2016 to gather feedback on program experience.
- Post-assessments were conducted by McMaster with 27 families after completion of the pilots.

A final report was provided from McMaster in October 2016.



Resources Provided to Pilot Sites

Outcomes

- Overall, the Move 2 Learn program seems to have had a positive impact on the
 participants in Middlesex County and this is supported by both the quantitative and
 qualitative results of the evaluation component.
- The overarching goal of providing an enjoyable and fun environment for families was reached by all four sites and the ability of the Move 2 Learn program to improve the movement and pre-literacy skills of the young children is promising.
- Additionally, the program positively influenced caregiver support for engagement in movement and pre-literacy activities at home.

• As well, the results of the qualitative evaluation indicate that there is flexibility around the implementation of the program and that it can be implemented in a variety of settings.



Strathroy Graduating Class



Thorndale Graduating Class

For more details on the evaluation of the program, you can download the full report at hkcc.middlesex.ca.

Next Steps

Our next step is to consider ways we can integrate the program into each pilot organization. We are exploring opportunities like train-the-trainer, in which the program would be implemented by volunteers in areas across the County, such as churches and other community settings.

Additionally, with the success of the Move 2 Learn program, our two library sites involved in the pilot have developed a plan for sustainability of the program, entitled "Storytime on the Move". Based on their experience with the Move 2 Learn pilot, these sites aim to pilot a 4-week program, with the goal of 'tweaking' the program as needed and then exchanging the program with the other 11 library sites involved in story time delivery. The program plan will entail delivery 3 times per year, ideally in all 11 library sites. This program will provide an opportunity for children and families to foster their motor skills as well as literacy skills, in a library setting, across municipalities.

In terms of sustainability, as highlighted under <u>County Events and Community-Consultations</u>, drop in programs and non-sport specific programs that help support skill development were identified by a segment of parents locally as top priorities/interest for promotion of physical activity.

Community Partners

- McMaster University, Infant and Child Health Lab
- Ontario Early Years Centres Perth-Middlesex, Lucan site; and Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Strathroy site
- Middlesex County Library, Parkhill Branch and Thorndale Branch
- Middlesex County Library, Lucan Branch (in-kind support for space)
- Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc (in-kind support for space)



Natural Play Space

Natural playgrounds are areas where children can play with natural elements such as sand, water, wood and living plants. The development of natural playgrounds are intended to supplement or replace traditional playgrounds in order to help engage children in outdoor play and enhance their connection with nature.

In a <u>recent review</u> by Simcoe-Muskoka health unit, the following benefits of green/naturalized school grounds were cited in the review:

- represent a promising means of getting more children moving in ways that promote physical, social and cognitive health at the same time;
- encourage children to get moving in ways that nurture all aspects of their health and development;
- play a significant role in promoting physical activity—especially moderate and light levels of activity;
- support active play for longer periods of time;
- can improve motor development which is related to physical literacy;
- provide more affordances for functional play (running, climbing rocks, sliding down slopes) in addition to constructive and symbolic play (playing house, pirates);
- provide a diversity of spaces that better accommodate the play interests and abilities of all students;
- foster more welcoming settings for a diversity of children to engage in active play;
- may contribute to maintaining physical activity levels among girls, those less inclined to participate in competitive rule-bound games, and younger children;
- can heighten student environmental awareness and stewardship;
- can provide shade, create cooler and more comfortable play and learning environments, and
- can create opportunities for student leadership.

One of the recommendations cited in this report was developing naturalized play areas on school grounds that connect children with nature and increase opportunities for physical activity to complement conventional/traditional schoolyard features.

Objectives

- To fund the development of a natural play space in collaboration with a pilot school within each of the School Boards (London Catholic District School Board and Thames Valley District School Board);
- 2. To reach out to parents, teachers, students and surrounding community via pilot school to promote the message of the role outdoor play has in fostering fundamental movement skills/physical literacy, and the value of outdoor play and nature for overall child health and development and in promoting physical activity;

3. To evaluate the impact of creating a supportive environment, such as a natural play space, on knowledge, attitudes and behaviours related to physical activity amongst children - children both in participating schools and in the surrounding community.

Implementation

This project aimed to transform the school yard of two pilot schools, one in the London Catholic District School Board, and one in the Thames Valley District School Board, into natural play spaces.

An effort was made to inform the school communities in these pilot schools about these play spaces and engage them in the use of these spaces during after-school hours.



Accomplishments

- Three sites were selected in collaboration with the London Catholic District School Board and Thames Valley District School Board. It was decided that two schools will share the funding in the TVDSB.
 - Eckoe Public School, Glencoe, TVDSB
 - o North Meadows, Strathroy, TVDSB
 - Sacred Heart Catholic School, Parkhill, LDCSB
- Construction of spaces over the summer of 2016.
- HKCC attended school open house/parents nights in Sept 2016 as a means to discuss
 with parents and students the value of the space. We were able to reach
 approximately 200 families between the schools.
- Distributed 15 Outdoor Adventure Back Packs, containing items to support young explorers including bug catcher, magnify glass, and binoculars - as prizes for visiting HKCC booth.
- An online anonymous survey was sent out to all three schools in October 2016. We
 were able to reach some of the administration and teachers, as well as parents in one
 of the three schools.



Sacred Heart Catholic School, Parkhill

Outcomes

- Overall, respondents indicated teachers being very satisfied (40%) or satisfied (30%) with the play space.
- For students, it was felt by 60% of respondents that students are satisfied, with 30% indicating very satisfied.
- Respondents indicated that the playspace enriched outdoor active play experiences across all grades. It appears that respondents feel the space was most enriching for the primary grades however, with highest agreement for the JK/SK (50% strongly agree) and Grade 1 and 2 students (40% strongly agree)
- Respondents were asked if they felt the space was supportive of encouraging a
 number of fundamental movement skills. Overall, it was felt the space encouraged
 most skills including running, jumping, climbing, hopping, balancing, and skipping.
 Other skills like log roll, catching, throwing, kicking and striking were not strongly
 influenced; this however is indicative of the type of space constructed. The skills most
 sited as being influenced include: balancing and climbing.
- Respondents were also asked if they felt the space was supportive of encouraging socialization, creativity and exploration. It was felt that the space supported these domains, with over 50% reporting "strongly agree" with each, and another 30% reporting "agree" for socialization and creativity.
- Other benefits noted include discovery of insects and exploring life cycles. It was also noted that the space supports environmental awareness.
- Respondents were asked if they felt the space was being utilized after school-hours. 60% reported not being aware, while 30% reported some or all of the time.
- 70% reported that it is important for schools to invest in natural play spaces, with 40% indicating very important and 30% indicating important.

• 60% of the respondents were familiar with the Healthy Kids Community Challenge.

In Parkhill, we were able to collect insight from 21 students during the School Open House. The following is a summary of the feedback:

- The most interesting parts of the space include: tunnel; made of natural elements/use of trees/wood & no metal; steps; stage
- 48% reported plans to "come back and play" (referring to after school hours)



North Meadows prize winner and her father enjoying their prize - Outdoor Adventure backpack

Community Partners

- London Catholic District School Board
- Thames Valley District School Board





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