



THE IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL LITERACY

Setting children up for a lifetime of health and wellness

It's no surprise that children develop better skills and have better overall health when they are active. So it came as a shock when a recent national study found that two-thirds of Canadian children *do not* have an acceptable level of physical literacy.

The 2018 study – Canada's first 'State Of The Nation' report on children's physical literacy – was led by the Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Group (HALO) at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO). The project

studied more than 10,000 children and found they aren't just inactive, but lack the fundamental movement skills, knowledge and motivation to engage in physical activities and play.¹

But let's back up a bit. What exactly is physical literacy? While there are many definitions, the International Physical Literacy Association says **physical literacy is the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life.**

"We hear about increasing obesity rates in kids, falling rates of physical activity and more time spent in front of screens," says Dr. Mark Tremblay, Senior Scientist at the CHEO and Director of HALO. "Physically literate children are more active and healthy children, which sets them up for life."²

KIDS SITTING TOO MUCH

This means more needs to be done – in our schools, in our communities, and in our homes – to increase children's physical literacy. According to ParticipACTION's 2018 *Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth*, the data around physical activity is alarming: on average, kids are still sitting too much and moving too little to reach their full potential.³ Family Day understands this and works hard within all facets of the agency to ensure children meet optimum health and wellness goals.

"We recognize how important it is to set good habits for life," says Linda Saad, Project Consultant at Family Day. "Physical Literacy helps children do better in school, grow stronger, improve their overall health and fitness, have fun with friends, feel happier, maintain a balanced body weight, improve their self-confidence, and learn new skills."

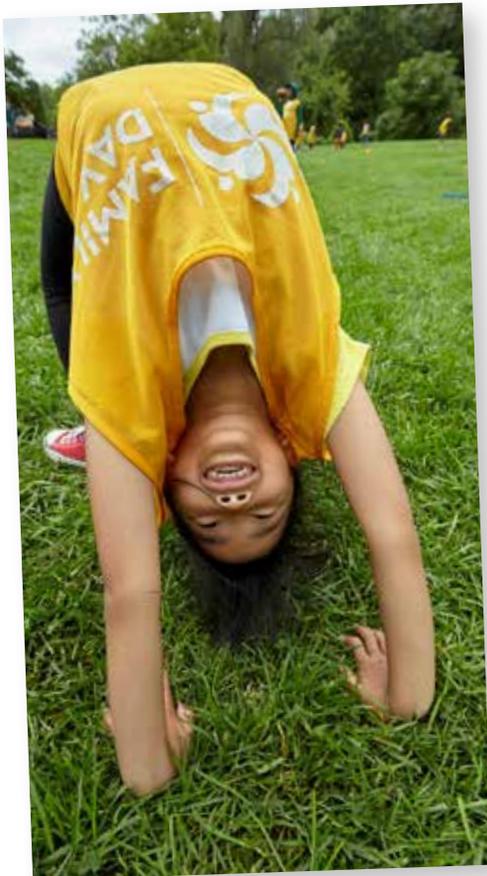
Canada's Physical Activity Guidelines recommend that children be active for at least 60 minutes per day; at Family Day we exceed these recommendations. Our educators plan a minimum of two, one-hour active, positive and meaningful outdoor play experiences each day.

GOOD HABITS FOR LIFE

"Family Day educators are trained in the Principles of Healthy Child Development," says Terry Kelly, Program Consultant at Family Day. "We also promote educational opportunities on physical literacy as part of our educators' own goals for continuous professional learning."

The agency follows the HighScope Curriculum in its centres which has principles of physical literacy embedded within it. Fundamental movement skills are clearly identified in our Key Developmental Indicators (KDIs), which our educators reference when planning physical activities.

For infants and toddlers, KDIs include moving the whole body (e.g., rolling, crawling, cruising, walking, running, and balancing).



THE IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL LITERACY

continued from page 1

For older children, KDIs include gross motor skills; children demonstrate strength, flexibility, balance and timing in using their large muscles (e.g., walking, climbing, running, throwing, and catching).



A HEALTHY BRAIN

So, we know that physical activity improves heart health, helps maintain healthy body weight, and builds strong bones and muscles. But research is now emerging on how physical activity helps the brain.

According to the ParticipACTION report card, there are important connections between the health of the body and of the brain that must be fostered in order for children to reach their mental, emotional and intellectual potential. In other words, kids' bodies have to move to get the wheels in their brains turning.⁴

Evidence shows physical activity in childhood is essential for a healthy brain and leads to such outcomes as: improved thinking and learning; emotional regulation and self-control; brain plasticity (the growth of new brain tissue); stress management; self-esteem and self-worth; and attention and focus.⁵

ACTIVE FOR LIFE

"Children's physical, emotional and mental health is top priority at Family Day," says Lisa Shortall, Manager of Training. "We realize that as educators we are setting the foundation for children to be active for life and, as such, our goal is to build positive experiences."

Our educators work hard to provide daily opportunities for physical activity and active play; keep up-to-date on the most recent data around physical activity; go outside in all weather; and promote active and risky play.

"As an agency we avoid elimination games; we focus on skill building," says Shortall. "We plan activities that provide a positive experience for everyone and provide character building, cooperation, decision-making, problem-solving, and conflict resolution."

But physical literacy must also extend into the home. So, what can parents do? Saad and Kelly say families can participate in a variety of activities together, including rolling down a hill and walking back up; throwing, catching or kicking a ball; walking, running or skipping in open spaces; hopping and climbing (a hill, a fence or a tree); and visiting the local swimming pool.

"Just don't forget the fun factor," says Saad. "The goal is to make it fun and ensure everyone is engaged at all times."

1, *Are Canadian Kids Losing The Ability To Play?* By Leslie Young

2, *Canada's First "State Of The Nation" Report on Children's Physical Literacy*, CHEO

3, 4, 5: 2018 ParticipACTION Report Card

CHILDREN AREN'T ACTIVE ENOUGH

- 35% of five- to 17-year-olds meet the physical activity recommendation within the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth
- 62% of three- to four-year-olds meet the physical activity recommendation within the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years

Source: *The 2018 ParticipACTION Report*

Message from
Joan Arruda, CEO

STRIVE FOR ACTIVE FAMILY TIME



In this issue of FOCUS, we highlight the importance of physical literacy, including how parents can influence their children's health and well-being. When we make the time to play and move with our children, we set the stage for a lifetime of physical activity.

I was recently reminded of how important it is for adults to model the behaviour we hope our children will adopt. On October 13, I attended Family Day's OPEN Doors event with my own grandchildren, aged 7 and 9. The boys were playing in the pop-up playground section with interesting objects like tires and tubes. My older grandson pulled together ropes, a tire and a handle, and then pulled the contraption over his shoulder and ran through the space calling it: "My workout machine." When he had reached a point where he couldn't run any longer, he turned around

and raised his arms to signify victory. I marveled that, at his age, he had already incorporated the concept of movement and achievement into his play.

As it happens, both of my grandson's parents are physically active, and both boys follow suit with Jiu-Jitsu classes and other activities. Yet, like all young children, they like their electronics and screen time. Understanding this, we strive for balance and are intentional about physical activity supporting their physical growth and development.

As our main article points out, the family is a key component in physical literacy. Family time can include so many options – in all seasons – with activities like exploratory walks, games, and bike riding. These activities are healthy, fun, and help to create great memories.

Joan Arruda

Cheers, Joan



OPEN Doors Event a Big Success

Close to 330 people turned out for Family Day's first OPEN Doors event on Saturday, October 13. Held at the Kortright Centre in Vaughan, the event brought together Family Day staff, Board members, children and their families for a day of fun in the forest.

Guests took part in several nature activities, facilitated by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. Activities included: loose parts play; a nature hike; tree bark and leaf rubbing; parachute fun; and several musical and artistic undertakings. The event was designed to bring people together to enjoy nature and take part in activities related to the natural world.

Survey Results Point to High Quality Care



The results of the second annual parent survey are in, with 94% of parents reporting they would recommend Family Day to their friends and associates. Conducted online by Drake International, the 2018 survey provided the following results:

- 98% of respondents said they were comfortable approaching educators and centre supervisors if they had questions
- 98% said they knew who to ask if they had a concern about their child in the program
- 97% noted they had a positive relationship with their child's educators
- 97% agreed with the statement: "The program provides a safe, comfortable environment for my child."



Parents pointed out a few areas in which they would like further information: children's skill development, including what skills could be applied in a home context; and food and dietary selections. Family Day's management team will be conducting further research into these areas.

Family Day Holds 167th AGM

About 130 Family Day staff, Board members and sector partners gathered at the BMO Institute for Learning on September 26 for the agency's 2018 Annual General Meeting. Our 167th AGM included a special keynote address entitled "Perspectives on Canadian Families" by author and speaker Nora Spinks, CEO of the Vanier Institute.

Nora Spinks, CEO of the Vanier Institute
and Joan Arruda, CEO of Family Day



Get in the Bowling Frame of Mind

Start practicing your fancy footwork.

The eighth annual Bowling for Family Day will take place on Saturday, April 13, 2019 at two locations: Markham Bowl and Brunswick Zone Bramalea. Stay tuned for more information in the months to come.



8TH ANNUAL
**Bowling for
Family Day**

SATURDAY
**APRIL 13
2019**

Celebrating our Wonderful Staff

While Child Care Worker and Early Childhood Educator Appreciation Day should be every day, it was officially celebrated on October 16, 2018. Family Day is extremely proud of our staff and the real difference they make in the lives of children and their families.



United Way Campaign Underway

Family Day's 2018 United Way campaign is now in full swing! We will be holding activities across the agency and will be participating in the CN Tower climb on November 25. Thank you to everyone who supports Family Day's efforts to raise funds for such a worthy cause.



United Way
Toronto & York Region



FAMILY
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Thanks For Participating

Thank you to everyone who participated in our online demographic survey. Family Day is working to strengthen our commitment to human rights and social inclusion, and the information you shared will help us to promote inclusive programs and services.



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- Licensed Home Child Care
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- School Age Programs
- Resource Programs
- EarlyON Child and Family Centres
- Homework Plus

FOCUS Newsletter

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United Way
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For countless families, Family Day is the only way!