



Healthy Weights
CONNECTION™

February 2015

Physical Literacy

Factsheet No. #4

Julia Hill

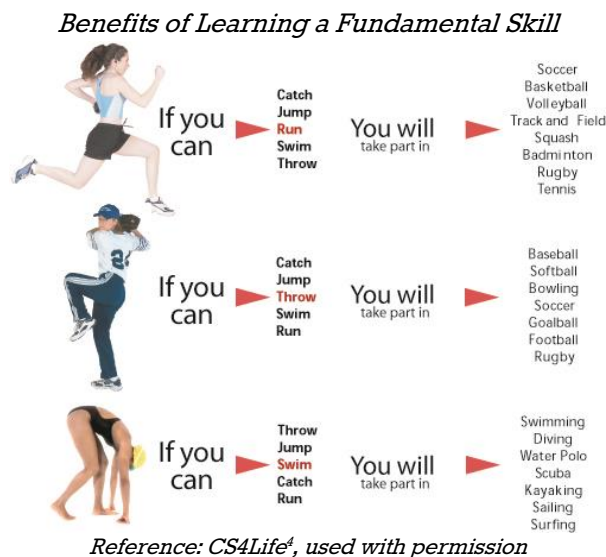
Introduction

Literacy means to learn and have knowledge and competence in areas such as reading and writing. An emerging concept called *physical literacy* means to become educated and knowledgeable about movement¹. Aboriginal youth have been identified as an underrepresented population in physical activity, recreation and sport which means this group may face unique barriers in physical literacy development². This factsheet was developed to inform service providers about physical literacy, including what it means, why it is important, what are the health and social benefits associated with physical literacy, and how to improve physical literacy within families and schools.

Definitions

A *physically literate* person can move with competence and confidence in a wide variety of physical activities in multiple environments that benefit the healthy development of the whole person³.

A *physically literate* person is consistently developing their motivation and ability to understand, communicate, and apply different forms of movement across a wide range of health-related physical activities³. These skills can help enable them to make healthy and active choices throughout their lives³.



Why is Physical Literacy Important?

Developing physical literacy at a young age is important because it instills confidence in fundamental movements and sport skills that affect physical activity later in life³. It also supports long-term participation and performance in physical activity and sports⁵. Although the preference is to educate children, it is also important to acquire these skills at any age.

¹ Physical and Health Education (PHE) Canada. (2013). Passport for life: Physical literacy explained. Retrieved from, <http://www.passportforlife.ca/physical-literacy-explained>

² Canadian Sport for Life. (N.D.). Developing physical literacy: A guide for parents of children ages 0 to 12. Retrieved from, <http://canadiansportforlife.ca/resources/developing-physical-literacy-guide-parents-children-ages-0-12>

³ PHE Canada. (2015). Physical literacy. Retrieved from, <http://www.phecanada.ca/programs/physical-literacy/what-physical-literacy>

⁴ CS4Life. (2015). Consequences of Missing a Fundamental Skill [Figure 1]. Retrieved from, <http://www.physicalliteracy.ca/more-fundamental-skills>

⁵ Canadian Sport for Life (CS4Life). (2015). What is physical literacy? Retrieved from, <http://www.physicalliteracy.ca/what-is-physical-literacy>



According to research, children and youth who do not develop physical literacy tend to withdraw from physical activity and sport, become inactive and make unhealthy choices⁵. For instance, children with physical skills can enjoy vigorous healthy play while those with less skills can be left out and this can lead to decreased effort and eventual withdraw from physical activities⁵.

Physical literacy is also important for reducing the risk of injury in physical activity and sport. Formal education in physical literacy can help the development of correct movement skills and thereby reduce the risk of injury¹. Physical literacy has been found to impact other areas of a person's life. For example, competent movers tend to be more socially and psychologically resilient and also more successful academically and socially¹.

Benefits of Physical Literacy

Acquisition of physical literacy skills has many health and social benefits, including:

- ✓ Development of confidence and self-esteem;
- ✓ Social interaction with others;
- ✓ Knowledge and understanding of the importance of physical activity in maintaining health;
- ✓ Commitment to participate in a range of physical activities;
- ✓ Appreciation of the value of physical activities in their potential to enhance the quality of life⁶.

Moving Forward

Quality physical education provides the most accessible opportunity for a child to develop physical literacy since physical education has the means to reach every child, regardless of age, ability, socio-economic status, gender, or culture³.

School administrators can seek qualified teachers to offer physical education programs to ensure all students develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to become physically literate³. Agility, Balance, Coordination, and Speed (ABCs) are important skills in most sports⁷. The table below presents some key sports that can help children develop the ABCs of physical literacy.

ABCs of Physical Literacy

Sport/Activity	Agility	Balance	Coordination	Speed
Gymnastics	X	X	X	
Track & Field			X	X
Skating & Skiing		X	X	X
Lacrosse	X		X	X
Cycling		X		X

Reference: CS4Life⁷

⁶ Whitehead, M. (2010). Physical literacy: Throughout the life course (International Studies in Physical Education and Youth Sport). Routledge: New York, NY.

⁷CS4Life. (2015). The ABCs: Useful in all sports. Retrieved from, <http://www.physicalliteracy.ca/abcs-useful-in-sport>



Service providers involved with planning community recreation and sport programs should ensure their programs cover a range of physical literacy skills rather than single sport programs².

Parents, caregivers, coaches, and teachers all play a role in the development of children's physical literacy. Parents can ensure their child has access to a range of opportunities to nurture this development, such as community recreation and sport programs and also a quality physical education program at school³.

Additional Resources

If you are looking for activity ideas to incorporate physical literacy concepts into your programming, visit the **Active For Life** website for a list of activities that can be organized by age group and skills:

<http://activeforlife.com/activities/>

If you are looking for activity ideas to help children and youth develop an understanding of the skills and strategies associated with playing a wide range of physical activities and sports, visit the **Play Sport** website for list of activities that can be organized by age group and movement skills:

<http://www.playsport.net/activity>

If you are looking for effective, fun and interactive methods to teach fundamental movement and sport skills, visit the **Physical and Health Education (PHE) Canada** website for access to free online videos:

<http://www.phecanada.ca/resources/fms-videos>