

A province-level standard for active play in licensed child care improves centre-level policies: Preliminary evidence

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Introduction

Physical activity (PA) and physical literacy are critical to childhood development¹ in the early years and a foundation for sport development.

Canadian children are not meeting PA or sedentary behaviour recommendations or norms of motor skill development^{2,3}

Childcare settings can provide PA/FMS opportunities^{4,5}

More than half of Canadian children are in child care⁶ but accumulate little MVPA while in child care⁷

The impact of state level policy on the relationship between childcare policies, environments and practices and the provision of fundamental movement promoting activities has yet to be explored in Canada.

Background

In 2017, the Director of Licensing Standard of Practice for Active Play (DOLSOP) and a capacity-building initiative (Appetite to Play) was released and implemented.

Purpose

To determine the influence of a state-level policy on childcare level policy and practice and of the capacity-building initiative Appetite to Play.

Methods

Participants

Managers of licensed childcare centres in BC providing care for children 30 months to 5 years of age.

Measures

Surveys, were adapted from the Early Years Physical Activity Observation Tool (EPAO)⁸ and distributed prior to the enactment of the standard (Wave 1, 2015-2016) and following (Wave 2, 2019).

Analysis

Descriptive and chi squared statistics summarized the data. Future analyses will include logistic regression and multilevel logistic regression models and matched samples.

Results

Table 1. Gender and age demographics for Wave 1 and Wave 2 survey participants.

	Wave 1	Wave 2
Gender		
Female	97%	88%
Male	2%	3%
Prefer not to disclose	1%	9%
Age		
20-39	31%	31%
40-59	59%	58%
60+	10%	11%

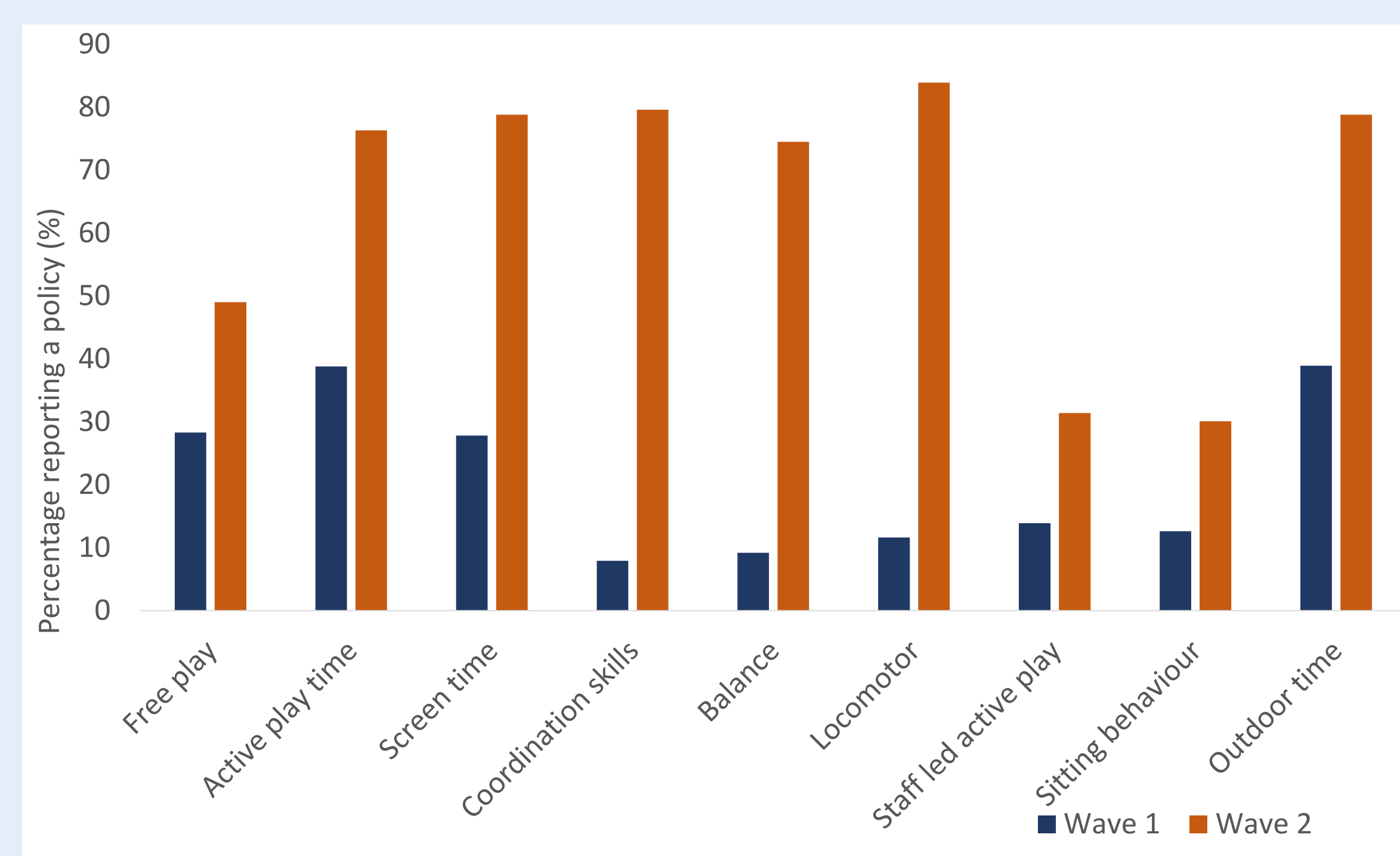


Figure 1. Prevalence of nine activity policies before (Wave 1) and after (Wave 2) DOLSOP implementation.

- Less than 25% of Wave 1 participants were aware of the DOLSOP while 98% of Wave 2 participants were aware.
- 22% of Wave 2 participants had participated in Appetite to Play.
- Prevalence of PA policies addressing a number of best practices appeared to increase after the DOLSOP (see Figure 1) and participants self-reported making changes in policies (see Table 2)
- Participation in Appetite to Play was significantly associated ($p=0.03$) with having a policy for total amount of active play time but no other policies.

Table 2. Percentage of participants reporting a change in policy in the previous year.

Policy	Percentage of participants reporting change
Time children spend outdoors, and fundamental movement skill development	51%
Sitting behaviour	34%
Professional development for staff to implement AP standard	29%

Conclusion

Preliminary evidence indicates provincial level policy and capacity-building efforts influenced the prevalence of active play policies at the individual childcare centre level.

Further analyses matching wave 1 and wave 2 centres will provide greater insight into the impact of the AP standard and the mediators and moderators of policy adherence.

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