

Mergler, Jason

University of Manitoba

Elizabeth Markwart, Leisha Strachan, Dany MacDonald, Fernando Santos, Jean Côté
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Snapshot: A Project SCORE Evaluative Pilot Case Study

The most popular extra-curricular youth activity in Canada is organized sport (Larson & Verma, 1999). For two decades, roughly 90% of Canadians have believed that sport has the potential to be a positive avenue for the growth and development of children and youth (Decima Research Inc., 2002; Jenkins, 2013; Mulholland, 2008; Pegoraro et al., 2022). Over those 20 years, the field of positive youth development (PYD) has advanced the idea that youth are resources to be cultivated and that the development of young people involves asset building rather than reducing problem behaviors. In sport, Project SCORE (www.projectscore.ca) is an online resource created to assist coaches and parents to focus on intentional positive youth sport program delivery (Strachan et al., 2016). Further, this resource is supported by the 4 Cs of positive youth development (Côté et al., 2016). Project SCORE was implemented in two separate sport programs to evaluate its effectiveness. Two coaches and 14 youth athletes (ages 11-16) were recruited to participate in a four-week program requiring each coach to attend an informative workshop prior to beginning, to implement weekly activities, and complete weekly follow-up surveys throughout the month-long program. Project SCORE also required the completion of discrete pre- and post-intervention questionnaires for coaches (the Life Skills Self-Assessment Tool for Coaches; Kramers et al., 2022) and youth (Athlete Sport Competence Inventory, Sport Confidence Inventory, Coach-Athlete Relationship Questionnaire, and Athlete Behaviour Scale). Based on a visual analysis of their survey responses, both coaches seemed to improve their ability to discuss and practice life skills development and transfer after the four-week program. Specifically, mean scores for the 4 Cs increased from 8.25 to 12.5 points out of 15. However, youth athletes displayed mixed trends in their group averages over the length of the program. Visual analysis demonstrated apparent decreases in competence (from 3.82 to 3.67 out of 5) and coach-athlete connection (from 6.25 to 5.92 out of 7), with simultaneous increases in confidence, (from 3.16 to 3.20 out of 4) and in athlete behaviour (from 4.00 to 4.15 out of 5). Overall, while both coaches superficially showed progress after the intervention, possibly indicating improved consistency and greater intentionality in program delivery, athletes displayed ostensibly mixed results. However, there were many limitations to consider, including the consistency of program teaching between coaches, lack of retention pre- to post-intervention, small sample sizes, and different sports and sport cultures (i.e., softball versus soccer). Moving forward, more efforts need to be directed towards understanding the impact of positive youth interventions across socio-cultural contexts with a larger sample of coaches and athletes.