

# RESEARCH FINDINGS

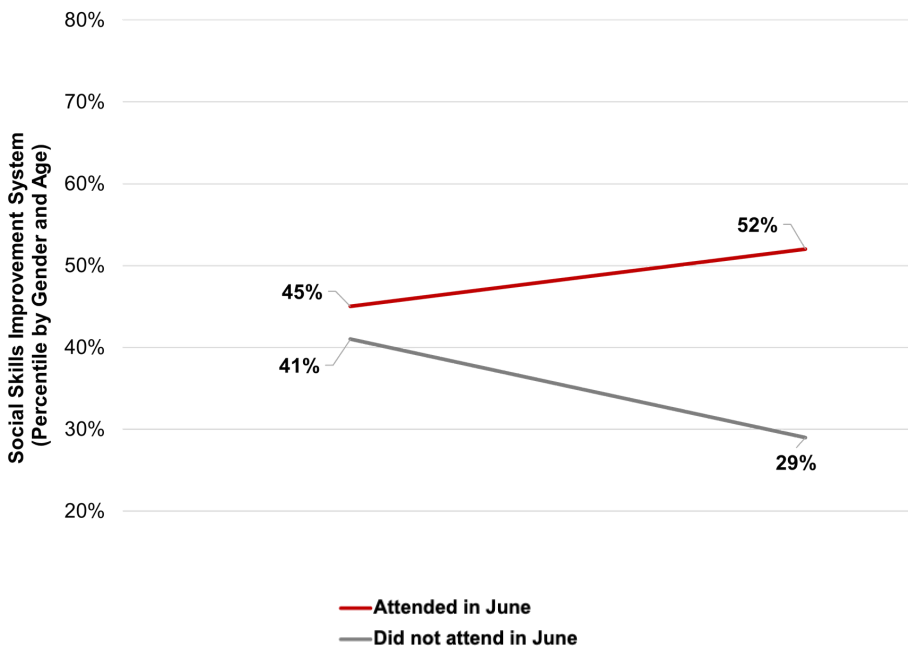
## THE 5<sup>TH</sup> QUARTER EFFECT

The transition from the academic year to summer represents a critical disruption in access to structured supports for many youth. LiFEsports is a sport-based positive youth development (PYD) intervention that teaches leadership and life skills through sport, combining approximately 15 hours of social skill instruction with exposure to 8 different sports and a healthy lifestyle curriculum. LiFEsports positions summer sport as a continuation of learning, not a pause. We define this as the “5th Quarter”: a structured extension of the school year where youth continue to build and apply life skills through sport-based PYD. This brief integrates findings from rigorous studies examining LiFEsports’ impact on (1) social skill development, (2) fundamental motor skill development, and (3) continued sport participation.



### Randomized Study of LiFEsports: Social Skill Development

**Caregiver Perceptions of Social Skills (N = 96)**  
Attended LiFEsports in June (n = 49)  
Attended LiFEsports in July (n = 45)



(Psychology of Sport and Exercise; DOI: 10.1016/j.psychsport.2025.103000)

**Design:** Randomized controlled trial (4-week summer intervention)  
**Focus:** Exploring social skill development among youth with limited access to sport/recreation opportunities/families experiencing the effects of poverty

- Key Findings:**
- **Significant improvements in social skills:** Youth attending LiFEsports demonstrated greater gains in social skills compared to a waitlist control group, based on caregiver reports.
  - **Summer learning was sustained or improved – whereas control learning was lost:** The intervention helped youth maintain and build social skills during summer months, a period often associated with regression.

### WHY THIS MATTERS

Sport-based PYD programs in the summer can function as a protective developmental bridge, preventing loss of social skills and promoting continued growth outside the school year.

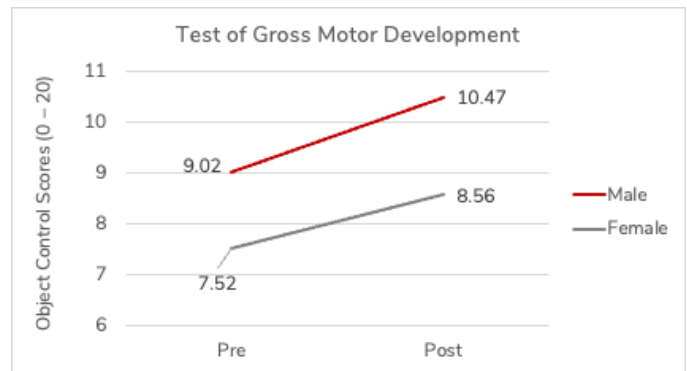
# LiFEsports Supports Gains in Fundamental Motor Skill Development

**Design:** Mixed-methods evaluation (motor skill assessment via observation + youth experiences from program surveys)

**Focus:** Examine whether and to what extent LiFEsports supports development of fundamental motor skills (FMS) through structured sport-based PYD

## Key Findings:

- **Significant gains in fundamental motor skills:** Youth demonstrated improvements in core motor competencies, including locomotor skills (e.g., running, jumping) and object control skills (e.g., throwing, catching).
- **Skill development occurs through intentional instruction:** Gains were linked to structured practice, modeling, and feedback embedded within programming—not just participation in sport alone.
- **Closing gaps in skills:** Girls and those returning for a second year showed meaningful gains, highlighting LiFEsports as an entry point for building foundational skills often underdeveloped in underserved populations.



## WHY THIS MATTERS

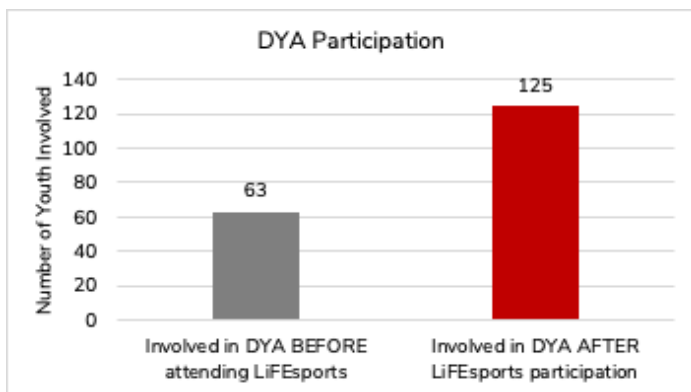
FMS development supports broader participation and confidence: Improvements in motor skills contributed to increased confidence in sport settings, greater willingness to engage in physical activity, and enhanced readiness for continued sport participation.

*(Journal of Motor Learning and Development; DOI: 10.1123/jmld.2025-0033)*

# LiFEsports Promotes Continued Sport Participation

**Design:** Program participation tracking (Dublin Youth Athletics [DYA] partnership)

**Focus:** Youth retention and continued sport engagement following LiFEsports participation



## Key Findings:

- **Participation in community sport more than doubled:** Youth involvement in Dublin Youth Athletics increased from 63 participants before LiFEsports to 125 after participation.
- **Access supported through scholarships:** 30 youth received DYA scholarships, reducing financial barriers to continued participation.
- **Sustained engagement beyond programming:** Approximately 1 in 3 youth remained in sport via DYA involved in sport following their LiFEsports experience.

## WHY THIS MATTERS

LiFEsports not only engages youth during programming but also strengthens long-term retention in sport by connecting youth to community opportunities, reducing access barriers, and supporting continued participation beyond the initial experience.

## Summary

Across these three studies, the “5th Quarter” emerges as a critical extension of the school year, where youth continue to build social skills, fundamental motor skills, and sustained engagement in sport through structured summer programming. Together, the evidence shows that when intentionally designed, sport does not end with the season—it creates a bridge that supports development, access, and retention well beyond the school year.