



MOOVE & SNOOZE LAB
UMASS AMHERST



Physical Activity through Sports in Children and Adolescents

APA 2024 Science Summit: The Science of Physical Activity
Sport, Performance, and Well-Being Symposium

Christine W. St. Laurent, PhD, MPH, CSCS

Department of Kinesiology
School of Public Health and Health Sciences
University of Massachusetts Amherst

My Perspectives...



Youth PA Guidelines

Preschool Children (3 to 5 years)

Be physically activity
throughout day

Adult caregivers should
encourage:

- Active play
- Variety of activity types

Children & Adolescents (6 to 17 years)

60 min+ daily MVPA:

- Mostly aerobic
- Muscle-strengthening
(3+ days)
- Bone-strengthening
(3+ days)

Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, Second Edition (2018)

Promoting PA in Youth



Youth Organizations
Class Lessons
Outdoor Play Camps
Community Built Environment Home Setting
Active Transportation
Physical Education School Built Environment
Classroom Activity Breaks
After School Programs
Recess Community Programs
Preschool & Childcare

What is a “Sport”?

The US National Youth Sports Strategy (NYSS) definition:

“A form of physical activity that, through recreational or competitive participation, aims to develop or maintain skills, fitness, mental well-being, and social-emotional health;

Therefore, it is expected that the health benefits of physical activity can come from participation in sports”

Source: US Department of Health and Human Services, *The National Youth Sports Strategy*

Benefits of Youth Sports

Confidence

Cognitive functioning

Physical literacy

Concentration

Less depressive symptoms

Goal setting

Interpersonal skills

Time management

Reduced suicidal thoughts & tendencies

Perceived

competence

Reduced risk of suicide

Leadership

Relationship building

Graduation rates

Work ethic

Memory

Teamwork

Academic performance

Self-esteem

Life skills

Reduced anxiety

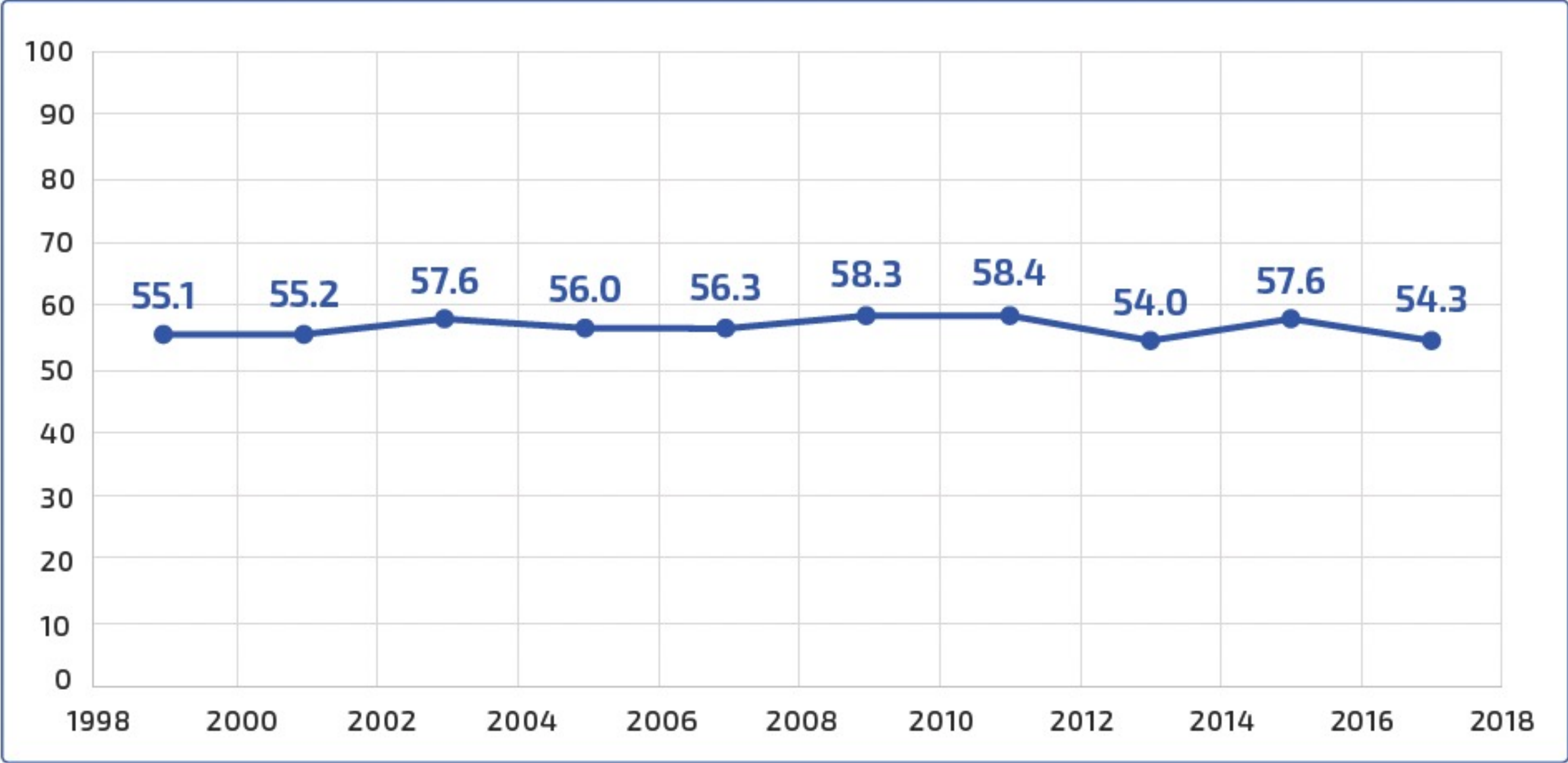
How Are We Doing?

2022 US Report Card on Physical Activity for Children & Youth

Source: Physical Activity Alliance. (2022). *The 2022 United States Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth.*

Indicator	Grade
Overall Physical Activity	D-
Active Transportation	D-
Organized Sport Participation	C
Active Play	INC
Sedentary Behaviors	D
Sleep	C+
Physical Fitness	C-
Family and Peers	INC
School	D-
Community and Built Environment	C

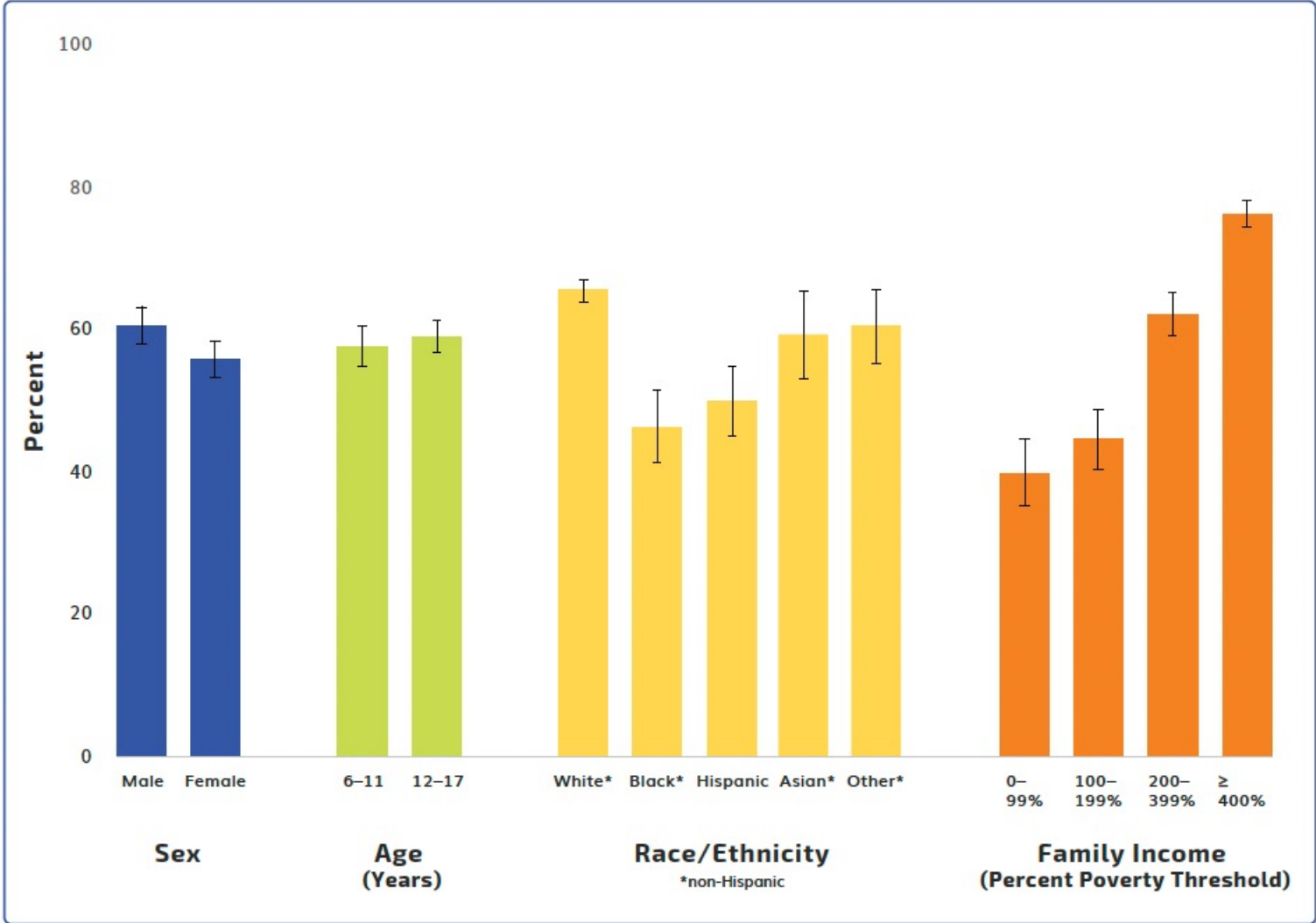
HS Students on at Least One Team



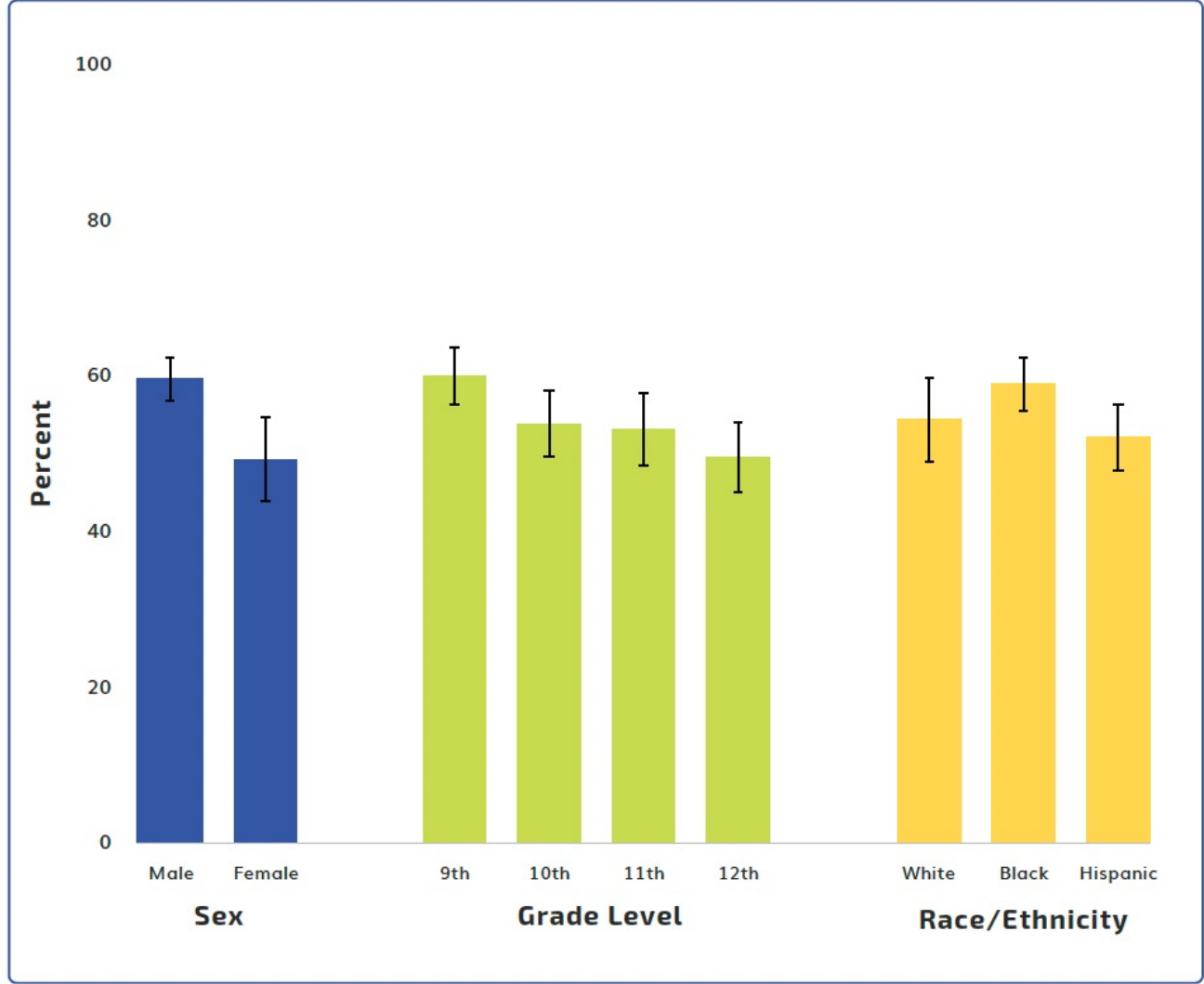
Source: National Youth Risk Behavior Surveys, 1999-2017

Participation Disparities

Participation in Team or Lessons After School or on Weekends

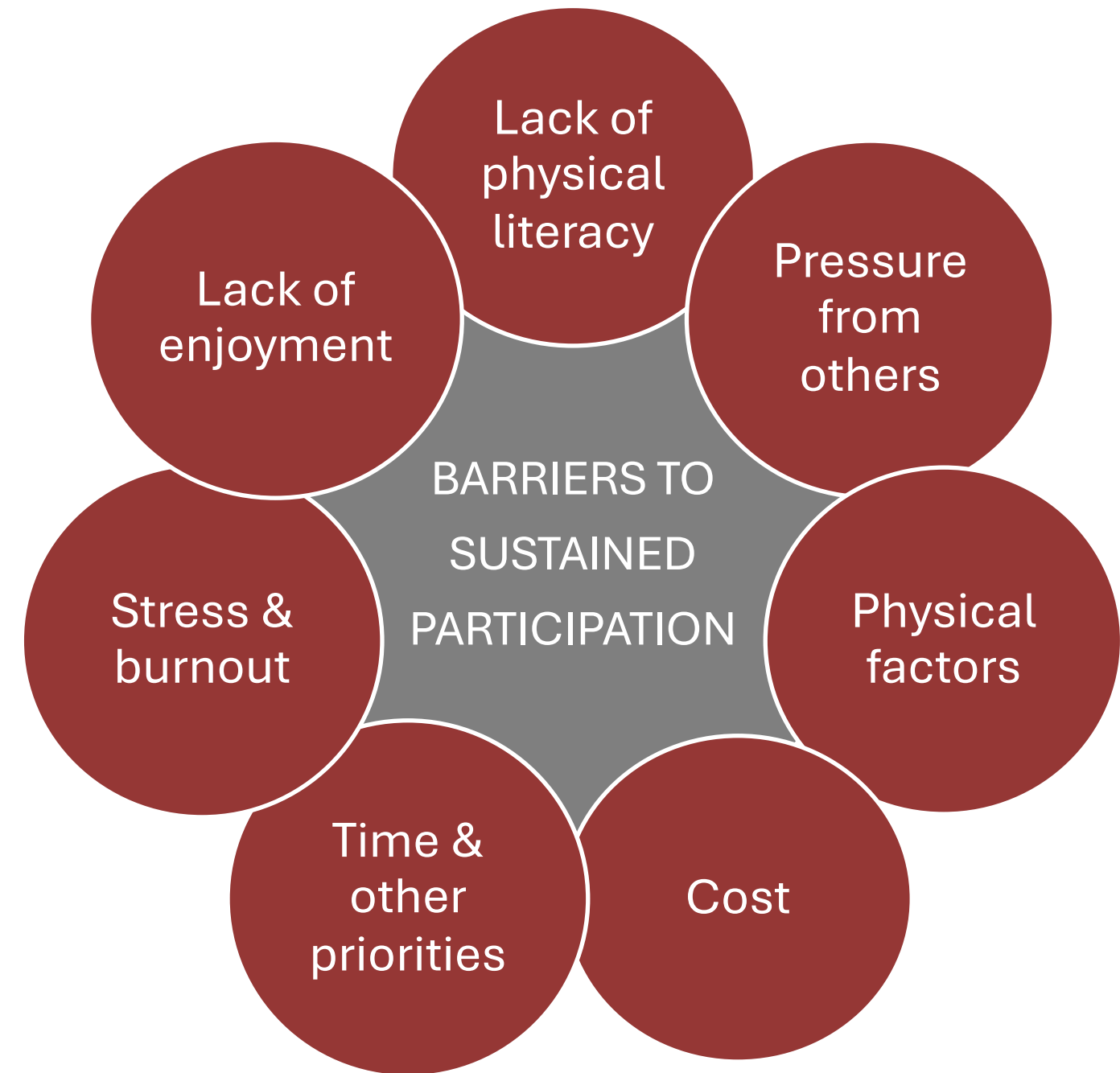
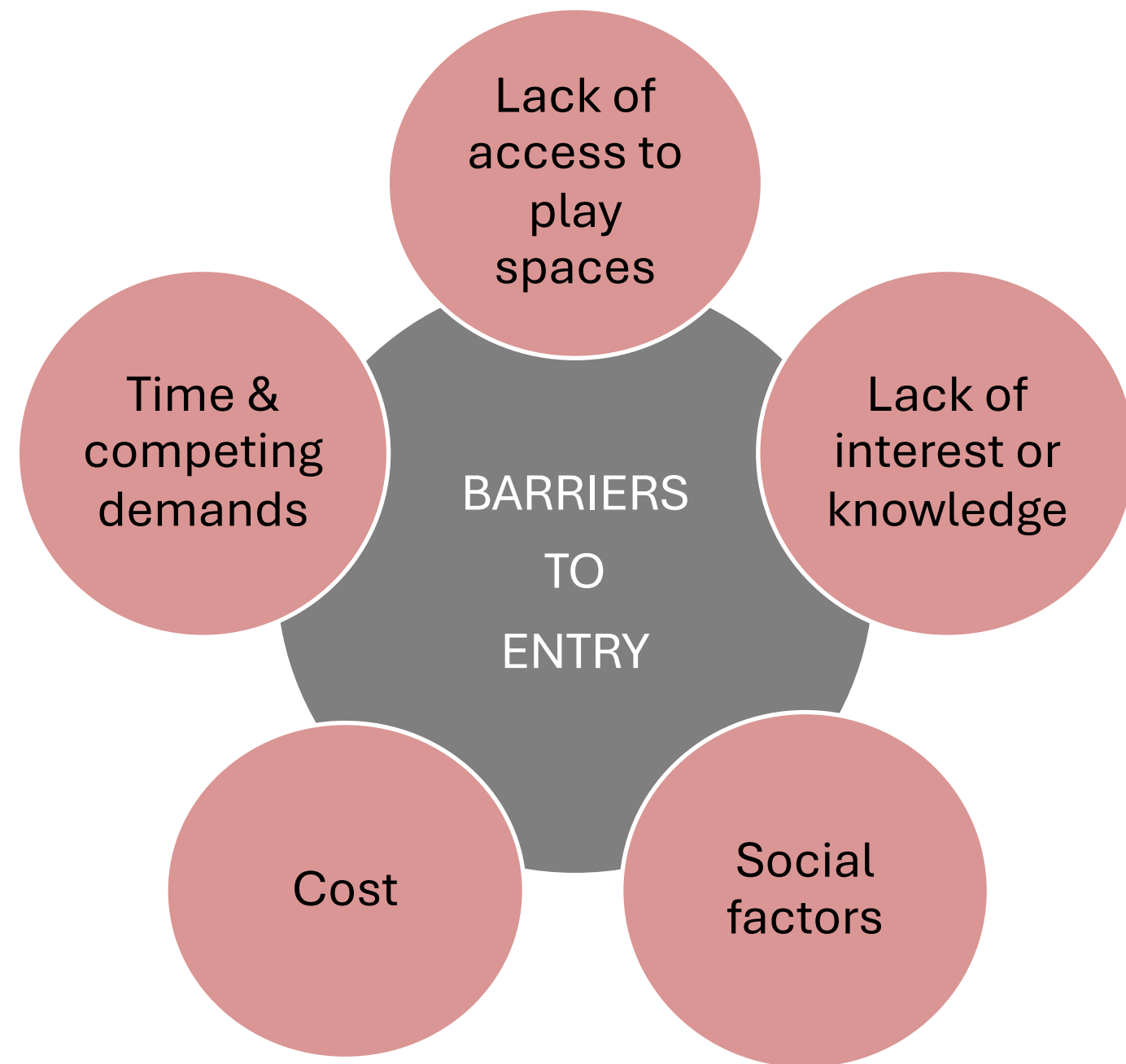


HS Students on at Least One Team



Source: National Youth Risk Behavior Surveys, 1999-2017

Barriers to Participation



Where Youth Sports Can Fall Short



Where Youth Sports Can Fall Short

“Well, I believe you can outscore your opponent and still lose, just like you can score less than them and win.”

~Ted Lasso

Adult
lack of
knowledge

Games >
Practices

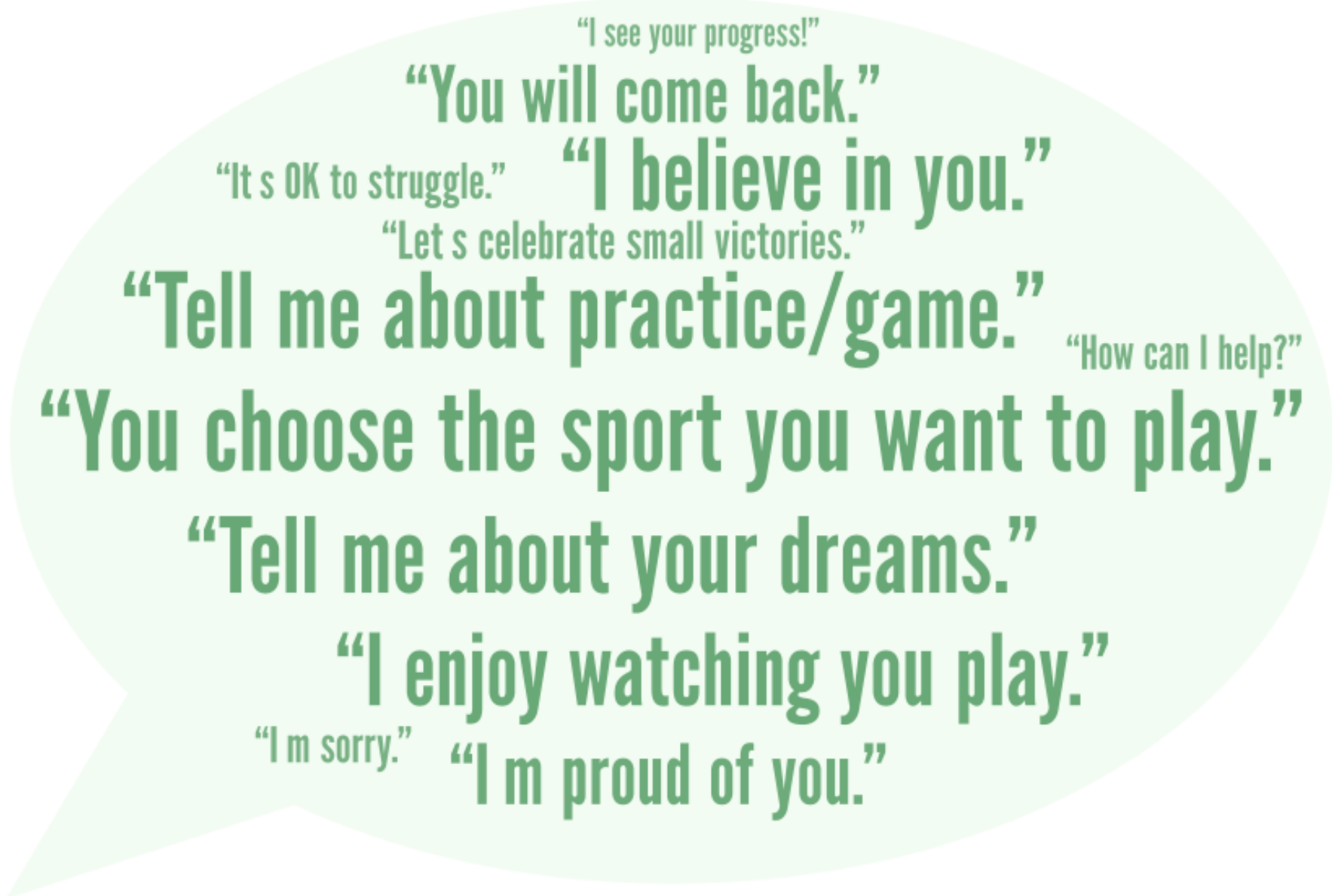
‘Poor’
modeling

Early sports
specialization

Restricted
PA during
events

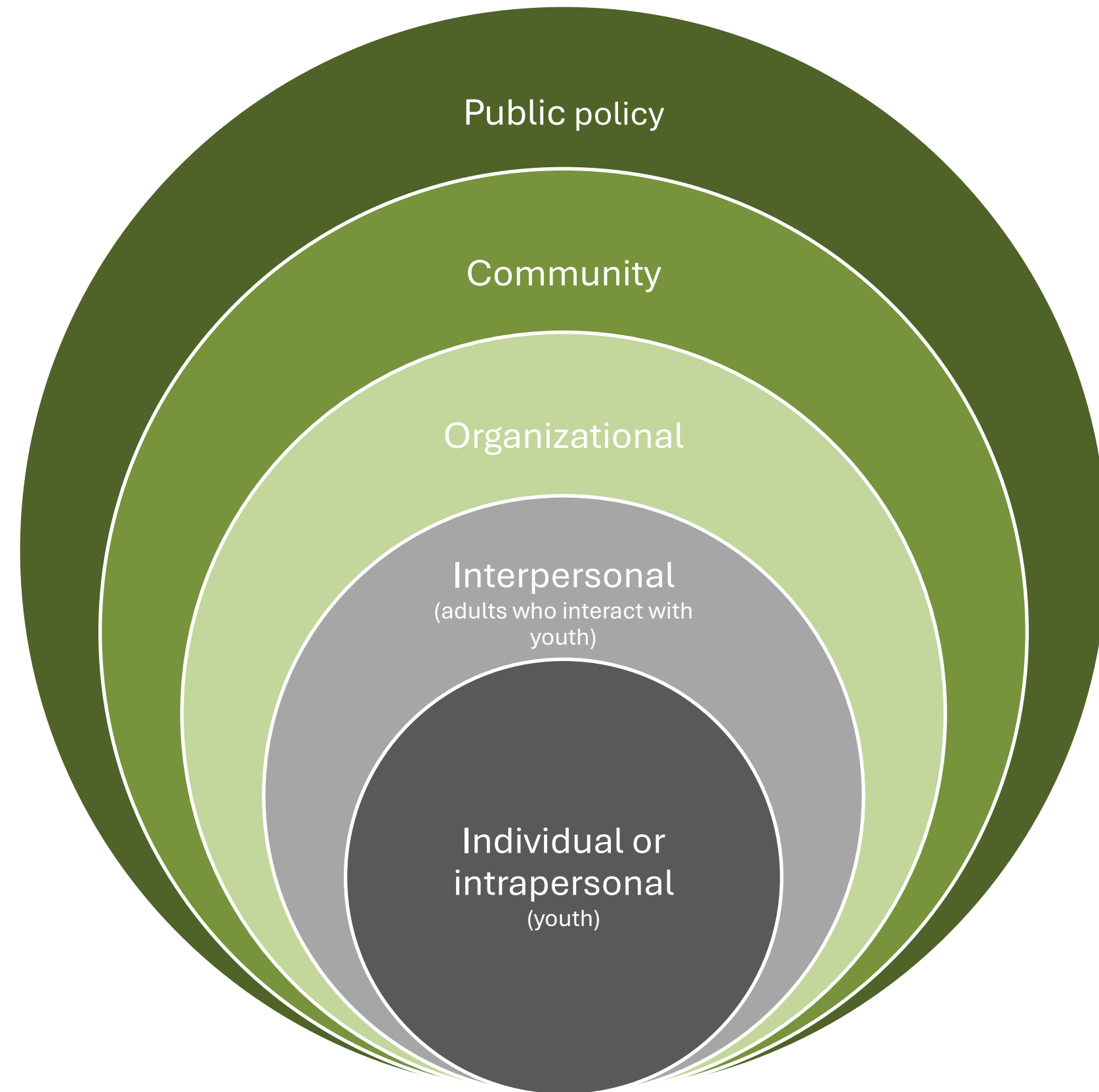
**Lack of
emphasis on
learning,
development,
enjoyment!!!**

Changing the Narrative & Culture

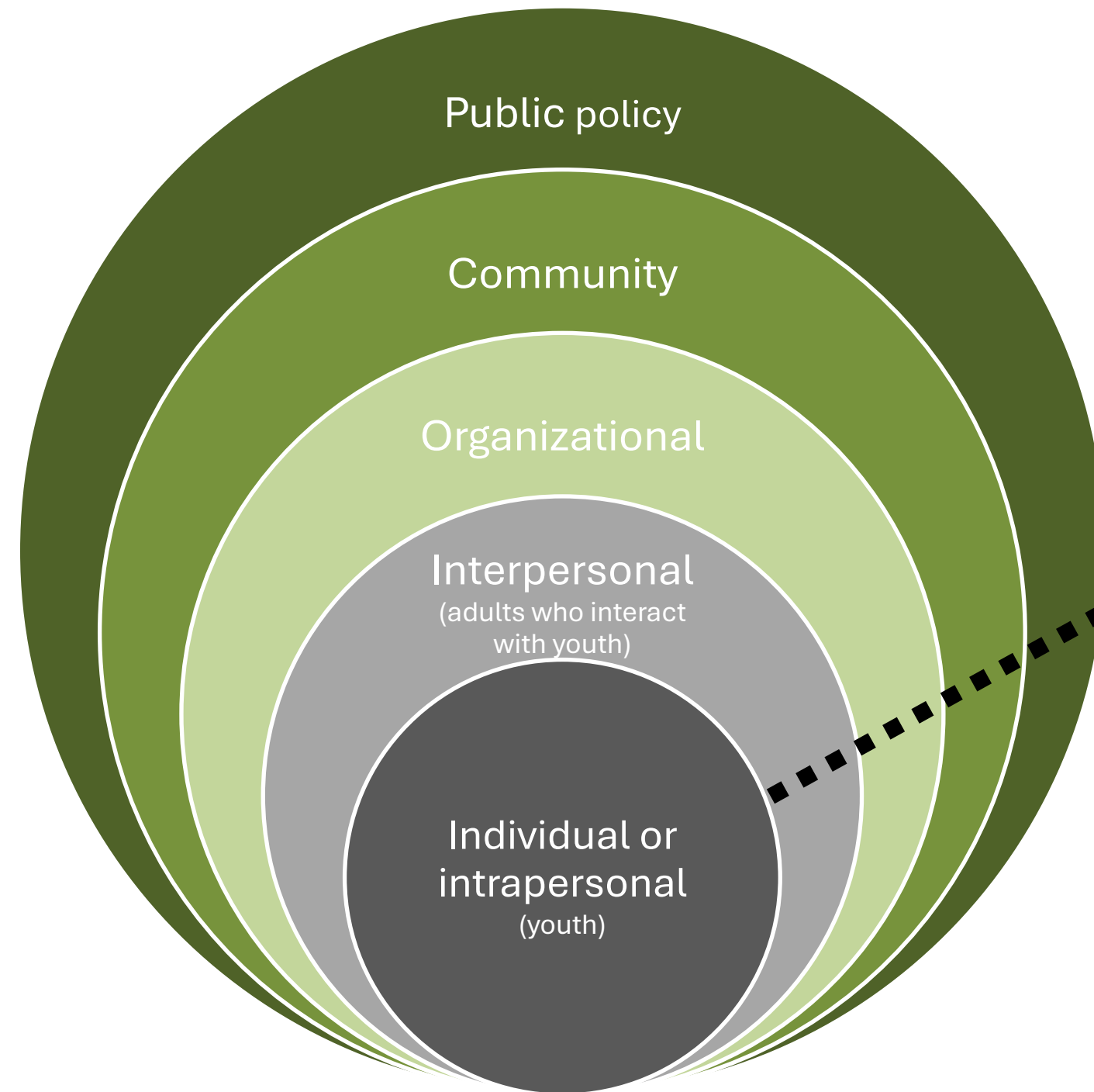


The NYSS Framework

Source: US Department of Health and Human Services, *The National Youth Sports Strategy*

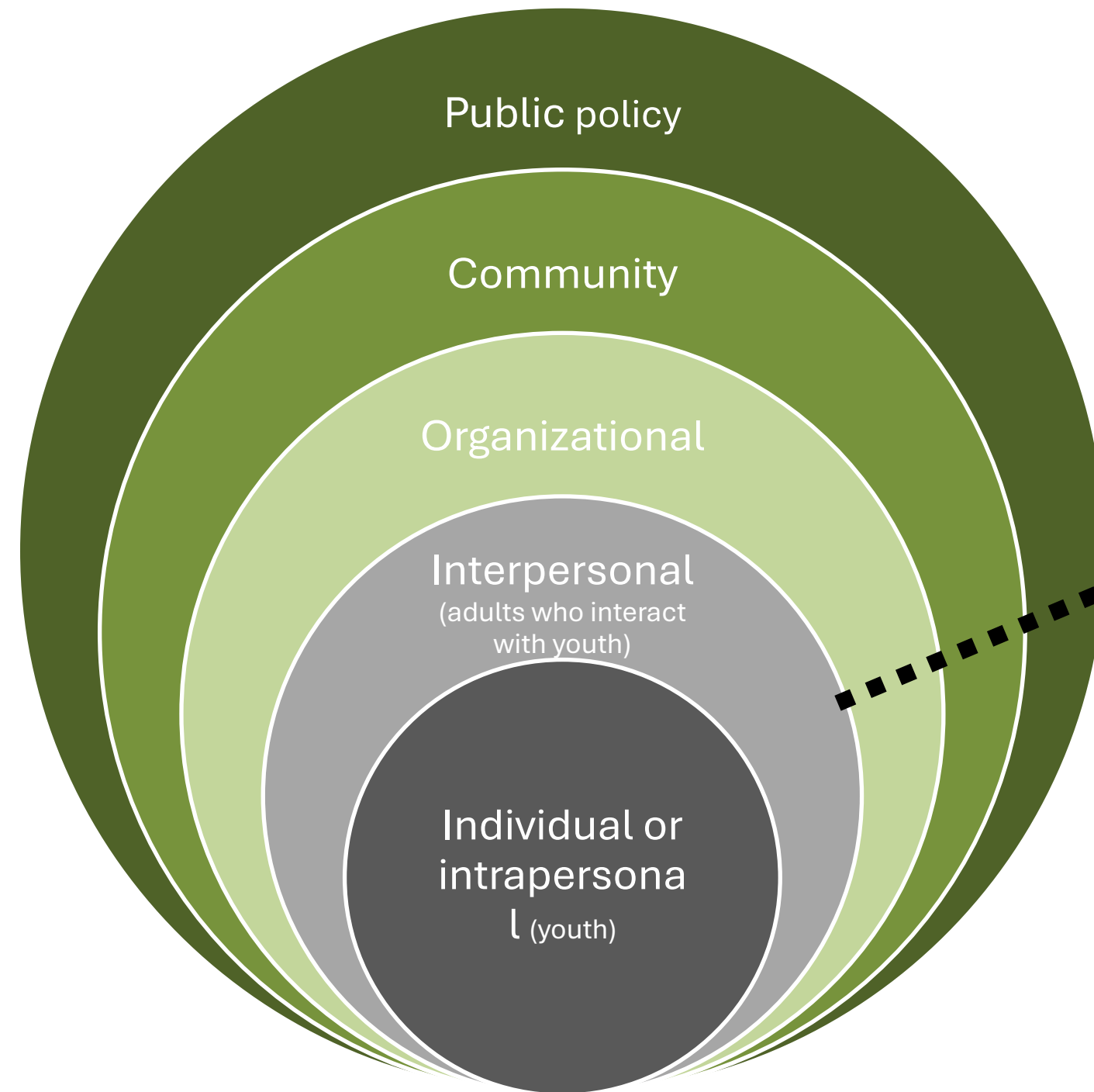


NYSS Framework



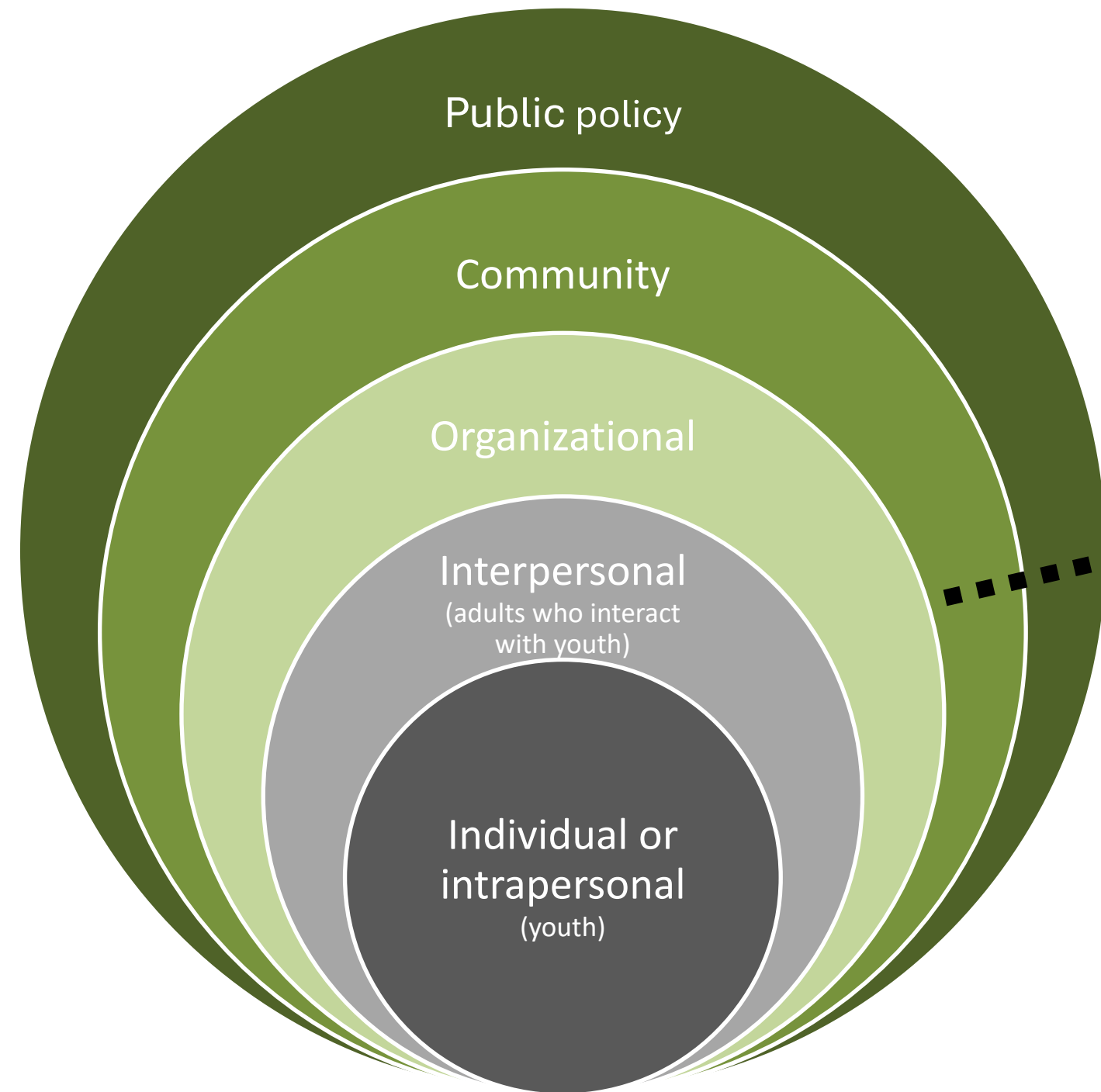
- Awareness, knowledge, beliefs
- Personal growth
- Physical literacy
- Sport sampling

NYSS Framework



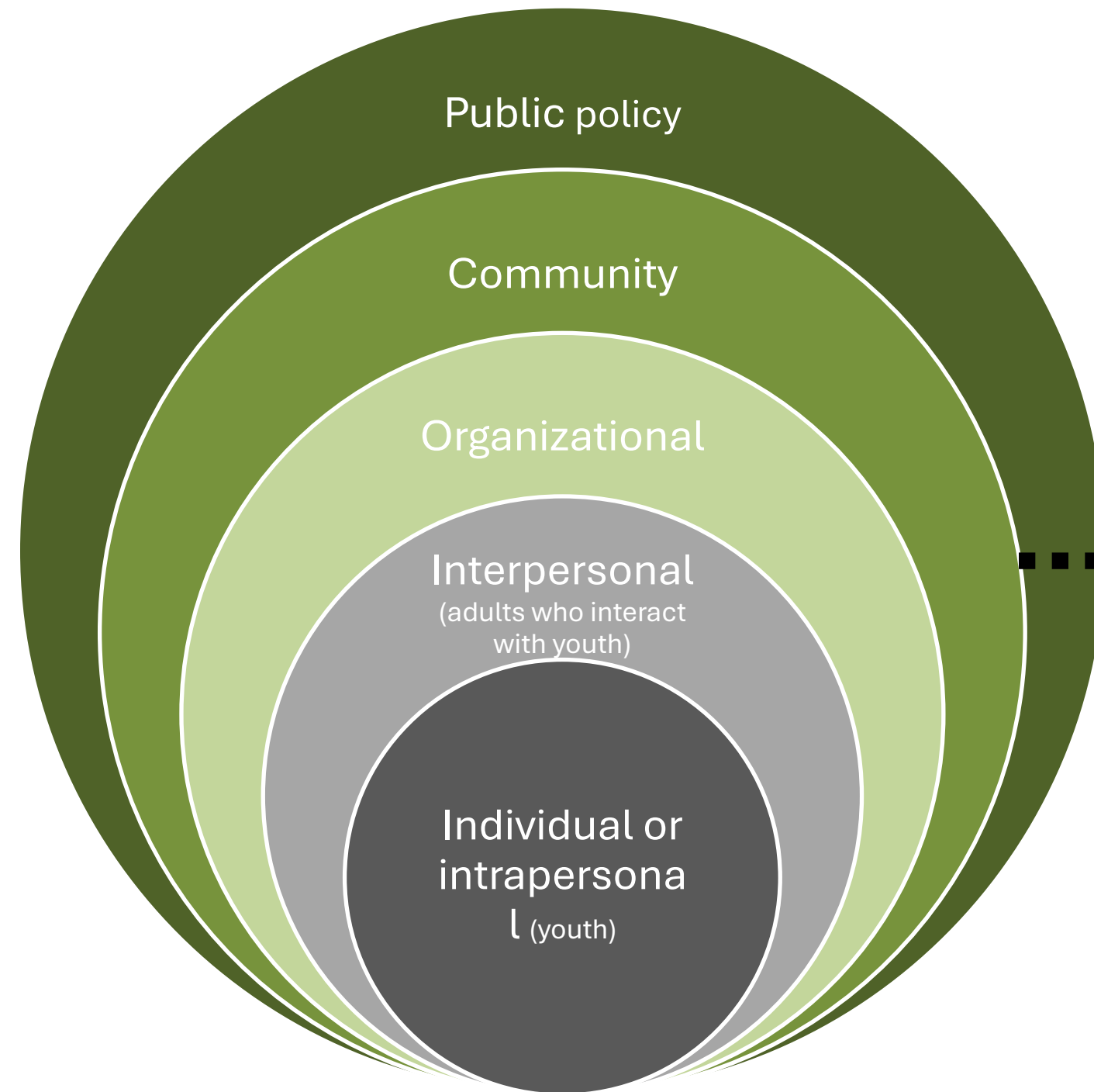
- Awareness, knowledge, beliefs
- Injury & abuse prevention
- Physical literacy
- Positive role modeling & mentoring
- Quality coaching skills
- Unstructured sports play

NYSS Framework



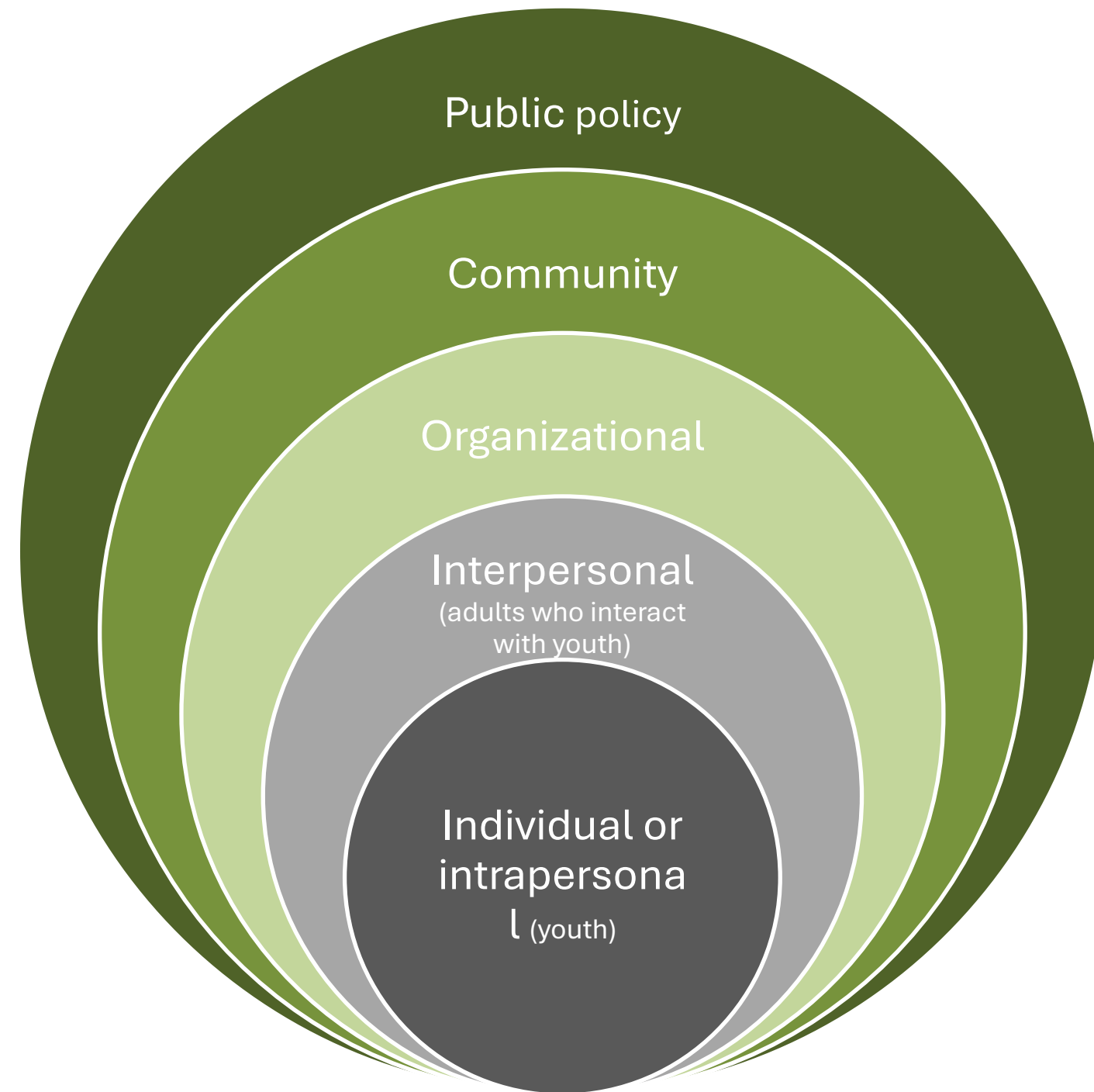
- Coach & volunteer recruitment, training, & retention
- Funding
- Partnerships & community engagement
- Quality sports programming
- Transportation

NYSS Framework



- Access to play spaces
- Awareness, knowledge, & beliefs
- Capacity building
- Resources
- Transportation

NYSS Framework

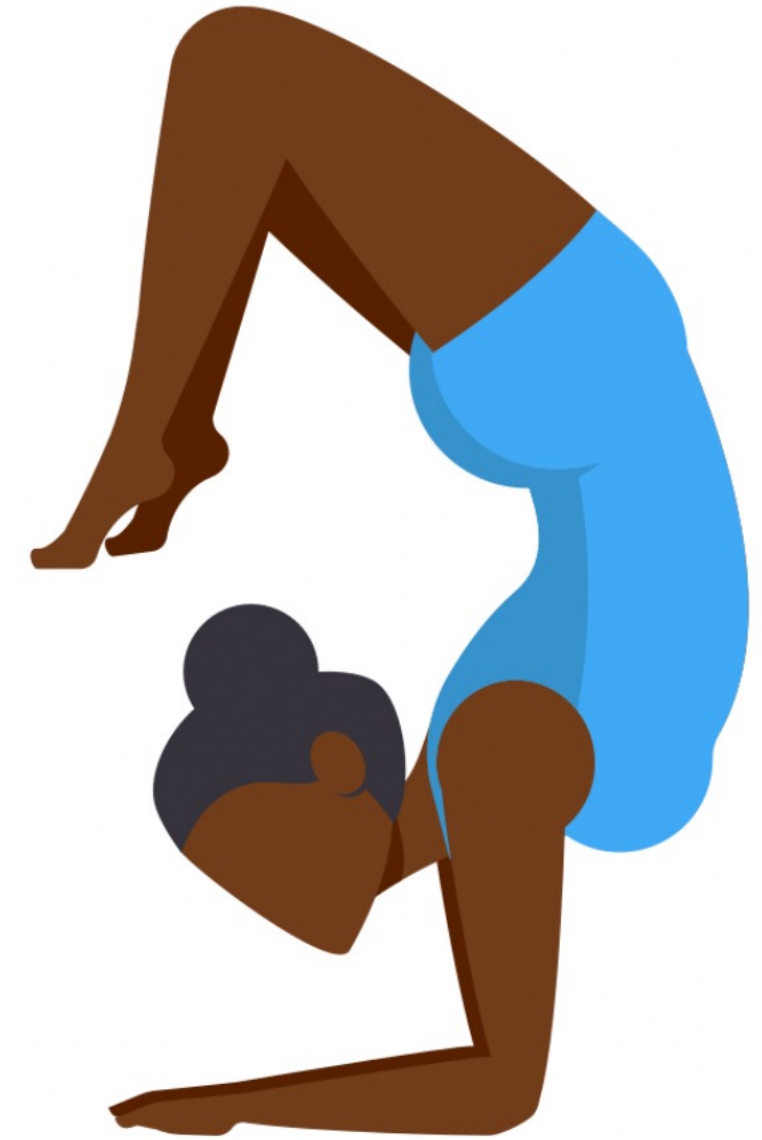


- Legislation & policy
- Proclamations, awareness, & other media
- Research, funding, & surveillance

Individual Level Actions

YOUTH CAN:

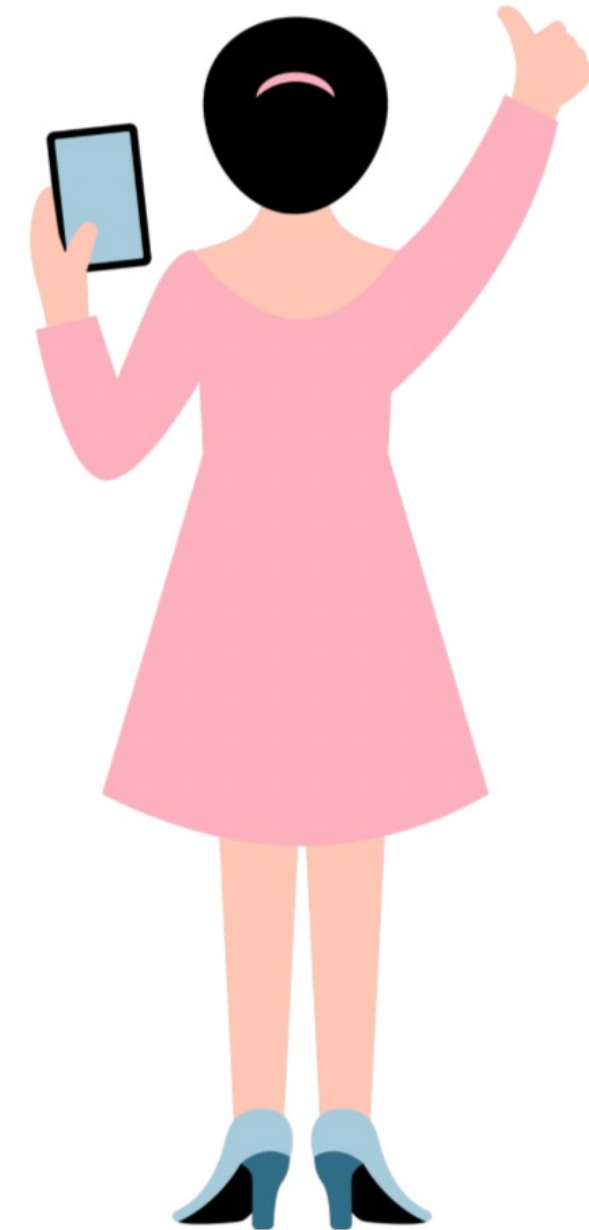
- Learn about the benefits of playing sports
- Seek out opportunities to play
- Ask parents/caregivers to sign them up for sports teams or activities
- Play a variety of sports
- Find enjoyable activities
- Be good peer models



Interpersonal Level Actions

ADULTS CAN:

- Make having fun a primary focus
- Encourage sport sampling
- Promote physical literacy
- Set a positive example
- Sign up as a coach, official, or volunteer



Interpersonal Level Actions (cont'd)

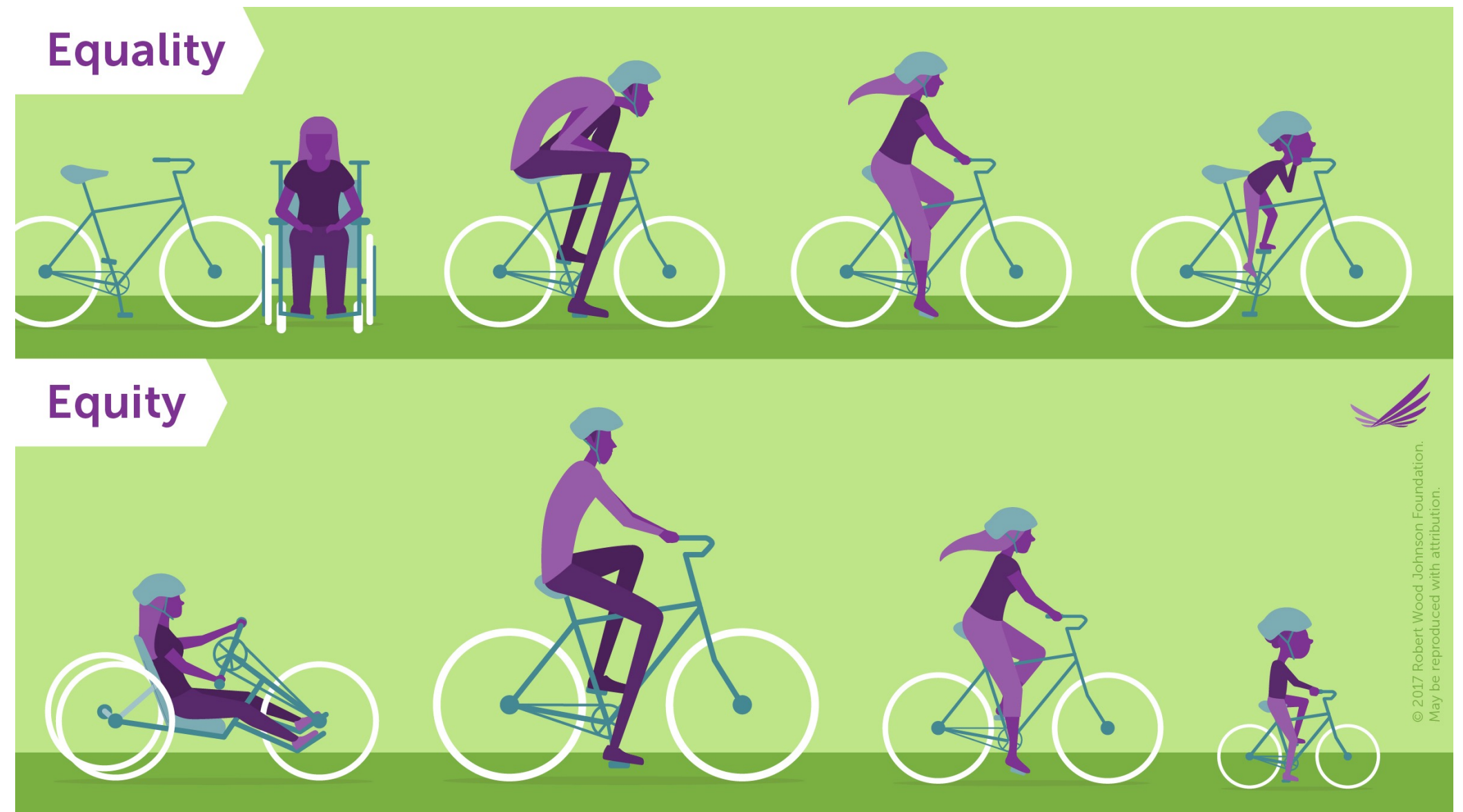
ADULTS CAN:

- Participate in training or certification programs
- Emphasize skill development over competition and performance outcomes
- Engage youth in the decision-making process
- Structure practices/games to promote MVPA
- Support unstructured sports play

Interpersonal Level Actions (cont'd)

ADULTS CAN:

- Ensure access to equipment
- Adapt/modify activities
- Establish/enforce appropriate safety practices



Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation,
<https://www.rwjf.org/en/insights/our-research/infographics/visualizing-health-equity.html>

My Personal Takeaways



“Kids are not miniature adults”

“One size does not fit all”

Contact & Additional Information

My Contact Info

Email:

cstlaurent@umass.edu

Instagram:

- @christine.stlaurent
- @mooveandsnoozelab

X: @cwstlaurent



Slides & Resources



www.mooveandsnoozelab.com