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Introduction to the Global Matrix 2.0: Report Card Grades on the Physical Activity of Children and Youth Comparing 38 Countries

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Active Healthy Kids Canada prepared and released a Report Card on the Physical Activity of Children and Youth every year between 2005 and 2014 in an effort to “power the movement to get kids moving” in Canada. This instrument was shown to be very effective at stimulating efforts to improve childhood physical activity¹ and requests were received from many countries to replicate the Report Card in other jurisdictions. To facilitate this, in 2014 Active Healthy Kids Canada hosted a Global Summit on the Physical Activity of Children in Toronto, Canada.² The Summit welcomed more than 750 delegates from 32 countries. The highlight of The Summit was the release of the 10th Anniversary Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card³ that compared grades on 9 report card indicators (overall physical activity; organized sport participation; active transportation; active play; sedentary behavior; family and peers; school; community and the build environment; government strategies and investments) across 15 countries (Australia, Canada, Colombia, England, Finland, Ghana, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, Mozambique, New Zealand, Nigeria, Scotland, South Africa, United States of America) using a harmonized data gathering and grading framework.^{4,5} The resulting Global Matrix provided a comprehensive overview of the “state of the nation” of each participating country, assessing how they were succeeding in providing physical activity opportunities for children and youth, while also providing a forum for international comparisons and shared learning.⁵

The Global Summit and Global Matrix release received extensive media coverage (>220 million media impressions in Canada alone; trending on Twitter on day of release) and was deemed very successful by delegates (>90% delegate satisfaction). Participating countries were very satisfied with the domestic and international impact of their substantial efforts in producing report cards. More importantly, participating countries found that the comparison of who was leading and who was lagging on the various indicators provided insights for improving the grade in their own country. The overall Global Matrix process and cross-fertilization of potential solutions was discussed at a post-Summit workshop where it was decided that this initiative should be repeated, with an even greater number and dispersion of participating countries. Given recent evidence of the disproportionate progress on increasing global physical activity levels relative to the disease burden,⁶ and the extraordinary cost of physical inactivity to the global economy,⁷ such repeated efforts seem warranted.

With the goal of creating a Global Matrix 2.0, the Active Healthy Kids Global Alliance (AHKGA) (www.activehealthykids.org) was created to provide a portal and mechanism where countries interested in participating could register and be mentored on how to develop a Report Card and participate in the Global Matrix 2.0. Information about the AHKGA was distributed through networks of those that participated in the first Global Matrix and was available with open access on the internet. Forty countries, representing all inhabited continents and from all income levels, responded with interest by the registration deadline (Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Cuba, Denmark, England, Estonia, Finland, Ghana, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Japan, Kenya, South Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, Mozambique, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Scotland, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, United States, Venezuela, Wales, Zimbabwe) and all but 2 countries were able to complete their Report Cards and participate in the Global Matrix 2.0. These 38 countries represent approximately 20% of the countries in the world, 40% of the world’s land mass, 60% of the world’s population, and an increase of >150% in

participating countries compared to the Global Matrix 1.0. On November 16, the Global Matrix 2.0 was released at the 2016 International Congress on Physical Activity and Public Health (www.ispah2016.org) in Bangkok, Thailand. In addition to participating in the launch preparations and activities, all participating country Report Card leaders made poster presentations on their individual country Report Card and provided copies of Report Cards for those in attendance. All Report Cards are also available on the AHKGA website.

This supplemental issue of the Journal of Physical Activity and Health serves to preserve the content legacy of the Global Matrix 2.0. The supplement contains Report Card summary papers representing all participating countries (presented in alphabetical order) and follow a prescribed manuscript template to facilitate comparisons. Each paper outlines the process used in each country to develop the Report Card, the data sources, partners, final grades for each indicator, and a figure of the Report Card cover. The final manuscript compiles the grades from each of the 38 countries into the Global Matrix 2.0 (a matrix of the 9 common indicators for each country), analyses and discusses differences and similarities around the globe, and offers insights for improving the grades.

This supplemental issue of the Journal of Physical Activity and Health is available electronically through open access to facilitate access for students, researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers around the world, with assistance from publisher Human Kinetics.

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