

# HONOURS

## Nikki Matthews

Supervisor: Dr. Roxanne Seaman

### Research Focus

Nikki's research investigates the impact and feasibility of the virtual S.M.I.L.E. program which was implemented from September to December of 2020. There is an abundance of research promoting the significant health benefits associated with physical activity participation, such as aiding in the prevention of chronic health conditions, the improvement of depression and anxiety symptoms, and motor and cognitive development. Unfortunately, before COVID-19, Canadian physical activity participation was dramatically lower than recommended in the typically developing population and even lower for individuals with disabilities. Physical activity participation further plummeted through the COVID-19 pandemic due to the in-person restrictions and program closures. Thus, to combat lack of opportunities, S.M.I.L.E. reinvented the typical program, creating instead "Virtual S.M.I.L.E." in its place. This eight-week program was composed of weekly at-home activity sheets, as well as three 45-minute virtual programming sessions. As there is little research to guide the creation of this type of program, this study was created to assess the program's effectiveness, impact, and feasibility. Within this study, there were 16 participants aged 7-31 years ( $\mu=20.4$ ,  $SD= 6.87$ ) with 15 participants having caregivers to speak on their behalf. To create the clearest and most accurate account of the program as possible, a pre and post-survey, weekly program reflections, caregiver interviews, and leader interviews were implemented and conducted within this mixed-methods case study. Results from this study will show program impact on physical literacy and physical activity participation, shed light on the parental perspective and involvement, and discuss future applications for virtual programming.

### The Researcher



For this project, Nikki has been able to work under both Dr. Emily Bremer and Dr. Roxanne Seaman as her supervisors. She is a 4th-year student graduating with a Bachelor of Kinesiology with Honours. She moved to Wolfville from Bradford, ON, and while she misses home sometimes, she truly loves being here! Since being at Acadia, she has been able to volunteer with awesome programs like Kinderskills, Active for Life, and Walk 'N' Roll, and has spent all four of her years at Acadia volunteering with the S.M.I.L.E. program. She has also worked as a research assistant and a TA for multiple Kine classes. She is currently a Student Director for Saturday morning S.M.I.L.E. and through this program, discovered that she wants to pursue a career in adapted physical activity. Her goal for the future is to continue with research in this field and to hopefully pursue further education.