



# Creating Healthy Schools

## 11.2 Elementary Recess

### What is the current policy?

Our school district understands the importance of physical activity among children. Recess allows students to take a mental break and provides needed physical activity. All elementary schools must provide daily activity for students. Elementary schools will

provide at least one 20-minute period of recess each day before lunch. Recess will be held outdoors, if possible. If not possible, teachers will be required to provide physical activity within the classroom. Recess will not take the place of physical education classes.

## Ideas!

### How can our school get more involved?

Here are several ways you can help ensure adequate recess time in your elementary schools.

#### Time Management

- Do not cut recess time short with long lesson plans.
- Do not use recess as a time to complete schoolwork.
- Plan daily lessons around the scheduled recess time.
- Treat recess as an important part of every school day.

#### Ways to promote activity and play to students

- Provide active supervision, engage in student activities.
- Teach and participate in playground games and model active behavior.
- Develop play zones for specific recess activities and games to avoid any conflict.
- Create recess kits that include games and equipment to be used during recess.

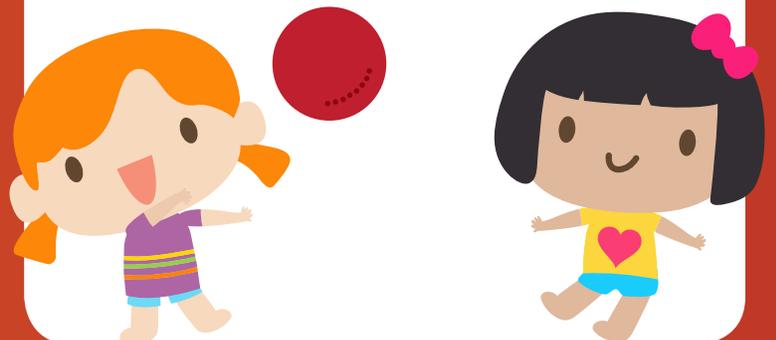
(more on back)

### Why is this important?

Each school is required to create and implement School Wellness Policies including adequate recess time in elementary schools. Staff members have the opportunity to ensure adequate recess time or other physical activities within the classroom.

Daily physical activity can reduce the risk of childhood obesity, improve academic performance and mental ability, and give children an opportunity to develop social skills. Many children in the United States are currently not meeting the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity a day. Making a 20-minute recess period mandatory will help the students be more active. This will improve their health and academic performance.

Having a 20-minute recess break from the classroom improves a child's attention, concentration, and ability to stay on task. Physical activity has many benefits. It helps a child stay fit and active, and allows them to succeed in the classroom. Social skills with classmates also improve.



### Daily Recess has been shown to:

- Improve student behavior on the playground and in the classroom.
- Lead to fewer accidents during the lunch break.
- Students are more relaxed and focused on eating rather than thinking about getting outside to play.
- Reduce litter on the school ground and inside the school.
- Recess before the lunch period can reduce food waste, increase fluid intake and lead to better nutrition of students.
- Students return to the classroom ready to learn.

### Resources:

- The PLAYWORKS Organization has put together tips for making a great recess: <https://www.playworks.org/resources/>
- Recess in Inclement Weather Guide from PLAYWORKS is a great indoor recess guide. <https://www.playworks.org/resource/recess-rain-snow/>
- This handout outlines a model wellness policy including ensuring adequate recess time in elementary schools. The handout created by The Indiana Department of Education can be found here: [https://www.healthiergeneration.org/\\_asset/wtqdwu/14-6372\\_ModelWellnessPolicy.doc](https://www.healthiergeneration.org/_asset/wtqdwu/14-6372_ModelWellnessPolicy.doc)
- The National Association for Sport and Physical Education has provided a position statement regarding Recess for Elementary School Students. More information is provided here: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED497155.pdf>
- Benefits of Recess Before Lunch Fact Sheet: Creating a Healthier Classroom explains the benefits of recess and contains solutions to common barriers: <http://www.peacefulplaygrounds.com/download/lunch/benefits-recess-before-lunch-facts.pdf>

*Two other versions of this policy item are available for both administration and family to assist with implementation.*

# Ideas!

### Classroom & Recess Environment

- Get children excited about physical activity and recess!
- Provide a safe recess environment outdoors and inside the classroom.
- Enforce safety rules.
- Allow time for hand washing activities.
- Create a positive environment for students. High fives, fist bumps, positive and encouraging statements should be seen and heard frequently.
- Have a safe recess environment where students are comfortable playing in diverse groups – including all gender, race, ethnicity, and skill levels.
- Confront bullying behavior if necessary.
- Teach students the skills to resolve conflicts.

### Some popular recess activities include:

- 4-square
- Soccer
- Basketball
- Wall ball
- Tetherball
- Hopscotch
- Chalk art
- Frisbee
- Tag and freeze tag
- Red rover
- Kickball
- Jump rope

