

## 11.1 ELEMENTARY RECESS

ADMINISTRATOR

# Creating Healthy Schools



### Implementation for success

To support required recess among elementary schools, the district/schools will:

- Schedule at least one 20 minute recess daily for all grade levels;
- Assure that the school's master schedule accommodates recess time;
- Form a school wellness council, if not already in place, and engage them in the creation and implementation of the policy on recess.
- Have staff identify benefits to promote implementation and the barriers that make it difficult to implement;
- Discuss the implementation of daily recess, and reduce any perceived barriers by staff;
- Provide resources to teachers regarding ideas for indoor recess activities that encourage movement;
- Provide schools with information and provide training opportunities, if needed, about confronting bullying behavior;
- Provide information about safety rules that must be enforced during recess time.
- Recess and other physical activity will not be taken away as a form of punishment or be used as a time to complete schoolwork.

### Model Policy:

Our school district cares about the health and well-being of students and understands the influence that physical activity has on academic achievement and overall student health. Given the significant importance of physical activity on the development of healthy habits, all elementary schools will provide daily recess for all grade levels.

Elementary schools will provide at least one period of recess each day that is at least 20 minutes in length and is conducted before lunch. Recess will be held outdoors when possible. When it is not possible to hold recess outdoors, teachers will provide physical activity within the classroom or in another designated recess area. Recess will not take the place of physical education classes. Recess and other physical activity will not be taken away as a form of punishment or be used as a time to complete schoolwork.

### Evaluation:

Evaluation of this policy will include reviewing the school's master schedule to ensure adequate recess time and recess observations. Each school will report annually to the district wellness council on the progress of policy implementation and will include recommendations where further district support may be beneficial. The district wellness council and/or school staff may also require selected schools to conduct student, family, and/or staff surveys as part of their evaluation process. Survey evaluation questions should address such items as how many times a week recess is provided, how many times recess was withheld, and what benefits and challenges are being experienced. At the end of each school year, the district wellness council leader will submit an annual report to the superintendent/board of education on the implementation and evaluation of this policy. This report shall be posted on the Internet for easy public access.

## Rationale:

Students who are physically active have improved concentration, memory, and better classroom behavior. Recess and active play influence not only a child's health, but their social, emotional, cognitive and physical development.

The current guidelines for physical activity state that children and adolescents need at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day. Including physical activity during the school day can help children meet this recommendation. Recess helps children achieve this level of physical activity as well as improving their ability to play with other children and handle conflict.<sup>1</sup>

Children spend a majority of their day at school, and, as such, rules and regulations set in place can have a big impact on student behaviors. Recess is an important part of creating a healthy elementary school environment and helps keep students physically active throughout the school day. Physical activity is important in maintaining a healthy lifestyle and has an impact on not only physical health, but mental health as well.

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

## Resources:

- National Association for Sport and Physical Education Resource Brief for Recess, which discusses the rationale and importance of providing daily recess to students: <http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/publications/upload/Recess.pdf>
- Make Recess Matter – A manual developed by Greeley Schools Organization contains additional rationale about the importance of daily recess and physical activity as well as recess activity ideas. This manual can be found: <http://www.greeleyschools.org/cms/lib2/C001001723/Centricity/Domain/3682/Recess%20Manual.pdf>
- USDA Healthier Schools Challenge Resources for Recess/Recess before lunch tips, success stories, and recommendations can be found: <https://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/healthierus-school-challenge-resources/recess-recess-lunch>
- Recess Before Lunch Program guide, research articles, resources and tool kits can be accessed: <http://www.peacefulplaygrounds.com/recess-before-lunch/>
- Time to Play: Improving Health and Academics through Recess in New York Elementary Schools Implementation Guide can be found: <http://www.nyam.org/dash-ny-program/pdf/MandatoryDailyActiveRecessGuide.pdf>
- Benefits of Recess Before Lunch Fact Sheet – Creating a Healthier Classroom provides solutions to common barriers and explains the benefits of recess before lunch. This can be found: <http://www.peacefulplaygrounds.com/download/lunch/benefits-recess-before-lunch-facts.pdf>
- Action Guide for School Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies, Connecticut State Department of Education, 2009, pg 51, <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2678&q=322436>
- The American Academy of Pediatrics Journal Article – The Crucial Role of Recess in School outlines the importance of recess in children. <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2012/12/25/peds.2012-2993.full.pdf>

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<sup>1</sup>Strong WB, Malina RM, Blimkie CJ, Daniels SR, Dishman RK, Gutin B, et al. Evidence-based physical activity for school-aged youth. *Journal of Pediatrics* 2005; 146(6):732-7