

Additional Information about Recess

Recess is an essential component of elementary schools. Recess is a break from the academic rigors. Breaks are essential for alertness for people of all ages. Research by Toppino, Kasserman, and Mracek found that recalling information improves when learning is segmented. Their findings supported brain functioning research. Attentiveness needs periodic novelty. Brains need downtime, like recess, to allow the human body time to prepare for forming long-term memory.

Current national emphasis on learning establishes a need for recess. Jarrett and Maxwell found in 2000 that recess has a relationship to learning, social development, and a child's health. These findings imply the need to schedule breaks where physical activity can occur.

Newman and colleagues found that recess activity allows children to manage stress of school and family. Unstructured peer interaction may also improve self-esteem.

Obesity trends continue to increase. Studies show that physical education is not enough. Additional activity time is needed, such as recess.

"Recess can play an important role in the learning, social development, and health of elementary school children."

- Olga S. Jarrett

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Links

www.bcps.org/offices/physed

www.aahperd.org

www.PE4life.org

www.fitness.gov

www.acsm.org

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Reasons for Recess

Office of Physical Education

Baltimore County
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Facts:

- All children in elementary schools should have a minimum of 20 minutes of recess each day. (NASPE, 2006)
- Physical activity improves attention, focus, behavior, and learning in the classroom. (CA. Dept. of Ed., 2005)
- Children should participate in several physical activity periods lasting 15 minutes or more each day. (NASPE, 2004)



Research Says

Recess may be the only time when students have the chance to choose activity, exercise, games, and interact with peers. These skills allow children to be successful in both school and society.

Rhonda Clements, author of *Elementary School Recess: Selected Readings* found that recess assists children in developing social, emotional, physical, and cognitive skills.

Current brain research shows there is an important relationship between physical activity, brain development, and cognitive performance (academic learning).



Children need a variety of activities during preschool through elementary years to develop motor skills including walking, running, climbing, jumping, balancing, and changing speed and direction. “Children engaged in daily physical activity show superior motor fitness, academic performance, and attitude toward school as compared to their counterparts.” (Jensen-1998, *Teaching with the Brain in Mind*)



Recess Supervision

Studies show that with adequate training of supervising teachers and students, playground injuries can be substantially reduced.

(*Supervision Guidelines for Playgrounds*, 2005)

Baltimore County Public Schools supports the recommendation of the National Program for Playground Safety which suggests the supervision ratio of recess equals the ratio of teachers to students in an indoor classroom.

Supervisors of recess have responsibilities which include checking for safety, reporting items for repair, and reporting injuries.

Appropriate Supervision

Teachers on duty need to be visible, vigilant, and positioned to observe all students.

Recess should never be taken away as punishment. Activities provided should be based on space, facilities, and choice. No student should be eliminated from activity unless there is a safety concern.

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education states, “Recess is not viewed as a reward; but, as a necessary educational support component for all children. Therefore, students should not be denied recess so they can complete class work or as a means of punishment.” (NASPE, May 2006)

Recess Rules

All elementary schools in BCPS have a “Recess: An Essential Component in Elementary Schools Teacher Resource Packet” to provide current guidelines. Schools have playgrounds for student use. The physical education teacher is responsible for reviewing safety rules on the play areas and teaching students safe, age-appropriate activities on these structures. General rules should be addressed by the classroom teacher and followed by students in order to avoid injury. These structures are maintained by BCPS.



Modifications may be needed for the safety and success of students with disabilities. Many activities can be adapted to meet the specific needs of students.

Recess Activities

Outdoor examples include tag games, diamond games, relays, rope jumping, sidewalk games, hopscotch, marbles, jacks, four square, court/field games, and basketball shooting games.

Indoor recess can include guessing games, sport (cup) stacking, imitation activities, and math enrichment games.

