

The School District of Philadelphia

**Office of Academic Enrichment & Support
Health, Safety & Physical Education**



Socialized Recess Handbook

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Office of Academic Enrichment & Support

Health, Safety & Physical Education

Executive Director

Bettyann Creighton, M.Ed.

215-400-6814

bcreighton@philasd.org

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA
Office of Academic Enrichment and Support
Health, Safety and Physical Education
440 NORTH BROAD STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19130

Bettyann Creighton
Executive Director

Telephone: 215-400-6814
Fax: 215-400-4195

Congratulations and welcome to the wonderful world of recess, an important part of every students' school day. Recess is not only beneficial for health and fitness. It also gives students an opportunity to improve social skills, teamwork, cooperation and leadership.

However, without rules and structure, recess can often be chaotic, dangerous and no fun at all. Haphazard running during "free play" can result in unintended injuries to children engaged in other activities. Large sided games held in the middle of the yard may not leave enough space to accommodate other activities. Additionally, unfocused supervision may result in accidents, teasing, bullying and more serious crimes taking place during recess.

To emphasize its importance and benefits, safe, organized and supervised recess for all elementary students is called for in The School District of Philadelphia's Wellness Policy.

Over the years, many creative ideas have emerged regarding "Socialized Recess" sometimes called structured recess. Schools and teachers have designed "play areas" for certain games, so that there is room for all. Areas designed for quiet activities, such as board games, music and art have been integrated to address all student preferences.

The Office of Academic Enrichment and Support, Health, Safety and Physical Education has gathered "best practice" information from various plans and other sources and compiled this handbook, which we hope you find helpful and useful.

If you have any questions about implementing your recess plan, please contact our office at 215-400-6814.

Sincerely,
Bettyann Creighton
Executive Director
Health, Safety & Physical Education

Overview

For the recess program to be successful there must be careful planning, organization and cooperation among school administration, teachers and aides. A sound, structured recess program provides the opportunity for children to play together in a cooperative, positive environment. It is recommended that direct leadership in the actual activities should be placed in the hands of the pupils themselves. Children learn to organize and conduct their own activities and to accept leadership from other members of their own groups.

Role of the School Principal

- Convene an organizational meeting with all necessary personnel
 - Physical education teacher, program leader, aides
- Review, for approval, the recess plan and specific role assignments for para-professional personnel
- Review, for approval, the plan of activities
- Provide school-wide communication and promotion of the plan to all teachers and students

Role of the Program Leader

- It is recommended that one teacher or staff member has the responsibility for the overall planning, supervision and operations of the program
 - Program of games and other activities
 - Evolution of a safe, organized yard plan to provide for various groups and activities
 - Establish and manage a list of student activity leaders/recess captains and assign specific duties
 - May involve classroom teachers in designating recess captains.
 - Devise a plan for the safe and strategic storage of equipment used for recess
 - Instruct leaders in the efficient movement of equipment between the storage area and the play area
 - Arrange for leader and aide identification through the use of vests or badges

Role of the Recess Supervisors

- Supervisors assure the overall goals of the recess program are met
- Deployed in strategic areas around the yard, supervisors observe and assure safety and compliance with the recess design and rules of behavior
- Supervisors should supervise and mediate activities, not play the games
- Supervisors must understand the conflict resolution plan and use a consistent plan for resolution of disputes

Role of the Pupil Play Leader, aka Recess Captain

- Takes the proper equipment to the designated area and returns it to the specified storage place at the close of the recess period
 - One option is that the Recess Captains remain in a specified area and lead the activity
- Recess Captains may also be trained as “peace seekers” who mediate conflict that may arise during play.
- It is recommended that Recess Captains wear identifying pinnies, badges, or safety patrol belts. This serves as an honor as well as enabling others to locate them easily.
 - A suggestion is to rotate Recess Captains periodically so other students have the opportunity to serve.

Launching the Program

- It is suggested that the principal or program leader explain the purpose and general plan of the program to the pupils during an assembly period
- Announce the start date and distribute all plans and rules to the classroom teachers
- The program will be successful to the extent that the principal, teachers and aides give it their continued attention and support, and that the supervising personnel on site remain directly involved in the process.
- Physical and Health Education teachers should use the PE periods to instruct their pupils in the activities selected for the recess play program

Safety Suggestions

- Care should be taken in the selection, placement and management of games
- Unorganized running should not be permitted
- Running in games should be confined to the immediate game area
- Rules of games may be modified to meet local conditions
- At the end of recess, all activity should cease and equipment should be taken to the designated storage area

Recess Goals

1. To provide a recess plan of organized activities that are safe and satisfy students' need for physical exercise and interesting and engaging activities.
2. To provide opportunities for students to develop social skill, cooperation and conflict resolution, responsibility and leadership skills.
3. To provide specific supervisory assignments to professional and para-professional school personnel on duty in the yard

Suggested Recess Plan Color Code

- Mellow Yellow – Quiet area for coloring, board games, cards, marbles, jacks, reading books, etc.
- Blue – Ball Games – Wall Ball, King Ball (aka 4 Square), Box Ball, Pickle ball, Football, Basketball, Soccer
- Green – Ground games – Hopscotch, Hula Hoops
- Red – Ropes – Single, Double Dutch, Chinese jump rope, High-Low water.

Pavement Markings for Schoolyards

1. Striping markers are available on loan from the Office of Health, Safety & Physical Education to paint lines for recess games. Contact us at 215-400-6814 to arrange for use a Stripper.

2. DO NOT paint if there are ample games already available in the schoolyard. If lines are faded, repaint on top of existing lines using exact dimensions.

3. Make sure to use appropriate dimensions when painting lines.

4. Unless painting a game circle, paint games near existing fences. DO NOT paint small games (hopscotch, king ball, etc.) in the middle of schoolyard activity.

5. Use a piece of string or twine to measure distances. Stretch string on ground and run center of marker paint stripe directly on top of twine

OR

Measure concrete blocks. Many game boundaries exactly match the width of the blocks. You may be able to utilize spaces between blocks as game boundary markers.

6. If you need assistance don't hesitate to call the Office of HS&PE!

Suggested Activity Areas

1. Quiet Corner - Suggest using 2 or 3 benches or mats
2. Hopscotch Areas
3. Game Areas: Red Light, Green Light; Giant Step, etc.
4. Box ball, Punch ball, Wall Ball, Pickle Ball
6. Jump Rope Areas: Single, Double Dutch and Chinese Jump Rope
7. Scooters, Hoops, and Stilts
8. Volleyball
9. Basketball (if approved as an area)
10. Time Out Area – Suggest bench

Suggested Basic Rules

1. Students will walk to and from activities
2. Students will take turns and share equipment
3. Students will demonstrate good sportsmanship
4. Students will 'freeze' at the bell or other signal
5. Students will cooperate with the supervisors and captains
6. Students will remember to have fun in a **safe** manner
7. Students will participate in one of the activities during the recess time.

Equipment

Schools can purchase Recess Equipment Kits through one of the vendors approved by The Office of Health, Safety & Physical Education. Contact us at 215-400-6814 for assistance and information. Schools may add equipment to the kits as they feel necessary, and are responsible for the inspection and replacement of damaged equipment. Equipment can be stored in mesh bags, rolling trashcans, or milk crates that are easily movable to the schoolyard during recess. When not in use, all equipment should be locked in a secure place.

Below is a picture of a sample Recess Equipment Kit.





GAMES



Four Square

Four-Square

1	2
3	4

In the standard game, there are four squares painted on the ground, all touching each other, making one, larger square. Each small square is roughly 8' x 8', but that's not a hard and fast rule. The ball used is the standard red 'kickball'

Each player occupies one of the squares. The squares each have a rank order. The square with the highest rank is called the 'King' [Sometimes the 'Ace']. The other squares sometimes have names, and sometime don't. The #2 square may be called the 'Prime Minister', or the other three may be called the 'Queen', 'Prince', and 'Princess'.

The start the game, the King serves the ball by bouncing it in his square once and then hitting it towards one of the other squares. The receiving player then hits the ball to any other player, and play continues until one of the following things occur:

- 1) A player hits the ball (or is hit BY the ball) before it bounces once in their square.
- 2) A player does not hit the ball before it bounces twice
- 3) A player hits the ball out of bounds (it must land in someone's square first)

Once a player is 'done', they move back to the lowest ranking square. The other players then move up to fill the vacancies. If there are more players than squares, that person goes to the back of the line, and the person at the front of the line gets to move onto the lowest square and play.

Pickle Ball

Pickle Ball

- A.K.A. Hot Box
- A.K.A. Run Down
- A.K.A. Running the Bases

The rules of the game are pretty simple.

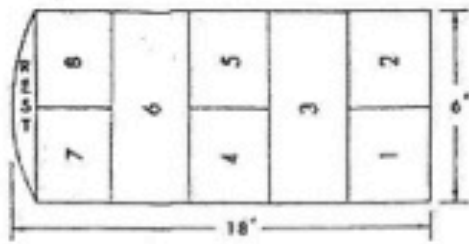
You'll need two bases (we used Mom's rugs), a softball and two softball gloves (if you don't have the gloves just use a ball that's not "hard")

Hopscotch

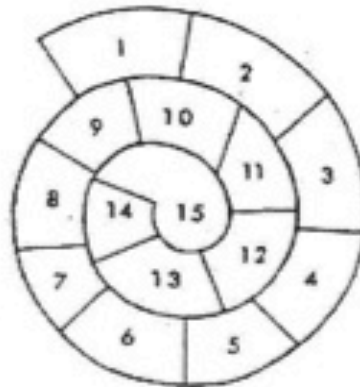
FLOOR DIAGRAMS FOR LIMITED AREA GAMES

The exact dimensions for many of the activity courts is dependent on the space available, the maturity and ability of the participants.

POTSY HOP SCOTCH



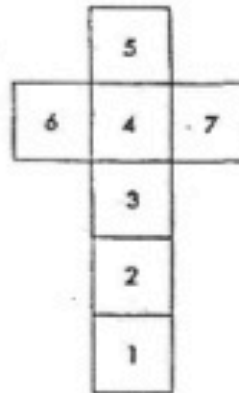
HOP SCOTCH
BEAN BAG TOSS



PHILADELPHIA HOP SCOTCH



CROSS HOP SCOTCH



Boxball

Boxball

A crash course for the sidewalk game

About Boxball

Boxball transforms two sidewalk squares into an outdoor version of ping-pong or, perhaps more accurately, a postage-stamp-sized game of tennis. The action is fast with pinpoint shots to the corners, soft spinning returns, and tough slams. Quick reflexes are the key to this simple and intense game.

To learn more about boxball, visit
<http://www.streetplay.com/thegames/boxball.htm>

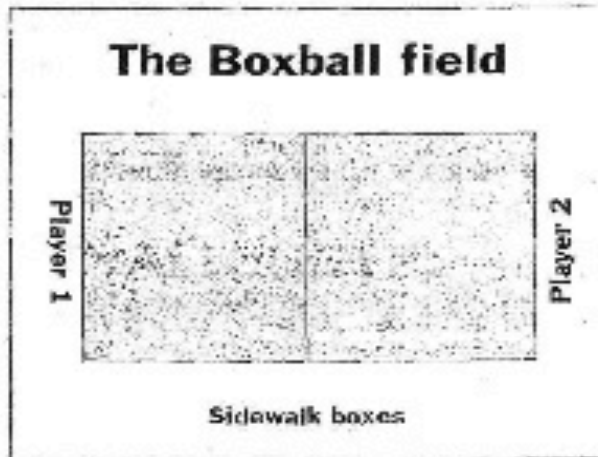
Game Essentials

Players: 2

Materials needed:

- Bouncing rubber ball (spalden is ideal)
- A sidewalk (with boxes; can be drawn if needed)

Time to play: About 10-15 minutes, depends on skill level and total points



The Boxball field

Of all the different ball games played in the urban environment, boxball requires the smallest field. Only two sidewalk squares (boxes) are required. The lines, or "cracks," around the concrete define the court; the seam between the two squares is the imaginary net.

How to play

Players choose or volley for first serve. Depending on the players' preferences, serve is maintained by the winner of the volley or rotated every five points. In some games, only the server wins a point; others play so that either player can win any point. Eleven or twenty-one are usually the winning scores, with the requirement of winning by two points.

The ball is slapped back and forth between boxes with an open palm. Slap the ball into your opponent's box; he or she returns it back to your box after one bounce or on the fly. If you step into the playing court, fail to return a shot, or if your return shot's first bounce lands out of your opponent's box, you lose the volley.

You can choose whether you can use both hands, or one hand only (where you can use the back of the palm for a "reverse shot"). Reverse shots aren't easy to control, since the back of the palm is not as flat or flexible as the front, but they're sometimes necessary in order to protect the ball box.

Players can try to hit the ball with force—or with a cutting motion to give the ball more spin, or "English," and make it more difficult to return. Spins add the subtlety that makes boxball a compelling game.

The last word

Boxball can bring out the best in you. It is a close, intimate and intense game. Determine stamming rules in advance and get ready to rumble!

www.streetplay.com/rulesheets

WALLBALL (One Wall, Wall ball)

Objective: To stay in the servers spot as long as possible

Server: Must start behind the service line in the middle of the court. The serve must cross the service line, land in play and hit no lines. If the serve is unsuccessful, the server is out and the challenger becomes the new server. If others are waiting, the server goes to the end of the line.

Challenger: The challenger may stand anywhere behind the service line. They must let the serve bounce in the backcourt on the serve only. If the challenger loses the point, they go to the end of the line, if players are waiting.

Legal Hits: Players may strike the ball with either hand or both. Players can use an underhand or overhand motion. A clenched fist hit is not a legal hit.

In Play: Ball must hit the wall after a hit. The ball can land anywhere in the court after a legal serve. A ball that hits a line is out. The ball can bounce only once in the court. The ball does not have to bounce unless it is served. Players alternate hitting the ball. Players cannot obstruct the other player from hitting the ball. (That is called a hinder)

APPENDIX A - Abigail Vare Elementary Recess Program

Special thanks to Betty Solley and the staff at Abigail Vare for providing their 2002 recess plan

ABIGAIL VARE SCHOOL
RECESS PROGRAM
2002

MEMO TO: Teachers of Rooms 211, 306, 308, 309, 310, 311
FROM: Betty Solley
RE: 2nd Lunch Recess Program

Please take a few minutes this morning to go over the activities and rules for the new second lunch recess program. I have selected recess leaders to assist with this program and they will need your approval to participate. Should you need to replace a leader for any reason, please select another student to participate as a captain for the day. Let me know if a permanent replacement needs to be made. The following information will help us get started:

- Please give the attached name tags to your recess leaders. (Name tags will be replaced by recess leader badges as soon as they arrive.)
 - Recess leaders will eat their lunch at the recess leaders' table in the large lunchroom. They will be sent to the yard with me or another adult a few minutes before the rest of the students to set up their activities.
 - Students are dismissed to the yard from lunch when their table and floor are clean and clear, and when their behavior is appropriate. (Share this with students.)
 - Please review recess rules and activities with your students prior to coming to lunch. We expect that students will enjoy their recess activities and cooperate with recess leaders and adults so that they may continue to participate.
 - We would appreciate feedback from you and your students as we seek to improve the recess program.
- c. Dr. Drossner, Ms. Green, Mrs. Turay, Mr. Walker, Ms. James

ABIGAIL VARE SCHOOL
RECESS PROGRAM
RECESS CAPTAIN SELECTION

Dear Teachers,

Our new recess program continues to move along nicely, thanks to your cooperation in sending the captains down a few minutes early so they can eat their lunch and set up their stations. We will be rotating captains approximately every four weeks. (You will be notified in advance when captains will be switched.) Classroom teachers will now be able to appoint their own recess captains. Please select two new responsible children (three for fifth grade) to become captains beginning Tuesday October 8th. Please remember to appoint substitute captains if one is absent or needs to be detained. Thank you again for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

c. Barry Drossner, Erica Green

Betty Solley

Abigail Vare School
Recess Captains

Please list new recess captains to start Tuesday, March 5th

Name _____ Room _____

Name _____ Room _____

Name _____ Room _____

(fifth grade only)

Please return to my mailbox. Thank you, Betty Solley.

Abigail Vare School
Recess Captains

Please list new recess captains to start Tuesday, March 5th

Name _____ Room _____

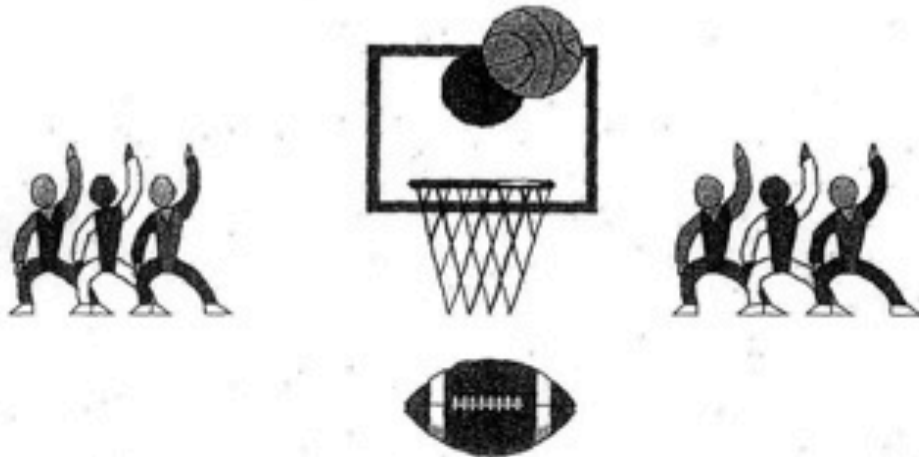
Name _____ Room _____

Name _____ Room _____

(fifth grade only)

Please return to my mailbox. Thank you, Betty Solley.

ABIGAIL VARE SCHOOL
RECESS
WINTER SCHEDULE



BIG YARD:

FOOTBALL: GRADES 6 / 7
FOOTBALL: GRADES 7 / 8
BASKETBALL: GRADES 7 / 8
BASKETBALL: GRADES 6 / 7
DODGEBALL:
CANBALL:

MONDAYS, WEDNESDAYS AND FRIDAYS
TUESDAYS AND THURSDAYS
MONDAYS, WEDNESDAYS AND FRIDAYS
TUESDAYS AND THURSDAYS
EVERYDAY
EVERYDAY

MIDDLE YARD: (Before steps to Big Yard)

JUMP ROPE:
HULA HOOPS:
CHEERLEADING:

EVERYDAY
EVERYDAY
TUESDAYS AND THURSDAYS

SMALL YARD:

CHECKERS; CHESS
DANCE:

EVERYDAY
MONDAYS, WEDNESDAYS, AND FRIDAYS

SMALL YARD PATIO:

TAG GAMES:

EVERYDAY

**ABIGAIL VARE SCHOOL
RECESS - GRADES 7 - 8
FALL SCHEDULE**



BIG YARD:

FOOTBALL:
WHIFFLE BALL:
BASKETBALL:
DODGEBALL:
VOLLEYBALL:

MONDAYS, WEDNESDAYS AND FRIDAYS
TUESDAYS AND THURSDAYS
EVERYDAY
EVERYDAY
EVERYDAY

MIDDLE YARD:

DOUBLE DUTCH ROPE, SINGLE ROPE
CHINESE JUMP ROPE
EVERYDAY

EVERYDAY

SMALL YARD:

NERF FOOTBALL
DANCE

MONDAY, WED., THURS.
TUESDAYS AND FRIDAYS

SMALL YARD PATIO:

MR. WALKER'S CHOICE

EVERYDAY

ABIGAIL VARE SCHOOL

RECESS RULES

- 1. Play fair-Take turns.**
- 2. Follow the Recess Captains:
obey all adults.**
- 3. RESPECT EACH OTHER**
- 4. Take care of equipment.**
- 5. Stop on the bell; line up
quickly and quietly.**

ABIGAIL VARE SCHOOL

Our Recess Plan

School _____

Contact Person _____

Yard Supervisors _____

Student Managers _____

Safety Instructions _____

Time-Out/Mediation Plan _____

Yard Blueprint



APPENDIX B – Recess Study

Active Living Research

Building Evidence to Prevent Childhood Obesity and Support Active Communities
www.activelivingresearch.org

RESEARCH BRIEF | January 2012



Increasing Physical Activity Through Recess

INTRODUCTION

Regular physical activity promotes important health benefits, reduces risk for obesity and is linked with enhanced academic performance among students.^{1,2} The U.S. Surgeon General recommends that children engage in at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity most days of the week, yet fewer than half of children ages 6 to 11 meet that recommendation.³ Numerous legislative efforts, including the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 [P.L. 108–265], and leading public health organizations, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Heart Association, recognize that schools play a critical role in supporting physical activity among children.^{4,5} Further, Healthy People 2020 objectives released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services underscore the importance of physical activity in schools, including daily physical education and regular recess.⁶

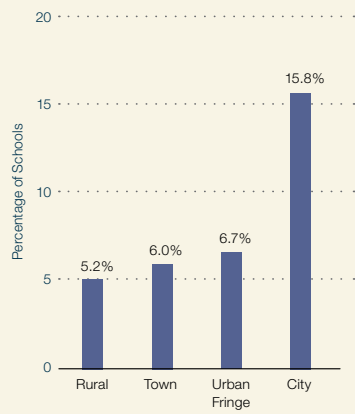
Recess is scheduled outside of class time and allows students to engage in physical and social activities of their choice. The National Association for Sport & Physical Exercise (NASPE) recommends that all elementary school students have at least 20 minutes of recess each day.⁷ Short physical activity breaks, such as those offered during recess, have been shown to enhance cognitive performance and improve learning.⁸ This brief summarizes the growing body of research examining recess, which shows that providing recess during the school day is an effective and efficient way to increase physical activity and improve academic performance among children.⁹

Key Research Results

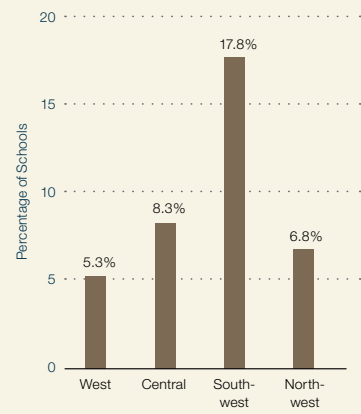
- **Providing recess breaks throughout the day can improve students' classroom behavior and attentiveness**, two often-cited barriers to student learning.¹⁰⁻¹² One study found that students demonstrated more inattentiveness as the length between recess periods increased, suggesting that the timing of recess is important.¹³ Another study found that students who were provided at least 15 minutes of recess exhibited higher rates of on-task behavior in the classroom that day.¹⁴
- **Children can accumulate up to 40 percent of their total daily physical activity during recess**. The percentage of recess time during which children engage in physical activity ranges from 16 percent to 68 percent among boys, and 15 percent to 52 percent among girls.¹⁵ Further, the contribution of recess to total daily physical activity ranges from 5 percent to 40 percent for boys and 5 percent to 31 percent for girls. These large ranges could be due to variations in the method of measuring physical activity, length or timing of recess, ethnic background of students, and/or the recess environment.
- **There are many effective strategies for increasing children's levels of physical activity during recess:**
 - **Providing inexpensive playground equipment encourages students to be more active**. In one study, providing students with equipment such as flying discs, plastic hoops, jump ropes, beanbags and balls increased time spent in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity during recess from 48 percent to 61 percent.¹⁶ Among students in the control group, time spent in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity decreased from 55 percent to 44 percent. While there is limited research in this area, these findings suggest that providing low-cost equipment can help increase physical activity.
 - **Training recess supervisors to teach new games and interact with students may help increase physical activity**. Training staff to promote physical activity is essential to achieving this goal, as some data suggest untrained recess supervisors may reduce physical activity opportunities during recess.¹⁷ Other research suggests that training staff to implement games during recess can promote physical activity among students.¹⁸

FIGURE 1. **Percentage of Schools Reporting No Recess**³⁰

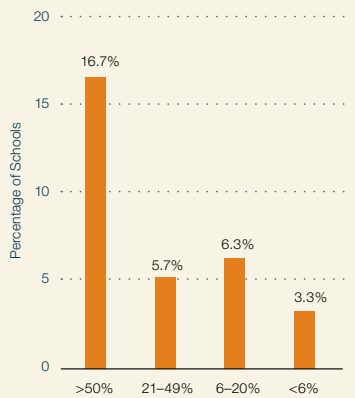
By School Locale



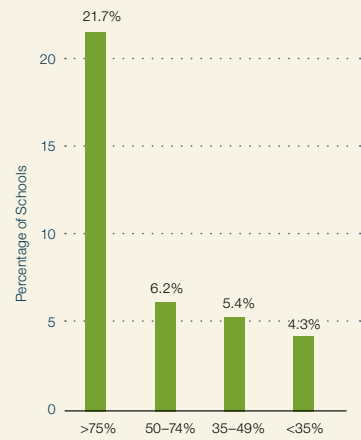
By Region



By Percentage of American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Non-Hispanic Black and/or Hispanic Students Enrolled



By Percentage of Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch



Conclusions

Providing recess is an important strategy for increasing health-promoting (i.e., moderate-to-vigorous) physical activity and improving behavior and concentration among students. Although many leading organizations recommend that elementary schools provide daily recess, most states and school districts do not require it. Further, students who are at highest risk for obesity are least likely to attend a school that offers recess. Among students who do have recess, there is a wide range in the amount of time they spend engaged in physical activity. Several strategies for increasing physical activity during recess have been successful, including providing playground markings, activity zones, recreational equipment and trained supervisors.

Policy Implications

- Evidence-based recess regulations can be implemented to promote physical activity during the school day. Possible regulations could include those that call for providing a safe environment and ample recreational equipment to encourage physical activity, offering at least 20 minutes of recess per day, and training recess supervisors and staff to interact with students to better promote physical activity.³¹
- Schools could partner with local businesses or civic organizations to help implement evidence-based strategies for maximizing children's physical activity during recess. For example, a local business or nonprofit organization may agree to donate jump ropes or paint playground surfaces used during recess. High school or college students who are participating in a service program or enrolled in courses with a service-learning component could visit elementary schools to teach new activities during recess, oversee an activity zone as recess assistant supervisors, or help renovate a recess space.
- Schools could designate a physical activity director who would work to maximize time spent in physical activity during recess, physical education classes and other opportunities for students to be active at school.³²
- State and federal education agencies could provide incentives for schools that use evidence-based approaches to increase students' levels of physical activity by giving credit in school quality scores, including on school report cards or school improvement plans.
- Creating an optimal environment for recess—one that is safe, well-supervised by trained staff and provides well-maintained recreational equipment—has potential to reduce injuries and improve behavior among children, both of which are often cited by administrators as deterrents to offering recess.³³

Endnotes

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Active Living Research, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, stimulates and supports research to identify environmental factors and policies that influence physical activity for children and families to inform effective childhood obesity prevention strategies, particularly in low-income and racial/ethnic communities at highest risk. Active Living Research wants solid research to be part of the public debate about active living.

Active Living Research

University of California, San Diego
3900 Fifth Avenue, Suite 310
San Diego, CA 92103-3138
www.activelivingresearch.org