



Elementary Schools Should Provide Daily Recesses in Addition to Planned Physical Education for All Students

WHEREAS, maturing children need daily recess that is unstructured or semi-structured, child-initiated play in order to develop healthily;

WHEREAS, physical activity during both structure physical education and recess help improve oxygen flow to the brain and glucose production thus causing an improvement in performing daily classroom skills;¹

WHEREAS, the National Association of State Boards of Education, the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education, the National Association for Sport and Physical Education, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and a non-federal Task Force on Community Preventive Services have acknowledged the benefits of recess, physical activity, and physical education;^{2,3,4,5,6,7}

WHEREAS, schools are logical places to provide instruction in physical activity and influence children's adoption of a physical activity habit;^{8,9}

WHEREAS, students who perform better on tests of physical fitness also perform better academically, thus refuting the oft-stated argument that time allocated for recess and physical education is better spent preparing students academically for high-stakes assessments;¹⁰

WHEREAS, the trend in the United States is a decrease in physical activity and an increase in energy intake;⁹

WHEREAS, type 2 diabetes in children and youth is increasing in prevalence, particularly among minorities, and obesity among children and youth has increased;¹³

WHEREAS, physical activity level is perhaps a more positive indicator of good health than relative obesity, emphasizing the need to develop a habit of physical activity early in life;^{14,15}

WHEREAS, recess benefits children in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade by providing an outlet for increased physical fitness, increased social interaction, increased emotional development, and increased cognitive development;³

WHEREAS, "physical education" and "recess" have unique characteristics and benefits for children;¹⁷

WHEREAS, in 2000 over 90% of elementary schools offered some form of daily or near-daily recess, yet anecdotal evidence suggests that a large number of schools are cutting back or eliminating recess in order to devote more time to academics;¹⁶ and

WHEREAS, few states require (4.1%) or recommend (22.4%) that schools provide regularly scheduled recesses.¹⁸

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: that the American School Health Association:

- 1) Supports well-supervised elementary school recesses of at least 15 minutes each for all elementary school children;
- 2) Recommends more than one recess per day, particularly for elementary students in pre-kindergarten through third grad who attend full-day school programs;
- 3) Recommends retaining recess in elementary schools, and reinstating it in schools where it has been eliminated; and
- 4) Urges its members and constituent organizations to advocate that local school districts develop and implement policies that maintain or mandate daily recesses (unstructured or semi-structured child-initiated play) of at least 15 minutes each, for all elementary school students.

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