

The Benefits of Recess and Outside Play for Elementary Age Students

By: David Babbin, Farmington High School Junior

Dear Farmington Parents and Faculty,

My name is David Babbin and I had the option to research a topic of my choice for my Government & Law class and I chose the importance of recess for elementary aged students and how having recess time can benefit their health and mental abilities later on in life. I found the following based on my research and interviews:

What does the law say?

The law for physical education for elementary school students says that kids are required 20 minutes of recess everyday.

Physical Health Benefits: There are many ways recess and play can physically help elementary school students. I had the opportunity to interview (in person and through email) Mr. Manfredi, Mr. Fantl and Mr. Chaves. Mr. Fantl gave me a lot of input on the physical benefits of recess. He understood a lot of what I researched because he wrote his master's thesis on physical activity on recess. Below are his conclusions about the physical benefits of recess:

- Students usually spend more time at recess than physical education throughout the week and it's where they get the majority of their physical activity.
- Students are recommended to get at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day and recess is usually a large portion of the in school opportunities students get for physical activity. Students do not have physical education daily and for many recess is the primary in school physical activity opportunity.
- There is research that shows the more equipment provided will encourage more physical activity.
- Students who are more physically active in early ages are more inclined to be physically active and healthy later in life.
- Depending on socioeconomic status of district, there are many places where in schools physical activity opportunities are the only opportunities students have. (ex. limited parks, athletic teams, and busy/unsafe opportunities.)

All of these points Mr. Fantl gave me clearly explain why recess and play is so beneficial for students at such a young age.

Mr. Manfredi, the Department Head for Health and Wellness explained the importance of recess during my interview, "kids are not made to sit for long periods of time. Kids are made to move and be hyper because that's what kids do so that they can get real life skills like solving problems and figuring out how to get along with people."

Based on my research, it is also proven that if kids develop these healthy physical activity habits at a young age they will sustain them throughout their lifetime.

Mental Health Benefits: There are many ways recess and play can mentally help elementary school students. I also received information from Mr. Fantl and Mr. Chaves. Mr. Fantl provided me with information on how recess and play is crucial for kids mental health. In his email he stated:

- High physical activity levels correlate with increased brain function, less stress, less anxiety, less behavioral issues, and higher self esteem.
- The social aspect of recess is also extremely important for mental health. Having the freedom to play with others, learn social skills, strengthen friendships, and allow for decision making on what to do at recess are all vital to the development of a young student.
- More and more research that increased physical activity levels of students with social and emotional needs promotes success in their school day.

Mr. Chaves also gave me his perspectives on the benefits. He states, "I don't just believe that there are simply benefits, I feel it is crucial for students to experience a healthy amount of recess throughout each day. Recess has many benefits for our students. This is their time to build friendships and learn through the affective domain. Gaining experience in sharing, taking turns, negotiating, creating games, playing games independent from teachers, following rules, showing good sportsmanship and teamwork without being instructed are all major reasons to give our students ample time for recess every day. I do believe that the more recess the better."

This shows that recess is a critical part of the school day and benefits students in mental and physical ways.

With the rise of technology it's really important that parents encourage outdoor play for their children after school, on the weekends and during the summer.