



Recess

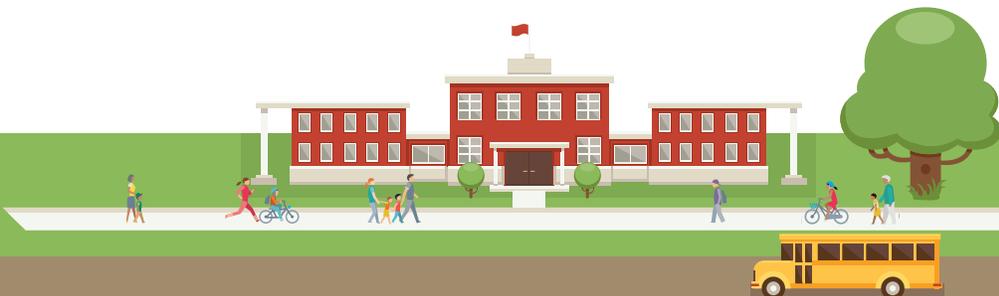
How Can You Help?

Recess is a planned time within the school day for free play and supervised physical activity.¹ Recess is a very important part of the school experience for students because it helps them practice life skills (e.g., cooperation, following rules, communication) and can increase physical activity.^{1,2} Recess also helps improve classroom behavior such as paying attention and memory.¹⁻³

What's Happening at School?

Knowing the answers to the following questions can help you support recess in your child's school. If you don't know the answers to these questions, check out the school handbook or school website, attend a school wellness meeting or Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meeting, or simply ask your child's teacher.

1. Does the district or school have policies about daily recess? If yes, what are they?
2. Do students have recess for at least 20 minutes per day?
3. Who is supervising recess? And are they given any training about how to supervise recess?
4. Is recess provided before lunch?
5. Are there safe and age-appropriate playgrounds and equipment for recess or age-appropriate structured play areas?
6. Does the school have a policy that prohibits teachers from taking away a child's recess as punishment?
7. Does the school playground have planned activities, such as activity stations or games (semi-structured recess), or can students do whatever they want (unstructured recess)?
8. What does the school do when the weather is bad outside? Is there space for active indoor play?
9. Is the school signed up for **Let's Move! Active Schools**, the national physical activity and physical education solution that equips school leaders and teachers with the resources and tools to implement effective recess policies and programming?





Ideas for Parents

You can be involved in your child's school by **attending** meetings, workshops, or training events offered by the school; **communicating** with school staff and other parents; **volunteering** for school events or in your child's classroom; **reinforcing** healthy messages and practices your child learns at school; **helping** make decisions about health in the school; and **being part** of community activities supported by the school. Here are some specific ideas for how you can support your child's school in providing recess.

- Join the school or district committee (e.g., wellness committee) that sets the policies for health and wellness, and work to include language about recess.^{1,4}
- Help raise funds to enhance your school's playground, including making sure the space is safe. This would also include getting sports equipment and other supplies (e.g., paint for marking play areas, activity stations including jump rope, four-square, hopscotch).
- Offer to help develop fun activities that students can do during recess.
- Volunteer to help with organized physical activities (e.g., four-square, active tag, flag football) during recess.
- Advocate to school leaders to have recess before lunch. This practice can reduce plate waste, and students are more focused in the lunchroom after getting some playtime during recess.¹
- Suggest offering recess as a reward to students for good grades, high test scores, or good classroom behavior.⁵
- E-mail or discuss the importance of having daily recess with other parents.
- Sign up to champion your school's **Let's Move! Active Schools** team. If your school doesn't have a team, encourage administrators or physical education teachers to enroll and get involved.



Check out additional resources for parents related to the school nutrition environment and services, physical education and physical activity, and managing chronic health conditions at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/P4HS.htm>.

REFERENCES

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. School health guidelines to promote healthy eating and physical activity. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep.* 2011;60(RR05):1-76.
2. Institute of Medicine. *Educating the Student Body: Taking Physical Activity and Physical Education to School.* Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2013.
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Health and Academic Achievement.* Atlanta: US Dept of Health and Human Services; 2014.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Parent Engagement: Strategies for Involving Parents in School Health.* Atlanta: US Dept of Health and Human Services; 2012.
5. National Association for Sport and Physical Education. Recess for elementary school students. <http://www.shapeamerica.org/advocacy/positionstatements/pa/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&pageid=4630>. Accessed August 5, 2015.

