

Recess Before Lunch!

...Playtime
before lunchtime!



Listen!

Comments about Recess Before Lunch:

"Recess Before Lunch has eliminated the 'rush to eat and get outside'... Students enter the cafeteria more calmly, they eat more calmly, and they have fewer office referrals once they return to the classroom. Our faculty and staff have 100 percent agreement that this is a better way to structure the the school day. We are glad it was suggested!"

— Dr. Teresa VanDover
Principal (former), Lee Expressive Arts School
Columbia Public Schools

"We are very happy with the recess before lunch. Our kids eat better... and it just makes sense."

— Dr. Sheila Logan
Principal (former), Moreau Heights Elementary
Jefferson City Public Schools

"I would recommend Recess Before Lunch; milk sales have increased and students eat more since no one is racing to finish their lunch to get to the playground first."

— Carmen Fischer
Director of Child Nutrition Services
Rockwood School District

Big benefits

Improved cafeteria atmosphere.

- Students are more relaxed and focused on eating rather than the playground.
- Less supervision in the cafeteria.
- Students have improved behavior.

Fewer classroom discipline problems.

- Students are calmer when they return to the classroom.

Increase in classroom time on-task.

- Students return to the classroom ready to learn.

Increased milk, vegetable, and entree consumption.

- Less plate waste, less trash.
- Increased nutrient and fluid intake; decreased number of nurse visits.

▶ Include Recess Before Lunch as part of your local wellness policy

▶ Low cost to implement

▶ After a morning of classes, kids are ready to play



Students are more relaxed and focused on eating rather than the playground

Recess Before Lunch...A Wellness Policy Solution

- INCREASES** classroom time on-task
- IMPROVES** cafeteria atmosphere
- REDUCES** plate waste
- IMPROVES** nutrient intake
- HELPS** improve behavior



Ready, set...

Seek input from the school and community.

Gain a commitment from administrators, food service staff, parents and teachers.

Observe schools that have Recess Before Lunch.

Plan recess and lunch schedules that allow adequate time to eat.

- Incorporate a hand-washing plan into the schedule.
- Encourage students to prepay for lunch to avoid losing money on the playground.

go!

Focus on the benefits rather than the obstacles.

- Think about what's best for the students.

Students are likely to be hungrier and thirstier.

- Have cold water available.
- Promote the school's breakfast program.

Anticipate some resistance to change.

Expect the schedule to be a work-in-progress.

- Practice the new routine and trial for at least a year before adopting policy.



Resources

- **Healthy Recess Before Lunch resources, USDA:**
<https://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/healthier-us-school-challenge-resources/recess-recess-lunch>
- **Recess Before Lunch - A Guide to Success, Montana Team Nutrition Program:**
<http://opi.mt.gov/pdf/schoolfood/RBL/RBLGuide2008.pdf>

Create a Lunch Atmosphere that Supports Healthy Eating

Recess after lunch often finds the student focused on the playground, not his or her lunch. Enhanced nutrition and better behavior go hand-in-hand; recess before lunch offers an opportunity for students to benefit from both.

Supporting Research for Recess Before Lunch Programs

A Montana Recess Before Lunch pilot study documented improvement in the mealtime atmosphere and students' behavior. Discipline problems on the playground, in the lunchroom, and in the classroom decreased.

A 2004 study by Bergman and colleagues of recess before lunch showed comparable results to a previous study by Mary J. Getlinger, et al. After implementing recess before lunch, plate waste decreased from 40 percent to 27 percent. In addition, consumption of calcium-rich foods increased 35 percent along with significant increases in consumption of most other vitamin- and mineral-rich foods.*

Research repeatedly shows recess before lunch can help students perform better in school, eat healthier, and promote a lunchroom atmosphere conducive to eating.

*Bergman, E.A., et al, "Relationship of Meal and Recess Schedule to Plate Waste in Elementary Schools." National Food Service Management Institute. Insight, Spring 2004.

*Getlinger, M.J., et al, "Food waste is reduced when elementary-school children have recess before lunch." J Am Diet Association, 1996;9:906-908.

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