

Benefits of Recess Before Lunch

Fact Sheet

Creating a Healthier Classroom

Why recess before lunch?

“When students go to recess before lunch they do not rush through lunch and tend to eat a more well-balanced meal including more foods containing vitamins, such as milk, vegetables, and fruits”

(The National Food Service Management Institute).

“Complete nutrition is related to overall health and improved test scores at schools”

(Vancouver Coastal Health Promoting Wellness: Ensuring Care)

When recess is before lunch, research shows that students:

- waste less food (as much as from 27% to 40%)
- consume more calcium and protein as much as 35%
- have decreased number of nurse visits for headaches and stomachaches after recess
- are calmer and ready to get to work immediately instead of needing cool-down time
- have an increase in classroom time on-task
- have decreased discipline referrals
- need less supervision in cafeteria
- have fewer accidents during lunch break
- litter less on school ground and inside the school

HAMILTON COUNTY
COORDINATED SCHOOL
HEALTH COMMITTEE

Concerns and Solutions for Implementing Recess before Lunch

Concern

Solutions

Scheduling

- Start with one or two grades to pilot.
- Educate and involve all appropriate people in planning ie. teachers, aides, secretaries, food service, staff, janitors etc.
- See sample schedules from Montana:
<http://www.opi.mt.gov/pdf/schoolfood/RBLAssistance.pdf>
- Educate students and parents regarding change.

Hand Washing

- Install dispensers with hand sanitizing so students can clean their hands as they enter the cafeteria.
- Often a company will donate the dispensers.
- Proceeds from a vending machine that dispenses healthy snacks can pay for the sanitizing liquid.
- Forest Glen Elementary added five minutes to each lunch session so students could use the restrooms and wash their hands before lunch.

Availability of Homemade Lunches

- Each class has a bucket in which all the lunches are placed every morning. The bucket goes out in the hall, and a custodian transports all the buckets to the cafeteria and leaves each bucket by a table.
- Lunch Cards also are left on a table, so pupils can collect them as they come in from recess.

Recess Before Lunch Research

Bergman, E. A., Buergel, N. S., Englund, T. F., and Femrite, A. (2004). The relationship of meal and recess schedules to plate waste in elementary schools. *The Journal of Child Nutrition & Management, Issue*

Buzby, J.C., & Guthrie, J.F. (2002). Plate Waste in School Nutrition Programs: Final Report to Congress. Retrieved October 20, 2005, from <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/efan02009/efan02009.pdf>

Dennis, N.C., and Maechten, A.D., Lunchtime revisited. Recess-first pilot schedule at Bandelier School, Albuquerque, N.M. A study examined food waste, health, behavior, and instructional effects under two different school lunch schedules—a recess-before-lunch pilot schedule was compared to a baseline week when lunch preceded recess. Results and outcomes are discussed. *Principal Reston, Va.* v. 78 (Sept. '98) p. 55-57.

Montana Team Nutrition Recess Before Lunch Pilot Project Summary – Plate Waste Results, April 2002 – May 2003. (Section 5) <http://opi.mt.gov/schoolfood/recessBL.html>
<http://opi.mt.gov/pdf/schoolfood/RBLPilot.pdf>

National Food Service Management Institute. (2003). "Relationships of Meal and Recess Schedules to Plate Waste in Elementary Schools" NFSMI Item Number R-71-03, 2003 (36 pages). Available from www.nfsmi.org

Tanaka, C., Richards, K. L., Takeuchi, L. S. L., Otani, M., and Maddock, J. (2005). Modifying the recess before lunch program: A pilot study in Kaneohe Elementary School. *Californian Journal of Health Promotion, Volume 3, Issue 4, 1-7*

White, Patrick. (2003) Reverse Order. *School Food Service and Nutrition. Volume 67 (7) 36-42*

Recess Before Lunch Resources

Vancouver Coastal Health Promoting wellness. Ensuring care.

<http://healthyeatingatschool.ca/wp-content/uploads/play-first-lunch-toolkit-september-2007-kr.pdf>

<http://docs.schoolnutrition.org/newsroom/jcnm/04fall/bergman/bergman1.asp>

http://depts.washington.edu/waschool/components/phys_ed/docs/AFHKWA_RecessBeforeLunch.pdf

http://www.education-world.com/a_admin/admin/admin389.shtml

<http://www.peacefulplaygrounds.com/pdf/insight30-recess-before-lunch.pdf>

<http://www.peacefulplaygrounds.com/pdf/recessbeforelunchslides.pdf>

<http://www.doe.state.in.us/food/pdf/netrecessstudy.pdf>

More Resources

List of Schools Converting to Recess before Lunch

Cincinnati Public Schools

As of May 2009, 8 schools have Recess before Lunch

Scottsdale, Arizona

First to convert -North Ranch Elementary now over half of the 31 district elementary schools have converted

Contact:

16406 N. 61st Place
Scottsdale, AZ 85254
480-367-5810

Indianapolis, Indiana

Forest Glen International Elementary School, a K-5 school

Contact:

6333 Lee Road
Indianapolis, IN 46236
317-964-4900
forestglen@msdlt.k12.us

Montana

In 2003 over 35 schools throughout the state
Pilot schools for Recess before Lunch were
Highland Park School in Lewistown,
Meadowlark School in Conrad, Valier Elementary
in Valier and Central Middle School in Whitefish
Montana Team Nutrition Web site at
<http://www.opi.mt.gov/schoolfood/RecessBL.html>

Tacoma, Washington

McKinley Elementary School

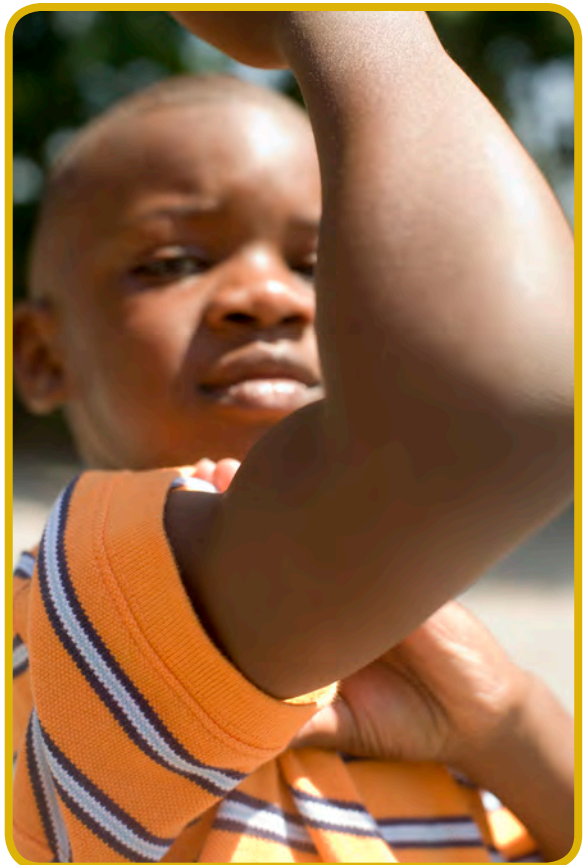
Contact:

3702 McKinley
Tacoma, WA 98404
253-571-2070

North Vancouver School District

Contact:

721 Chesterfield Ave.
North Vancouver, B.C. Canada, V7M 2M5
604-903-3444
info@nvstd44.bc.ca



Recess Before Lunch

Testimonials

"I believe switching to having our recess before lunch rather than after has reduced the number of incidents that had been occurring before we made the switch. Students eat more of their lunch because they've been running around playing ball, climbing on the jungle gym, swinging, etc. so they have a better appetite, which means they're getting more nutrients into their growing bodies. Students of course learn better when they have fuel in their systems.

Although students only get 15 minutes of recess, they are more motivated to behave in class in the mornings, turn in their homework, etc. because they know teachers can take that 15 minutes away as a consequence. It is a lot easier to hold a student back for 15 mins. and they miss recess than try to manage that after lunch has ended (we can't hold them back from eating lunch). We still have some challenges, especially on the days when recess is held indoors, but overall I think it has had a great impact on our students and our school environment".

Laurie Smith, 4th Grade Teacher, Cincinnati Public Schools

"We wouldn't change our schedule. Allowing the students to play before we eat eliminates students not eating because they want more play time. It's also increased our participation in lunch".

Jackie Rowedder, Principal, Academy of World Languages, Cincinnati

"Our Principal made this decision after food service suggested it. We think it is only positive. The children don't hurry (or skip) lunch just to get to recess. They blow off some steam before settling down to eat. One drawback is they have to wear their coats into the lunchroom in the winter. I don't know why anyone would be opposed, really."

Nurse, Academy of World Languages, Cincinnati

"K-2 does recess before lunch. (sometimes after lunch also!). They have a separate playground near the classrooms so actually this is something the teachers came up with themselves. They have reported better results with instructional time-more focus."

Nurse, Midway Elementary School, Cincinnati Public Schools

"Our school began recess before lunch this year. I really think that it is working nicely. From a health perspective, I believe that eating lunch and then running around the schoolyard can lead to upset stomachs. From an academic perspective, I like the calmer way that students return to the room after lunch. Before, when I was picking them up from recess, everyone was still hyper and often were upset over any conflicts that occurred at recess. It could take up to 15 minutes to settle down and/or solve problems that occurred on the playground. It is much easier to transition back into learning with the children coming back to the classroom from lunch instead of recess."

Cheryl Adams, 3rd Grade Teacher, Lockland Elementary, Lockland Local Schools

"At the beginning of this school year, our school switched to a Recess Before Lunch program. It has seemed to be a positive move for our students, staff, and students. I have noticed a decrease in the number of disciplinary situations we have at recess. The students line up after recess in an efficient manner, as the quiet groups get to go through the lunch line first! We have noticed an increase in the amount of food and milk consumed during the lunch period. And most importantly, our teachers find that the students are more calm, and ready to get back into the academics after eating lunch."

Michele Kipp, Principal, Lockland Elementary, Lockland Local Schools