



Recess Policy Guidelines

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Overview

This memo outlines the Lowell Education Justice Alliance proposed recess policy. Lowell Public Schools can be a leader among urban school districts by ensuring all students are provided adequate breaks to recharge and refocus, thereby improving academic performance and health outcomes.

Goals

1. *Lowell Public Schools will adopt a district-wide recess policy in order to address the disparity in how schools implement recess by the 2018-2019 school year.*
2. *Cultivate a common understanding of how regular, unstructured breaks optimize the physical, social and cognitive development of our students.*

Recess Policy Guidelines

The following guidelines are based on recent recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics and Centers for Disease Control:

- Minimum of 30 minutes of daily recess for all students Pre-K through 8th grade
- Recess should not be withheld for academic or behavioral reasons
- Recess held before lunch whenever feasible
- Free play and exploration, not directed by teachers/staff
 - Maintain a division between time allotted for physical education and recess
- Adequate indoor and outdoor spaces, facilities and equipment
 - Basketballs, footballs, volleyballs, handballs, etc.
 - Indoor recess areas for inclement weather where all can participate
- Ensure facilities meet or exceed safety standards
- Trained staff or volunteers to supervise recess

Facts on Recess

- Recess builds brains and bodies, "...pediatricians' support of recess is an extension of the AAP's policy statement supporting free play as a fundamental component of a child's normal growth and development" (CDC, 186).
- Recess helps students develop communication skills, such as cooperation and sharing, and helps counteract sedentary time spent sitting in class (AAP, 186)
- The American Association of the Child's Right to Play recommends a half-hour break for children both in the morning and in the afternoon.

- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends that each child get at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day.
- Urban school districts are more likely to lose recess minutes! (Basch, 2011).
- According to NAEYC, National Association for the Education of Young Children, recess is part of learning, and, therefore should be included in the standard for structured learning time.
- The Center for Disease Control also recommends regular recess for middle and high school students. Not always called “recess”, this includes periods of physical activity within the school day outside of physical education instruction (CDC, 2).
- Children engaged in play are thinking critically and abstractly, learning to deal with consequences, problem solving, investigations, pro-social behaviors, bonding with peers, and increasing communication skills (AAP, 184).
- “Several studies demonstrated that recess, whether performed indoors or outdoors, made children more attentive and more productive in the classroom” (AAP, 184).
- Recess benefits students physically and cognitively no matter the mode of activity they choose (AAP, 184).

What is LEJA?

Lowell Education Justice Alliance (LEJA) is a grassroots group of parents, educators, students, school staff, and concerned community members committed to building a stronger and better PUBLIC school system driven by community voices. We believe that policies and decisions are strongest when they are informed by those who are most impacted. Teachers, parents and students must have a critical role in creating the schools our communities deserve. At the core of this work is a belief that quality, equitable public schools are essential to a healthy society and so we will resist efforts to privatize our public schools. All students deserve to learn in an environment that is equitable, joyful, educational and inspiring.



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