



— AN INITIATIVE OF HEALTHY CPS —



## PLAYWELL: ACTIVE AND ENGAGED RECESS

### WHAT IS RECESS?

Recess is a non-instructional time during the school day during which students have the opportunity to develop and practice valuable skills that will help them succeed academically and socially. Goals of recess include: increasing physical activity time, learning and practicing social skills, learning and practicing developmentally appropriate games, and having fun!

### RECESS MUST BE...

- » Scheduled for at least 20 minutes a day for all students K-8
- » Scheduled before lunch (district recommendation based on increased benefits of recess before lunch)
- » Managed by trained supervisors
- » Inclusive of and engaging to all students
- » Not be withheld from students as a punishment or for academic reasons
- » Adhere to district weather guidelines (see reverse of this page for details)

### BENEFITS OF RECESS\*

**Physical:** Recess increases students' physical activity time which leads to improved health and physical fitness, helping to prevent childhood obesity.

**Social:** Recess allows children to learn and practice important social skills such as sharing, communicating, cooperating, problem solving, conflict resolution and respecting rules and order.

**Emotional:** Playing at recess reduces anxiety and aids in stress management. It also builds self-esteem and self-worth and promotes relaxation between classes.

**Cognitive:** Physical activity enhances cognitive development. Recess provides children with a necessary break from the classroom experience which allows them to improve attention and concentration levels while in class.

\*Adapted from National Association of Sport and Physical Education Recess Brief

Made possible by a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (Grant Number: 1H75DP004181-01) to the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Office of Student Health and Wellness, Healthy CPS. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions and official policies of CPS and CDC.

### RECESS FAQ'S

#### Is recess mandatory?

- » Yes, per the *CPS Local School Wellness Policy*, all elementary and middle schools are required to provide students with at least 20 minutes of daily recess. Recess may not be withheld as a punishment.

#### Does recess count as Physical Education?

- » No. Recess is **non-instructional time** during which students can engage in and practice physical activity and social development.

#### How many supervisors should there be for recess?

- » There is no official guidance for how many supervisors are required to support recess. However, in order to provide safe and organized recess, it is recommended to have at least one supervisor per classroom.

#### Are there behavior expectations at recess?

- » Recess is part of the school day. Basic expectations for behavior inside the school should extend to and be reinforced in recess.

### RECESS BEST PRACTICES

- » **Recess is free-time with a purpose.** Establish recess goals and behavior expectations.
- » **Recess is a seamless part of the school day.** Establish recess routines and procedures that are clear and communicated.
- » **Recess is organized.** Establish activity zones in the play space. Post a recess command bulletin board. Create roles and responsibilities for each recess supervisor.
- » **Recess is a collective responsibility.** Teachers and students take responsibility for making recess a productive, seamless part of the school day.
- » **Recess is active.** Safety permitting, recess should include opportunities for physical activity whether indoors or outdoors.



## PLAYWELL: RECESS WEATHER GUIDELINES

### BENEFITS OF OUTDOOR RECESS

Outdoor recess allows children to get fresh air, provides an opportunity for children to engage in moderate to vigorous physical activity, and gives students more activity options than most indoor spaces.

Outdoor recess is an important part of a child's school day and schools are highly encouraged to provide students with the opportunity to play outside whenever possible. Use the following guidelines provided by the district to determine whether recess is held indoors or outdoors each day.

### COLD WEATHER GUIDELINES

- » Above 32° F with or without wind chill: Recess should be held outdoors.
- » Between 31° F and 150 F with or without wind chill: Principal discretion.
- » Below 15° F with or without wind chill: Recess should be held indoors.

**Precipitation:** Snowy and icy conditions should be evaluated for student safety and attire.

**Preparedness:** Students should have appropriate outdoor attire to stay warm and dry during recess.

**Playground safety:** The playground equipment and surface (i.e., icy conditions) should be evaluated to determine whether students can safely play outdoors.

### WARM WEATHER GUIDELINES

- » Heat index of 90° F or below: Recess should be held outdoors.
- » Heat index between 91° F and 94° F: Principal discretion.
- » Heat index above 95° F: Recess should be held in a cool location.

**Activity level:** Students should participate in only light to moderate physical activity.

**Student preparedness:** Students should wear appropriate attire during warm weather. It is recommended that students wear sunscreen when outdoors.

**Playground equipment:** The playground equipment and surfaces should be checked prior to recess (i.e., slides, swing seats, and other playground equipment could get very hot and burn students). Supervisors should ensure that students do not play on equipment that is extremely hot to the touch.

**Water access:** Students should have access to water before and/or after recess. Additionally, students who show any signs of heat exhaustion or a heat-related illness (i.e., heavy sweating, weakness, muscle cramps, nausea, weak pulse, clammy skin, etc.) should be provided with immediate access to water.



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