



Recess Policy for Elementary School Children

Growing Healthier Kids

Recess Policy: Unstructured Physical Activity for Elementary School Children Promotes Better Health

Elementary school students need access to unstructured physical activity time or “recess time” every day. By implementing a recess policy, schools can help prevent obesity and diabetes and promote social, emotional and cognitive benefits for our children.

Proposed Recommendations for Travis County Elementary Schools

Elementary school students in [insert your district name here] should be provided with 20- 30 minutes of supervised recess time per day in addition to the 135 minutes of structured physical activity time per week that is currently mandated under SB530.

What Problem Is This Trying to Solve?

- Parents and educators are looking for ways to improve children’s educational experiences
- Everyone wants to help our children grow up healthier – both physically and mentally
- The amount of recess students enjoy depends on the campus they attend, which makes having a recess policy an equity issue. Children at high risk for obesity are least likely to have recess. ¹
- Developing a district-wide policy will ensure that all students, teachers and families can enjoy the many benefits of recess time.

What Are the Benefits?

There is a large and growing body of research that demonstrates the many benefits of recess time. These include physical, social and emotional, and cognitive benefits.

Physical Benefits

Students spend more than half of their recess period in moderate to vigorous physical activity – which is the type of activity that is most beneficial for children, health-wise. ²

Social and Emotional Benefits

Research shows that during unstructured recess, children interact with each other and come up with their own games, which has many benefits: ³

- This interaction promotes empathy and encourages cooperation.
- Students show better self-control in the classroom.
- It allows for choice and freedom and promotes building close peer relationships.

Cognitive Benefits

Unstructured recess gives kids opportunities for decision making that stimulates problem-solving and creative thinking, which improves listening, attention, concentration and test scores. ⁴

How will this be implemented?

Fortunately, we have three local examples of how to implement this policy. Austin, Pflugerville, and Del Valle ISD have offered to be resources so everyone can benefit from their lessons learned. An initial soft launch of this policy district-wide is a way to work out any kinks before enforcement begins.

Who is Behind this Effort?

The Central Health Equity Policy Council, a coalition of 70 community partners who advocate for health equity in Travis County with the goal of achieving wellness for all.



References

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