

Procedure - Recess and Physical Activity

Recess

The district will provide at least thirty minutes of recess for all elementary-school students each school day that exceeds five hours. The school may provide additional recess time before or after the school day, but that time may not be counted toward the thirty minutes of recess that is required. Additionally, time spent changing into and out of clothes for outdoor play should not be used to meet the thirty-minute requirement.

Recess must be supervised and student-directed. It must aim to be safe, inclusive, and high quality. To achieve those aims, schools will offer opportunities that align with state and national recess recommendations and maintain safe and age-appropriate equipment to use during recess. Schools may also include organized games as part of recess, but they should avoid including or permitting students to use computers, tablets, or phones during recess. Whenever possible, recess should be held outside. But if recess is held indoors, schools should use an appropriate space that promotes physical activity.

Recess will complement, not substitute for, physical education class.

Schools should not withhold recess as a form of discipline unless a student's participation in recess poses an immediate threat to the safety of the student or others. Nor should schools withhold recess to compel students to complete academic work. Schools should develop alternatives to withholding recess as a form of discipline or as a way to compel students to complete academic work.

The district encourages recess to be scheduled before lunch whenever possible. Scheduling recess before lunch reduces food waste, maximizes nutrition, and allows students to be active before eating. If recess is offered before lunch, schools will place appropriate hand-washing facilities and/or hand-sanitizing mechanisms just inside or outside the cafeteria to ensure proper hygiene prior to eating. Students must use these mechanisms before eating. Hand-washing time, as well as time to put away coats/hats/gloves, will be built into the recess transition period/timeframe before students enter the cafeteria.

Physical Activity in Schools

Given that middle and high school students do not have recess, the district will encourage physical activity breaks for middle and high school students. All schools will participate in a Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program. A Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP) is a multi-component approach by which school districts and schools use all opportunities for students to be physically active, meet the nationally-recommended 60 minutes of physical activity each day, and develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to be physically active for a lifetime. A CSPAP reflects strong coordination and synergy across all the components: quality physical education as the foundation, physical activity before, during, and after school, staff involvement, and family and community engagement.

Quality Physical Education

Schools will implement a physical education program that includes instruction and practice in a variety of motor skills and movement patterns; knowledge of concepts, principles, strategies, and tactics related to movement and performance; knowledge and skills to achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical activity and fitness; responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others; and values physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and social interaction.

Physical Activity during the School Day

The district recognizes that students are more attentive and ready to learn if provided with periodic breaks when they can be physically active or stretch. Schools will encourage teachers to do the following:

- Incorporate movement and kinesthetic learning approaches into “core” subject instruction when possible (e.g., science, math, language arts, social studies and others) and do their part to limit sedentary behavior during the school day.
- Provide short (3-5-minute) physical activity breaks to students during and between classroom time. These physical activity breaks will complement, not substitute, for physical education class, recess, and class transition periods.

Schools cannot use physical activity during the school day as punishment. For example, a school can’t have a student run laps or do push-ups as a form of punishment.

Outdoor Recess Policy

We believe outdoor play is vital for student wellness and aim to hold recess outside whenever possible. Students should come to school prepared for daily Northwest weather conditions (including rain jackets and warm layers).

The decision to hold indoor recess is made by the administration based on current local conditions. As a general guideline, students will remain indoors for recess if the outside air temperature or wind chill drops below 32°F, during periods of heavy/freezing precipitation, or if local air quality monitors indicate an AQI of 151 or higher. Administration will also factor in current recess staffing/monitoring levels and whether student clothing is appropriate for the weather.

Physical Activity Before and After School

The district offers opportunities for students to participate in physical activity either before and/or after the school day (or both) through a variety of methods (e.g., physical activity clubs, intramurals, sports, etc.).

School District Facilities

Access to school sites will be provided through permitting use of facilities to community youth sports groups consistent with the district’s facilities use policy, community college, and municipal joint use agreements and partnerships with youth organizations so additional opportunities are available for all youth in the community to participate in quality physical activity, fitness, sports, and recreation programs.

Management Resources

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