



LET'S PLAY!

ARIZONA



RECESS

TOOLKIT

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Introduction

When you think back to elementary school, recess is often a highlight of the day. Recess was a time to play with friends and socialize. Research shows that recess is more than just a break from classroom time — it helps students not only increase their daily physical activity promoting healthy growth and development, but also helps students practice social skills (e.g., cooperation, following rules, problem solving, negotiation, sharing, communication), positively engage in classroom activities (e.g., being on-task, not being disruptive), and enhance cognitive performance (e.g., attention, memory).^{1,2,3,4} The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention outlines the following benefits of recess for students:⁵

- Increasing their level of physical activity.
- Improving their memory, attention, and concentration.
- Helping them stay on-task in the classroom.
- Reducing disruptive behavior in the classroom.
- Improving their social and emotional development (e.g., learning how to share and negotiate).

The evidence is clear - healthy, active students are ready to learn and contribute to a positive school climate.

1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. School health guidelines to promote healthy eating and physical activity. MMWR Recomm Rep. 2011;60(RR-5).

2 Institute of Medicine. Educating the Student Body: Taking Physical Activity and Physical Education to School. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press; 2013.

3 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs: A Guide for Schools. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US Dept of Health and Human Services; 2013:22–25.

4 American Academy of Pediatrics. (2012.) The Crucial Role of Recess in School. Pediatrics 2013; 131: 183-188.

5 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2017, June 28). Recess in Schools. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/recess.htm>

Arizona's New Recess Law

During the 2018 second regular session of the fifty third legislature, the State of Arizona passed two important bills that support recess in Arizona schools. Senate Bill 1083 (SBI083)⁶ requires all schools that have grades K-5 provide two recess periods per school day. The language reads:

Each school district and charter school shall provide at least two recess periods during the school day for pupils in Kindergarten programs and grades one through three. From and after, August 1, 2019 each school district and charter school shall provide at least two recess periods during the school day for pupils in Kindergarten programs and grades one through five. A school district or charter school is not required to extend the school day as part of meeting the requirements.

A school that offers a half-day kindergarten program is required to provide at least one recess period during the school day for pupils in that kindergarten program. A school district or a charter school may count a pupil's participation in a physical education course during a school day as one of that day's recess periods.

This does not apply to middle schools, junior high schools, high schools, Arizona online instruction or schools in which the lowest grade of instruction offered is grade five.

“Recess” means a period of time during the regular school day, including time before or after a scheduled lunch period, during which a pupil is able to engage in physical activity or social interaction with other pupils.

The two recesses per day requirement is effective this school year, with a one-year grace period for grades four and five where needed.

The passing of this important legislation was influenced by parents and educators from across Arizona, and guided by research, with the understanding that a whole child approach to education is one that is inclusive of recess for the promotion of long-term development, success, and well-being of all children.

During this same legislative session, Arizona also passed Senate Bill 1008 (SB1008)⁷ which allows schools to include both recess and lunch periods as instructional minutes during the school day. The previous language prohibited schools from including both lunch and recess periods as part of this calculation. The new language states that:

“The hours in which a student is scheduled to attend a common school during the regular school day shall be included in the calculation of the average daily membership for that student.”

This new language allows schools to include lunch and recess periods to calculate Average Daily Membership (ADM) allowing for flexibility in how lunch and recess are scheduled for each school district to meet its students’ needs.

The Arizona Recess Toolkit is designed to provide school leadership and teachers with information, guidance, and tools that will make the implementation of the new law easier. The toolkit aligns with Arizona


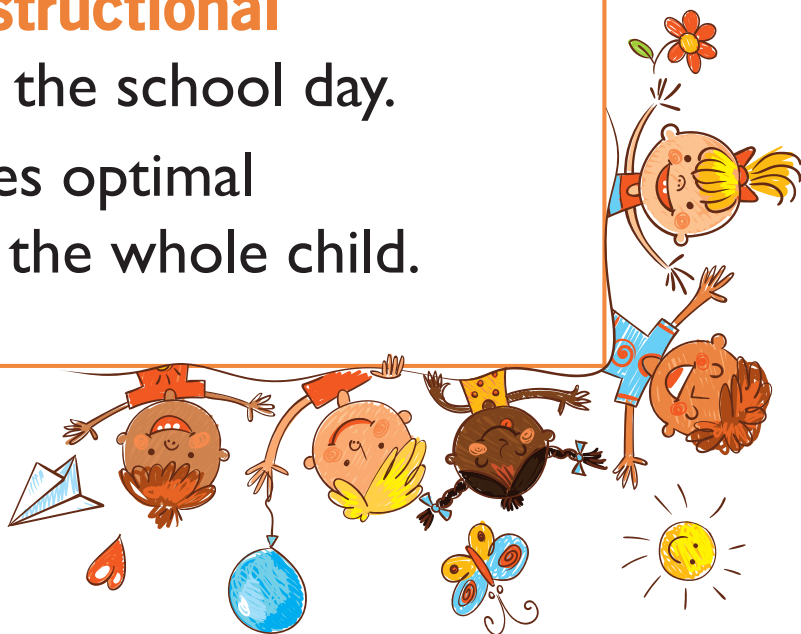
Revised Statutes for Education and instructional time and the Arizona Department of Education K-12 policies and procedures and standards. By supporting the successful implementation of quality recess practices, you are promoting the physical, social, and emotional well-being for Arizona children while enhancing student learning.



⁷ Senate Bill 1008, amending A.R.S section 15-901

Arizona's New Recess Law

What You Need to Know

- 
- A group of five diverse children are shown from the chest up, appearing to peek over the top edge of a large white rectangular box. From left to right: a boy with a red balloon, a girl with a heart, a girl with a paper airplane, and a boy with a paper airplane. A girl with blonde hair is on the left, and a boy with dark hair is on the right. A sun and a butterfly are also visible in the scene.
- **All K-5 schools** in Arizona are required to provide **two** recess periods for students per school day.
 - Recess and lunch periods **may be included as instructional minutes** during the school day.
 - Recess promotes optimal development of the whole child.
- 
- A group of five diverse children are shown from the chest up, appearing to peek over the bottom edge of the large white rectangular box. From left to right: a boy with a paper airplane, a girl with a heart, a girl with a paper airplane, a boy with a paper airplane, and a girl with a flower. A sun and a butterfly are also visible in the scene.



Implementation

The new recess requirements are intended to be flexible based on the unique needs of each school district with consideration for the following:

- Recess must occur during the "regular school day," which is defined by A.R.S section 15-901 as scheduled instructional hours. Thus, before-school/arrival play, while beneficial for students, is not to be counted as one of the two required recesses.
- Incorporate recess time in alignment with required instructional minutes during the school day,
- Stagger the recess schedule to optimize student engagement by grade, and
- Plan for supervision and coverage

Your school/district recess policy may be efficiently folded into your existing written Local Wellness Policies (LWPs). Planning may also be integrated as a function of your wellness representative on the site-based management team as an opportunity to use systems and resources already in place.

While some schools are already offering two recess periods during the school day, others have reduced recess time seeing it as competition to instructional time and feeling pressure to focus on test scores.

These new recess bills can help all schools value recess as part of instructional time and, with intentional planning, realize the benefits of quality recess. The first step is to convene a School Health Advisory Council (SHAC), composed of members that are impacted by recess which may include representation from administration, classroom teachers, recess supervisors, parents and students.

Once you've established your School Health Advisory Council (SHAC), the team can gather existing recess policies, procedures, and practices to ensure they are in alignment with the new state law.

Below is a list of suggested steps to take to implement a new recess policy and plan. For more assessment and planning tools, SHAPE America developed a [comprehensive planning guide and checklist](#) for implementing high-quality recess.

Implementation Steps

- Convene key stakeholders and your SHAC to establish your recess policy to be integrated into your Local Wellness Policies (LWPs).
- Develop a bell schedule that is inclusive of two or more recess periods, not including morning pre- or post- bell time.
- Assign a recess supervision schedule utilizing staff or parent volunteers.
- Implement the recess policy and plan.
- Monitor and adapt the plan as needed.

Sample Recess Policy

The following is an example of a recess policy that schools can adopt to align with the new recess bills. Schools should use this as a starting place for their recess policy and tailor it to meet the unique needs of its community.

All K-5 students at (Insert Name of District/School) will have an opportunity to participate in two (2) scheduled recess period(s) during the school day. (Insert Name of District/School) will not withhold recess as a form of punishment for behavior or related to academic performance in any way.

- **Half-day Kindergarten students will receive one recess period during the school day.**
- **Grades K-5 will receive two or more recess periods during the school day including one morning recess and one afternoon recess with lunch, but scheduled before the lunch period in alignment with best practices for health and well-being.**

The (Insert Name of District/School) will promote and encourage student participation in physical activity and recognizes that all physical activity contributes to a healthy lifestyle and better learners. Schools will provide students with a variety of options for participation in developmentally appropriate physical activity, including recess periods. The (Insert Name of District/School) will not withhold recess as punishment for classroom behavior or related to academic work in any way.

The CDC also provides a [customizable template](#) for schools to use when developing their school recess plans and policies. The SHAC may consider including language that adopts best practices for quality recess discussed in [section 5](#) of this toolkit.

Instructional Time and Sample Bell Schedules

The Arizona Revised Statutes (A.R.S. § 15-901 (A)(2)) stipulates hour requirements of instructional programming for students. Minimum instructional hours required per year for elementary students are defined as follows:

- Kindergarten (if half day): 356 Hours/Year
- Grades 1 - 3: 712 Hours/Year
- Grades 4 - 6: 890 Hours/Year

Instructional Minutes and Sample Bell Schedules

The Arizona Department of Education recommends the following elementary school instructional minutes by subject to use as a guide in developing your recess schedule:

Sample Recommended Instructional Time for Elementary Schools

	Primary Grades (1-3)		Upper Elementary (4-6, including 7 & 8 if self contained)	
	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly
Developmental Reading	90 Min.	450 min.	60 Min.	300 min.
Language Arts	60 min.	300 min.	60 min.	300 min.
Mathematics	60 min.	300 min.	60 min.	300 min.
Social Studies	30 min.	150 min.	40 min.	200 min.
Science	30 min.	150 min.	40 min.	200 min.
Physical Education	*30 min.	120 min.	*30 min.	120 min.
Art	**15 min.	60 min.	**15 min.	60 min.
Music	**15 min.	60 min.	**15 min.	60 min.
Health	**15 min.	60 min.	**15 min.	60 min.
Total	345 min.	1650 min.	335 min.	1600 min.

*It is recommended that this be scheduled and taught at least 120 minutes per week.

**It is recommended that this be scheduled and taught at least 60 minutes per week.

It is assumed the normal six-hour day will provide for 360 minutes of instructional activities in which children are under the guidance and direction of teachers in the teaching process. The above recommendations provide 15 minutes for primary grades and 25 minutes for upper elementary grades that the teacher can schedule additional activities that are in the best interest of the students. The school week should consist of 1800 minutes of instruction at both the primary and upper elementary grade levels. This allows approximately 150-200 minutes of instruction time per week to be used at the discretion of the teacher. It should be noted that in both the daily and weekly schedule that reading and language arts activities should be incorporated into other instructional areas, and rich content should be incorporated into reading and language arts.

Cottonwood-Oak Creek School District #6

7:40 AM	Playground opens
7:55 AM	Bell
8:00 AM – 8:50 AM	Class
8:50 AM – 9:30 AM	Specials
9:30 AM – 10:15 AM	Class
10:15 AM – 10:30 AM	Recess #1
10:30 AM – 11:35 AM	Class
11:35 AM – 12:15 PM	Recess #2 and Lunch
12:15 PM – 1:45 PM	Class
1:45 PM – 2:00 PM	Recess #3
2:00 PM – 2:30 PM	Class
2:30 PM	Dismissal

Julia Randall Elementary School (Payson, AZ)

3rd Grade		4th Grade		5th Grade	
TIME	CONTENT	TIME	CONTENT	TIME	CONTENT
7:40-8:00	Breakfast / Attendance / Pledge	7:40-8:00	Breakfast / Attendance / Pledge	7:40-8:00	Breakfast / Attendance / Pledge
9:15-9:45	Class time	8:00-11:00	Class time + Specials	8:00-10:00	Specials
9:45-10:00	Recess	11:00-11:20	Recess	10:00-10:15	Recess
10:00-11:25	Class time	11:20-11:40	Lunch	10:15-11:50	Class time
11:25-11:45	Recess	11:40-12:40	Class time	11:50-12:10	Recess
11:45-12:05	Lunch	12:40-12:55	Recess	12:10-12:30	Lunch
12:05-2:10	Specials	12:55-2:10	Class Time	12:30-2:10	Class Time

Mountain View School, Dysart USD, Waddell, AZ

Grade	Lunch	Recess #1	Recess #2
Kindergarten	10:25-10:45	10:45-11:05	12:20-12:30
First Grade	10:25-10:45	10:45-11:05	1:10-1:20
Second Grade	11:50-12:10	11:30-11:50	1:35-1:45
Third Grade	11:30-11:50	11:50-12:10	1:35-1:45

Mary A. Otondo Elementary, Yuma Elementary School District, Yuma, AZ

Grade	Recess #1	Lunch	After-Lunch Recess #2
Kindergarten	11:00-11:15	12:15-12:35	12:35-12:55
First Grade	10:15-10:30	11:45-12:05	12:05-12:25
Second Grade	11:10-11:25	12:45-1:05	1:05-1:25
Third Grade	10:00-10:15	12:15-12:35	12:35-12:55
Fourth Grade	10:20-10:35	11:45-12:05	12:05-12:25
Fifth Grade	10:45-11:00	12:45-1:05	1:05-1:25

Sechrist Elementary School, Flagstaff USD, Flagstaff, AZ

Grade	Recess #1	Lunch & Recess #2
Kindergarten	10:00-10:15	11:40-12:25
First Grade	10:00-10:15	11:45-12:25
Second Grade	10:00-10:15	11:45-12:25
Third Grade	10:00-10:15	12:15-12:55
Fourth Grade	10:15-10:30	12:15-12:55
Fifth Grade	10:15-10:30	12:15-12:55

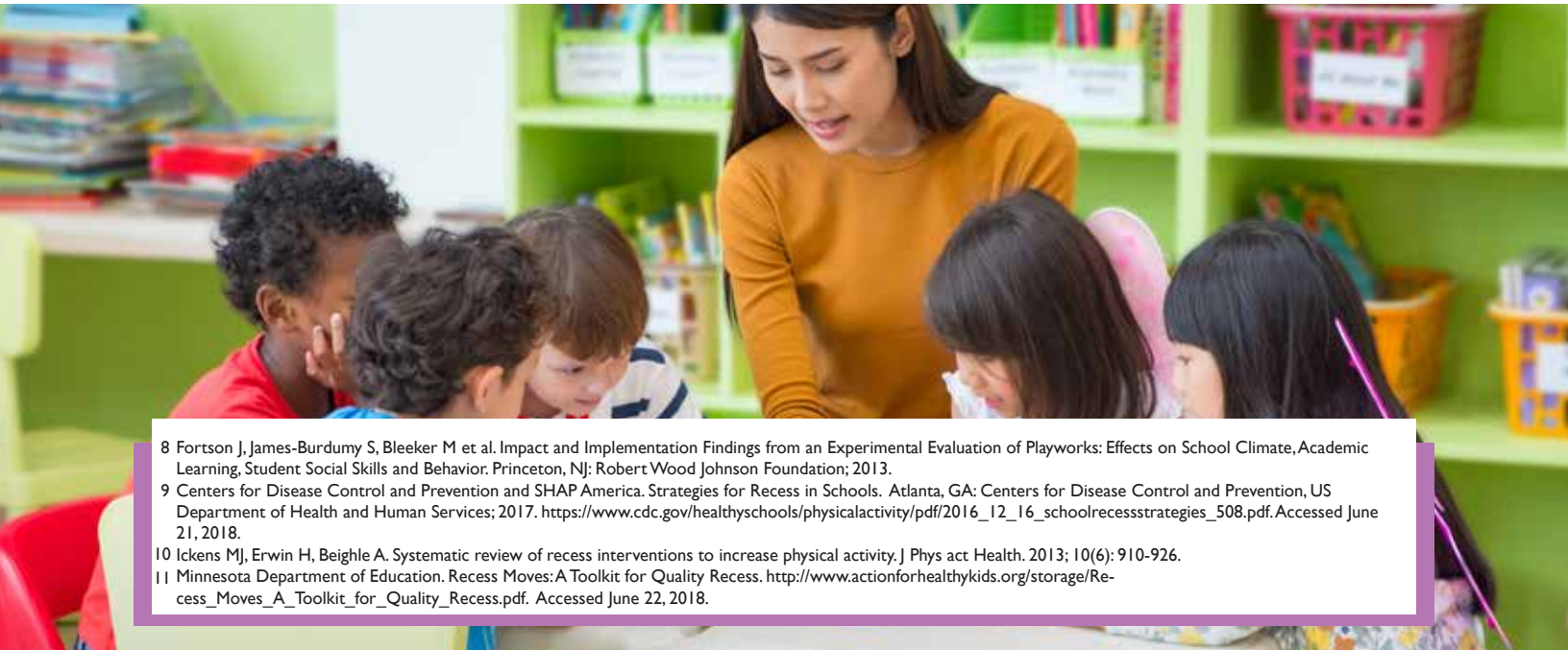
Recess Supervision

Supervision at recess is critical for reducing playground injuries, bullying, and social isolation.⁸ There are a wide variety of options available for schools for providing supervision at recess. There are two roles school staff and volunteers play when supervising recess. The first role is to supervise students and ensure that they are being safe and following recess guidelines and expectations. The second role staff and volunteers play is to ensure that all students are engaged in physical activity during the recess period.⁹

Recess supervision may include both structured and unstructured play^{10,11}. Active recess, also known as recess enrichment (and formerly known as structured recess), can help make recess go more smoothly through activity that is planned and intentionally directed by an adult. Examples of structured activities to support an active recess may include bean bag games, follow the leader, and musical chairs. Unstructured physical activity, sometimes called “free time” or “self-selected free play” are activities that children start by themselves. Examples of unstructured activities may include playing tag or just playing on the playground. There is value to both structured and unstructured play. Planned activities at recess can help students build positive relationships with physical activity and can be used to engage all students during

the recess period. Providing staff with ongoing professional development opportunities to lead structured recess activities can help to improve student engagement during recess. Encouraging students to organize and lead recess activities can help to promote positive recess behaviors and empower students to be physically active during recess. There are a number of resources available for staff and volunteers to guide activities at recess. For example, CATCH Kids Club activities is a physical education program that reinforces movement skills and the importance of lifelong physical activity. CATCH activity kits provide over 300 unique non-elimination activities that are designed to engage students and provide meaningful movement experiences. These activities can be adopted and used for structured recess activities and are being adapted for use at recess at some Arizona schools already. Peaceful Playgrounds also recognizes the important need for unstructured free play. This provides opportunities for students to interact and increase social skills and conflict resolution and also provides a break for teachers and staff who are supervising.

“A study by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) found that outdoor unstructured play is as important as reading or math.”

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- 8 Fortson J, James-Burdumy S, Bleeker M et al. Impact and Implementation Findings from an Experimental Evaluation of Playworks: Effects on School Climate, Academic Learning, Student Social Skills and Behavior. Princeton, NJ: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; 2013.
- 9 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and SHAP America. Strategies for Recess in Schools. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US Department of Health and Human Services; 2017. https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/pdf/2016_12_16_schoolrecessstrategies_508.pdf. Accessed June 21, 2018.
- 10 Ickens MJ, Erwin H, Beigle A. Systematic review of recess interventions to increase physical activity. *J Phys Act Health*. 2013; 10(6): 910-926.
- 11 Minnesota Department of Education. Recess Moves: A Toolkit for Quality Recess. http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/storage/Recess_Moves_A_Toolkit_for_Quality_Recess.pdf. Accessed June 22, 2018.

Implementation Requirements

What You Need to Know



- **The two, or more**, required recess periods must occur during the regular school day.
- **Before-school/arrival play**, while beneficial for students, is not to be counted as one of the two required recesses.
- Develop a **written recess policy** and integrate it into your Local Wellness Policies (LWPs).
- Recess can include **unstructured and structured** activities.
- Unstructured play during recess provides opportunities for students to increase social skills and conflict resolution.





**Standards Against
Withholding Recess as
Punishment**

The Arizona Department of Education Standard

Across the country, a common approach to managing challenging behavior is to restrict or withhold recess. However, this may be counterproductive and have unintended consequences of students benefiting from the physical activity time during recess. In turn, quality recess periods should be seen as a strategy to promote positive classroom behavior that all children participate in during the school day. Since at least 2008 and affirmed in 2015, the Arizona Department of Education has physical education standards that state:

It must be noted that the use of physical activity as punishment for any reason (e.g. poor behavior or performance) is not acceptable. Additionally, it is not acceptable to withhold students from participation in physical education classes or recess for poor behavior or to make up work for absences.

The Arizona School Boards Association (ASBA) also offers a model recess policy that discourages the off-trend practice of withholding recess. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) also believes that recess is a crucial and necessary component of a child's development and, as such, has a position statement that recess should not be withheld for punitive or academic reasons.

Alternatives to Withholding Recess

Teachers and staff may feel limited in disciplinary actions which leads to withholding recess. [Peaceful Playgrounds](#) has developed a list of 60 free alternatives to withholding recess, with a focus on positive alternatives. Below are a few examples of alternatives:

Positive Alternatives:

- Listen to music while working
- Teach the class
- Be a helper in another classroom
- Have lunch with a teacher or principal

A full list of alternatives can be downloaded on [Peaceful Playground's website](#). The SHAC should review these alternatives and include some samples in the recess plan. It is recommended teachers and staff receive professional development on these classroom management strategies to best implement your recess policy.

Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland has [specific regulatory language](#) about when, and with who, recess may be withheld. Their efforts included disseminating a model letter for students and families to ensure consistent messaging and understanding of the regulation with teachers.

Sample Student/Family/Teacher Communication Letter

Dear (Homeroom Teacher Name),

Recess is an important part of my day. I need to move. I need time on my own. I need to get fresh air. Recess is so important that our wellness regulation has a special paragraph about it. I am writing to let you know that my parents/guardians have discussed this with me. If I am not a danger to myself or others, I get to go to recess. Please do not take away any of my recess time for things such as not completing class work, making up a quiz or test, or as punishment for my behavior during the day. If my actions are causing any problems please communicate with me and my parents/guardians. We all will work together to find solutions so that I can be successful at school. Thank you.

Sincerely,

(Student Signature) (Date)

(Parent/Guardian Signature) (Date)



Arizona Department of Education Standards

What You Need to Know



- The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) has a **professional standard against withholding recess** as punishment for classroom behavior.
- Recess is a crucial and necessary component of a child's development and **should not be withheld for punitive or academic reasons.**
- Peaceful Playgrounds offers positive **alternatives** to withholding recess such as listening to music while working, teaching the class, or helping in another classroom.



A group of diverse young children are smiling and holding onto a colorful playground structure made of red, purple, and yellow bars. The background is a clear blue sky. A large yellow triangle is overlaid on the top right of the image, containing the title text.

Other Best Practices in Implementing Quality Recess

Place recess before lunch ¹²

In anticipation for recess following lunch, schools report that students will often rush to eat their lunch or often skip eating lunch all together.¹³ Placing recess before lunch can ensure that students have adequate time for meals and help them to work up an appetite. It may also reduce plate waste and encourage consumption of healthier foods including fruits, vegetables and milk.^{14,15,16} Placing recess before lunch can create a calmer lunch environment by giving students more time to eat and making them feel less rushed to get out and play. This results in fewer afternoon visits to the school nurse for tummy aches and improved post-lunch academic performance.

Provide adequate time for recess ^{17,18}

The recess bill was created with intent to restore recess for Arizona students. As you work with your school's SHAC to implement your recess plan and schedule exercise caution against meeting the bare minimum and only scheduling a 10-minute recess to avoid unintended consequences and the shortfalls of inadequate recess periods. Adequate time for recess is recognized as a key factor to allow children to transition in and out of the classroom giving them time to move, work through emotions, and dive into their imaginations.

Another short-term effect of not having enough recess time is a decrease in student's natural desire to learn, because they are given no break, or inadequate amounts of time, for a break from learning. Recess time should be adequate enough to allow students the necessary time to rest, move, socialize, play, and imagine. The recommended minimum length of recess is 20 minutes or more with best practice demonstrating that it takes an average of 45 minutes of free play to self-regulate, socialize intelligently, and master more complex problem-solving skills that occur on the playground. Short recess periods result in the unintended consequences of just arousing students which may leave them more 'hyper' and less able to concentrate upon returning to the classroom. 20 minutes, or more, of recess time gives students the time to regulate their bodies and then bring the activity level back down again to prepare to return to learning.

¹² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and SHAP America. Strategies for Recess in Schools. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US Department of Health and Human Services; 2017. https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/pdf/2016_12_16_schoolrecessstrategies_508.pdf. Accessed June 21, 2018.

¹³ National Education Association. Recess Before Lunch. <http://www.nea.org/archive/43158.htm>.

¹⁴ Stronhbehn CH, Strohbehn GW, Lanningham-Foster L, Litchfield RA, Scheidel C, Delger P. Impacts of Scheduling Recess Before Lunch in Elementary Schools: A Case Study Approach of Plate Waste and Perceived Behaviors. *Journal of Child Nutrition & Management*. 2016; 40(1).

¹⁵ Hunsberger M, McGinnis P, Smith J, Beamer BA, O'Malley J. Elementary school children's recess schedule and dietary intake at lunch: a community-based participatory research partnership pilot study. *BMC Public Health*. 2014; 14:156.

¹⁶ Fenton K, Rosen NJ, Wakimoto P, Patterson T, Goldstein LH, Ritchie LD. Eat Lunch First of Play First? Inconsistent Associations with Fruit and Vegetable Consumption in Elementary School. *J Acad Nutr Diet*. 2015; 115(4): 585-592.

¹⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC. Healthy Schools. Recess in Schools. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/recess.htm>.

¹⁸ Hanscom, Angela. 2016. Edutopia. Longer Recess, Stronger Child Development. <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/longer-recess-stronger-child-development-angela-hanscom>.

Provide adequate physical activity equipment and playground markings

One way to increase physical activity at recess is to provide adequate access to equipment such as balls, jump ropes, beanbags, hula hoops, fabric tunnels, and flying disks. Equipment items should vary in size and manipulation in order to meet the needs of all students, including those with disabilities.¹⁹

Painting surfaces with lines and markings can also help to encourage physical activity at recess. These can include outlines for traditional sports, such as basketball or soccer, as well as recreational games including beanbag toss, four square, hopscotch.²⁰ Schools can provide chalk for students to draw their own gameboards, or ask for parent volunteers to paint surfaces over a weekend.

Teach positive playground expectations.²¹

Recess also provides a time for students to develop conflict resolution skills. Using incidents that develop at recess or on the playground can provide teachable moments for educators to promote empathy, cooperation, conflict resolution, and positive behaviors.²² These skills can be taught in the classroom and reinforced during recess periods.²³

It is important for students to know what is expected of them at recess. Reviewing what types of play are appropriate at recess with students is one way to ensure positive recess experiences. Expectations may include being respectful, responsible, and safe, lining up before and after recess, how to use playground equipment appropriately, taking turns and sharing, putting away athletic equipment at the end of recess, and strategies for managing disputes such as games like “rock, paper, scissors.”

Having a simple conversation with students about their behavior leads to positive results. Reinforcing positive behaviors through verbal praises such as, “I appreciate you sharing your equipment with your classmates,” can also encourage positive behavior. If safety is a concern, transferring a student from recess to the nurse, principal, or school counselor is a reasonable safety measure.

¹⁹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and SHAP America. Strategies for Recess in Schools. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US Department of Health and Human Services; 2017. https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/pdf/2016_12_16_schoolrecessstrategies_508.pdf. Accessed June 21, 2018.

²⁰ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and SHAP America. Strategies for Recess in Schools. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US Department of Health and Human Services; 2017. https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/pdf/2016_12_16_schoolrecessstrategies_508.pdf. Accessed June 21, 2018.

²¹ Minnesota Department of Education. Recess Moves: A Toolkit for Quality Recess. http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/storage/Recess_Moves_A_Toolkit_for_Quality_Recess.pdf. Accessed June 22, 2018.

²² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US Department of Health and Human Services; 2009. Accessed June 21, 2018. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/protective/pdf/connectedness.pdf>

²³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Strategies for Recess in Schools. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US Department of Health and Human Services; 2017.

Best Practices in Implementing Quality Recess

What You Need to Know



- Place **recess before lunch** for improved health and academic performance in the later half of the school day.
- Having **physical activity equipment available** and playground markings can enhance physical activity during recess.
- Reinforce **positive playground expectations** with teachable moments that promote empathy, cooperation, conflict resolution, and positive behaviors.
- Provide **adequate time for recess**, ideally 20 minutes or longer for each recess period.



Arizona Champions

Here are some examples of how schools and districts in Arizona have implemented two recess periods.

Stanfield Elementary School [Stanfield, Arizona] – A non-traditional approach to recess

At Stanfield Elementary, teachers have the autonomy to determine when recess occurs during the school day, as long as one recess period takes place in the morning and one takes place in the afternoon. Recess periods must be a minimum of 15 minutes each. This allows teachers and students to decide when students need a break from instruction. If teachers are engaged in a lesson plan, they are not interrupted by a scheduled recess time or do not have to plan their activities around a scheduled recess. Similarly, if teachers notice their students are not engaged in a lesson, they can take a break for recess and reengage once students return from a much-needed break. In this model, teachers supervise recess for their classes. This provides an opportunity for teachers to build relationships with their students in a less formal setting. Teachers can also choose to lead structured activities to engage all students during recess. Finally, this gives teachers an opportunity to be physically active as well. This model requires no additional funding or restructuring of existing bell schedules.

Payson Elementary School [Payson, Arizona] – A traditional approach to recess

At elementary schools in Payson, recess periods are scheduled in the morning and before lunch by classroom, with multiple classrooms sharing a recess period. Recess periods are 15 minutes each. Structuring recess periods by multiple classrooms allows teachers to rotate supervising duties so they are only required to supervise recess activities once or twice per week. This also eliminated the need to use aides for recess, allowing aides to stay with students. This model also allows teachers to participate in exercise activities themselves and does not require additional funding.

Bisbee Unified School District

Bisbee USD has a model local wellness policy (LWP), which integrates recess into a comprehensive approach to wellness and physical activity. By written policy, Bisbee requires:

- 45 minutes of daily recess on days during the school year;
- That recess is outside to optimize outdoor play;
- That recess is not withheld for any reason; and,
- That recess is offered before lunch

 Unified School District

Elementary schools have 30 minutes of lunch recess, and a second 15-minute recess during the day. PE is also offered twice weekly.



Arizona Champions

What You Need to Know



- **Stanfield Elementary School** allows for teacher autonomy in determining when recess occurs during the school day as long as one recess period takes place in the morning and one in the afternoon.
- **Payson Elementary School** schedules a morning and lunch recess while allowing teachers to rotate supervising duties.
- **Bisbee Unified School District** offers a 30-minute lunch recess and second 15-minute recess during the school day that has been integrated into their A+ model local wellness policy.





Resources

Arizonans for Recess and School Wellness:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1665720310347892/>

Arizona Department of Education Physical Activity Resources:

<http://www.azed.gov/hns/physicalactivity/>

Arizona Health and Physical Education (SHAPE America):

<https://www.azhpe.org/>

Recess Planning Template. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/pdf/2016_12_16_CustomizableRecessPlanningTemplate.docx

AZ Health Zone – School Health Partners and Resources:

<https://www.azhealthzone.org/collaborators>

CATCH PE Options for Structured Physical Activity Programming:

<https://catchinfo.org/programs/>

60 Alternative to Withholding Recess. Peaceful Playgrounds Foundation:

<https://peacefulplaygrounds.com/60-alternatives-to-withholding-recess/>

Recess before Lunch - Action for Healthy Kids:

<http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/tools-for-schools/find-challenges/cafeteria-challenges/1232-recess-before-lunch>

Strategies for Recess in Schools - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and SHAPE America:

https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/pdf/2016_12_16_schoolrecessstrategies_508.pdf

What You Need to Know

Arizona's New Recess Law

- All K-5 schools in Arizona are required to provide two recess periods for students per school day.
- Recess and lunch periods may be included as instructional minutes during the school day.
- Recess promotes optimal development of the whole child.

Implementation Requirements

- The two, or more, required recess periods must occur during the regular school day.
- Before-school/arrival play, while beneficial for students, is not to be counted as one of the two required recesses.
- Develop a written recess policy and integrate it into your Local Wellness Policies (LWPs).
- Recess can include unstructured and structured activities.
- Unstructured play during recess provides opportunities for students to increase social skills and conflict resolution.

Arizona Department of Education Standards

- The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) has a professional standard against withholding recess as punishment for classroom behavior.
- Recess is a crucial and necessary component of a child's development and should not be withheld for punitive or academic reasons.
- Peaceful Playgrounds offers positive alternatives to withholding recess such as listening to music while working, teaching the class or helping in another classroom.

Best Practices in Implementing Quality Recess

- Place recess before lunch for improved health and academic performance in the later half of the school day.
- Having physical activity equipment available and playground markings can enhance physical activity during recess.
- Reinforce positive playground expectations with teachable moments that promote empathy, cooperation, conflict resolution, and positive behaviors.
- Provide adequate time for recess ideally 20 minutes or longer for each recess period.

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