



By
Dr. Melinda Bossenmeyer

“The Recess Doctor”



Recess Before Lunch

What is it?

Where students go to recess first , then eat lunch.



Recess Before Lunch



Benefits

- Improved cafeteria behavior.
- Calmer, more relaxed students in cafeteria
- Students return to classroom ready to learn.
- Students throw away less food.
- Students drink more milk and eat more.
- Fewer discipline problems
- Fewer visits to school nurse



Principal comments

Ms. Peters McKinley Elementary,
Washington

- “By having recess before lunch, our students make better choices about what they eat. They eat more and always drink their fluids. It’s easier to settle them down in to the classroom after lunch.” (Action for Healthy Kids Washington-Recess Before Lunch)



Principal comments

“At Highland Park Elementary, we have noticed less time wasted in transition. Students are calmer, more settled, and ready to begin learning than when they come off the playground.”



Teacher Comments

“We have more uninterrupted teaching time.”

“Less fights on the playground and better classroom behavior.”

“Students are not rushing through lunch to get to recess.”



Recess Before Lunch



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Recess Before Lunch

- Research Benefits

- Recess before lunch elementary students

- Ate 24% more food
 - Wasted 30% less food
 - Ate 8% more calories
 - Consumed 35% more calcium and
 - 13% more Vitamin A





School Health Policies and Programs Study

In 2001, less than 5% of elementary schools scheduled recess prior to lunch

Number of schools implementing Recess Before Lunch is rapidly growing.



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Montana Team Nutrition Program Research

- Decrease in discipline problems on the playground, in the cafeteria, and in the classroom
- Children returned to class more settled, calmer, and ready to learn
- Focus groups with children found that children





You're probably thinking

“How do I get started?”

First

Explore the barriers you'll face in
changing a long standing education
tradition



Administrative Feedback

1. Important kids not be rushed through lunch
2. Kids want to get out and play.
3. Kids eat quickly and waste food
4. Inviting to think behavior would improve in lunchroom

Adm. Identified Barriers

“Difficult to get people to buy in that recess before lunch is better for students.”



Teacher Feedback

1. Decreased the playground issues that spill into classroom.
2. Motivates kids to get work done so they can go play and then go eat.

Teacher Barriers

We need to focus on testing.

Schedule is already set for academic subjects.

Serving kids would be more difficult.



Recess Before Lunch

Parent Comments

1. Tradition
2. Need for data outcomes.
3. Previous experience.
4. Logistics. How will this work?
5. What about hand washing?

www.nfsmi.org website

Barriers for Parents

- If it's not broke why fit it?
- Scheduling is an issue.
- Where will kids put their coats?
- They might get tired after a full meal.



Recess Before Lunch



- You may be realizing that, “O.K. this may not be as easy as I thought.”
- Let me think about this.

What are the steps for implementing Lunch Before Recess?



Recess Before Lunch

Step 1

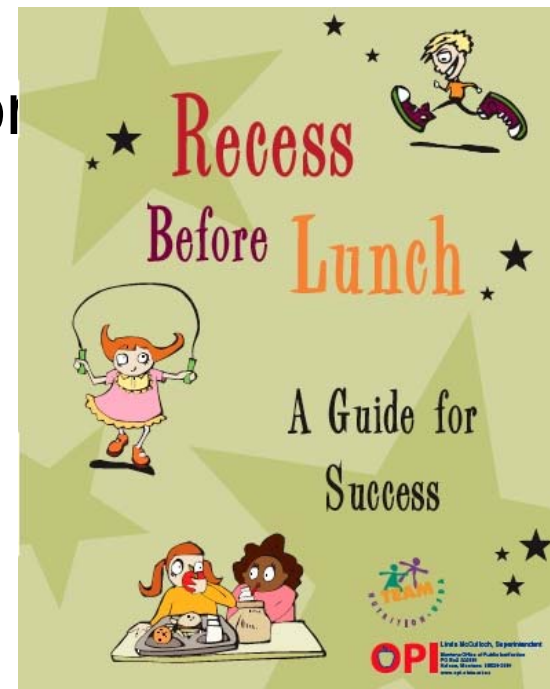
Educate Yourself on Recess Before Lunch

Resources to Download

blog.peacefulplaygrounds.com

Recess Before Lunch: *It Does Make a Difference!*

SNA Annual National Conference
July 17, 2006





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Step 2

Educate Teachers

- Staff Meeting
Agenda Discussion

Use guide for staff inservice
in the RBL : Guide to
Success

Child and Adult Nutrition Services
Benefits of Recess Before Lunch
Fact Sheet
Creating a Healthier Classroom



Why recess before lunch?

Students who go to recess after lunch are often thinking ahead to recess and rush to finish their lunch rather than taking the time to eat a well-balanced meal. When students go to lunch before recess, the National Food Service Management Institute notes, "The lunch [these students] do consume tends to consist of high-protein and high-fat foods, such as the entrée. If students have already participated in recess, they still eat their entrée, but will also eat more foods containing calcium and vitamins, such as milk, vegetables, and fruits." ("Insight," Spring 2004).

When recess is before lunch, students:

- waste less food.
- consume more food and nutrients.
- behave better on the playground, in the cafeteria, and in the classroom.
- eat at a more leisurely pace because the cafeteria atmosphere is more relaxed.

How can your school make the change?

- Inform school faculty and staff, parents, students, and the community of the reasons for the change in order to build support.
- Realize that change takes time and effort and the first try may not work out.
- Develop routines for the following if you do not already have them in place:
 - Hand washing
 - Going to recess, coming in from recess and going to lunch, and going from the lunchroom back to the classroom
 - Getting sock lunches
 - Submitting lunch money
- Practice your new routine, so everyone knows what to do and when to do it.
- Schedule adequate time (25-30 minutes) for students to eat.
- Be committed, even through a trial period, to



Recess Before Lunch

Step 3

– Educate Parents

- Write an article about Recess Before Lunch in school Newsletter
- Send home parent letter about the change
- Sprinkle benefits of RBL in lunch menus that go home to parents.

**Recess
Before
Lunch**



Principal Sally Soliday from Echo Park Elementary School, in Apple Valley, MN explains their "Recess Before Lunch Program"... Teachers are given a 25 minute prep-time while students have recess supervised by teaching assistants. After recess, students enjoy a 20 minute lunch with their classroom teacher. Sally goes on to say that "students are expending a lot of energy during recess and are ready for a relaxing lunch. Students are hungrier and as a result eat more food and drink more milk. The atmosphere is unhurried. Students are better prepared to return to their classrooms to focus on learning."

Benefits

- Reduced plate waste
- Students eat at a more leisurely pace
- Better student behavior—less disciplinary problems
- Cafeteria is quieter, more relaxed, an environment in which students can socialize



- **Step 4 Educate Students**
 - Explain new procedures
 - Introduce procedures of hand washing
 - Either provide disposable handy wipes
 - Provide access to sanitizer dispenser
 - Provide time to wash hands



- Step 5
 - Plan for new recess and lunch schedule
 - Meet with all involved playground supervisors, lunch monitors, food service workers, custodians, teachers etc.
 - Be flexible realize that the initial schedule may need revision.
 - GIVE IT TIME TO WORK. Change takes time.



Recess Before Lunch

- Check out our resources at blog.peacefulplaygrounds.com
- Do you have some thoughts, questions or solutions to share. Post them to our comments section of the blog and watch them appear.