

Recess Is At Risk, New Campaign Comes To The Rescue National PTA

Survey Shows PTA Members Don't Want Recess Eliminated
PTA, Leading Education Organizations and Cartoon Network Launch Rescuing Recess Campaign

WASHINGTON – MARCH 13, 2006 – Think recess is just child’s play? Experts agree that playtime can be just as vital as classroom time to a child’s social, emotional and educational development. Today in Washington, D.C., the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and Cartoon Network announced the launch Rescuing Recess, a campaign that champions the importance of recess for kids and works to help keep and revitalize it in schools across the country. The campaign was developed with direction from an advisory board of leaders and policymakers in children’s health and education, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Education Association (NEA), the National Association for Sport & Physical Education (NASPE), The President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, New Leaders for New Schools and Health MPowers

Despite mounting evidence that kids need an outlet to blow off steam, learn to interact with others and get the exercise they need, nearly 40 percent of American elementary schools have either eliminated or are considering eliminating recess. Due to school budget cuts and an increased focus on academic standards, millions of American schoolchildren may miss out on unstructured play with their peers including hopscotch, tag, kickball or jump rope. Recess also functions successfully as an established school-based activity and should be carefully considered as part of any school health and wellness policy

“We know many children enjoy recess as a welcome break from the classroom and parents appreciate the balance that it offers between schoolwork and play,” said Anna Weselak, National PTA President. “Children who are physically active do better in the classroom. The research tells us that even if it means a reduction in class time, providing more time for physical activity can lead to increased test scores. We are excited to be part of Rescuing Recess to make sure we keep or bring back an activity that needs to be part of every child’s learning experience.”

PTA and Cartoon Network Send a Call for Kids to Rescue Recess

The goal of the campaign is to recognize unstructured break time as an essential element of the school day and to connect educators, parents, and kids as advocates to bring back or keep recess.

Rescuing Recess will be rolled out in phases and will include volunteer resources, recess kits, on-air public service announcements and grants. To kick off this multi-year

campaign, kids across the country are being asked to write letters to their local and state school officials in support of recess. Using an online letter template available at www.rescuingrecess.com, kids can express their own views about break time and let local school boards know that recess is important to them. At the end of the letter writing campaign, Cartoon Network will award more than \$300K in grants to the top participating PTA units within each of 50 states and the District of Columbia. Additionally, a \$50,000 grant will be awarded to the top state with the highest participation, with the winner to be announced in June at the National PTA conference in Phoenix. These grants are one element of the Rescuing Recess campaign, through which Cartoon Network will pledge more than \$1.3 million to help save recess.

"Rescuing Recess is a part of Cartoon Network's overall GET ANIMATED program that encourages kids to lead active, healthy lifestyles and learn how to become advocates for issues that are important to them," said Jim Samples, executive vice president and general manager of Cartoon Network. "Recess is the one time at school when kids get a break to have unstructured play, and serves as an essential part of their development. We want to arm kids, parents and teachers with tools to ensure that recess remains a part of the school day, so this is just the beginning of a larger Cartoon Network effort to empower our youth."

PTA Survey Shows That Parents and Teachers Agree Recess is Essential Part of the School Day

A new survey recently conducted by the PTA showed that nine out of 10 teachers say recess and the free time spent with peers is an important part of the school day and is crucial to a child's social and emotional development. Other key findings from the survey include:

- * 99 percent of parents and teachers think recess is important for elementary school students
 - o Three out of four agree that recess should be mandatory
- * More than half of PTA leaders think kids are less disruptive in class if they have recess
 - o More than 75 percent disagree that all school time should be spent on academics
 - o Two-thirds think kids need unstructured play during the day
 - o Three-fourths say taking a break in the day helps kids concentrate
- * More than half of PTA leaders think their daily recess is at risk
 - o 73 percent say it is because of the need to focus on academics; 30 percent say it due to lack of supervisory staff
 - o Only 9 percent are confident that recess will not be reduced in their school

Read more about Rescue Recess and download templates for your own Press Release and Letters to the Editor and Your Local Superintendent in the article, Think Recess is Just Child's Play?, found in PTA's Health and Wellness section.