

Rudolph F. Crew, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: REQUEST THAT THE SCHOOL BOARD APPROVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RECESS TO TAKE PLACE EITHER THREE TIMES A WEEK FOR 15 MINUTES EACH TIME OR TWO TIMES A WEEK FOR 20 MINUTES EACH TIME IN ALL GRADES, PRE-KINDERGARTEN THROUGH FIVE AND RECEIVE THE RECESS MANUAL

COMMITTEE: INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), in addressing the importance of physical activity in the academic process, seeks to implement a recess policy to ensure that all children receive the minimum requirements of daily physical activity. Beginning September 2005, M-DCPS will implement recess to take place either three times a week for 15 minutes each time or two times a week for 20 minutes each time in all grades, Pre-Kindergarten through five.

Recess, while separate and distinct from physical education, is an essential component of the total educational experience for elementary aged children. Recess is defined as unstructured playtime that is supervised by adults, but not directed by adults. Recess provides children with opportunities to engage in physical activity that helps to develop healthy bodies and enjoyment of movement. It also allows elementary children to practice life skills such as conflict resolution, cooperation, respect for rules, taking turns, sharing, using language to communicate, and problem-solving in real life situations. Furthermore, recess facilitates improved attention and focus on learning in the classroom.

According to various national organizations, recess is considered an important component of a child's physical and social development. Inactivity is further considered a major risk factor for heart disease and it is now evident that patterns of inactivity begin at early ages. As a result of parents working outside the home, safety, and other factors, a growing number of children have limited time to participate in unstructured play. They spend more time watching TV, playing computer games, and/or participating in other sedentary activities. The result of this inactivity, coupled with poor nutritional habits, is that more children are overweight and obese; showing early signs of heart disease, diabetes and other serious health problems. The involvement of young children in daily physical activity during school hours is critical for their current and future health.

Recess also provides the opportunity for students to develop and improve social skills. During recess, students learn to resolve conflicts, solve problems, negotiate, and work with others without adult intervention. Cognitive abilities may also be enhanced by recess. Studies have found that students who do not participate in recess may have difficulty concentrating on specific tasks in the classroom, are restless and may be easily distracted. In addition, recess serves as a developmentally appropriate strategy for reducing stress. Contemporary society introduces significant pressure and stress for many students because of academic demands, family issues, and peer pressures. (National Association for Sport and Physical Education, 2001)

GUIDELINES FOR RECESS

Based on a review of literature, and best practices, the following guidelines are provided to ensure a safe and productive implementation of recess.

- Beginning September 2005, upon Board approval, M-DCPS will implement recess, scheduled to take place either three times a week for 15 minutes each time or two times a week for 20 minutes each time in all grades, Pre-Kindergarten through five. This is in addition to the regularly scheduled physical education instructional classes, which provide a sequential instructional program.
- Recess should not replace physical education. Recess is unstructured playtime where children have choices, develop rules for play, and release energy and stress.
- A Recess Manual has been created to assist schools in the implementation of recess. The Recess Manual has a section on sample age appropriate activities. These activities are suggestions to help during the 'start-up' phase of recess. However, recess is intended to be unstructured playtime that is supervised by adults, but not directed by adults.
- Minimum safety and supervision procedures for recess and for safe and proper use of all playground equipment are outlined in the Recess Manual.
- Principals should use his/her discretion to develop schedules that provide for supervised recess in grades Pre-Kindergarten through five.
- Recess will be conducted outdoors when weather permits. In the case of inclement weather (thunder, lightning, outside temperature over 90 degrees), appropriate recess activities will be conducted indoors.
- Recess should not be viewed as a reward but a necessary educational support component for all children.
- Students should not be denied recess as a punishment or to make up work.
- Children should accumulate 30-60 minutes of physical activity on all, or most, days of the week. This should be periods of moderate to vigorous activity in several bouts of age appropriate physical activity lasting 15 minutes or longer each day. The 30-60 minutes of physical activity is a combination of recess, physical education, and out-of-school activities.
- Adults should intervene, based on safety and supervision procedures, when a child's physical or emotional safety is an issue. Bullying or aggressive behavior must not be allowed and all safety rules should be enforced.

CONTRACT ISSUES TO TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION

- An adult must always supervise children
- Classroom and Special Area teachers must maintain planning periods
 - Planning time occurs during art, music, and physical education for classroom teachers
 - Spanish and Media are NOT planning time
- Teachers must have 30 minute duty free lunch. In Zone schools, teachers must have a 45 minute duty free lunch
- Working hours cannot be extended

Again, a Recess Manual has been created to assist schools in the implementation of recess. The Recess Manual outlines cognitive benefits, guidelines for recess, and playground safety and supervision procedures. The Recess Manual has a section on sample age appropriate activities. These activities are suggestions to help during the 'start-up' phase of recess. Since students in M-DCPS have not had recess for years, they might need some initial help. However, recess is intended to be unstructured playtime that is supervised by adults, but not directed by adults. The Recess Manual has been provided to the School Board under separate cover and a copy will be placed on file in the Citizen's information Center and in the Office of the Recording Secretary.

Agenda Item A-3 requests that The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, approve the implementation of recess to take place either three times a week for 15 minutes each time or two times a week for 20 minutes each time in all grades, Pre-Kindergarten through five and receive the Recess Manual.

RECOMMENDED:

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, approve the implementation of recess to take place either three times a week for 15 minutes each time or two times a week for 20 minutes each time in all grades, Pre-Kindergarten through five and receive the Recess Manual.

ADDITIONAL RECESS INFORMATION

What is recess?

- Recess is defined as unstructured playtime that is supervised by adults, but not directed by adults. While separate and distinct from physical education, it is an essential component of the total educational experience for elementary aged children.
- Pending approval at the September 7, 2005, School Board meeting, beginning September 2005, recess will be scheduled to take place either three times a week for 15 minutes each time or two times a week for 20 minutes each time in all grades, Pre-Kindergarten through five.

Why is recess important?

- Recess provides children with opportunities to engage in physical activity that helps to develop healthy bodies and enjoyment of movement.
- Recess also allows elementary children to practice life skills such as conflict resolution, cooperation, respect for rules, taking turns, sharing, using language to communicate, and problem-solving in real life situations. During recess, students learn to resolve conflicts, solve problems, negotiate, and work with others without adult intervention.
- Recess facilitates improved attention and focus on learning in the classroom.
- Studies have found that students who do not participate in recess may have difficulty concentrating on specific tasks in the classroom, are restless, and may be easily distracted.

Is instructional time being sacrificed for playtime?

- NO. An overview of related research showed that recess is beneficial to children in several ways: including brain development, learning, health and physical development, social and emotional adjustment, and language development. WHILE THE MYRIAD BENEFITS OF RECESS COULD BE MET IN OTHER WAYS, THERE IS NO OTHER SINGLE VENUE THAT CAN PROVIDE ALL OF THEM.
- The brain operates on a 90-110 minute cycle (Klein & Armitage, 1979; as cited in Jensen, 1998) and at the ebb portion of the cycle; a mental rest is in order. Rossi and Nimmons (1991; as cited in Jensen, 1998) found that mental breaks of up to 20 minutes several times a day increased productivity.
- People learn better when new material is presented over discrete time periods with a change in activity between learning periods (Toppino, Kasserman, & Mracek, 1991). Children need a more pronounced break in activity, such as engaging in physical activity between sedentary learning periods (Pellegrini & Bjorklund, 1997).
- Studies have shown that children who engage in more physical activity throughout their school day perform better than those who spend more time in instruction (cited in Jensen, 1998).
- Studies have shown that elementary school age children are more attentive to their teachers and schoolwork after they have had recess (Jarrett, Maxwell, Dickerson, Hoge, Davies, & Yetley, 1998; Pellegrini & Davis, 1993; Pellegrini, Huberty & Jones, 1995).

How will recess happen?

- Pre-K – Schedules for Pre-K include 30 minutes of “outdoor play.” Recess will be incorporated into that time.
- K – 5 – Principals have incorporated recess into their master schedule on an individual school-by-school basis. School schedules have been reviewed by Regional and District School Operations staff.
- Zone – Recess will occur immediately after lunch.

ADDITIONAL RECESS INFORMATION

What accommodations have been made?

- Where classroom teachers are unable to supervise recess, appropriate accommodations have been made. For example, teacher assistants and/or paraprofessionals will supervise recess. Or, in the few cases of limited mobility, recess will occur near the classroom. In circumstances where Special Area subjects and planning time is not compromised, Special Area teachers may supervise recess.
- In the case of inclement weather, such as thunder, lightning, outside temperature above 90, recess can take place indoors.
- The Division of Life Skills has distributed a "Hot Climate" Policy that outlines precautions to take during hot and humid days.

Students with Disabilities

- Recess scheduling for students with disabilities, who are not served in general education, will be discussed on an individual basis through the IEP process and accommodated as appropriate.

Contract issues

- Planning time and duty-free time is not impacted with the implementation of recess

Facilities

- Principals have identified space for recess by grade levels. For example, 1st grade playground, west field, PE shelter, etc.
- In cases where schools identified facility concerns, School Operations will work with Facilities to address the issues on a case-by-case basis.

Training

- The Division of Life Skills and Special Projects has created a "Recess Manual" that outlines cognitive benefits, guidelines for recess, playground safety and supervision procedures, and age appropriate activities. The age appropriate activities are suggestions to help during the 'start-up' phase of recess. However, recess is intended to be unstructured playtime that is supervised by adults, but not directed by adults.
- The Division of Life Skills and Special Projects will conduct District-wide workshops to help implement recess. Additional support will be provided as needed.

Parents

- Upon Board approval, parents will be informed of recess in a variety of ways, such as letters, newsletters, flyers, and/or "principal coffees."
- Recess will also be discussed at EESAC meetings.

Incident Form

- Incident forms have been edited so that school site staff can identify when incidents occur during recess. This will enable us to track incidents occurring during recess.