



ACTIVE Schools TOOLKIT

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
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Strategies for Active Schools

II

B. Physical Activity as Part of the School Day Strategies

Strategy 4

Active Recess "Snapshot"				
Description: The goal is to have all students engaged in physical activity during the majority of recess time through age appropriate games and other organized activities.				
Resources Needed:				
Funding	Staff Time	Prep Time/ Materials	Training	
Varied according to current supplies and playground.	Variable depending on how recess has been managed in the past.	Summer break is the best time to prepare the playground. Community and staff working together will help with preparation time.	Staff training for playground aides and teachers for playground games/ activities/rules.	
Facilities and Equipment Needed:				
Facilities	Equipment	Set up / take down time	Transportation	Custodial
Safe locked storage of all recess equipment.	Playground balls Basketballs Jump ropes Chinese jump ropes Soccer balls Hopscotch Striking equipment Tetherballs	Initial preparation of the playground is needed.	None	Blacktop and grassy play area must be kept clean of debris; large playground equipment must be checked for safety seasonally. Any fencing must be routinely checked for safety.
Evaluation: Observation and children being more active during recess.				

Description and Rationale

Active recess involves purposefully designing the playground and recess activities to encourage physical activity for all students. It also involves including a minimum of 20 minutes of recess each day for students in elementary and middle school. Active recess incorporates activities on the grassy areas or fields, blacktop surfaces, and playground equipment. Active recess provides children with a guarantee of non-structured play each day, with equipment and supplies needed to be physically active on the playground. It provides some structure to recess and may include several activity stations scattered around the playground and green spaces.

For maximum impact, use active recess as a school-wide practice for all students. For greatest success, all school personnel must take an interest in the play and activity of children. The classroom teacher can help teach new rules of activities, while the physical education teacher can help teach new activities. The art teacher may help develop new rules posters. The school counselor and school nurse can help integrate safety and social rules.

Many playgrounds include three play areas: blacktop, grassy areas, and playground equipment. Following are ideas to increase activity in two of the three areas:

- **Blacktop:** Games and activities safe for the blacktop are generally bouncing and jumping games. Examples include: Four and Two Square, jump rope activities, hopscotch, basketball, net games, and all activities where markings have been painted on the blacktop. For safety reasons, most educators avoid kicking games or striking games on the blacktop.
- **Grassy areas:** Grassy areas are safe for kicking, running, striking, and fast-paced activities including, but not limited to: soccer activities, striking games or field games, tag games, and running-type challenges. Areas for kicking games must be separated from playground equipment.

Active recess provides standards-based and progressive instruction of movement skills. Recess provides children with much needed unstructured activity time. Recess is not a replacement for physical education. It should be considered an important activity supplement, and another opportunity for children to accumulate 60 minutes of physical activity a day. Recess also allows children to release energy and reduce stress, both of which help improve attention in the classroom and decrease disruptive behavior.

An active recess will include children participating in developmentally appropriate play where they may explore, stimulate their imagination, and develop critical thinking skills as they take a break from a structured classroom.

The benefits of active recess include the following:

- Unstructured play helps children manage stress and reduce anxiety.
- Recess creates a setting in which children learn and practice social skills and must be creative with how they choose to spend their free time.
- Children who take breaks between performing school tasks are more attentive and alert afterward.
- Recess allows children to explore, which stimulates their imaginations and fosters critical thinking skills.
- Breaks between rigorous studying or working improve brain function and memory.
- Children who receive more recess behave better and are likely to learn more.⁴

CDC Recommendation: Schools should incorporate at least 20 minutes of recess per day in addition to physical education classes.⁵

Active recess relates to NASPE Standard 3: Participates regularly in physical activity; Standard 4: Achieves and maintains a health enhancing level of physical fitness; and Standard 5: Exhibits responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others in physical activity settings.



4 *Huntington Learning Center Glendale Feb. 1, 2010—Global Press Release Distribution* citing a 2009 study at Yeshiva University’s Albert Einstein College of Medicine

5 Burdette et al, 2007 Strong inverse association between physical fitness and overweight in adolescents: a large school-based survey. *Int J Behav Nutr Phys Act.* 2007 Jun 5;4:24.

Action Steps

- Commit to active recess as a school-wide practice.
- Review and improve, if needed, recess areas. If possible, establish safe grassy, blacktop, and playground equipment areas. Paint colorful markings on blacktop.
- Develop an active recess handbook for the school and orient all playground supervisors.
- Allow all children to participate in recess activities. Avoid withholding recess from students who misbehave in other academic classes. Recess should never be denied, withheld as punishment, or as a time to make up incomplete academic work.
- Allow different developmental levels private use of large equipment area (swings, climbing equipment, and slides). Avoid allowing fifth grade to play on the large apparatus at the same time as the first grade.
- Provide a consistent set of rules for each area of the playground. Post them where all can see.
- Select appropriate activities and obtain needed supplies and equipment.
- Teach children appropriate use of each area of the playground.
- Increase the use of games and equipment during recess. Provide equipment choices for each area of the playground.
- Teach appropriate children's games at each grade level. Both physical education and classroom teachers can integrate games into units.
- Examples of some popular games include: Four Square, Longball, Basketball, Around the World, Tetherball, Multi-Use Circle, Wallball, Alphabet Track, Running Track-Painted Line, Tricycle Track, Volleyball, Prisoner Court, Skipping Track, US Map, and Hopscotch.
- Consider pedometer play at recess.
- Integrate math and physical activity while challenging the children to more physical activity.
- Consider recess before lunch (students play and then eat).

Examples

Portland area schools integrated recess as a school project to make recess safe and give students ownership of their recess, while all school personnel helped in the transition from a chaotic recess to time well spent.

http://www.oregonlive.com/portland/index.ssf/2009/04/portland_schools_make_recess_f.html

Gibraltar's Active Recess

Activity time is actually an extension of PE. It is not recess time. It is a 30-minute structured time with many cooperative games, aerobic games, and skill-related games to encourage use of skills used in PE. Gibraltar has created all its lessons and used many sources. Gibraltar has taken time to teach some games that could transfer to the playground during recess.

Contact Chris Zvara
Physical Education Teacher, Gibraltar Elementary School

Resources

School playground design. Information on the planning and design of playgrounds for varying age levels, including resources on safety, accessibility, equipment, surfaces, and maintenance. <http://www.edfacilities.org/rl/playgrounds.cfm>

Games. Ultimate Playground and Resource Game Book offers a variety of activities for an active recess. <http://www.gameskidsplay.net/>

Peaceful Playgrounds <http://www.peacefulplaygrounds.com>

Pedometer resources

Lesson plan <http://www.uen.org/Lessonplan/preview.cgi?LPid=16271>

Log It Home, a pedometer recording program for 3rd grade and up. <http://www.peclogit.org/logithikepreview.html> and <http://www.peclogit.org/logit.asp>

WE Count Walking Program integrates walking programs and pedometers into recess. <http://www.peacefulplaygrounds.com/pedometers.htm>

Playground Passes: <http://web.archive.org/web/20030802120604/> and <http://www.prairie.ca/~roakden/playpass.htm>

Lunch before recess

http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin/admin389.shtml

Rules of play http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin/admin519.shtml

SPARK After School <http://www.sparkpe.org/after-school/>