



Recess BEFORE LUNCH

playtime before lunchtime!



Listen!

Comments from school staff and a parent:

“Recess Before Lunch is a minor change in the schedule, yet it nets huge rewards in children’s health. Our research showed that students played, ate and studied better when recess preceded lunch versus the previous schedule. We are so happy we made the change.”

—Mary Englick, parent and dietitian
Governor’s Ranch Elementary
Jefferson County Public Schools

“Our 313-student pre-K through 5th grade building has embraced Colorado Action for Healthy Kids! The school’s nutrition program plays a significant role in the school day for each student. My personal observation, on a daily basis, of Recess Before Lunch program supports:

1. All students eat all or most of their lunch every day.
2. Students spend their time in the cafeteria eating, reducing random noise and misbehavior.
3. Students return to the classroom calm and well-fed following Recess Before Lunch.”

—Joseph J. Caruselle, principal
Irving Elementary School
Pueblo City Schools - District 60

For more information:

Montana Team Nutrition Program
opi.state.mt.us > search > recess before lunch

National Food Service Management Institute
nfsmi.org > in document library, search > recess

Benefits!

Improved cafeteria atmosphere

- students are more relaxed and focused on eating rather than the playground

Less supervision in the cafeteria

- students have improved behavior

Fewer classroom discipline problems

- students are calmer when they return to the classroom

Increase in classroom time on-task

- students return to the classroom ready to learn

Increased milk, vegetable, and entree consumption

- less plate waste, less trash
- results in increased nutrients and fluid intake

Decreased number of nurse visits for tummy aches after recess

- Include recess before lunch as part of your wellness policy
- Low or no-cost to implement
- After a morning of classes, kids are ready to play





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Ready, set...

Seek input from the beginning within the school and community

Gain a commitment from administrators, food service staff, parents and teachers

Observe schools that have Recess Before Lunch

Plan a new recess and lunch schedule that allows adequate time to eat

- incorporate a hand-washing plan into the schedule
- after recess, provide space for storage of coats, toys, etc.
- encourage students to prepay for lunch to avoid losing money on the playground

go!

Focus on the benefits rather than the obstacles

- think about what's best for the students

Students are likely to be hungrier and thirstier with this change

- have cold water available
- promote the school's breakfast program

Anticipate some resistance to change

Expect the schedule to be a work-in-progress

- practice the new routine and trial for at least a year



This piece was produced in partnership with Colorado Action for Healthy Kids and Colorado Connections for Healthy Schools. For more information, visit: actionforhealthykids.org cde.state.co.us/cdeprevention

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Create a lunch atmosphere that supports healthy eating

"The evidence is in and the results are conclusive: Recess Before Lunch is the way to go. When students are allowed to play before eating lunch, they are more likely to eat more and waste less.

In addition, children who have recess before lunch are better behaved during lunch and are much more likely to concentrate and focus during afternoon classes."

— Alice Joe Rainville, SFNS, professor/researcher Eastern Michigan University

Supporting research for Recess Before Lunch programs

A Montana Recess Before Lunch pilot study documented improvement in the mealtime atmosphere and students' behavior. Discipline problems on the playground, in the lunchroom, and in the classroom decreased.

A 2004 study by Bergman and colleagues of recess before lunch showed comparable results to a previous study by Mary J. Getlinger, et al. After implementing recess before lunch, plate waste decreased from 40 percent to 27 percent. In addition, consumption of calcium-rich foods increased 35 percent along with significant increases in most other vitamin- and mineral-rich foods.*

Research repeatedly shows recess before lunch can help students perform better in school, eat healthier, and promote a lunchroom atmosphere conducive to eating.

*Bergman, E.A., et al, "Relationship of Meal and Recess Schedule to Plate Waste in Elementary Schools." National Food Service Management Institute. Insight, Spring 2004.

*Getlinger, M.J., et al, Food waste is reduced when elementary-school children have recess before lunch. J Am Diet Association 1996. 9:906-908.