

Recess Before Lunch

Kids
Can Do
it!



Change from Tradition!

For years kids have been gobbling down their lunch and racing to get to the playground. No child wants to sit at lunch when the playground and friends are their priority. Study after study has demonstrated that allowing kids to have recess before lunch is superior from both a nutritional and educational standpoint.

Big Benefits!

Because kids don't rush to finish lunch to get to the playground...

Kids eat healthier

- Kids have increased vegetable, milk, water, and entrée consumption – this means they get more important nutrients and fluids
- Less plate waste

Kids perform better in school

- Kids return to the classroom more settled and ready to learn
- Kids refocus on learning more quickly when they return to class
- Increase in classroom time-on-task

The lunchroom atmosphere is more conducive to healthy eating

- Kids are more relaxed after play and are focused on eating rather than the playground

Student behavior improves on the playground, in the cafeteria, and in the classroom

- Fewer classroom discipline problems – kids have played and are full, settled, and quieter when they return to class after eating
- Fewer office referrals
- Less supervision in the cafeteria with improved student behavior

Ready, Set, Go!

Tips on Changing to Recess Before Lunch....

1. Gain support from within your school and community
2. Gain a commitment from administrators, food service staff, teachers, and parents
3. Observe schools that have Recess Before Lunch
4. Plan a new recess and lunch schedule that allows adequate time to eat:
 - Schedule adequate time for students to eat (at least 20 minutes once seated)
 - Decide how to handle lunch money
 - Decide where to store cold lunches and lunch tickets for easy access
 - Incorporate a hand-washing regimen after recess and before lunch – some schools use hand sanitizers or hand wipes
 - After recess, provide space for storage of coats, toys, etc.
 - Students are likely to be hungrier and thirstier with this change
 - Kids may need a mid-morning snack
 - Have cold water available
 - Promote your school breakfast program

Exercising before lunch helps keep kids at a healthy weight!

5. Focus on the benefits rather than the obstacles
 - Think about what's best for the students!
6. Be committed!
 - Practice this new routine for at least a year – stick with it!
 - Expect it to be a work-in-progress
 - Anticipate some resistance to change from tradition

Speaking From Experience!

Comments from Colorado...

"Recess Before Lunch has really benefited our school! Our kids eat better...our kids behave better...our kids are more settled and ready to learn when they return to class."

Dr. Dan Lawler, Principal
Tavelli Elementary School, Poudre School District

"Recess Before Lunch seemed like a natural way to increase students' nutritional intake, as well as enhancing their ability to learn."

Kristin Tucker, Parent
Stein Elementary, Jefferson County Public Schools

"I would recommend Recess Before Lunch; lunch sales have increased and students eat more since no one is racing to finish their lunch to get to the playground first."

Walter Chisman, Food Service Director
Ellicott Elementary School, Ellicott School District



Research Supports Recess Before Lunch

Research repeatedly shows Recess Before Lunch helps students perform better in school, eat healthier, and promote a lunchroom atmosphere conducive to healthy eating.

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.

Two well respected research studies* investigated the effects of Recess Before Lunch and found that after implementing recess before lunch, consumption of calcium-rich foods increased **35%** along with significant increases in most other vitamin- and mineral-rich foods. Additionally, plate waste decreased from **40% to 27%**.

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

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

More Information!

www.actionforhealthykids.org

www.opi.mt.gov/schoolfood/recessBL.html

www.cdphs.state.co.us/pp/COPAN/resourcekits/SchoolSiteResourceKit.pdf

CanDo – Coalition for Activity and Nutrition to Defeat Obesity
Poudre Valley Hospital Foundation
1024 South Lemay Avenue | Fort Collins, CO 80524
Phone: (970) 495-7517 | ve2@pvhs.org
www.CanDoOnline.org

Supported By:
LiveWell Colorado

kids
CanDo
it!