PLAYWELL: ACTIVE AND ENGAGED RECESS

WHAT IS RECESS?

Fun, safe and active play doesn’t happen automatically. Thus, simply giving children and youth time outside isn’t providing quality recess. High quality recess is a non-instructional activity during the school day when students are encouraged to be physically active and engaged with their peers in activities of their choices that provides students the opportunity to engage in physical activity as well as activities that promote social development. Recess should be a valued and seamless part of the school day that engages all students and requires commitment from all staff.

RECESS MUST BE...

» Scheduled for at least 20 minutes daily for all K-8 students
» Scheduled before lunch
» Managed by trained supervisors
» Inclusive of and engaging to all students
» Not be withheld from students as a punishment or for academic reasons
» Adhere to district weather guidelines (see reverse of this page for details)

BENEFITS OF RECESS

» Increase student level of physical activity
» Improving student memory, attention and concentration
» Improves academic achievement
» Helps students stay on-task in the classroom
» Reduces disruptive behavior in the classroom
» Improves student social and emotional development

RECESS BEST PRACTICES

» Recess is free time with a purpose:
Organize recess so that students have defined and specific choices in activities.

» Recess is a seamless part of the school day:
Establish recess routines and procedures that are clear and communicated.

» Recess is organized:
Establish activity zones in the play space as well as designated spaces for indoor recess.
Create roles and responsibilities for each recess supervisor.

» Recess is a collective responsibility:
Teachers and students take responsibility for making recess a productive and seamless part of the school day.
Recess supervisors should be trained and engaged.

» Recess is active:
Safety permitting, recess should include opportunities for physical activity for all students whether indoors or outdoors.

RECESS FAQ’S

Is recess mandatory?
» Yes, per the CPS Local School Wellness Policy, all elementary and middle schools are required to provide students with at least 20 minutes of daily recess. Recess may not be withheld as punishment.

Does recess count as Physical Education?
» No. Recess is non-instructional time whereas PE is a core curricular instructional class.

How many supervisors should there be for recess?
» There is no official guidance, however in order to provide safe and organized recess, it is recommended to have at least one supervisor per classroom.

Are there behavior expectations at recess?
» Recess is part of the school day. Basic expectations for behavior inside the school should extend to and be reinforced in recess.
Benefits of Outdoor Recess

Ideally, recess should take place outdoors on school grounds as weather, space and safety permit. Outdoor recess allows children to get fresh air, provides an opportunity for children to engage in moderate to vigorous physical activity and gives students more activity options than most indoor spaces.

Outdoor recess is an important part of a child’s school day and schools are highly encouraged to provide students with the opportunity to play outside whenever possible.

Cold Weather Guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weather</th>
<th>Recess Held:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Above 32 °F with or without wind chill</td>
<td>Outdoors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 °F to 32 °F with or without wind chill</td>
<td>Principal Discretion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 15 °F with or without wind chill</td>
<td>Indoors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schools should exercise the following precautionary measures if holding recess outdoors:

**Precipitation:** Snow and icy conditions should be evaluated for student safety and attire.

**Student preparedness:** Students should have appropriate outdoor attire to stay warm and dry during recess.

**Playground safety:** The playground equipment and surface (i.e., icy conditions) should be evaluated to determine whether students can safely play outdoors.

"With or without wind chill" means how cold it feels, whether it is caused by wind chill or not. For example, if the straight temperature reading is 10 degrees or if it’s 20 degrees with a wind chill of 10 degrees, recess should be held indoors.

Warm Weather Guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weather</th>
<th>Recess Held:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heat index of 90 °F or below</td>
<td>Outdoors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heat index between 91 °F and 94 °F</td>
<td>Principal discretion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heat index above 95 °F</td>
<td>Indoors in a cool location</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schools should exercise the following precautionary measures if holding recess outdoors:

**Activity level:** Students should participate in only light to moderate physical activity.

**Student preparedness:** Students should wear appropriate attire during warm weather. It is recommended that students wear sunscreen when outdoors.

**Playground equipment:** The playground equipment and surfaces should be checked prior to recess. Supervisors should ensure that students do not play on equipment that is extremely hot to the touch.

**Water access:** Students should have access to water before and/or after recess. Additionally, students who show any signs of heat exhaustion or heat-related illness (i.e., heavy sweating, weakness, muscle cramps, nausea, weak pulse, clammy skin, etc.) should be provided with immediate access to water.

**Other Warm Weather Days Considerations:**
All recess supervisors should be aware of medical conditions, such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, allergy and medications, especially on warm weather days, as medical conditions may put a student at a higher risk for heat illness. On warm weather days, schools should designate a shaded area as a cool down area for students who need a break from exposure or activity. Supervisors should also perform well-being checks by asking students how they feel; those feeling weak, dizzy or nauseous, sweating heavily, or experiencing cramps should get water and take a break in a cool down area.

Healthy CPS — Office of Student Health & Wellness