

RESTORATIVE RECESS



Recess benefits a child's cognitive, emotional, physical, and social well-being. It's an essential, planned break from cognitive tasks throughout their day.

Understanding the Unique Benefits of Recess:



- Recess helps young children develop social skills that are not acquired in the more structured classroom environment.
- Through play at recess, children learn valuable communication skills, including negotiation, cooperation, sharing, and problem-solving as well as coping skills, such as perseverance and self-control.
- Recess affords young children free activity for their own personal enjoyment. Even minor movement during recess counterbalances sedentary time at school and at home.
- Recess helps a child achieve the recommended 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity per day, a standard strongly supported by the CDC & American Academy of Pediatrics.

Alternatives to Withholding Recess:

In a national survey of principals, more than three-quarters state that students in their schools are punished by withholding recess, but evidence shows that this is exacerbating the issues of having inattentive students. Taking physical activity away from children decreases their attention spans and ability to focus in a classroom setting and increases behavior problems and trips to the principal's office.

Click here for a list of [Alternatives to Withholding Recess!](#)



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Creating Safe Spaces:

Recess should be a safe and well supervised environment. Although schools should ban games and activities that are unsafe, they should never discontinue recess altogether.

- Have a well-known boundary area where recess supervisors have visual access to the whole space.
- Keep a well-maintained playground space free of trash and debris. This is a great way to teach children personal responsibility also. Take a few minutes at the end of recess to clean up any trash and collect any used equipment.
- Have recess monitors assist students with conflict resolution when necessary.
- Have access to age-appropriate equipment for students to use and create zone areas to spread students out throughout the playground space.

Click here to find a few of our favorite [Building Healthy Communities Recess Games](#)



Restorative Approaches to Recess Conflict:

In times of conflict when intense emotions are involved have students take a few deep breaths. If they are still unable to communicate, ask them to walk a lap around the playground and return to the conversation. Ask them if they can each identify what emotions they are feeling?

Start with these questions:

Who's affected?

What actually happened?

Who is responsible for what?



What needs to happen to resolve the situation and repair the harm?

The restorative process is different from traditional conflict management approaches because it doesn't emphasize negative consequences, nor does it dwell on blame. Consequences are not simply handed down to students. Instead, students create their own solutions and decide what they need to do to make things right. By building on other skills we teach, such as assertive communication or active listening, students will gain conflict resolution skills.