

Rudolph F. Crew, Superintendent of Schools

**SUBJECT: REQUEST THAT THE SCHOOL BOARD APPROVE THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF RECESS FOR A MINIMUM OF 15 MINUTES,
NOT TO EXCEED 20 MINUTES, AT LEAST THREE TIMES A WEEK IN
GRADES PRE-KINDERGARTEN THROUGH 5**

COMMITTEE: INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), in addressing the importance of physical activity in the academic process, seeks to implement a recess policy to ensure that all children receive the minimum requirements of daily physical activity. Beginning August 2005, M-DCPS will implement recess for a minimum of 15 minutes, not to exceed 20 minutes, at least three times a week in all grades, Pre-Kindergarten through Five.

Recess, while separate and distinct from physical education, is an essential component of the total educational experience for elementary aged children. Recess provides children with opportunities to engage in physical activity that helps to develop healthy bodies and enjoyment of movement. It also allows elementary children to practice life skills such as conflict resolution, cooperation, respect for rules, taking turns, sharing, using language to communicate, and problem-solving in real life situations. Furthermore, recess facilitates improved attention and focus on learning in the classroom.

According to various national organizations, recess is considered an important component of a child's physical and social development. Inactivity is further considered a major risk factor for heart disease and it is now evident that patterns of inactivity begin at early ages. As a result of parents working outside the home, safety, and other factors, a growing number of children have limited time to participate in unstructured play. They spend more time watching TV, playing computer games, and/or participating in other sedentary activities. The result of this inactivity, coupled with poor nutritional habits, is that more children are overweight and obese, showing early signs of heart disease, diabetes and other serious health problems. The involvement of young children in daily physical activity during school hours is critical for their current and future health.

Recess also provides the opportunity for students to develop and improve social skills. During recess, students learn to resolve conflicts, solve problems, negotiate, and work with others without adult intervention. Cognitive abilities may also be enhanced by recess. Studies have found that students who do not participate in recess may have difficulty concentrating on specific tasks in the classroom, are restless and may be easily distracted. In addition, recess serves as a developmentally appropriate strategy for reducing stress. Contemporary society introduces significant pressure and stress for many students because of academic demands, family issues, and peer pressures. (National Association for Sport and Physical Education, 2001)

GUIDELINES FOR RECESS

Based on a review of literature, and best practices, the following guidelines are provided to ensure a safe and productive implementation of recess.

- Beginning August 2005, upon Board approval, M-DCPS will implement recess for a minimum of 15 minutes, not to exceed 20 minutes, at least three times a week in all grades, Pre-Kindergarten through Five. This is in addition to the regularly scheduled physical education instructional classes, which provide a sequential instructional program.
- Recess should not replace physical education. Recess is unstructured playtime where children have choices, develop rules for play, and release energy and stress.
- Schools will develop general safety and supervision procedures for recess and for safe and proper use of all playground equipment.
- Principals should use his/her discretion to develop schedules that provide for supervised daily recess in grades Pre-Kindergarten through Five.
- Recess will be conducted outdoors when weather permits. In the case of inclement weather, appropriate recess activities will be conducted indoors.
- Physical education teachers, or District support staff, will provide technical assistance to classroom teachers in grades Pre-Kindergarten through Five to assist with the implementation of the recess period.
- Recess should not be viewed as a reward but a necessary educational support component for all children.
- Students should not be denied recess as a punishment or to make up work.
- Children should accumulate 30-60 minutes of physical activity on all, or most, days of the week. This should be periods of moderate to vigorous activity in several bouts of age appropriate physical activity lasting 15 minutes or longer each day. The 30-60 minutes of physical activity is a combination of recess, physical education, and out-of-school activities.
- Adults should intervene when a child's physical or emotional safety is an issue. Bullying or aggressive behavior must not be allowed and all safety rules should be enforced.

CONTRACT ISSUES TO TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION

- A certified teacher must always supervise children
- Classroom teachers must maintain planning periods
 - Planning time occurs during art, music, and physical education
 - Spanish and Media are NOT planning time
- Teachers must have 30 minute duty free lunch
- Working hours cannot be extended

A Recess Manual has been created to assist schools in the implementation of recess. It has been provided to the School Board under separate cover and a copy will be placed on file in the Citizen's information Center and in the Office of the Recording Secretary.

Agenda Item A-3 requests that The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, approve the implementation of recess for a minimum of 15 minutes, not to exceed 20 minutes, at least three times a week in all grades, Pre-Kindergarten through Five.

There is no cost to the District.

RECOMMENDED:

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, approve the implementation of recess for a minimum of 15 minutes, not to exceed 20 minutes, at least three times a week in all grades, Pre-Kindergarten through Five.

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