



## CONTINUED LEARNING TAKES PLACE ON THE PLAYGROUND

Sharing the Voices of Alabama's Parents & Teachers

### 2018-19 Health & Safety Committee Initiative

To meet accountability mandates, recess has been squeezed out of the school day for many children in Alabama. While we all share the desire for our children to achieve academically, taking away recess is counterproductive to those goals.

It is uniformly shown that students who are allowed daily recess demonstrate increased focus, stronger problem-solving skills, improved creativity, and better adaptability. Research also shows that classrooms become more productive, with less off-task behavior, when daily recess is implemented.

Survey Data collected November 2018- January 2019 indicates that Alabama families believe recess is a valuable part of the k-5 school day and that daily recess should be restored to school schedules where it has been eliminated.

Respondents included: 160 responses in total, representing 25 local units from all over the state of Alabama. Respondents indicated they reside in the cities of: Birmingham, Fultondale, Gardendale, Harvest, Huntsville, Madison, Mobile, Montgomery, Tuscaloosa and other.

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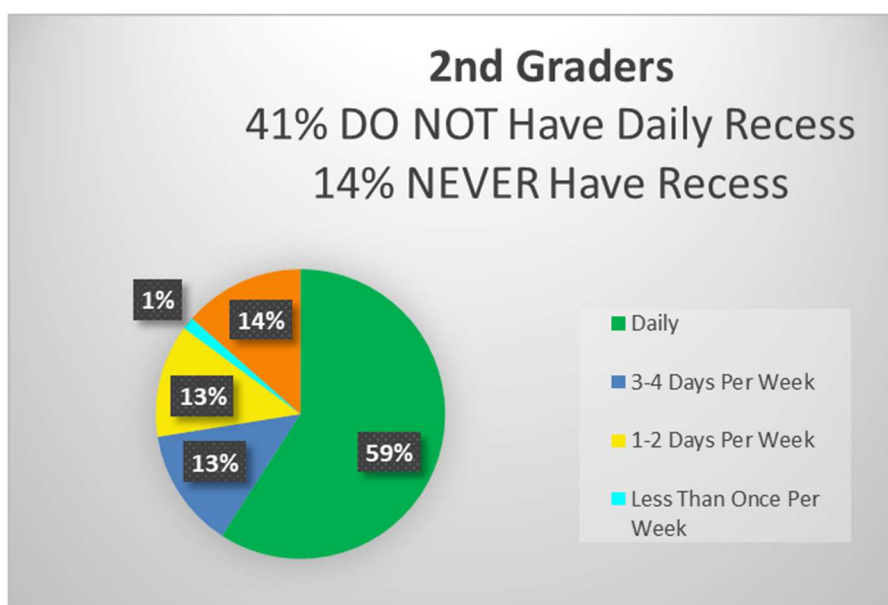
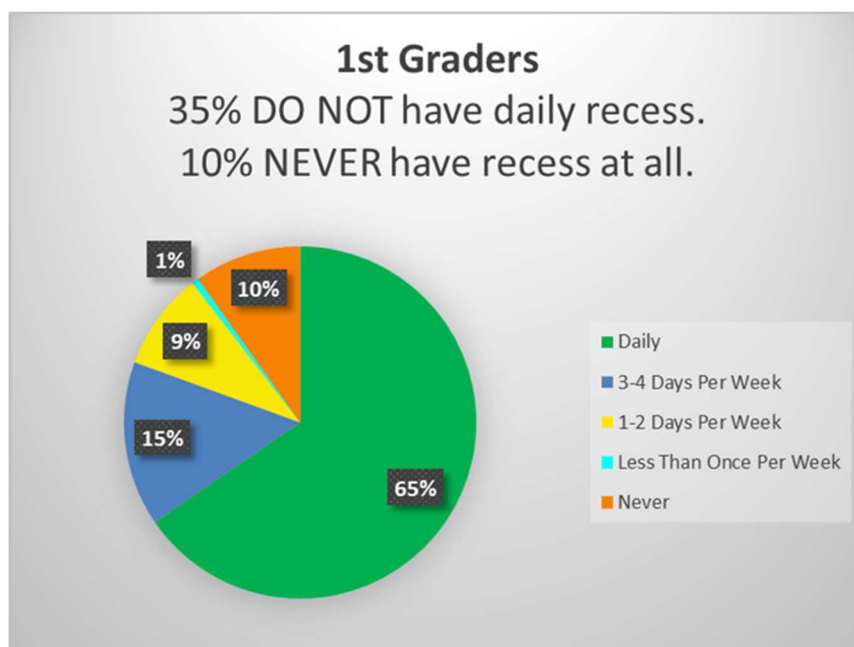
## Recess Frequency

### Frequency by Grade Level

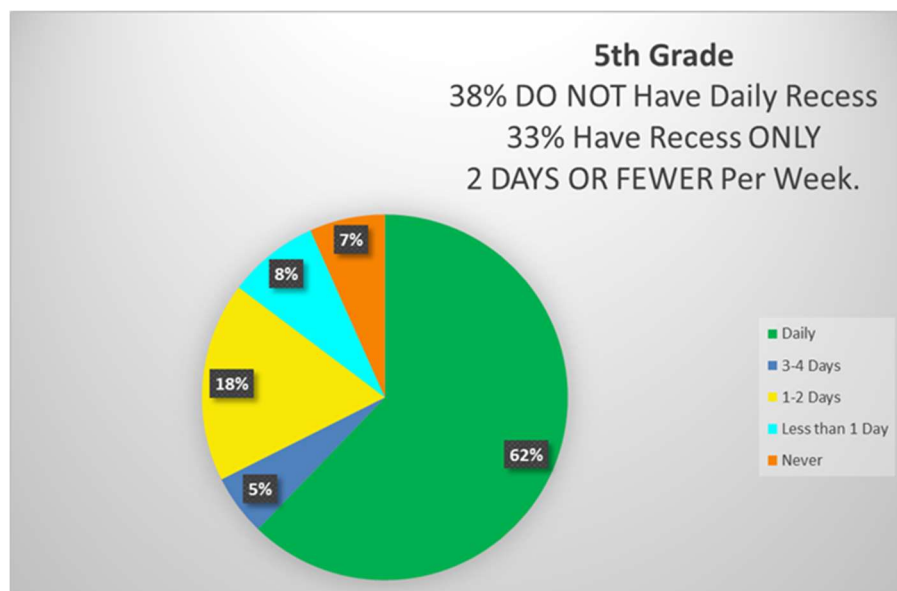
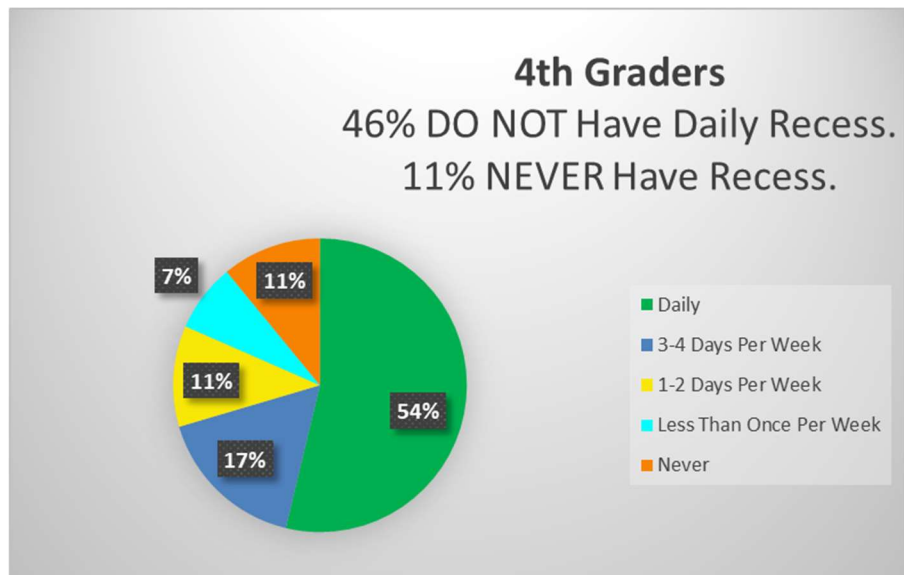
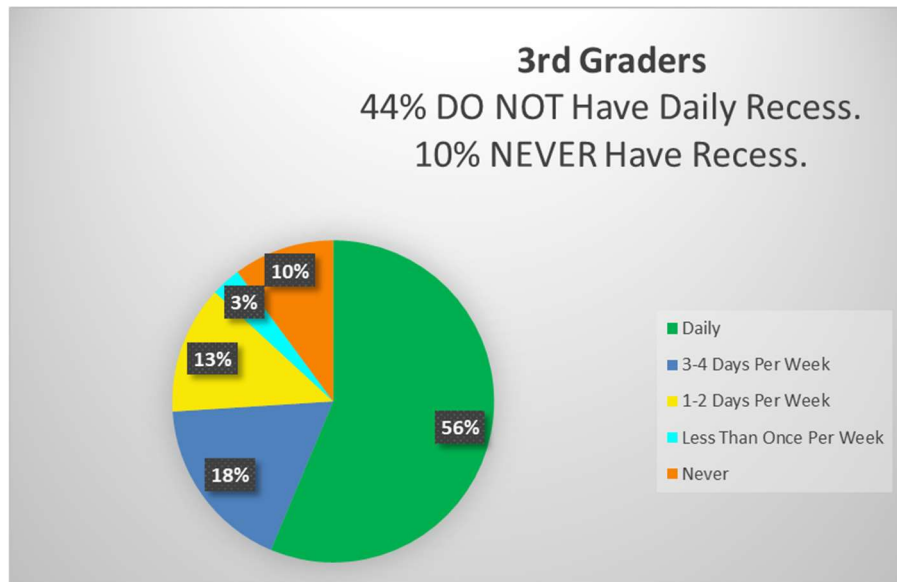
The following graphs represent results from a matrix requesting information on recess frequency in grades k-5. Respondents were asked to answer only for those grade levels with which they were familiar. The sample of responses regarding kindergarten represented very few schools and could not be interpreted as representative of the larger population.

Each PTA local unit (school) was weighted equally.

The Graphs represent percentages of students from reporting Alabama PTA local units.



## RECESS FREQUENCY



## Open-Ended Question Responses

### “Would you like to share anything else about the frequency of recess?”

This question collects parents’ and teachers’ general beliefs, observations, and assessments about the frequency of recess in their schools.

- 
- Teachers in 2nd-4th are allotted two 15 minute recess blocks per WEEK. It is up to teachers whether or not they use them.
  - Sometimes recess is taken away as punishment.

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*We have two teachers in 3rd. They never go out if it's even slightly chilly, one offers indoor recess... and the other does not.*

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- It depends on behavior which makes very little sense.
- If students don't have P.E. then the teacher is allowed to take their students outside for 25 mins. However, it is strictly stated this isn't recess time. It is to be called “P.E. with the teacher.”
- While offered daily, it is sometimes taken away as punishment.
- Many teachers punish students, or even the whole class by taking recess away.

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*Many teachers punish students, or even the whole class by taking recess away.*

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- Some classrooms have recess on the above schedule, but many teachers chose not to have any recess.
- At...[MONTGOMERY SCHOOL], the term "recess" is undefined. The students EITHER

get P.E. or "go out at the end of the day". If the children go out in the morning for P.E., then they do not get to go out again. This is absolutely ridiculous.

- I think it's imperative to have breaks and free time to move and re-energize so that your brain can learn! Recess is important. I understand if you have testing or a school assembly or something that you have to cancel recess...otherwise I expect my child to have P.E. daily...AND a 15-20 minute recess...and not right before or after PE.

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*I would like to have the recess available daily for all grades*

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- We need more recess to help the kids be able to stay focused throughout the day. The research is overwhelmingly in favor of the intellectual and emotional benefits of unstructured outdoor play.
- Twice on Fridays.
- We have two teachers in 3rd. They never go out if it's even slightly chilly, one offers indoor recess when they don't go outside, and the other does not.
- I know my 4th grader's recess depends on weather. Some of her teachers will allow an indoor recess on days they can't go out, but some don't.
- My child is in 1st grade, so I don't know about the other grades.

## RECESS FREQUENCY

- It is in the schedule for 15 minutes each day. It is only taken a couple days a week based on the temperature outside.
- Depends on whether for recess...winter less.... other seasons 1-2
- We also offer a Friday afternoon extra recess for meeting behavior goals during the week.

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*5th graders are only 10 or 11.  
They need the playground too.*

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- 20 min of outdoor recess is given when the weather is nice. I don't believe this is enough especially for young kids. When the weather is bad, recess is basically skipped. Kids finish work in their classroom. I believe it should be required that the kids still have free time inside where they get to socialize with little structure.
- I would like to have the recess available daily for all grades
- I think it is needed for all students. It benefits physical and mental wellbeing.
- Some classes do not go outside if the temp is below 50.
- In 5th grade it is not consistent, but they do try to allow the kids to have free time at the end of the day to run around and socialize.

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*It's made available every day, but it is dependent on weather and the teacher. 20 min of outdoor recess is given when the weather is nice... When the weather is bad, recess is basically skipped.*

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- My child's biggest complaint is that when they do get recess, it is not on the playground, but on an empty track with nothing to play with. 5th graders are only 10 or 11. They need the playground too. Walking around an empty track doesn't

achieve the goal of recess - to have fun and imaginative physical activity.

- It seems to be used as punishment in the older grades. It's one of the first things they lose.
- There is not enough of it. These children need a chance to stretch and play. Additionally, at Hampton Cove the recess scheduling is bad. Last year, one of my children had PE, recess, and lunch all in a row. This year one has recess and lunch back to back. The other has lunch and PE back to back and recess as the last thing of the day. These children need breaks between each period of focused instruction time.
- I feel 20-30 minutes once a day is not enough.
- 3-4 but some days it will be taken away.

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*I would like for them to go outside even if it is cold!! They will survive and it is good for them. It seems to be used as punishment in the older grades. It's one of the first things they lose.*

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- Recess should be 2-3 times per day
- If the children have PT/gym, they do not get recess.
- Recess is offered every day unless they have PE with the coach that day.
- I am a first grade teacher and we have been told by our administration we should not take our students out if they have PE with the PE teacher.
- It must be daily

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*6th grade never gets recess.*

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- I believe the students are offered recess daily. I do know some years it would be too

cold for teachers or they would take recess away as punishment.

- As a parent/teacher student need at least a 15 min break per day. This helps with their fine/gross motor dev. And social /emotional dev.
- I believe all kids need to get their sillies out, but when kids have their recess times taken away for behavior, that doesn't help the children in any way.
- Recess should NOT be withheld from students as punishment. ALL students need recess!"

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*...I expect my child to have P.E. daily...AND a 15-20 minute recess...and not right before or after PE.*

---

- think kids need longer recess
- Only cancelled when it is rainy/ too wet, or too cold
- Kindergarten - the teacher tries to take them out for 20-30 minutes after lunch everyday weather permitting. My third grader says his teacher tries to take them out in the afternoon 2-3 days a week, but not always.
- It would be beneficial to have it twice per day for 20 minutes
- When it rains (very frequently), there is no recess. Build gyms in your schools. Also, when there is PE, there is no recess.

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*Students should have recess at least once per day. The break helps reduce mental and physical fatigue.*

---

- Often, children have "recess" inside, when the weather in the winter is still suitable for play if they have coats. However, all children are kept inside for recess if a few how forgotten or failed to bring coats. Also,

sometimes children are kept in from recess to do work if they have classroom work that was unfinished or if they did not meet an Accelerated Reader points goal.

- Students should have recess at least once per day. The break helps reduce mental and physical fatigue.

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*If the children have PT/gym, they do not get recess.*

---

- Recess is important for ages!
- I sub and I know if a class has for example library that afternoon, recess is cut short, so they might only get 10 minutes. :(
- Recess has been cut to 20 minutes per our elementary curriculum director
- recess is quickly replaced with indoor study time or activity on YouTube on cold day or inclement weather days.

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*Recess time is taken away as a punishment for not getting work done or talking/moving too much. They will also get silent lunch for the same reasons.*

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- I do not believe they are given enough time in recess at any age at our school.... especially the higher elementary grades. And often, it is not even offered daily by 3rd grade. The most concerning is when one or two students misbehave, and those actions result in the entire class "losing" recess for the day. These are elementary aged children and they physically, socially and mentally need at least 30 minutes of recess every day.
- Recess time is taken away as a punishment for not getting work done or talking/moving too much. They will also get silent lunch for the same reasons. This hurts children who need movement to help organize their

## RECESS FREQUENCY

sensory systems and minds. More recess and less instructional time would help the kids get more out of the instruction time and be a benefit to everyone.

- Needs to be daily
- Weather plays a huge part in whether the kids can go outside to play.
- Seems ideal.

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*We have addressed this with our admin without change.... This is a hot button topic & truly disappointing.*

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- We have addressed this with our admin without change. Our 2nd graders are bouncing off the walls & teachers are being pushed to have more "learning" time. Research shows this will not result in the increased learning they are looking for. This is a hot button topic & truly disappointing.
- The 4th grade teachers do not "push" recess. They allow the kids to stay in their classrooms if they don't want to go outside. If the weather prohibits the [children] from outside recess they do NOT get indoor recess, the teacher has them do more classwork.

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*recess is quickly replaced with indoor study time or activity on YouTube on cold ... days.*

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- 6th grade goes once a week, if they are not on punishment that week. They have been maybe a handful of times this school year.
- 6th grade never gets recess.
- Taking recess away from the class is the go-to consequence for misbehavior for the upper grades.

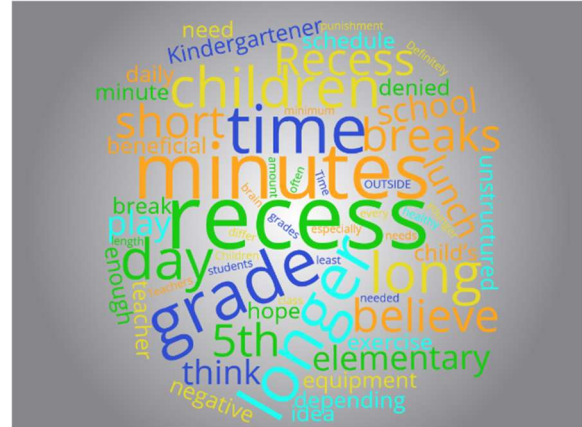


## Recess Length

## Open-Ended Question Responses

***“Is there anything else you would like to share about the length of recess breaks at your school?”***

This question gathers parents' and teachers' general beliefs about length of recess.



Word cloud of parent & teacher responses about recess length.

- Again, it is up to individual teachers as to whether or not the recess is ever taken. In my son's case he has not had recess regularly since 1st grade. In 3rd he had NONE, until the last week of school.

Why is it negative to say the word recess?

- My answers are referring to what our school calls “PE with the teacher”. This is unstructured time for the students. Why is it negative to say the word recess?
- It's just one break of 15-20 minutes a day when they have it.

*It is unacceptable for our children  
to be denied recess breaks*

- I would guess it's typically 10-20 minutes when they get it.
- I think a 15-20-minute recess daily (away from PE) is healthy and needed.

- Not sure how long they get, but it is a reasonable amount of time.
- Recess should be longer.
- Time may differ due to the seat
- Extra 30 minutes on Fridays
- I believe recess needs to be longer.
- My daughter is sad 5th grade is not allowed to play on the outdoor equipment. Recess consists of running on the grass.

*I have no idea how long recess breaks are for my Kindergartener and 5th graders. I hope it's more than 20 minutes*

- I would like to keep the length at a minimum of 20 minutes
- I believe a 30-minute recess should be available for all elementary grades.
- 15 minutes to be exact. Definitely wish they had longer though.
- They need to be longer, especially for the younger children.
- We would like our children to have a considerably longer daily recess period

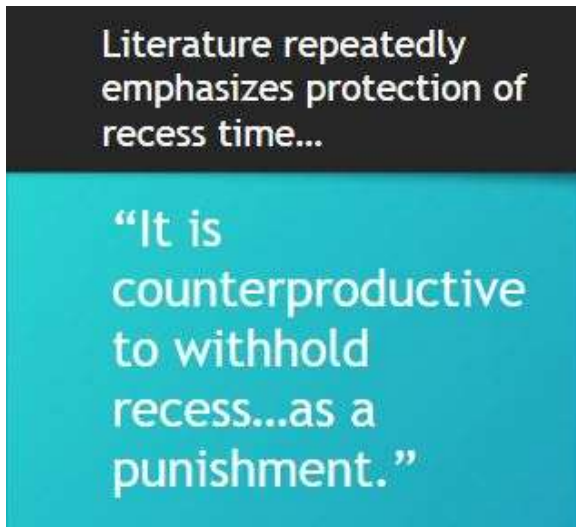
## RECESS FREQUENCY

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*All ages should have recess, not just elementary*

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- I have no idea how long recess breaks are for my Kindergartener and 5th graders. I hope it's more than 20 minutes.



*"Educating the Student Body: Taking Physical Activity and Physical Education to School." National Academies Press Institute of Medicine, Food and Nutrition Board(Committee on Physical Activity and Physical Education in the School Environment (2013)*

- If the children eat fast enough at lunch, then they have 20 minutes
- a few minutes are trimmed off for lining up to go back inside.
- They need more time OUTSIDE!!
- If the kids have PE, they don't get recess. The teacher can limit recess depending on their schedule. It's too short.

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*Teachers take it away as punishment, I don't think this should be allowed.*

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- Recess is 30 minutes
- Should be at least 20 min
- Recess is often cut short or doesn't happen at all depending on the school schedule
- longer

- I think there should be a recess break every morning and time for them to play for a little while unstructured after lunch as well. The best exercise for the brain is exercise!

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*It is unacceptable for our children to be denied recess breaks*

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- It is too short
- All ages should have recess, not just elementary
- I am unsure how long recess is.
- Teachers take it away as punishment, I don't think this should be allowed.
- My child's recess is at the very end of the day before dismissal. I believe it would be more beneficial if her grade had recess earlier in the day. Children in 4th and 5th grade have no access to play equipment or balls. They have recess on the grass or in the parking lot.
- I sub and I know if a class has for example library that afternoon, recess is cut short, so they might only get 10 minutes. :( Their typical recess is 20 minutes.

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*My child's recess is at the very end of the day before dismissal. I believe it would be more beneficial if her grade had recess earlier in the day.*

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- It is not long enough after about 3rd grade.
- They will also lose recess time (entire classes) for not walking straight in the hallways or being too loud. More reasons for MORE recess, not less.
- 15 minutes is what they usually aim for right before having lunch.
- Seems adequate. They get about 30 mins.
- It is 30 minutes per recess time.

## URGENCY

### Urgency

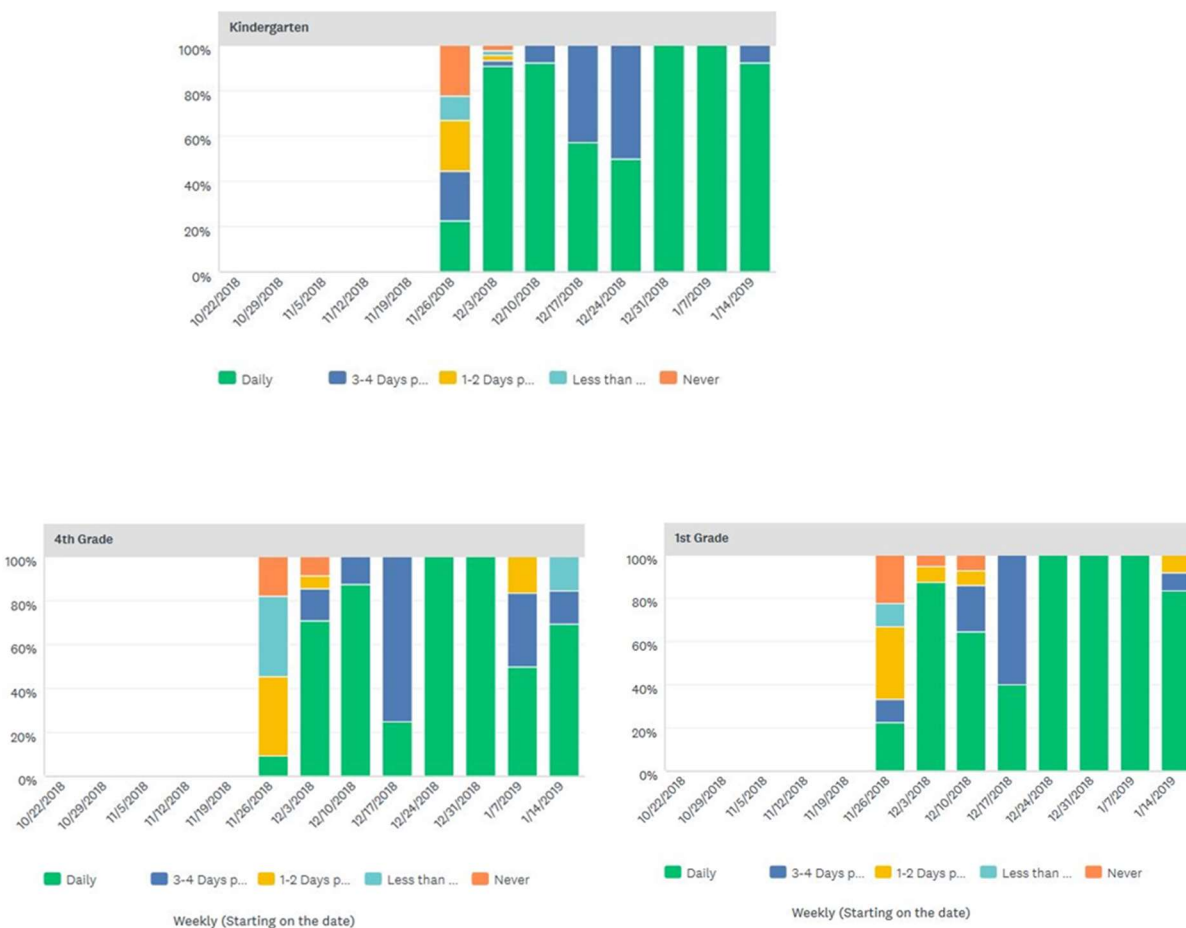
The issue of daily recess is important to parents of Alabama children. You can see this emphasized in the open-ended responses throughout the survey. This emphasis comes from both those family members whose children have access to daily recess and from those family members whose children do not have daily recess. There is also a noticeable sense of urgency in parents whose children do not have recess.

The charts below demonstrate the urgency of recess. You can see in the provided examples that respondents whose children do not have daily recess typically responded within the first week of the survey announcement.

Green indicates daily recess. Darker blue indicates 3-4 days of recess. All other colors indicate 2 or fewer days of recess. The other colors indicating 2 or fewer days of recess appear predominantly in the first weeks.

(Additional survey links were sent out during the first two weeks of January, where you can see a resurgence of responses reporting less than daily recess).

How often is recess made available to students at the school you're affiliated with? Please answer only for the grades for which you have information.



## Current Policy and Desired Changes

***“What is your opinion on the amount of daily recess offered at the school you’re affiliated with? What changes to the recess policy could help children in your school?”***

This question offers general insight into whether parents believe a change is needed, and insight into what parents believe is best practice for all children. Some of these responses will be more meaningful in context with the same respondent answers in the raw data.

- 
- Daily free-play recess for every child needs to be ensured at our school. It would strengthen school community, and personal relationships that are so important to feeling safe enough to take risks/think critically in the classroom.
  - There is not enough recess time. A policy that allowed teachers to include recess without sacrificing instructional time would be ideal.
  - I think 20 minutes of daily recess would be great for our children. I don’t see how it is possible to add another 20 minutes to the curriculum without extending the school day. I also do not agree with recess being taken away from a child as a form of punishment
  - Every day, 30 minutes of unstructured free-play.
  - I think recess should be 4-5 days a week, not just 1-2 days.
- 

*I think recess should be 4-5 days a week, not just 1-2 days.*

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- All grades should have daily recess. It would improve attention and energy level for all of them, but it would also provide much needed social interactions at every grade level.
- My child goes out 2 days a week, if weather permits. It needs to be daily 20-minute unstructured recess. Brain Breaks should

not be replacement unless absolutely necessary.

- My child has adhd. I feel a recess break during the day would help to improve his focus during the day.
- 

*It isn't enough, and the uneven use of recess leaves many children out. We need a mandate for 20 minutes minimum every day with no penalties.*

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- 15 minutes recess daily should be mandatory in all elementary and middle schools.
  - Our students don’t receive enough recess time. In my opinion students should have a 20-minute recess in the morning and a 20 minute recess in the afternoon.
  - all kids need to have a recess break at least 2 to 3 times a week
- 

*They often have to choose from a limited number of possible activities instead of having truly free play*

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- I'd love for them to have a longer break, or multiple breaks, as well as less structure. They often have to choose from a limited

number of possible activities instead of having truly free play

- All grades need at least 20 minutes of recess every day, if not more. And it shouldn't be taken away as punishment. What those "rowdy" students often need more than anything is recess!
- It isn't enough, and the uneven use of recess leaves many children out. We need a mandate for 20 minutes minimum every day with no penalties.

Essentially, recess is a break in the school day, a time away from cognitive tasks.<sup>2,5</sup> The CDC specifies that recess is "regularly scheduled periods within the elementary-school day for unstructured physical activity and play" (App. 7).<sup>4</sup> It affords the child a time to rest, play, imagine, move, and socialize.<sup>6,11,17,25</sup> Following recess, children are more attentive and better able to perform cognitively.<sup>9,15,20,21,24</sup> In addition, recess helps children to develop social skills that are not acquired in the more structured classroom environment.<sup>6,18,25</sup> Children should be encouraged, but not required, to be physically active during recess; it should be considered to complement, not to replace or substitute for, physical education classes.<sup>5,8,10,26,27</sup>

*A definition of recess from "The Crucial Role of Recess in Schools," The Journal of School Health (2010)*

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*I feel very lucky we still have it.*

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- I think ...[MONTGOMERY SCHOOL] has a poorly defined definition of recess and uses it interchangeably with P.E. Administrators and Teachers usually don't even use the term recess, they just call it "going out". A definition of the term "recess", and a time requirement for each grade level would ensure that children are able to get the time they need (IN ADDITION TO P.E.!)

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*A definition of the term "recess", and a time requirement for each grade level would ensure that children are able to get the time they need (IN ADDITION TO P.E.!)*

---

- I feel very lucky we still have it.
- I am not familiar with the policy...just that they are having daily recess. I do worry that all children don't have friends to play with and wish that we had something in place where we could make sure every child has a friend or friends to play with and something they enjoy doing to decompress...and

refresh...which I think is a main purpose of recess...

- Too little. Daily recess for all.
- I feel with the packed school day, they do the best they can.
- I like that our school makes sure kids have daily recess, but I feel like it should either be longer or possibly several times a day. I think children would benefit from a morning break, lunch break, and afternoon break. Studies have shown that increased recess time increases attention and decreases unwanted behavior.
- Need to be allowed to run, right now no tag and no using sports fields. Also, give teachers option to have another short break outside if needed.
- Students get a great amount of recess at our school.

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*Not the length, the quality.  
Students at times do not have  
access to any equipment*

---

- Giving teachers more flexibility with their schedule or other locations to have recess
- Everyone should have mandatory recess. Even when it's too cold for the teachers,



## DESIRED CHANGES

and if it's raining indoor options should be offered (games, etc)

- I think 30 minutes is great, but two, 20 min recess would be even better to help split up the classroom time
- The more recess for kids the better for attention span in the classroom
- I think they need more recess. Taking breaks during the day helps with focus and learning.

---

*Daily recess for every child needs to be ensured at our school. It would strengthen school community, and personal relationships that are so important to feeling safe enough to take risks/think critically in the classroom.*

---

- More recess would be beneficial
- Much needed play/brain break for teachers and students! Especially in the younger years!
- They could have more time or recess in the morning and afternoon in shorter times to give the kids a little break.
- It's great
- I appreciate that my child gets a chance to have unstructured time to have physical activity and work on social skills.
- I think it's the best effort they can do with recess and time.

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*Even ... if it's raining indoor options should be offered (games, etc.)*

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- Daily recess is a must for all children. Sometimes two short recesses would also be more beneficial.
- Play especially for the younger Children are vital for their cognitive abilities as well as



Word Cloud of parent & teacher responses regarding opinions and desired changes.

physical abilities. Recess allows the child to exercise not only their physical stresses but also allows them to learn how to play with others as well as stretch their physical limitations with such things as monkey bars and climbing exercises that the lower motor skills in hand Eye coordination

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*I would like to see more than 15 minutes for all grades*

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- Not the length, the quality. Students at times do not have access to any equipment and walk around the lawn meaninglessly.

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*Right now it seems that indoor recess is just a time to finish work.*

---

- I would like to see more than 15 minutes for all grades at the elementary school level
- It should be 30 minutes daily. By the time we get out there and then line up to leave our time is over
- I think it's important for the kids to have some un-structured playtime.
- I think it's great that they have recess every day, but it shouldn't be seen as unusual. I

think recess needs to be longer. Also, it should be required that indoor recess is not structured but rather free time for the students to socialize. Right now it seems that indoor recess is just a time to finish work.

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*It should be 30 minutes daily.*

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- Kids need recess time and should be offered access to places to play
- I would like to keep the daily recess provided at my kid's school. it helps with the social skills and destress
- From a teacher's perspective, I think recess should be given every day for students. However, recess should not get in the way of academics. The expectations of teachers and students is ridiculous and in order for teachers to get curriculum covered and give students time to process what they are learning, there is no time for recess. Due to academic expectations on students, we have minimal time to allow students to socialize or have free play.
- Continue recess for a good amount of time

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*I think 25 minutes is at least what they should get*

---

- I am good with the amount of time offered for recess. Our school goes outside unless below freezing or raining, then recess is indoors.
- Kids need recess every day!
- Is good for kids that age to have a break during the school day
- Daily recess is needed.
- I think it is great. Recess is very important, even for the older grades.

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*I think it's important for the kids to have some un-structured playtime.*

---

- Longer recess time
- Our kids have recess and PE daily, so no changes needed.
- 30 minutes would be ideal
- I would like them to have a longer recess.
- Allow all elementary grades to have a recognized 30-minute recess.
- I think it's essential
- Students should be able to sit out at recess for behavior/unfinished work. Students still receive 30mins if physical education each day.
- I believe that the school does a good job of incorporating recess in each grade as much as they can.
- I would be happy if they had more recess. Maybe 2 recess times a day to break up the extreme demands of instruction time.
- I think 25 minutes is at least what they should get.

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*We do not approve of recess being taken away for minor classroom misbehavior...Those things would probably disappear if kids had longer recess every day.*

---

- I am very happy with daily recess. There needs to be more equipment for the older grades.
- I feel the kids should get 20 minutes instead of 15. I definitely feel it's necessary to get their extra energy out so that they will do better in class.
- Currently, I think my child has enough recess at school. When my older child attended and was in 6th, I think they had way TOO MUCH recess. That may have just

## DESIRED CHANGES

been those teachers and 6th grade is no longer at the elementary school this year.

- I'd rather see fun day Friday go, if it allows daily recess (on the playground, or with things to play with - not on an empty track).
- Find a way to let them have indoor recess in cold) rainy days. My child is a straight A student but still wants a little social time daily

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*There needs to be more equipment for the older grades.*

---

- I wish they had it for 15 minutes twice a day. I think recess is more valuable than PE daily.
- Longer periods of free play and movement could help them focus better during instruction times. Also, it will allow them to learn social skills.
- We would like to see a considerably longer daily recess time. We do not approve of recess being taken away for minor classroom misbehavior (for example—fighting, having untidy desk, talking too much, etc.). Those things would probably disappear if kids had longer recess every day.
- I think it would be great for kids to have more time for recess! I know there are lots of things to get finished in the classroom, but I think kids need to be able to play!
- I think they need at least 30 minutes twice a day.
- Especially for my boys, I would like as much recess as possible. Children thrive inside when they can get their energy out and build relationships outside the classroom.
- my child is in the 1st grade but as they get older I still think they need the downtime & ability to co-play with other classes.

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*Twice a day...Never take the recess away, no matter what. Kids need the brain breaks!*

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- Twice a day. A solid 30 minutes twice a day. If it's raining, hot, snowing, etc. go to the gym. Never take the recess away, no matter what. Kids need the brain breaks!
- Recess seems to be late in the requiring prolonged sitting for most the day. It seems like an afterthought and will be skipped if there isn't enough time.

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*I think that recess should be done twice a day*

---

- Not enough time spent OUTSIDE
- recess should be offered 2-3 times DAILY
- Recess should be everyday even if P.E. is offered that same day.
- Longer breaks and PE daily
- There isn't enough recess. There should be a second recess at lunch time
- They get a generous amount.

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*From a teacher's perspective...The expectations of teachers and students is ridiculous and in order for teachers to get curriculum covered and give students time to process what they are learning, there is no time for recess.*

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- Not enough!!!!
- I think that recess should be done twice a day to break up learning and keep kids active. Two 25-minute breaks would be great. The other thing is that kids need to be active even when it's raining, so structured activity or exercise while in the



## DESIRED CHANGES

classroom would be great. It could even be video led exercise.

- It is not enough and not long enough. Recess/unstructured play should be offered twice daily. This article recommends an hour daily and I agree: 20 minutes daily is too short. PE shouldn't count. Recommendations are for an hour daily: [https://mobile.edweek.org/c.jsp?fbclid=IwAR2NXE6iVTDtRAD3OCzywUNJfaKfgAZCMXfp4ncOzpyQ7R7LLXCy2TJKH\\_c&item=http%3a%2f%2fapi.edweek.org%2fv1%2fblog%2f95%2findex.html%3fuuid%3d77019&cmp=SO-C-SHR-FB&cid=25920011&intc=mob-topnav#error-message](https://mobile.edweek.org/c.jsp?fbclid=IwAR2NXE6iVTDtRAD3OCzywUNJfaKfgAZCMXfp4ncOzpyQ7R7LLXCy2TJKH_c&item=http%3a%2f%2fapi.edweek.org%2fv1%2fblog%2f95%2findex.html%3fuuid%3d77019&cmp=SO-C-SHR-FB&cid=25920011&intc=mob-topnav#error-message)

---

*I think it would also help with some of the anxiety that many of our children are experiencing*

---

- PE is on a rotation here. Three weeks of PE, then three weeks of computer, then 3 weeks of art. Recess is important since these kiddos aren't getting PE very often. The kids need to get out of the classroom, play, take a brain break, and be kids.
- I think the recess time is adequate at 30 minutes.

---

*Social and emotional learning, as well as physical movement are all just as important as academics.*

---

- I think they get enough recess. My child doesn't come home complaining about the lack of time, so I think it's fine.
- It is not offered in first through fifth grade. If we were allowed to take our children outside for 20 minutes of recess after lunch, I believe they would perform better for the afternoon academics.

- Not long enough. Should also get a chance to play after lunch. PE & recess can happen on the same day. It isn't either/or.
- The kids should be outside or engaging in physical activity at least twice a day every day for at least 15 minutes at each break!

---

*If we were allowed to take our children outside for 20 minutes of recess after lunch I believe they would perform better for the afternoon academics.*

---

- Not long, low supervision, not good equipment for play
- keep it
- As long as they allow the kids to have recess daily for 20 minutes, I am happy.
- I love that our kids get both recess and PE. For my kids, they really need the time outside the classroom to run around and burn off energy.
- It should be daily for every grade level, even in upper levels student need at least a 15 min. Break with the new academic guidelines the stress levels of students are unbelievable.

---

*I like that my daughter has recess.*

---

- I like that my daughter has recess.
- More play time and less restrictions on who can participate.
- Kids need just a little longer to unwind, maybe just another 5 minutes would be beneficial.
- My child has adhd. Extra recesses have been proven to be beneficial

---

*More frequent breaks going outside are critically important*

---

## DESIRED CHANGES

- Recess should occur daily, whether indoor or outdoor. It should last a minimum of 30 min. Our children can be productive and less disruptive in the classroom if they have the opportunity to relax and release some of the built-up energy. I think it would also help with some of the anxiety that many of our children are experiencing and misbehavior.
- They need much more time
- need more time to blow off steam
- We fully support recess offered every day, and in the middle of the day to maximize the benefits of physical activity and unstructured social interaction for our children

---

*PE & recess can happen on the same day. It isn't either/or.*

---

- children need at least 30 min of recess each day separate from P.E.
- As noted in my previous comment. I don't think MPS places enough value on recess. I think it should be mandatory scheduled time. I've noticed the older kids (4th grade) in our school are often on "silent lunch". When are kids allowed to be kids? Social and emotional learning, as well as physical movement are all just as important as academics.

---

*it's quickly replaced with electronic time on inclement weather day. I feel the students would benefit from...dance parties or board games.*

---

- That the kids do not get enough outside time. I would like to see all grades get two 15-20 recess sessions during the day.
- More frequent breaks going outside are critically important

- It's currently completely insufficient. Policy should be 30 mins per day rain or shine
- The amount of recess of about 20 min is good. I wish it were a bit more. Friday's, they do get a little extra time and I like that. There is not enough play equipment for the kids and the playground is quite small. Some parents think it to be unsafe for the number of children on the equipment. Some parents who have complained are former teachers themselves. If children did not bring their coats to school on cold days, the whole class should not be kept in from recess, just those kids who don't have proper dress.
- The amount is appropriate.
- Lower grades have more excess than older
- I believe they should get at least 30 minutes. When I was growing up we had recess two times a day and I turned out fine.

---

*Recess as the last period of the day is silly. The kids need a break between sitting in classes.*

---

- Recess as the last period of the day is silly. The kids need a break between sitting in classes.
- I think it is important for the children to get this break to stretch and socialize
- children need more recess daily and for all grade levels daily
- I'm happy with the duration. I would like to see if offered more in 5th grade. It's used as a reward instead of a daily activity.
- daily recess is important to our teachers and staff. However, it's quickly replaced with electronic time on inclement weather day. I feel the students would benefit from a physical activity such as dance parties or board games.
- I think all teachers should be required by the school to take the kids to recess for at least 30 minutes, every day.

## DESIRED CHANGES

- Longer time at recess. And there are infractions that should mean losing recess, but being restless, talking too much or having difficulty sitting/attending are NOT good ones

---

*I think all teachers should be required by the school to take the kids to recess*

---

- They need more than they are getting now
- Recess is often revoked as a disciplinary measure, which I disagree with.
- I think they should have recess twice a day
- It should be 20 min each twice a day
- Do not punish children by withholding recess.
- needs to be mandatory
- More time would be great
- I believe recess is too short. A lot of the time the children don't even get the 15 minutes they are allotted.
- The amount daily varies, between 20 to 40 minutes, depending on the events of the day. I believe the amount of recess the students receive is great and sufficient.

- The recess policy is great. No change needed
- Seems to be enough. They also have PE daily besides recess.
- Recess should be mandatory
- It is unacceptable. I think kids should play outside before school starts instead of lining up silently for up to 40 min before the first bell. And At LEAST a 20 min recess during the day of free play (to allow transition time & really about 15min or less of actual play).
- Twice a day recess would be better
- It's not enough. Child's parents should be responsible for ensuring their child has adequate clothing for the weather. If it's not raining and is above 35 degrees than they should be outside.
- I think it is perfect. Except with the 6th grade.

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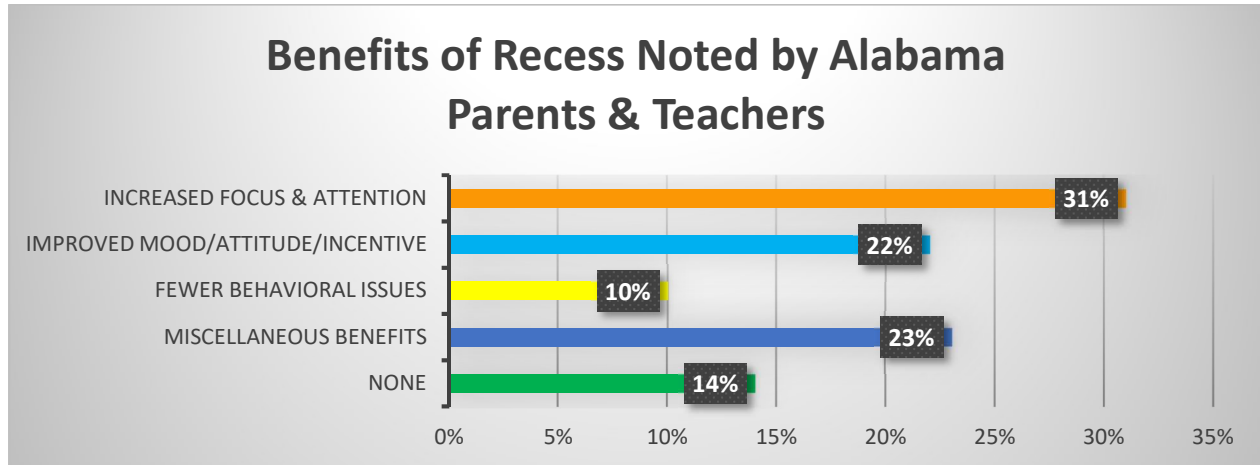
*Recess should be mandatory*

---

- Children NEED recess. I'd love to see a 30-minute recess for all grades. Or even two 15-20-minute recesses.
- I think the amount of time is adequate

## Observations on Academic Performance

### Graph of Observations



### Open-Ended Responses

***“Have you noticed any effects that recess (or lack of recess) has on your child's academic performance? Or on you, if you are a student? If so, please share an example.”***

This question was asked to collect anecdotal evidence from Alabamians to support the unanimous research findings that students with recess are more academically successful. Continued learning takes place on the playground which enhances classroom performance.

- 
- Yes. He needs to develop the important social skills that are going to help him throughout life. He has no opportunity to practice those skills in an unstructured setting. He also is very bright and ADHD, so he gets in trouble for inability to sit still and be quiet all day. These things make him hate school. I want him to love learning!
  - My oldest children (4th grade) benefit from recess to take a break from the required sitting instructional time. It helps them reset their brains. My youngest needs movement throughout the day to survive the day.
  - Loss of focus
  - As a parent, he gets home super wound up. He seems to have trouble focusing in the classroom and has gotten in trouble in the past for talking, getting up from desk without permission. His grades have slowly been declining, but I'm not entirely sure what the exact cause is. He is a gifted student, so this seems a little strange.
  - Able to focus better on days with recess
  - My children are active and would benefit from the opportunity to free play every day.
  - My child often gets restless midday. They expect students to be quiet in class, quiet for 15 minutes in lunch room and quiet in hallway. They have pent up energy. Come

home ready to bounce off the walls. Then we have to get them to sit and do homework

- I was a traveling teacher for several years. Recess increases children's attention spans in the afternoon. I once taught at a school where they rang the bell and the entire school went out for recess each day. My favorite class was the one that came to me after recess. They were refreshed and ready to work. The teachers enjoyed the break as much as the students. It was so successful it still baffles me why ever school does not implement daily recess. No one ever complained about recess at that school.
- My child is not your typical student and can handle not having recess, but he definitely feels much readier to learn when he has had the opportunity to have unstructured play time. I'm very concerned for the kids that need the unstructured time. They are kids and need to release their energy. These students are being disruptive in my son's class which is negatively affecting his education.

---

*Able to focus better on days with recess*

---

- When my child has recess, she is better able to concentrate in class. When the class has recess taken away due to poor behavior of a few, she comes home upset and unable to share what she learned that day. When she has more recess, she seems to do better on her homework.
- The lack of much recess seems to make our daughter both more restless at home and less able to engage in self-directed and imaginative play.
- My daughter has more positive feelings about school when she gets a break.
- Yes, my child has ADHD and has a hard time focusing. When she is required to sit all day

or keep her body mostly still inside of a classroom/building, she is impacted. She has a hard time completing work, staying focused, especially with written tasks.

- No, but I can sure tell when they aren't able to go outside or get breaks due to weather, testing, etc. So... it's a good thing.

---

*Not on academic performance, but it has a huge effect on attitude towards school and wanting to attend.*

---

- Exhausted and grumpy at the end of the day.
- My son is a very active kindergartener, so having recess is essential for him to perform well.
- Lack of recess results in less focus. My daughter has ADHD, so she really struggles if she has no way to release her energy and get a break from trying to stay on task.
- Academic is important, but it is also social learning time.
- I have noticed that my daughter is more wild or "hyper" on days she did not have recess.
- Students perform better when they have an opportunity to expend energy.
- Yes. Students with ADD/ADHD have a more difficult day if they cannot run and play
- Not on academic performance, but it has a huge effect on attitude towards school and wanting to attend.

---

*The lack of recess seems to make our daughter... less able to engage in self-directed and imaginative play.*

---

- Less likely to pay attention and focus when there is no recess

## EFFECTS ON ACADEMICS

- It has taught him to socialize and become more vocal in class. He was more reserved before he was able to have free time to meet new friends.
- My child will complain when he doesn't get the chance to run around freely. He would go out at 20 degrees just to be able to exert his energy.
- my child does poorly when he does not get recess
- My child feels and acts better with a recess.
- Yes, if recess is not available due to temperature or rain, I noticed that my child seems to be a little more wound up when she gets home. I feel like recess is vital to it every day activity aside from Jim and other physical activities for young children.
- Increased academic achievement and love for school

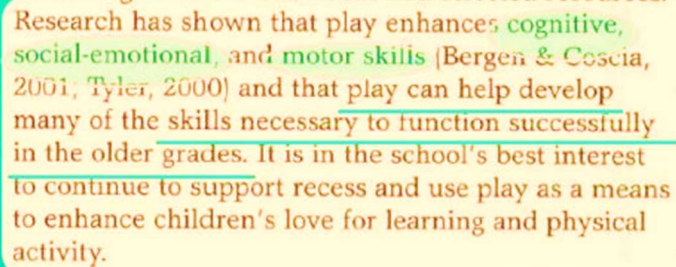
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*it definitely helped my kids gain social skills*

---

- On rainy days many of the children in the classroom appear to have a great amount of energy pinned up and struggle to focus or sit still. At home, I notice that when my children cannot be active due to weather that their attention span and ability to follow directions well decreases.
- Students need the movement and social time. Having recess usually means less behavior issues in the classroom.
- My daughter is sad when she has indoor recess because she doesn't have that free time to socialize. She is a good student, so it doesn't seem to affect her performance, just her mood.
- it definitely helped my kids gain social skills
- Recess is a nice break for everyone. However, because social time so is so minimal, recess becomes the main focus for

some students. They will ignore doing their work, listening to a lesson, etc. because they are focusing on what time it is and counting down the time until recess.



Research has shown that play enhances cognitive, social-emotional, and motor skills (Bergen & Coscia, 2001, Tyler, 2000) and that play can help develop many of the skills necessary to function successfully in the older grades. It is in the school's best interest to continue to support recess and use play as a means to enhance children's love for learning and physical activity.

*"A Cognitive Approach to Elementary School Recess." Teaching Elementary Physical Education (2005)*

- Positive, fun environment, time with friends, less exhaustion for learning activities
- Better performance as they are able to take a mental break. Students are more focused after he recess
- My daughter lives the free social time.
- Rainy or cold days they seem to become restless if they are not able to run around or move. We move a lot in my classroom on those days.
- My child does not perform as well when she does not get recess.
- My child needs time throughout the day to be creatively and physically active. Otherwise, she grows increasingly resentful of school, and is not inspired to academically achieve. Art, music, PE, and recess provide time for my child to reset and be ready to learn and study again. They also open her mind and encourage creative thinking, which I believe is a huge component to being a good student.
- In my opinion recess is necessary
- Students learn if they do their work they can play. Put first things first. They learn if they are good, they get a recess. Be proactive.
- My children are happier and less moody on days that they have recess.



- Not anything academically, but she has harder days at school if she does not have that break

---

*Rainy or cold days they seem to become restless if they are not able to run around or move. We move a lot in my classroom on those days.*

---

- Yes, I believe when my child has the opportunity for unstructured playtime it allows him to burn some of his energy and interact with classmates and he is more likely to focus on his school work during instruction time. The relationships and bonding he builds during that time also helps build teamwork inside the classroom.
- I feel it helps my son get his excess energy out so that he can better focus on class.
- I think it improves their concentration and helps them focus. Resets their brain.
- When my child doesn't have recess because of recess, she has a harder time calming down.
- Haven't noticed
- Oh, definitely! On the days my daughter doesn't get recess, it's an all-around bad day. It affects her mood and makes her less motivated to do her work.
- At the previous school my child attend there was an additional recess after lunch. With this additional recess his behavior was much better.
- As a former student, and a current parent as well as a current teacher, all children perform in the classroom better when they have recess. There is tons of data online to support this.
- Not in my kids but I see it in others. They need a brain break!
- They come home exhausted for sitting most of the day.

- Effects we've observed due to limited recess periods include-increased anxiety; fighting; talking in class.
- I feel that students are more restless and have a harder time concentrating with so little recess time.

---

*At the previous school my child attend there was an additional recess after lunch. With this additional recess his behavior was much better.*

---

- When they don't get it, usually for weather related issues
- I know teachers need it!
- They get antsy if they can't run off their energy
- Yes. This is our first year here, and the first time my child hasn't had recess twice a day and she comes home in a terrible mood, with tons of energy. She says she's always distracted in class because everyone is crazy.
- I have two active children that need time to

**Additionally, teachers benefit from recess. In terms of classroom behavior and cognitive focus, whether performed indoors or outdoors, recess made children more attentive and more productive in the classroom.<sup>9,12,15,22,24,25</sup> This was found to be true even though, in many cases, the students spent much of their recess time socializing. In fact, a student's abil-**

*"The Crucial Role of Recess in Schools," The Journal of School Health (2010,) cites multiple sources revealing that recess increases productivity in the classroom.*

get their wiggles out to be more attentive in class. When I pick them up, I can tell when they haven't had outside time because they are bouncing off the walls.

- Lack of recess is associated with increased anxiety, stress and agitation and decreased ability to focus

## EFFECTS ON ACADEMICS

- My child seems more compressed from her school day now, then she did at her previous school last year.

---

*My child, while only 6, has a difficult time staying in his seat at school. His kindergarten school had recess three times a day and he did not have that problem in kindergarten.*

---

- Lack of free time makes the kids loose focus easily their brains need free time to relax from the daily learning.
- I notice that it helps them stay still afterward and focus more.
- My child, while only 6, has a difficult time staying in his seat at school. His kindergarten school had recess three times a day and he did not have that problem in kindergarten.
- My students seem to overall be more focused for math which is immediately following recess.
- I am more concerned with his health and mental wellbeing that are being affected by lack of recess. I do believe his grades would improve too.
- Yes, attention problems
- Less attentive, squirmy
- Recess can be a stress reliever/ a time to let go of excess energy. Students can relax and come back to class settled, focused and ready to learn.

---

*I once taught at a school where they rang the bell and the entire school went out for recess each day. My favorite class was the one that came to me after recess. They were refreshed and ready to work.*

---

- Not sure; MTG has always made sure that each grade has recess; even on days the weather makes them stay in, they have free-time. My daughter will comment about any day that winds up, for some reason, not having recess.
- My son says when they are in the classroom all day his mind drifts off because of the continued instruction.
- The kids look so forward to blowing off steam at recess.
- He is bored and has too much energy. He needs more physical activity
- Yes. My child does well in school but there are plenty of days that he comes home mentally exhausted which makes anything the teacher sends home a struggle to complete, especially on days where he did not have recess.
- They are exhausted and cranky when they have none

---

*Our son is definitely more irritable and less focused on days when weather prevents recess*

---

- helps with restlessness, adhd
- Our son is definitely more irritable and less focused on days when weather prevents recess
- my child's classroom has a lot of built up energy....class is unable to properly focus
- The kindergartners are more able to settle in and focus after time on the playground. My older child would benefit socially from unstructured time outside with his classmates and would be more able to focus, particularly later in the day.
- They are unmanageable because they have lots of energy that needs to be burned off each day.



- Lack of recess or only one recess causes children to lose hope, attention to wander, and perform poorly on assignments and tests

## Recess Impacts Behavior

"...levels of inappropriate behavior increase as a function of time when they [students] do not have recess..."

*"Effects of Recess on the Classroom Behavior of Children With and Without Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder." School Psychology Quarterly (2003) makes it clear that recess improves classroom behavior.*

- Yes, when he doesn't have recess my son has excess energy and can't focus
- My child tends to do well either way. However, most children need exercise to help them use energy and help them focus during class. I do not agree with children being denied recess as a consequence. I know this happens. Occasionally, it has happened to my child in her early school years if she is behind on her Accelerated Reading or if she has classroom work left. She no longer struggles in these areas now that she is older, so it is no longer an issue.
- Recess has helped my child to be more attentive to the teachers and less disruptive in class.

---

*Students are able to focus*

---

- Students are able to focus
- If they don't get it I feel students are restless and sometimes angry
- Without recess they have pent up energy that leads to more distractions and stress. They need to be able to let it out and have a "brain break". Even when my kids come home I let them play for 30 min - 1 hour before starting homework, to destress from school before starting more school work.
- My kids are calmer when they have recess

---

*My kids are calmer when they have recess*

---

- My 5th grader will come home sad and frustrated when he loses recess time because of the actions of others in his classroom.
- When my children lose recess as a whole class because of a few misbehaving students it really downs there day. The whole class shouldn't miss recess because of a few misbehaved students. I do agree that sometimes taking away recess as a punishment is acceptable. I just think it should be day by day and case by case basis.

---

*Recess has helped my child to be more attentive to the teachers and less disruptive in class.*

---

- I think so many kids have trouble sitting still and staying focused. An appropriate timed recess of at least 30 minutes might help the burn off some energy and better focus in class for the remainder of the day.
- More work brought home because he couldn't focus and was fidgety. He does better with more movement breaks. Our

## EFFECTS ON ACADEMICS

best year was 1st grade when the teacher built movement breaks into her day to give increased movement time.

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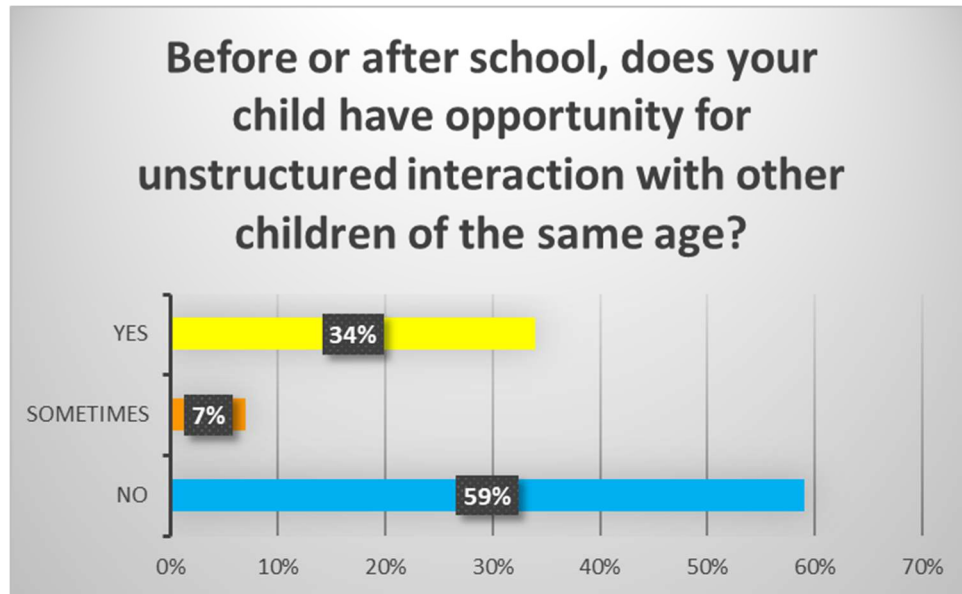
*I have noticed that on a day without recess, homework is stressful.*

---

- Able to pay attention more
- My child does best academically when he has recess consistently.
- Yes, my child seemed unhappy not having it when they didn't
- Absolutely. My children are more fidgety and tired when they do not get time
- students that do not get recess tend to have a hard time focusing towards the end of the day
- The more time she has to play freely the more able to focus she is in the classroom. We call this "getting the wiggles out"
- I have noticed that on a day without recess, homework is stressful.
- Yes, my child definitely needs the freedom from the chair, to move, run, just be a kid. He can then listen better and focus.
- Too much studies and no play does make them bored. It's good that the school has enough recess for all grades.
- Recess has a positive effect. It helps students focus and have a more positive attitude.
- I have noticed more with friends' kids getting in trouble b/c they are bored & need to move, so they act out & spell all their spelling words backwards (correctly) & get in trouble.
- If my children have not had recess (or a mental break) they come home more edgy and tired.
- Only with the 6th grade. They should at least allow the good behaving students their time, instead of the good ones being punished with the bad students.
- More breaks help my kid stay focused
- When he has recess, he is able to focus better afterwards
- No, but my children do not struggle academically.

## Social & Emotional Development Opportunities

### Opportunity for Social Interaction Graph



### Open-Ended Question Responses

***“Before or after school, does your child, or do you as a student, have daily opportunities for unstructured social interaction with other children of the same age?  
Please share examples. Please do not include organized sports or coached programs.  
We want to identify opportunities in which children can freely interact and play with each other.”***

This question was asked to emphasize the crucial role of recess in social and emotional health. A common argument against making time for recess or substituting PE for recess is that children have plenty of time to play with other children outside of school.

Continued learning takes place on the playground whether it is problem-solving, cooperation, negotiation, self-control, leadership development or emotional development. The conditions conducive to the learning that takes place on the playground are rarely replicated in other activities.

- 
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No. Our cub scouts has kind of devolved to playdates because few of the schools have recess.</li> <li>• My children attend the after-school program at the school. They are allowed 2 days per week playground time. Any other time before or after school is quiet.</li> <li>• Yes</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No</li> <li>• no, not daily</li> <li>• My child does extended day care from 3-5:30, but once he gets home he doesn't get daily opportunity to socially interact with other children.</li> <li>• no, only at recess.</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

## SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- My children play with a few kids in our neighborhood, but not every day. My son is also in Cub Scouts, which always has some unstructured time.
- My child goes to after care in his school. He does get some unstructured social time there. He also participates in boy scouts.

---

*No. Our cub scouts has kind of devolved to playdates because few of the schools have recess.*

---

- Not often. They have to be at school so early in the morning, and homework family time takes up time after school.
- No, we don't have kids that live close by in our neighborhood.
- No not unless there is some type of school function. Ex. Fall festival, dance or program
- Some of the time in extended day is somewhat unstructured. When my child gets home from school, she is able to contact friends, and sometimes able to visit with them after school, although it's usually on weekends.
- Not really. It's hard to organize free play with other kids her age after school with any regularity.

---

*Not daily, because we live in a neighborhood with few children*

---

- no
- Not before school. After school, I make sure we go to the playground at least 2X a week, because she's not getting the opportunity in school.
- just recess
- Not a lot...but we do get our 2nd grader together with friends and cousins her age at least 1-3 times a week to play
- No.

- Not very often outside of sports
- No
- Yes. My kids love to say their friendship after school to parents. It can be a good communication with family too.
- Not daily.

have the potential to promote activity and a healthy lifestyle. However, recess—particularly unstructured recess and free play—provides a unique contribution to the creative, social, and emotional aspects of a child's development. These benefits need to be fully considered when making decisions to abridge or eliminate time for regular recess. From the perspective of health and well-being of the whole child, recess time should be considered a child's personal time. It should not be withheld for academic or punitive reasons. Opti-

*A review of research in "The Crucial Role of Recess in Schools," The Journal of School Health (2010,) emphasizes the impact of recess on social and emotional development.*

- Yes. Play dates, neighborhood play
- Playing with neighbors, riding bikes
- Not daily but a few times a week we play with neighbors.
- Not daily, but a few times per week
- Sometimes it just depends on the schedule
- No, they have daily opportunities to play with children of other ages.
- Our next-door neighbor is a boy his age and they play almost daily. He also has a younger brother that he gets to play with every day.
- No
- Yes
- Occasional play dates and church activities
- extended daycare. summer neighborhood street play
- Library visits once a week
- No.
- No much
- Not really.
- No
- He can play with other children in our neighborhood
- No
- Yes, my daughter plays with her best friend who lives down the street every afternoon.

She and her friend usually are found playing on the swing set that we have in our backyard. They also enjoy playing inside and doing things that involve painting drawing imagination that sort of thing.

- Not daily but sometimes in the neighborhood.
- Yes
- Yes, she plays with neighborhood friends after school.

---

*Not daily but a few times a week we play with neighbors.*

---

## SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- No. Recess is the only time for unstructured social interaction. Which is why more recess time is better. Indoor recess should be required to be unstructured.
- not daily, may be once a week during the weekend
- My children are in high school. Their workload is ridiculous. At times, they have 4-5 hours of homework a night. They do get to spend time with friends on the weekends.
- No
- My children play with other kids in our neighborhood or family friends.
- Not really, she has many extracurricular activities after school. The only

unstructured social interaction she has is on weekends usually

- My children spend time each afternoon when they come home playing with their neighborhood friends.

---

*my kids only have opportunity for unstructured social interaction with other children during recess*

---



Information from "The Crucial Role of Recess in Schools," Journal of School Health (2010)

- On most days, the answer is yes. I encourage (and force) my children to go outside and play with neighbors. Riding bikes, riding scooters, playing games, jumping on trampoline, and other outdoor activities are my preference.
- Yes, our kids play with the neighbor kids on a regular basis.

- She can talk to other children on the bus
- My son and daughter play outside with the neighbors.

- some
- football

- My child does if there are children in our

neighborhood who are available to play after school.

- No
- no
- my kids only have opportunity for unstructured social interaction with other children during recess

## SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Lunch daily, morning arrival, afternoon dismissal, multiple opportunities in the classroom
- No
- Not usually during school days
- No
- Not every day but playing with neighbors
- Not very often. My daughter has a younger sibling, but school, homework and extracurricular activities usually keep us pretty busy. My daughter might get an opportunity, once a month at a birthday party. Its just hard at the age, to get kids together when everyone is so busy.
- YES. He meets with neighborhood kids and plays often. Plus, he runs, bikes, hikes, does archery, karate and ball.
- Not every day, but at least 2 or 3 days during the week, and at least one of the weekend days.
- Yes, her brother
- Yes, our neighborhood kids.
- No because children their age do not live near us.

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*Not daily, because we live in a neighborhood with few children, but on the weekends Yes, our neighborhood kids.*

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- No.
- No.
- My children attend after school care, so yes.
- Aftercare with Appleton. they get to play
- Not before, and rarely after because of the amount of home work and extracurricular activities.
- They play with the neighborhood kids outside on the weekends. During the week especially in Fall/Winter, it's too dark by the time they get home after their afterschool program to play outside.
- Play dates with friends on the weekends
- She does not have a daily opportunity for unstructured play.

- Yes my son plays basketball and t-ball with the YMCA
- No. My children don't get home until after 3:30 so there isn't much time to play outside with other children before it gets dark.
- Yes
- No
- No

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*No. Too much homework to be able to socialize after school.*

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- We have a dual-working parent household. He gets some unstructured interaction in his after-school programs, but they are mostly structured. Outside of that, he might have 2 days weekly to play freely with children his age outside of school. One of his classmates' lives on our street and they will occasionally play at each other's house.
- No, he doesn't
- Yes
- We have several children in our neighborhood that play together after school when it's nice. When it's not, they are all inside my house driving me crazy. 😊
- No
- It varies based on homework and availability of friends. He and I do 15 minutes of physical activity before school.
- After school some days
- No
- yes, at the gym child watch.
- Not really
- Yes, but only with their siblings. With children outside our family, the interaction may only happen a few times a week.
- Yes, gets together with friends in neighbor.
- No
- No
- At home, yes. At school, no. Due to the stresses of testing my kids aren't excited about school anymore. When they're at school, they're expected to be working.



- Neighborhood kids
- No
- Daily - we play outside with neighbor kids
- play outside with friends, religious ed
- Our children have other kids in the neighborhood where they engage in unstructured interaction, but not always daily and much less in the colder months
- no
- My children play outside in our neighborhood most everyday with other children. We are very fortunate that we just happen to live in an area with many children close in age that love to throw a ball, play road hockey, ride bikes, etc. My oldest in particular needs this time to run and play before settling down to do homework or reading.
- Too much homework leads to very poor quality of life and limited time for imagination, play, and positive parent and sibling interactions
- No, no time

---

*Not really. About 1-2 times a week they get to meet with friends in church or in the neighborhood. Winter time is tough.*

---

- There are children in the neighborhood that my child plays with after school on days where she does not have after school activities.
- After school care.
- Yes, neighbors
- Some
- My kids will play with their cousins or neighborhood kids.
- Sometimes
- my children have outside, unstructured play time before school a few minutes they ball outside waiting for the bus. They have a few hours nightly to have unstructured social times outdoors and indoors with neighborhood friends.

## SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Not really as there are no kids near my child's age on our street.
- Yes; after school care

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*My children play outside in our neighborhood most everyday with other children. We are very fortunate that we just happen to live in an area with many children*

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- Yes, I make sure that he always has time to go play outside in the neighborhood with friends. His behavior improves with this, we have much better sleep. He rides bikes, rollerblades, plays hide and seek.
- No. Too much homework to be able to socialize after school.
- No
- No
- No.

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*Yes, I make sure that he always has time to go play outside in the neighborhood with friends. His behavior improves with this...*

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- No there is no time, not organized
- Yes. Friends visiting. Riding bikes. Jumping on trampoline. Walking the dog
- students don't "get out and play" after school anymore. Recess provides that. The unstructured "play" is so important.
- Our kids play most days with the neighborhood kids
- Yes, my son plays after school with a neighborhood friend.
- Yes, church groups, boy scout activities, & playing with neighborhood kids. Birthday parties spend the night parties
- My own kids (grades 3, 4 & 5) get up earlier than normal and have about 30 to play with each other before we leave for school. But

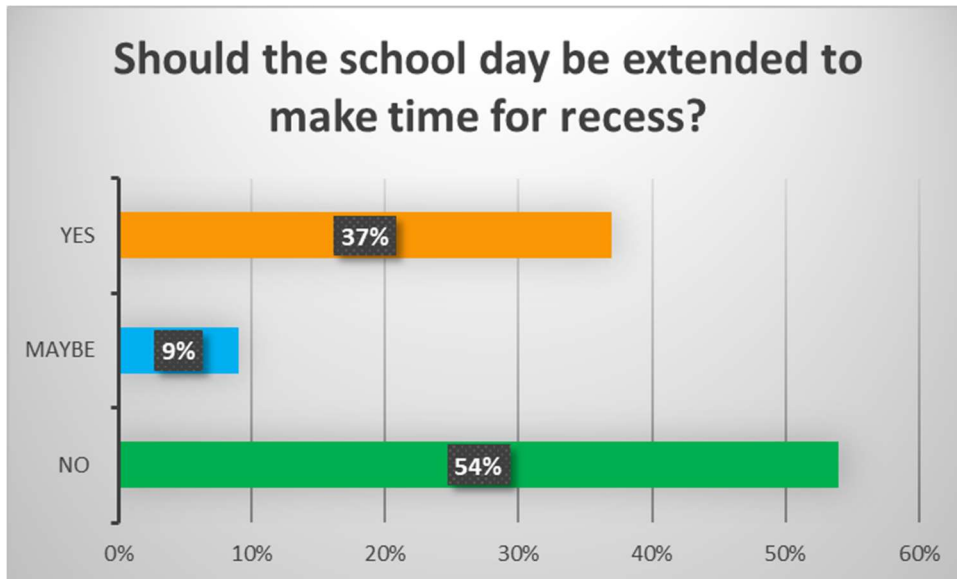
## SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

if they arrive at school before the bell rings, they have to sit in the gym without talking.

- Not really. About 1-2 times a week they get to meet with friends in church or in the neighborhood. Winter time is tough. The rest of the year they do go outside to play with friends in the neighborhood.
- no
- I am able to pick my kids up after school & we have playdays & run around the house & Park. We are lucky.
- No.
- Yes, my children play with other children in our neighborhood daily.
- I don't believe so.
- No
- My son does not have any opportunities to have unstructured interaction with other children.
- No. Not daily. But with 4 children in the house, they do interact with children, just not the same age.



## Extending the School Day



***“What are your thoughts about extending the school day to provide the recommended 20 minute daily recess?”***

When parents insist that their children need unstructured breaks in the school day, the first suggestion from administration is often that the only way to make time for recess is to extend the school day. We asked this question to gain perspective on parental thoughts regarding this solution.

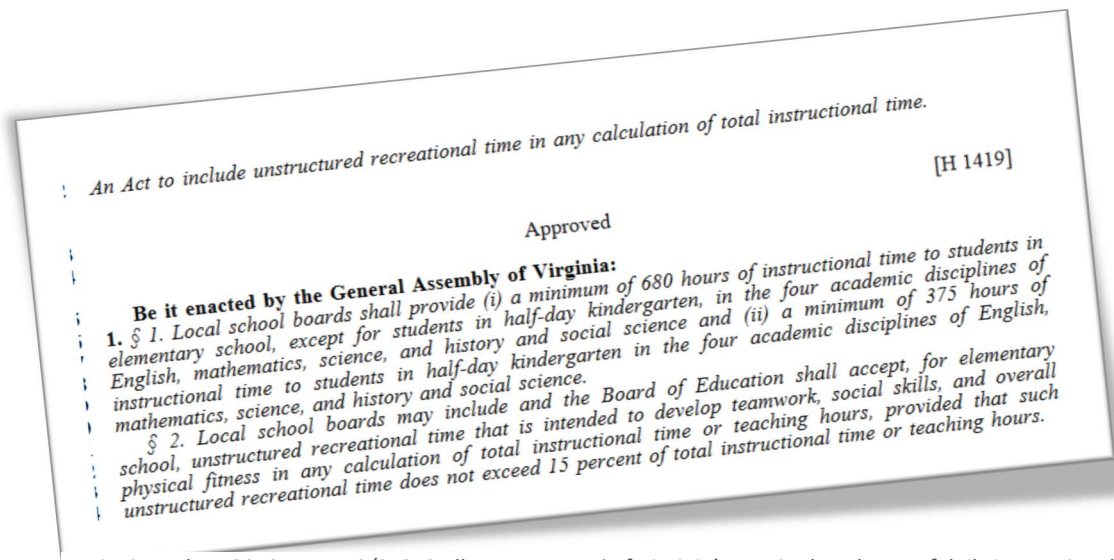
It is widely recognized that recess had been squeezed out of the day because of mandated instructional minutes. In recent years, many states have taken legislative action to ensure daily recess is provided for every child. Virginia’s solution was to recognize a percentage of time at recess as instructional minutes. Reports back from states that have implemented daily recess laws indicate academic improvement.

- 
- I do not think it's necessary to extend the school day. If necessary, they can split PE time to include recess.
  - I think it would be a great idea for elementary students
  - Virginia created legislation that recognizes a specific amount of free-play recess as instructional time.
  - I would be ok with it, though I do not think it is necessary. Virginia passed a law that views recess as instructional minutes.
  - If the day needs to be extended to include is EVERY day, then yes! And recess should be required for each student if the school day is extended. No taking away as punishment, no saying we are too busy today - EVERY day REQUIRED.

## EXTENDING THE SCHOOL DAY

- If it would help my child perform better in school, yes. But not if it will require them to wake up any earlier than they already have to
- 100% for it
- If this is what it takes to provide recess, I am fine with it, but would rather find time during the current school schedule if possible.
- That would be ok with me.
- It is not necessary. There is a lot of wasted time during the day. We have lost sight of focusing our attentions on educating the whole child. Too much time is focused on standards that do not meet the needs children need to succeed in life. The decline I have seen in the past 15 years is incredible. It is one reason I left teaching at the college level to return to teaching at the elementary level.
- No, need to extend the school day. Most schools across our nation offer recess and don't have an extended school day. Alabama should be no different. When kids are allowed recess, they perform better in the classroom, so students and teachers are able to accomplish are often able to cover more material when recess is added to the school day.
- No, the days are already too cramped with stuff. The teachers are tired of paperwork and if the day is extended it should be for teachers work strictly on needed paperwork so throughout the day they can TEACH!!!!
- YES, YES YES. Kids need the time to develop socially by having unstructured time.
- fine with me
- I'm okay with it, though I'd probably prefer fitting it in. I'm fine with reducing the

amount of time spent on traditional education, though!



Beginning July 1, 2018, HB1419/SB273 allows up to 15% of Virginia's required 5.5 hours of daily instructional time to be used for recess (roughly 50 min). [www.morerecessforvirginians.org](http://www.morerecessforvirginians.org)

- I think it would be worth it, but I it would be better to modify the required minutes for academics to allow for recess. If it used to fit, it should fit now.
- I think the school day is already long enough. Time can be managed more effectively.
- Luckily, we have that, but I would totally be for it in our Middle School.
- Seriously!? I think we have enough time to fit in a 15-20-minute recess. We do not need to extend in elementary school. Maybe middle.... but not elementary
- Yes,
- I think the days are already long enough.
- I would be in favor of extending school day to increase recess time, but 20mins is really not enough, minimum should be 40mins.
- It should be more than 30 minutes.
  - Yes. Extending the school day would be worthwhile if the time is used for active unstructured play, or even active structured play such as cooperative games, physical team-based challenges (think ropes course), or outdoor s.t.e.a.m. activities.
  - Yes
- Great idea!

- Yes!
- NO!
- No
- I'd be fine with that
- Yes
- I would be open to extending the day.
- Nope. With the amount of learning that occurs in a day I'd rather have a shorter day. It's too long as it is with or without recess.
- No, it should be worked into the existing school day

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*Virginia created legislation that recognizes a specific amount of free-play recess as instructional time.*

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- It would be worth adding 20 min to the school day to allow breaks for the kids.
- For grade K-2, it is absolutely not needed. My child is learning as he needs to. We have work to do at home, and overall learning mainly comes from home. Everything CAN'T be learned, at the rate that the standards progress, with just the classroom teacher. Home support if vital.

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*Extending the the school day to add an extra recess does not solve the problem.*

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- No
- Extending the the school day to add an extra recess does not solve the problem. Children's attention span is short and to give a small break can get them refocused.
- I have mixed feelings about this. That would mean that the school would be going on from 7:40 in the morning until well after three. With children already getting up at 5:30 in the morning in order to make the bus at 6:20 to 6:40 this would put for an extremely long day for young children. I do however think that in today's school we have steered away from what children do as children and focused more on academics at such a young age. This causes undue stress. I believe adding recess is imperative but not at the expense of a longer day.
- Agreed
- The day is long already, and an extremely early start time makes for a tired afternoon.
- I am ok with extending the school day if needed.

(6) In addition to the requirements in subsection (3), each district school board shall provide at least 100 minutes of supervised, safe, and unstructured free-play recess each week for students in kindergarten through grade 5 so that there are at least 20 consecutive minutes of free-play recess per day. This requirement does not apply to charter schools.

The above became Florida law in 2017. (<http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes>)

- I am ok with that.
- The school day is long enough. If the day was extended, I would expect my child to have at least 15 minutes of unstructured outside play time everyday not dependent on the weather.
- I don't think it's necessary.
- I would rather not extend the school day, especially for younger kids. It is already a long day for them to do work at school. Many teachers are able to accommodate the recess within their schedules because they see the importance for the children.

- I think the amount of time kids are currently in school should be more than enough to accommodate a 20-minute recess time.
- No, that is ridiculous. They get plenty of academic time. And it is proven that daily recess helps learning so it will work out to a more efficient day.
- No
- Yes absolutely
- Our day already includes the 20-minute daily recess and have not heard if that strongly impacts their academic achievements or not.
- I think it benefits the kids to have a break in a moment to run around.
- I totally support that idea
- Fine with it.
- I don't believe that the school day should be extended in order to provide recess.

- No. Children are at school long enough.
- No unless we shorten Friday.
- That would be fine.
- I do not want to extend the school day.
- I am not opposed to that.
- if it's for better school performance I definitely agree
- Sounds good, as long as it can be partially taken away due to behavior or unfinished assignments due to behavior.
- I strongly disagree.
- Since the school day is already a whopping 7 hours long I do not like the idea of extending the school day. Many home school programs finish their curriculum in 4 hours or less.
- It would be fine with me.

- I think the school systems are doing too much testing and work time and don't allow for other activities like arts and music and recess.*

- I am against it. These days, everyone has their kid(s) involved in sports and, when at school, they should be LEARNING. I think it's good for learning to break up the day with short amounts of physical activity but certainly I don't think the school day should be extended for it.
- Since we already get it, I would say it's worth the time.
- Absolutely NOT!!!





- Depends. If it means going EARLIER than 7:40, then NO. There is so, so, so much research that shows children's brains aren't fully functioning at 7:40, and the earlier it gets the worse it'll be, which means the extra time won't be quality learning time anyway. Additionally, they won't get enough sleep since bedtime is already very early if they're to get the recommended hours of sleep per night. If a child is in a sport, dance, or children's program at church, then getting home for HW (reading), dinner, baths, etc....it'll be cutting into the amount of sleep that studies show children (especially the younger ones) should receive. If it means going LATER than 2:40, then YES. However, I know that going later isn't a very viable option because of the shortage/overcrowding of buses and the need to stagger the school's release times to accommodate both the shortage of buses as well as help the traffic flow.
- I would not be opposed
- Not in favor

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*If it means going EARLIER than 7:40, then NO*

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- I am open to the idea. However, once the time is there, what keeps administration from changing and using that time as instruction time?
- Undecided.

- I do not think the school day should be

**BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

**C.18A:35-4.31 Recess period required; exceptions.**

1. a. Beginning with the first full school year following the effective date of this act, a public school district shall provide a daily recess period of at least 20 minutes for students in grades kindergarten through 5. The recess period shall be held outdoors, if feasible. A student shall not be denied recess for any reason, except as a consequence of a violation of the district's code of student conduct, including a harassment, intimidation, or bullying

*Recess law approved August 10, 2018 for the state of New Jersey. (www.njleg.state.nj.us/2018/Bills)*

extended!

- I don't agree with this! I think the school day is long enough!! I think the school systems are doing too much testing and work time and don't allow for other activities like arts and music and recess.
- In the entirety of a school day, 20 minutes is a short amount of time and I believe would have large, positive impacts.
- I for it. & a late start time would be great. there si so much these kids have to do afterschool with extra stuff like dance sports music etc.
- I don't like it. At this age, they have too much structure in school as it is. Give them the breaks during normal school hours.
- My children go to an after-school program since I work. Extending the school day wouldn't affect us and is fine.
- The day is long enough just let recess be LONGER
- I THINK WE COULD ELIMINATE THE 20 MINUTE SNACK AND TV TIME IN THE AFTERNOONS to ensure time for recess
- It seems counterproductive to the positive effects of daily recess.
- I think this would be very good for the students as this gives them time to be kids and to explore physical activity and interactions with peers.
- I think there is time during the school day to include more recess. Other schools we have

## EXTENDING THE SCHOOL DAY

attended allowed children to play on the playground if they arrived at school early.

- They already receive 35 minutes
- Fine.
- That should be a bare minimum. It should be more.
- I would be okay with it.
- No. They can play at home. What a ridiculous question.
- I'd be ok with that.
- I do not believe the school day should be extended to allow recess.
- No! That just adds to the amount of time in school and doesn't address the problem that they sit too long as it is.
- Absolutely do not think the school day should be extended. Families already have less and less quality time together at home by the time parents get home, have dinner, do homework and get ready for bed. Some parents do not even get an hour with their kids after work and school. Extending the school day would only make this worse. Also, our kids are already exhausted from school, standardization and structure as it is. Our kids need to be allowed to be children, not robots.

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*Families already have less and less quality time together at home. By the time parents get home, have dinner, do homework and get ready for bed. Some parents do not even get an hour with their kids after work and school.*

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- Yes!
- the school day dos not need to be extended.
- Why? I feel there is to much pressure on the teachers to teach core curriculum that it trickles down to the students. This then creates a non-optimal learning environment.
- Sure!

- They don't need to be in school any longer than they are. Take away from something else, not add on to the day. That wouldn't help younger kids like I have.
- Not sure about that...
- I favor it.
- Please do
- might be beneficial
- Absolutely support it
- No. the state of Alabama should not allow math and reading blocks to be extended taking away from recess
- I'd support that. We're a military family and this is the first location we've ever been at that doesn't have mandatory recess. Our previous schools have all had a 20-minute break in the morning, as well as 20-30 minutes of free play after lunch. The teacher monitored the morning recess and there were lunch monitors that watched the children during lunch and the playtime outside after lunch (so that teachers didn't have to eat with their students). I believe teachers need and deserve a lunch break away from their class every day.

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*Absolutely not. Shorter instructional periods should be utilized rather than longer school days. Lack of recess also contributes to rebellious attitudes and aggression in the classroom.*

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- My child gets recess now so no
- The day does. It needs to be extended. Our students already attend 8-3. There is plenty of time in the day to give proper play time.
- Absolutely not. Shorter instructional periods should be utilized rather than longer school days. Lack of recess also contributes to rebellious attitudes and aggression in the classroom.
- I would NOT like to extend the school day. Our K-6 already goes 8-3, which is a long day.

## EXTENDING THE SCHOOL DAY

- I think it's a great idea, but you also need to consider adequate facilities: every school needs a full time gym - not a dual use gym/cafeteria
- I don't think it is necessary at our school. The children are given recess time. The quality of the recess can be improved with more adequate play yard, more adequate play equipment, less inside recess in the colder months. Our school is overcrowded, which may be why the recess situation at our school needs modifications.
- The school day is already quite long. Currently, my school provides the 20 min daily recess which I believe is necessary to the student's overall health and education.
- Love this idea
- No
- Yes! I think it is important they get at least 20 minutes. I personally think they should get 30 minutes.
- not a good idea.
- no extension
- I do not believe this is a good idea. I think it needs to be worked into the existing time frame.
- disagree 100% There are too many variables for that to be a solution.
- Terrible idea. The kids are already in school for too late.
- I do not support extending the school day. I think a longer recess should be incorporated into the current school day.
- Yes!!!!!!!!!! At least
- I am all for it!
- The school day should not be extended.
- No. They are trying to teach too much too early.
- I agree social activities are part of their learning
- I would be for it
- not a good idea...
- I think other things could be shortened to allow for more recess
- I have mixed feelings about it. On the one hand I'm all for it, but the additional time should be placed on the afternoon, not the morning. Elementary kids are already getting up for school way too early!
- I believe there is plenty of time to include recess now. Extending the school day just to add a recess, doesn't work for me.
- It is fine the way it is
- No, I do not think this is a good idea. The school day is long enough. Even when they have recess, I don't feel it's always "free play".
- Not necessary. The school already provides enough time for recess.
- I'm not sure extending is the solution as is restructuring.
- Ridiculous.
- Absolutely not. The kids are already in school for a long time -- especially for kindergarten.
- I would LOVE to see the school day extended for more recess. Allowing the children a longer break, or two separate breaks, would give them a better focus time during the classwork.
- I agree
- Great
- I think it's nice to have recess and P.E
- I think if recess were scheduled during the early afternoon it would increase the ability focus on lessons after lunch.
- I would not be in favor of an extended school day. I would absolutely be in favor of the 20 minutes currently used for Leader In Me being used as recess. I find infinitely more value in children interacting freely OUTDOORS than in a prescribed leadership curriculum.

## Additional Comments & Concerns

***“Is there anything else you would like to share with Alabama PTA about recess?”***

This question was asked to allow respondents to bring their own concerns about recess to our attention. It also allows them to speak freely about anything we did not specifically ask about recess.

- 
- I'm glad there is a grassroots effort to make change and advocate for demanding the best practices for improving health and education of our children.
  - It's very important!
  - Recess needs to be in our schools!!!
  - **I know it's a scary step, but the research is so very clear.** Even if we're reducing study time to do it, students will actually perform better in their academics!
  - **Please fight for our kids! Parents and children want this, and the research is clear!**
  - I think back to when I was in school. After a long summer break, I was excited to return to school. My children dread the start of school in August. **I clearly remember free time when I was in elementary school. I remember playing games with my classmates. My children have never experienced this.** In middle school, they are with the same group of students all day long. They have very little opportunity to socialize with students or peers outside of this group. It breaks my heart. I loved school, but school was different then. I don't blame them for being unhappy at school.
  - I am beside myself with the state of education in Alabama. **Research and studies have proven over and over again that children succeed when they are given frequent breaks** and more opportunities for physical activity. Recess is an essential part of a child's social and emotional (and physical!) development and should be given as much weight as academic subjects in school. I cannot believe we are still having this conversation and cannot believe the state of recess here. It's a shame. Administrators know better, and they should be fighting for what is best for our children.
  - My child attends ... [MOBILE COUNTY SCHOOL].
  - It is recommended that kids get 60mins of activity a day. School can account for up to 2/3s of a child's day (when you include transportation to and from). It would be great if the recommended amount of recess could be increased to at least 40min.
  - Please do not use taking away recess as a consequence.
  - **Kids learn by playing** and recess helps get any wiggles out and use energy and improve concentration in the classroom
  - it is absolutely necessary
  - Do not take away recess. Recess allows children to explore and be creative. It allows them to have the social interaction they need. It allows them to expend some energy and with increase rate for overweight children, they need the recess. Federal employees have to work an eight to ten-hour work day, but they're authorized to take a 15 minute smoke break. Even the non-smokers are allowed to take a break. **Isn't recess the same thing as taking a break? It's been proven that more breaks cause workers in the long run to be more effective and productive.** Don't take away or reduce recess.
  - Again, it's not just about the time but the quality of that time.



- **Recess is proven to be beneficial to students' learning. Look at all the studies.** Kids need recess to learn. Kids should also have plenty of breaks during the day to get the wiggles out. Even adults are recommended to take hourly breaks from their desks. Kids need that even more. They also need plenty of time to socialize and just play. With all the screen time, they need fresh air. More recess is better. 30 minutes minimum.
- Unstructured social time is essential for the mind, body, and soul. **It teaches students how to interact with their peers face to face** instead of socializing over technology. However, with the high demand on students academically, there is no time for recess. Look at schools around the world to see what they're doing. Their academic expectations are lower, and students have more unstructured time. This leads to a more successful student.
- It would be nice to shift the elementary school schedule so that the elementary level students come in an hour later than they do now. That way the little ones can get more sleep.
- Last year 6th graders in MADISON CITY had 20 minutes of recess. This year 6th graders have been bumped into middle school and have ZERO minutes of recess. This is not only unfair, but I believe unhealthy!
- Don't decrease it ever. Let them play outside as much as possible even when it's cold.
- None at this time
- I think the schools need more recess and less tests!
- They need to have more structured play I think instead of teachers just sitting on a bench and catching up but to be more interactive during that time. I can remember when our teachers used to make us play games & would play with us. IE four square. Maybe this would slow down some of the Bullying that occurs during recess.
- Recess is a MUST for all ages!!
- recess needs to be mandated. Not given as an option, suggestion, or recommendation. And if weather is not conducive to outside play, there must be a suitable indoor option for physical activity
- It's been proven that children need physical activity to help them learn. My child does not have enough recess during his school day
- PE/gym time should not count. The school needs more options for indoor recess (there is no gymnasium).
- Thank you for looking into this for us. I, and other moms, would be happy to help supervise the playground after lunch if they were granted the chance to go out then.
- Kids need activity to thrive!
- A break in child's day, can further their learning tremendously. It is necessary for good quality learning. KEEP IT!!
- **There are lots of studies that support recess for ALL age students.** Studies also show walking on treadmill while learning help, however, I know it is not going to happen. Frequent breaks, smaller classes, and changing teaching strategies every 10mins or so will help. Brain Rules is a great book.
- I think we should keep it! It really gives them time to get the nervous energy out and time to let information settle in their brains. **As an adult, I need to take breaks between meetings and the same thing applies to children's learning.**
- Extending the day... it would be unstructured daycare for most. Absolutely against that. It is a very bad idea.
- I wish teachers **would stop taking recess away from the students for behavior issues.** Maybe the child needs to get out and be active to help with their behavior.
- **Recess should NOT be used as a reward or punishment.** Too many kids lose recess for behavior, when this is the time for them to blow off steam.

## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- Beyond the physical benefits, **the mental and social benefits of recess cannot be recreated in the classroom.** Even a moderate amount of exercise increases blood flow and oxygen to the brain which enhances a person's ability to concentrate and to process new information. A school day without recess is like eating a meal without key nutrients - it may temporarily satisfy your hunger, but it won't give you what you really need to perform your best.
- **recess is non-negotiable.** Our children deserve unstructured time to express themselves
- I've shared my thoughts in the previous questions. Thank you for conducting this survey. Hopefully good will come of it!
- **Many years we have chosen to homeschool our kids who need more frequent breaks and exercise.** We are thankful for good teachers and leaders who make sure exercise and breaks happen.
- I would like to make sure that recess is always provided in cold weather. And that recess cannot be taken away as punishment. And that the younger grades have more than one recess time. The kids perform better with more access to play.
- I appreciate the stance that Alabama PTA is taking on the importance of recess! Bravo!
- A teacher should always be where he or she can see all the students at all times. I have seen bullying and fights take place out of sight of the teacher.
- playgrounds need to be kept safe and clean to encourage use of the playground. Outdoor classrooms need to be encouraged for use.
- Our oldest child is a senior in high school. She was given much more recess time as an elementary school student than our younger kids have been. The fact that many teachers punish the entire class by taking away recess when one child behaves inexcusably and happens so much more often than it did when our daughter was a student at ... [HUNTSVILLE SCHOOL]
- **I'm a pediatric physical therapist. I treat kids with ADHD and other attention disorders and unstructured movement breaks are vital and beneficial for brain development and social development for all kids.**
- My daughter has talked and written about the importance of recess or activities time and what it can do positively. She started in 5th grade noticed there was not much at school for it.
- Please do not penalize children at PE or recess for behavior issues or making up work.
- NO, I'm pleased.
- I believe that children should have more unstructured interaction time.
- Our school has a 40-degree policy. Meaning that if the temperature is below 40 degrees F, students are not allowed to have outdoor recess. I find this practice to be ridiculous. We live in an area where nearly all students can afford appropriate clothing for temperatures down to at least 32 degrees F. There is also an overflowing lost and found coat rack that could be used if children needed to borrow a coat. Please let our children outside, even if it is cold. Doing an education piece on the fact that cold temperatures don't cause children to become sick would be most beneficial.