

## The Brain Must Be Fed

Much more of the brain is activated during physical activity than when doing seatwork. That's because movement delivers oxygen, water, and glucose ("brain food"). This optimizes the brain's performance.

Numerous studies have shown that students who are physically active improve their academic performance, achieve higher test scores, and demonstrate a better attitude toward school.

## Our Children's Health Is at Risk

One in 6 American kids is obese, a condition that puts them at risk for heart disease, stroke, and many other conditions. Children burn the most calories outdoors. But even children who have no weight issues require physical activity to sustain optimal health. The outdoors is the best place for children to practice emerging physical skills and to experience the joy of movement, both of which increase the odds that they'll become lifelong movers and healthy adults. Additionally, unstructured play reduces stress, which is intensifying among today's young children.

## Children Must Learn to Be Social

Recess may be the only time during the day when children have an opportunity to experience socialization and real communication. Without such opportunities, how will children learn to live and work together as adults? When and where will they have learned the team-building skills American corporations see as a priority for their young employees?

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Why Recess Matters



## Recess Isn't a Frill

Amid the clamor for more “instructional time” and accountability, recess these days is often seen as a frill. As a result, it's estimated that 40% of U.S. elementary schools have eliminated recess from the children's day.

Eliminating or reducing recess might make sense if:

- standards and tests were all that mattered in a child's education,
- children consisted of heads only, and
- the research – and there's much of it – didn't confirm that children can't afford not to have recess.

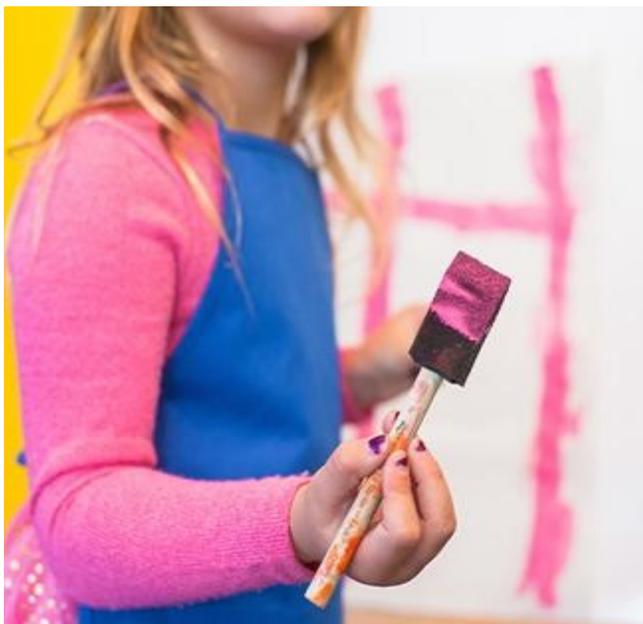
I offer here contradictions to the belief that recess is inconsequential.

## Everyone Benefits from a Break

As far back as 1885 and 1901, the research is quite clear: both children and adults learn better and more quickly when their efforts are distributed (breaks are included) than when concentrated (work is conducted in longer periods). More recently, the novelty-arousal theory suggests that people function better with a change of pace.

Because young children don't process most information as effectively as older children they can especially benefit from breaks.

Finland has put the research to use. Their schools provide the children with a 15-minute break after every 45 minutes of instruction – and their schools are doing so well that they attract educators from all over the world who want to learn from them.



*“Physical activity is Miracle-Gro for the brain.”*

~ Professor & Author Dr. John Ratey

## Recess Increases On-Task Time

The research of Dr. Olga Jarrett and her colleagues determined that children became more on task and less fidgety on days when they had recess. Sixty percent of the children, including those suffering from attention deficit disorder, worked more and/or fidgeted less on recess days.

Dr. Jarrett's work demonstrated that a 15-minute recess resulted in the children being 5% more on task and 9% less fidgety, which translated into 20 minutes *saved* during the day. So, the argument that there's no time for recess doesn't hold.

## Children Need Outside Light

The outside light stimulates the pineal gland, which helps regulate our biological clock, is vital to the immune system, and makes us feel better. Outside light triggers the synthesis of Vitamin D (lacking in many these days). Studies show that it also increases academic learning and productivity.