



# RECESS BEFORE LUNCH

A change to the traditional lunch schedule can lead to more nutritional intake, less food waste, better behavior and increased learning in the classroom.

## *Health Benefits*

With the traditional lunch-before-recess model, students rush through lunch in order to get to the playground. This causes them to eat less of their food and become hungry later. It also leads to preventable nurse visits for headaches and stomachaches.

With recess before lunch, nutritional and calorie intake increase because kids have a larger appetite and are not rushed. According to a study of elementary schools in Utah, students threw away less food and ate more fruits and vegetables with RBL.



## *Improved Discipline and Learning*

Recess before Lunch is a better setup for student behavior throughout the day. When recess ends, students may go to class with “excess energy and freshly disputed playground problems”, which reduces instruction time.

In a pilot study in Hawaii, there was a significant decrease in discipline referrals after RBL. Teachers reported that students returned to class more settled and ready to learn, and they stayed more focused throughout the afternoon.

## Orange County School Districts Participating in RBL:

Buena Park, Capistrano Unified, Centralia, Fountain Valley, Fullerton School District, Irvine Unified School District, Newport-Mesa Unified, Santa Ana Unified, Placentia-Yorba Linda Unified

## Eastshore Elementary School (Irvine)

According to Ms. Bertone, the beauty of RBL is that kids were actually eating their lunch, while not losing any playing time. Food waste decreased, and supervisors were supportive because the kids were less rambunctious.

## Monroe Elementary (Santa Ana)

After Monroe switched to RBL, Principal Rios noticed that kids were hungry because they had exercised, so they made full use of their eating time. The staff was supportive, especially since teachers dismissed kids to play instead of waiting in line with them.

## San Juan Elementary (Capistrano)

When students played after eating, the school had a lot of kids in the nurses' office. With RBL, they found that students ate better after playing. There were no complaints about the change.



### Pendleton Elementary (Buena Park)

The school implemented the program because “there were issues at lunch with kids taking two bites of their food and heading to recess.”

There was resistance at first because of lost play time and dirty hands. With time, the school started getting buy in and stuck to it. Teachers liked RBL because there used to be a higher rate of problems with students getting trouble during the lining up process, but the teachers do not have to deal with the process of lining up for lunch anymore.

An unexpected benefit is that kids are talking to each other more during their meals.

#### CONTACT US:

1505 E 17<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 219  
Santa Ana, CA 92705  
714-564-9525



## *Potential Barriers and Solutions*

**Supervision:** A few supervisors would be directing the students to get in line for lunch. If the number of lunch aides is limited, more staff can be on site to supervise the process.

**Hand-washing:** As the bells ring for students to go to lunch, they can be led to hand-washing stations to wash their hands before lining up. Hand wipes or hand sanitizers can also be used.

**Schedule Change:** Schools can start with one or two grades to pilot. With staff communication and organization, the schedule change is not a hassle and would only benefit the students.

## *Sample Processes*

The bell rings and students go to recess. After recess, there are various bells for students to begin lining up. Students line up in 3 to 4 lines in a designated spot. From there, they walk to the cafeteria, eat lunch, and at the end of lunch, teachers pick up their students from the cafeteria. - **Pendleton Elementary, Buena Park Elementary School District.**

The teachers walk their students to the playground, where there are supervisors. When it is time for lunch, the supervisors walk students to the lunch area. The school has staggered lunch periods for each grade. - **San Juan Elementary, Capistrano Unified School District.**

For free RBL Technical Assistance Contact

OC Food Access Coalition

at 714.564.9525

or [info@ocfoodaccess.org](mailto:info@ocfoodaccess.org)

Further information can be found at:

<http://foodpsychology.cornell.edu/discoveries/recess-swap>

<http://peacefulplaygrounds.com/recess-before-lunch/>

[http://cjhp.fullerton.edu/Volume3\\_2005/Issue4-Hawaii/01-07-tanaka.pdf](http://cjhp.fullerton.edu/Volume3_2005/Issue4-Hawaii/01-07-tanaka.pdf)

<http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2015/01/a-more-nutritious-school-day-through-recess/384526/>

<http://www.nea.org/home/43158.htm>