

RECESS BEFORE LUNCH:

PROGRAMMING AND IMPLEMENTATION



What is Recess Before Lunch?

- A shift from the traditional Eat-Before-Play lunch scheduling, students would play before they eat lunch. a practice that aims to improve students' health and behavior by, as its name implies, having children play first and eat lunch afterward
- Recess Before Lunch can improve students' health as well as improve behavior and increase uninterrupted instruction time.

Why schools switched to RBL

“There were issues at lunch with kids taking two bites of their food and heading to recess so we thought it would be good to try and implement this program.”

– Principal Jeffrey, Pendleton Elementary

“Students rushed to play and always threw food away because they were more interested in playing than eating.”

– Principal Rios, Monroe Elementary, Santa Ana

“Students would go out to play on a full stomach and we would have a lot of children in the nurses’ office.”

– Principal Pule, San Juan Elementary, Capistrano

The Benefits of Recess Before Lunch

Nutritional Intake

- Students eat more Fruits and Vegetables
- Drink More Milk
- Waste Less Food

Social Benefits

- Behavior
 - Playground
 - Lunchroom
 - Classroom
- Less Visits to the Nurses Station



Nutritional Intake

- NSLP provides nutritional lunches by requiring a fruit and vegetable side. Even though the food is provided to kids, much of it is left uneaten.
 - With RBL, students eat more because they do not feel rushed and have a larger appetite after playing.
- With Recess Before Lunch, students consume:
 - 54% more fruits and vegetables
 - 8% more calories
 - 35% more calcium
 - 13% more vitamin A

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

Classroom Behavior and Learning

- When recess ends, students may go back to class with “excess energy and freshly disputed playground problems”.
 - Instruction time is lost in the transition from the playground to the classroom.
 - RBL is a better setup for student behavior in the afternoon.
- Significant decrease in discipline referrals after RBL in Hawaii pilot study
- Teachers reported that students returned to class more settled and ready to focus.
 - Improvement in learning and academic performance
 - Less students with headaches and stomachaches in the afternoon

Potential Concerns and Barriers

- **Supervision**

A few supervisors would be directing the students to line up for lunch. If the number of lunch aids is limited, more staff can be on site to supervise the process.

- **Hand Washing**

As the bell rings for students to go to lunch, they can be led to hand washing stations to wash their hands before lining up. Hand wipes can alternatively be used.

- **Schedule Change**

By communicating effectively with school staff and lunch supervisors, the schedule change can be made hassle-free and would only be beneficial for students.

- **Transition from Recess to Lunch**

Having a staggered lunch schedule would facilitate a smooth transition, with the kids moving from recess to lunch at different times.

Additional Comments from Principals

- Teachers liked Recess Before Lunch because they could dismiss the kids directly to the playground rather than lining up with them in the cafeteria.
- Monroe Elementary
- “There was resistance in the beginning, but we fought against this resistance and through time, we started getting buy in.” – Pendleton Elementary
- There were no complaints, and the staff felt that it was better for the students.
– San Juan Elementary
- “Kids did not lose any playing time, and the beauty of it is that they are actually eating their lunch!” - Eastshore Elementary

Thank You