




### Exploring the Benefits and Challenges to Scheduling Recess Before Lunch in Elementary Schools



opi.mt.gov

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### Today's Webinar Speaker



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### What is Recess Before Lunch?

Kids Play,  
And Then Eat!



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**55 MILLION SCHOOL KIDS**

Each one of us can help improve the eating and activity habits of the 55 MILLION school kids in this country and, in the process, improve their health so they can succeed in the classroom.

**GOOD FOOD + ACTIVE BODIES = KIDS EQUIPPED FOR SUCCESS!**

Kids who attend "healthy" schools have fewer absences, higher academic achievement and self-esteem and are more likely to graduate from high school.

**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY SUPPORTS ACHIEVEMENT**  
Even moderate exercise, like walking, increases brain activity.

**KIDS WHO EAT WELL, LEARN BETTER**  
Students who eat school breakfast have been shown, on average, to attend 1.6 more days of school per year and score 17.5% higher on standardized math tests.

**HEALTHIER PRACTICES CAN INCREASE SCHOOLS' BOTTOM LINES**  
Schools can get a financial boost by offering more nutritious meals. A healthy student will buy and eat healthier foods and beverages.

**EVERY KID HEALTHY**

Visit [ActionForHealthyKids.org](http://ActionForHealthyKids.org) where you can find **The Learning Connector: What You Need to Know to Succeed Your Kids Are Healthy and Ready to Learn** and to order a **Healthy Plate**. You'll have access to our free programs, volunteer opportunities and school grants.

Logos: Action for Healthy Kids, Northwestern Mutual Foundation

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**Today's Lesson: Healthy Students are Better Students**

Healthy Eating + Physical Activity = Improved Academic Performance

Students who eat breakfast have better attention and memory.

Only **38%** of all teens eat breakfast everyday.

**Good Job!**

After just **20 minutes** of physical activity, brain activity improves.

**Needs Improvement!**

Only **25%** of high school students are active for the recommended 60 minutes each day.

**What is the right answer?**

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**Why Montana Explored Recess Before Lunch?**

1. Nutrition and physical activity affects student academic performance and behavior
2. Mealtime is an important part of the school day for children- both socially and from a health perspective.
3. Plate waste in school lunch a concern.
4. Limited research on recess before lunch scheduling.
5. Childhood obesity a national concern.

Illustrations: Girl with lunch tray, Boy playing sports.

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## School Wellness Programs Pay Off in Student Success

**School wellness policies** ensure school environments help students learn and practice healthy habit skills and are exposed to brain-boosting, academic supports. These supports can be easy access to nutrient-rich foods and beverages, physical activities, and wellness strategies such as recess before lunch scheduling.

[http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/healthy/wellnesspolicy\\_requirements.html](http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/healthy/wellnesspolicy_requirements.html)

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## Big Picture Message

- **School Meals Serve Education Each Day**  
Children must be well nourished to be ready to learn and behave well during the school day.
- **Impact on Human Well Being**  
How school meals are designed will affect not only student food consumption levels but impact the development of healthy eating habits and a student's relationship with food.

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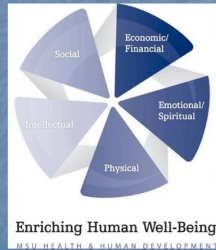
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## Recess Before Lunch links to Enriching Human Well Being

- Improves consumption of healthy foods
- Allows for better social interaction and relaxed eating environment
- Is a cost neutral step and may decrease food costs
- Supports development of healthy eating habits



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### Our Research... two stages

- 2002-03 pilot project with four school sites
- 2008 on-line principal survey



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### Project Design of Pilot Project

**Purpose:**

- To determine change in food waste
- To determine acceptance and effectiveness as perceived from school staff and students

**Design:**

- 4 elementary schools in Montana (2- grades K-2; 1 grades K-8; 1-grades 5-8)
- Spring 2002 through Spring 2003
- Three phases- in each phase conducted plate waste study, student focus group, staff surveys

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### Project Design...Plate Waste

- Data is based on three of the four schools.
- The menu and portion size was consistent within each school throughout the 3 phases
- Food waste collected included food from school nutrition program meals, foods brought from home or other school venues
- The total amount of food and beverage waste was measured in pounds and ounces.
- Average student waste was calculated by total waste by total daily attendance.
- Plate waste days were unannounced to students and staff.

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### 3 Phases of Data Collection

- **Phase 1:** conducted Spring 2002, PRIOR to the school implementing RBL
- **Phase 2:** conducted Fall 2002, after the initial implementation of RBL
- **Phase 3:** conducted Spring 2003, after the RBL policy had been in use for one year.

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### Average Food Waste Per Student

Phase	Average Food Waste (ounces)
Phase 1, Spring 2002	3.38
Phase 2, Fall 2002	2.62
Phase 3, Spring 2003	3.18

Implications: This study demonstrates the decrease in food waste per student as a result of implementing a Recess Before Lunch policy.

Source: Montana Office of Public Instruction School Nutrition Programs Recess Before Lunch Pilot Study, data from 3 Montana schools, April 2002-May 2003.

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### Average Beverage Waste Per Student

Phase	Average Beverage Waste (ounces)
Phase 1, Spring 2002	1.29
Phase 2, Fall 2002	0.71
Phase 3, Spring 2003	0.99

Implications: This study demonstrates the decrease in beverage waste per student as a result of implementing a Recess Before Lunch policy.

Source: Montana Office of Public Instruction School Nutrition Programs Recess Before Lunch Pilot Study, data from 3 Montana schools, April 2002-May 2003.

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### Results... Student Focus Groups and Staff Surveys/Comments

- Students accepted the change
- Improvements in cafeteria atmosphere
- Dramatic improvement in discipline problems on the playground and classroom.
- Children returning to classroom more settled, calmer and ready to learn.
- Gain in teaching time reported by teachers in morning and afternoon.

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### Results... Challenges

- Scheduling
- Staff buy-in and involvement
- Hand washing
- Meal payment plan
- Handling winter clothing and cold lunch storage

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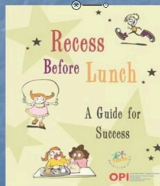
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### Important Resource...

Recess Before Lunch: A Guide for Success  
<http://www.opi.mt.gov/schoolfood/recessBL.html>



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## Phase 2 of our research..... 2008 Survey of Principals

### Purpose:

- To gain information to further provide technical assistance to MT schools on RBL
- To evaluate the long-term outcomes of RBL
- To collect data on the rates of RBL and implementation factors in MT schools
- To reconfirm the benefits of RBL as a school wellness strategy with schools in MT and the nation

### Design:

- Statewide on-line survey of principals in K-8 public and private schools in Montana

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## Project Design...Survey

### Survey Design and Questions:

- Survey questions were organized in a branching structure for the three targeted groups of administrators which included the following:
  - Administrators currently using a RBL schedule
  - Administrators who used a RBL schedule in the past but not currently using it.
  - Administrators that have never used a RBL schedule
- Other questions included: school enrollment size and grade levels served; length of time utilizing RBL, grade levels involved in RBL, observed benefits, challenges and facilitative factors,.
- Open ended questions asked for feedback from stakeholders and any advice for other principals on RBL

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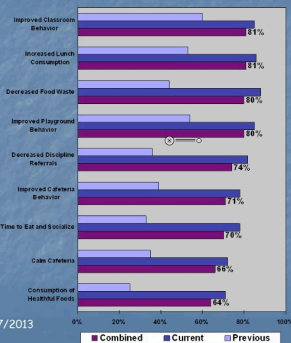
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## Benefits Reported by Principals




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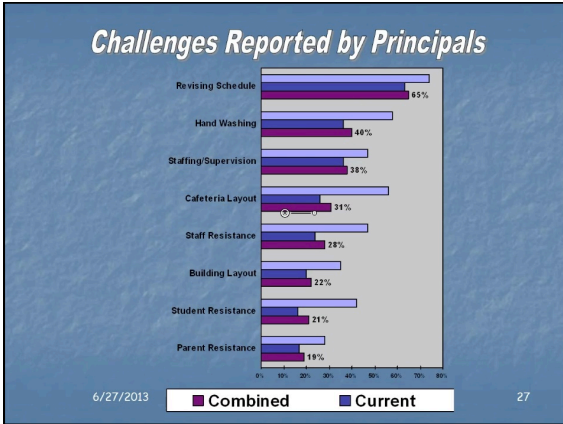
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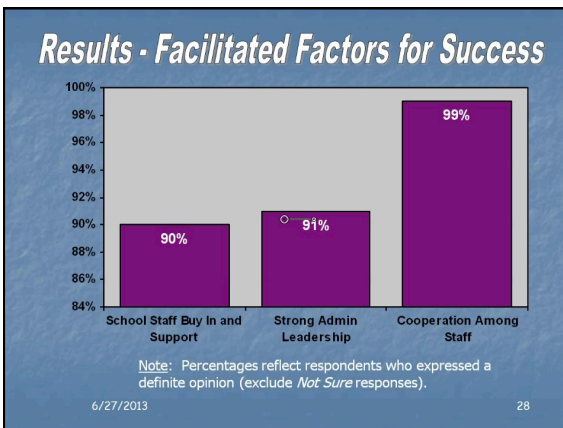
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### Suggestions for Successful RBL Implementation

- **Plan ahead**; obtain buy in and support from school staff.
- **Involve students**, parents, and school staff in planning efforts.
- **Start with a limited pilot program or trial period** – monitor and adjust as needed.

Be prepared to **address challenges** before implementing RBL.

- Have a plan to address:
  1. hand washing
  2. scheduling of lunch times and eating spaces
  3. supervision issues
  4. cafeteria, playground and hallway flow patterns

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**Important Resource...**  
**2008 Survey Final Report**

Challenges, Benefits and Essential Factors for Success in Implementing a Recess Before Lunch Schedule in Montana Elementary Schools

<http://www.opi.mt.gov/pdf/SchoolFood/RBL/08RBLSurveySumRpt.pdf>

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*Scheduling Recess Before Lunch: Exploring the Benefits and Challenges in Montana Schools* Peer Journal Article

■ The Journal of Child Nutrition and Management: A Publication of the School Nutrition Association

■ Volume 24, Issue 2, Fall 2010, Bark, Stenberg, Sutherland, Hayes

<http://www.schoolnutrition.org/Content.aspx?id=14762>

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**Recess Before Lunch:  
Right for So Many Reasons**

*"If you eat lunch before recess, I get a tummy ache" ... MT student*



*"Children are settled down and ready to learn when they return to the classroom" ... MT teacher*

*We are seeing less food waste, better behavior on the playground and in afternoon classes" ... MT principal*

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**Areas of Future Efforts & Research**

**Training and Technical Assistance:**

- Publish research in peer reviewed journal and articles in school publications
- Development of RBL mentor network
- Develop additional hand washing and scheduling tools to guide

**Research:**

- Relationship between amount of time students have to eat and the scheduling of recess before or after lunch
- The impact of a recess before lunch schedule on the amount of physical activity minutes per day

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**Does Your Lunch Schedule allow Enough Time for Children to Eat and Enjoy Their Meal?**

**Strive for 30 minute lunch periods (over 20 minutes) if you want kids to waste less food, eat a more nutritious lunch and be more ready to learn in the afternoon.**

<http://www.peacefulplaygrounds.com/pdf/insight24-meal-and-recess-schedules.pdf>

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**Set up a Comfortable Cafeteria**

To ensure pleasant and positive mealtime experiences in your lunchroom

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To ensure children are ready to learn in the afternoon classes

<http://www.opi.mt.gov/pleasantmealtimes>

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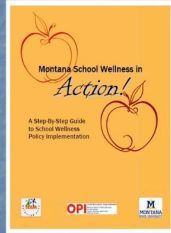
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### Recess Before Lunch is a School Wellness Policy Strategy

- Increased awareness and commitment to nutrition and student wellbeing



<http://www.opi.mt.gov/Pdf/SchoolFood/WellnessImpGuide.pdf>

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### Questions?

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