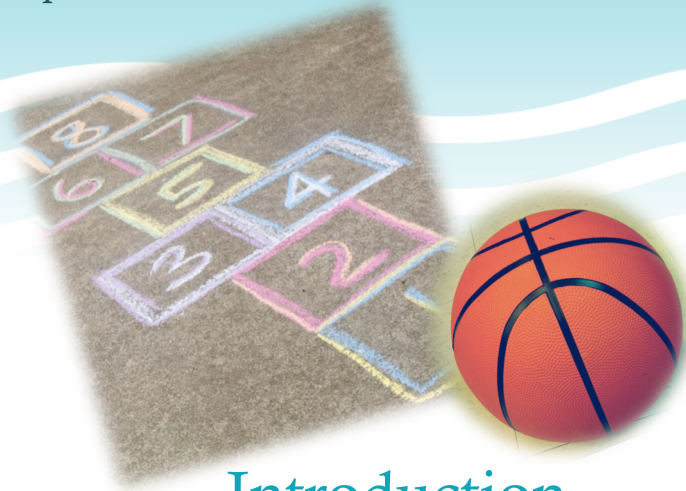


NHPS Recess Guide

A Comprehensive Guide to Effective Recess Implementation

September 2013

Recess is a non-instructional activity during the school day that provides students the opportunity to engage in physical activity and activities that promote social development. Recess may include free play and structured activities but may not be instructional in nature.



Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to aide school committees in the development and implementation of a successful recess program. The benefits of recess for children have been widely reported. Recess improves students' physical, mental, and emotional health and enhances their learning opportunities. With these goals in mind, the NHPS Recess Task Force developed this guide.

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NHPS Recess Policy

In addition to physical education classroom time, the NHBOE requires principals to provide PreK-6 students with at least 20 minutes a day of supervised recess (not including transitions) to encourage physical activity and socialization.

- Outdoor free play is encouraged regardless of temperature so long as weather conditions are appropriate. In the event outdoor play is not possible, schools will provide physical activity indoors.
- Schools and parent groups will work together to provide appropriate space and equipment for recess use.
- Recess should be in addition to physical education class time and not be a substitute for physical education.
- School staff shall not withhold participation in recess from students for disciplinary reasons or cancel recess to make up for missed instructional time.
- Recess plans may be modified for shortened school days
- Schools should utilize the NHBOE Recess Guide for best practices of recess implementation.
- Schools are encouraged to provide recess for grade 7-8 students.

The Importance of Recess

Multiple studies on recess found one or more positive associations between recess and indicators of cognition, emotion, and academic behaviors; additionally, relevant studies indicate a positive effect on children's attention, concentration, on-task classroom behavior, and/or attitude toward school.

The White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity Report to the President specifically recommends that elementary students have regular recess.



Free Play

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, free, unstructured play is essential for keeping children healthy, and for helping them reach important social, emotional, and cognitive development milestones.

Unstructured play also helps kids manage stress and become resilient.

Overview

Benefits

The benefits of recess for children have been widely reported. Recess improves students' physical, mental, and emotional health and enhances their learning opportunities.

Recess has positive social and cognitive impacts on students; studies indicate that:

- Play can improve language, literacy, and problem solving skills.
- Exercise causes changes in the brain that enhance the ability to pay attention in class.
- Recess stimulates brain development, decreases obesity, and fosters social skills.
- Recess does not have a negative impact on student outcomes.
- Recess boosts cognitive function and helps children adjust to school.

Activities

During recess, students can participate in structured activities, free play, sports activities, and/or relatively simple games (i.e., activities that are easy to play, have few and simple rules, require little or no equipment). Recess can also include activity/game stations that are set up prior to recess time for students to choose from upon entering the recess space.

Schools should aim to provide students with a recess that not only promotes physical development but social and emotional development as well. When structuring recess, schools should consider activities that will encourage good behavior (e.g. good sportsmanship) and build important skills (e.g., problem solving, team work etc.).

Student Participation

Students whose parents or guardians provide a written objection to participation in certain programming, such as recess, will not be required to participate in such programming. Additionally, students with a written objection will not be suspended or expelled for not participating in any such programming. All other students (without a written objection) will be required to participate.

If a parent/guardian provides a timely written objection to participation in recess, the school should work with the student's parent/guardian to determine an alternative activity for the student to participate in during recess time.

Please note that participation in recess should NOT be withheld as a punishment. Recess should be a part of every student's daily schedule, unless his or her parent/guardian asks for his/her removal.

Equipment and Resources

When selecting playground equipment, schools should consider the age range of children who will be using the equipment. Recess equipment and playgrounds should encourage children to develop new skills and should be appropriate for their sizes, abilities, and developmental levels.

Examples of suggested equipment include:

<p>OUTDOOR PLAY</p> <p>Hula hoops Rubber playground balls Flying discs/Frisbees Soccer balls Portable soccer goals Soft footballs Basketballs Portable basketball hoop Game timer Double-Dutch ropes (30 ft.) Jump ropes</p>	<p>INDOOR PLAY</p> <p>Hopscotch mat Fitness dice Jump rope exercise spots Poly fit spots Foam balls Board games Fitness/dance CDs CD player Fitness Videos/DVDs Yoga mats Yoga cards or videos</p>	<p>MARKING</p> <p>Game Cones Sidewalk Chalk Spot Markers</p> <p>STORAGE/ MAINTENANCE</p> <p>Mesh Bags Plastic Bins Inflator</p>	<p>SUPERVISOR</p> <p>Safety vests Clip boards Plastic whistles</p> <p>SAFETY</p> <p>Walkie-talkies First aid kit Ice packs</p>
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Schools that have previously implemented recess have shared a number of creative strategies related to recess equipment and space, including:

- Providing each classroom with a mesh bag filled with grade-appropriate equipment for recess
- Painting or taping four square courts and hopscotch squares on the pavement of the school grounds to facilitate organized games
- Utilizing recorded lessons designed to engage students in interactive moderate to vigorous activity in the classroom setting

Prohibited equipment includes trampolines, inflatable equipment, swinging gates, climbing ropes that are not secure at both ends, heavy metal swings, multiple occupancy swings, rope swings, and swinging dual exercise rings and trapeze bars.

Equipment maintenance is extremely important in preventing injuries on the playground. School staff should survey equipment on a regular basis to ensure that it is free of dangerous hardware. Equipment should also be free of head entrapments; spaces should measure less than 3 1/2 inches and more than 9 inches.

Age-Appropriate Recess Ideas

Recess Ideas!!!	PreK-2	3-5	6-8
Outside Unstructured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hula Hoops • “Free Play” on playground • Sidewalk Chalk 	Recess Bag: Basketball, football, jump ropes, chalk, soccer balls, baseball etc.	Recess Bag: Basketball, football, jump ropes, chalk, soccer balls, baseball etc.
Inside Unstructured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yoga Cards • Rhythm Sticks • Instruments • Play-Doh 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing Cards • Board games • Approved educational websites (IPAD) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing Cards • Board Games • Approved educational websites (IPAD)
Outside Structured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four Squares • Bubbles • Hop-Scotch • Red light/Green Light 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kickball Tournament • Flag Football • Track Tournaments (relay races) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kickball Tournament • Flag Football • Track Tournaments (relay races)
Inside Structured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fitness/Dance Videos • Fox and the Rabbit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silent Ball • Four Corners • Simon Says 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board games • Walking and Talking Club

Other ideas/resources:

- ABC Fitness: An entire curriculum that provides grade appropriate activities for K-5. This is a FREE program. The idea behind it is to have “Activity Burst” throughout the day.

<http://www.davidkatzmd.com/docs/ABCManual.pdf>

- 2 Go Indoor Games-each package comes with a floor mat as well as table cards that include games such as hopscotch, bean bag toss, alphabet grid, number grid and target practice.

www.peacefulplaygrounds.com

- Take 10! Classroom-based fitness program for grades K-5 centered on getting kids moving for at least ten minutes a day.

<http://www.take10.net/>

Integrating Recess into the Student Day

Scheduling

Recess must be at least 20 minutes in length. The requirement of at least 20 minutes daily for recess aligns with guidance from the National Association for Sport and Physical Education.

New Haven Public Schools strongly recommends that recess occur immediately before lunch. Studies, such as the Montana Office of Public Instruction School Nutrition Programs pilot program, indicate that recess before lunch can result in the following benefits:

- Less wasted food by students
- Increased nutrient intake (increased consumption of milk and food)
- Students less inclined to rush to finish their lunch
- Improved student behavior on the playground, in the cafeteria, and in the classroom
- Students who are calmer and more focused upon returning to the classroom

For more information on the benefits of recess before lunch, please visit:

- [www.opi.state.mt.us/school food/recessBL.html](http://www.opi.state.mt.us/school%20food/recessBL.html)
- www.nutritionexplorations.org/pdf/sfs/scheduling_recess.pdf
- www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin/admin389.shtml

Space

Ideally, recess should take place outdoors on school grounds as weather, space, and safety permit. In all cases, the school administration must consider the safety of children during recess. Other factors in determining outdoor space for recess include the availability of usable open space on school grounds and the suitability of that space for recess activities. Schools can utilize playgrounds as well as pavement and grass spaces enclosed by a fence on school grounds. If applicable, schools may also be able to utilize adjoining park space and facilities.

Although the objective should be to hold recess outdoors, plans must be made for conducting recess indoors when the exterior space is not available due to outdoor facilities, weather, or safety constraints. Indoor recess can take place in various spaces within the school, including a school's gymnasium, multi-purpose room, and classroom.

Note on facilitating indoor recess

To best facilitate indoor recess:

- Use a rotating schedule to share gymnasium space.
- Provide staff with audiovisual equipment and dance, yoga, or other children's exercise videos.
- Provide staff with training on facilitating recess indoors and ideas for safe indoor recess activities.

Inclement weather

Children should be provided with the opportunity to play outside whenever possible. However, a school's plan for recess should provide contingencies for inclement weather. Determining when recess can take place outdoors is the responsibility of the principal. When making this determination, principals should not only consider the temperature (low temperatures do not have to be a barrier to outdoor recess, provided that students are appropriately dressed) but other factors as well, including the wind chill, ice on the ground, etc.

If temperatures are extremely low, especially if there are strong winds, snow, rain and/or sleet, principals should use discretion and decide whether students should be allowed to exit the building. Principals and staff should be reminded that there is high potential for frostbite when extreme weather conditions are accompanied by wind chill. Principals should also ensure that students are prepared to properly dress for outdoor play during the winter (jackets, gloves, hats, etc.).

Principals should also exercise discretion when the temperatures are particularly high. When the forecast indicates that the weather will be particularly warm, principals should remind students to hydrate properly, wear lightweight, light-colored clothing, and wear sunscreen. Principals should also communicate these reminders to the students' parents. Shaded areas can also be designated as cooling spots.

High ozone days

High ozone days are very dangerous; all should proceed with caution on these days. These tend to be hot, muggy days. There are a number of health impacts to the general public, such as decrease in lung function and inflammation of airways with the symptoms of coughing, throat irritation, chest tightness, wheezing, shortness of breathe, and pain and burning in the chest when taking a deep breath. People with asthma are known to be especially susceptible to the effects of ozone exposure. Because the prevalence of asthma in children is particularly high and because children are generally at risk of higher exposures, they may be disproportionately affected by ozone exposure. Their chances of an asthma attack increase drastically on high ozone days. Go to <http://www.wtnh.com/weather> to learn more about the air quality for the day. Principals should exercise caution on high ozone days.

Student Safety

Safety

Ensuring the safety of students during recess is the top priority of recess supervision. Schools should be aware of external neighborhood issues, and the time and location of recess should be taken into consideration. A school's plan for recess should include contingencies for outside safety issues that could adversely affect the school's ability to safely implement outdoor recess.

Prior to recess, the grounds for recess activity should be surveyed for dangerous wastes, such as glass, evidence of alcohol use, evidence of substance use, litter, sharp objects, etc. Any dangerous wastes should be properly (using universal precautions) removed before the children enter the recess space. Supervisors should also look for tripping hazards, such as tree stumps, exposed concrete footings, missing rubber tiles, and playground barriers. Tripping hazards should be reported to administrators immediately. Recess supervisors and students should also be made aware of potential tripping hazards immediately.

Once recess begins, recess supervisors must position themselves around the entire recess space and be visible to children at all times. Children should not be allowed to re-enter the building during recess, unless directed by an administrator or a supervisor. Children should not retrieve balls or equipment that exit the recess space.

For additional information, see the Safe Kids Connecticut "Playground Safety" sheet in the Appendix.

Injury prevention

The American Academy of Pediatrics and the Injury Prevention and Research Center at Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago both provide various guidelines to ensure student safety and injury prevention on the playground. Guidelines include:

- Students should not wear backpacks or other bags during recess.
- Students should leave objects such as pencils, pens, and markers in the classroom.
- Shoelaces should be tied at all times.
- Equipment should be used only for the purpose it was designed.
- Students should be encouraged to play actively without pushing, shoving, punching, pulling, or hitting others.
- Students must not wear bicycle helmets while playing on equipment, as their head could become entrapped in the equipment.
- Avoid loose clothing or clothing with strings, as that can result in strangulation on playground equipment. Watch for mitten strings and hoods.
- Check slides and swing seats, especially metal ones, on hot days to ensure that students won't get burned on equipment.
- Large groups of students should not march through play areas.

- Jump ropes should be used only for jumping (not for playing tug-of-war or other games).
- Only softballs should be permitted on the playground during recess.
- Snowballs are not allowed.
- Students must not climb trees.
- Students must stay away from dangerous areas, such as drains, trash receptacles, train tracks, streets, and bodies of water.
- Contact sports are not allowed.
- Students on swings must sit in an upright position, and not stand up, twirl or jump off while a swing is in motion.
- Students should not run in front or in back of the swings.
- Students must go down slides one at a time, sitting in an upright position, and not loiter at the top or bottom; they must not climb up or down the slide.

Blood-borne pathogens

Supervisors and students should avoid and be aware of any contact or exposure to blood-borne pathogens during recess. Blood-borne pathogens, such as bacteria and viruses, are present in blood and body fluids and can cause disease in people. These pathogens include, but are not limited to, hepatitis B virus (HBV), hepatitis C virus (HCV), and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the virus that causes AIDS. If a child bleeds or vomits during recess, supervisors should not handle either of those bodily fluids and should ensure other students are not exposed to them.

In the event of exposure to a blood-borne pathogen, the following steps should be followed:

- Wash needlesticks, cuts, and all skin exposures with soap and water.
- Flush nose or mouth with water.
- Irrigate eyes with clean water, saline, or sterile wash.
- If the source of the exposure is a student, and cannot be managed by basic first aid, call 911 immediately then contact the student's parent/guardian. If the medical emergency can be managed by basic first aid, contact parent/guardian and recommend follow up with a healthcare provider.
- Contact a member of the custodial team to dispose of waste.
- In the event that an employee gets injured, follow appropriate NHPS protocol.
- Complete an Accident Report for any cases of blood-borne pathogen exposure.

Supervision

Effective supervision

The key to safety during recess is effective and active supervision. Supervision designees should monitor students at all times during recess. Supervisors should monitor recess for safe play and must remain alert and aware throughout their assigned recess periods. Schools should ensure that all those who provide supervision during recess receive recess supervision training on how to deal with incidents that may occur during recess time, such as injuries (minor and severe), altercations between students, visitors lingering on school grounds during recess, etc. Schools should have processes in place for handling recess incidents, and those processes must be communicated to school staff members and individuals that provide supervision.

Administrators and school teams should work with appropriate supervision staff and volunteers to establish:

- A recess schedule
- Roles and responsibilities of teachers, educational support personnel, and volunteer recess supervisors
- A map that indicates recess areas which require supervision
- Assigned supervisory areas
- Age-appropriate recess activities for primary, intermediate and upper grade students
- Differentiated outdoor space for different types of activities (e.g., basketball section, double-dutch section, etc.)
- Procedures for how to handle and/or refer injuries, resolve conflicts, etc.
- Procedures for entry/dismissal, restroom use, etc.

Potential staff

Schools can utilize a number of different individuals to supervise recess. Specifically, schools can utilize their current school staff members as their schedules allow. Schools can utilize:

- Paraprofessionals
- Classroom assistants and/or teaching assistants (although schools should NOT utilize special education assistants or early childhood assistants for general recess supervision)
- School aides and assistants
- Security personnel and off-duty police officers
- Teachers (provided contractual obligations and other teaching duties are met)

In addition to current school staff, schools can consider external staff to provide recess supervision, including:

- Parent workers
- College interns
- Parent and community volunteers
- Community partners

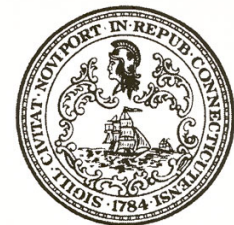
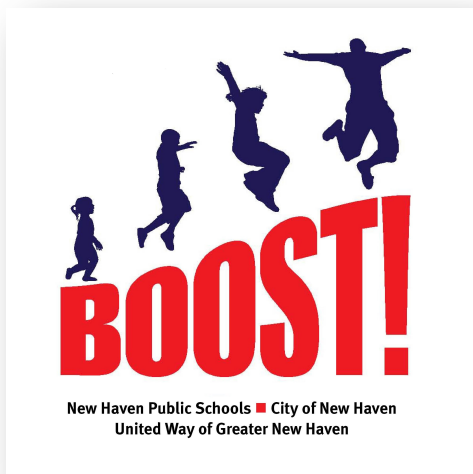
If schools utilize volunteers to provide recess supervision, they must adhere to all current district guidelines regarding volunteers. Prospective school volunteers must complete all NHPS volunteer application forms including a volunteer enrollment form, a background investigation authorization and release form, and a volunteer release form. Approved volunteers must adhere to all district- and school-level policies.

Community partners

For interested schools, there are a number of community organizations that can provide recess curriculum, safe practices, and/or staffing.

Organization	Website	Phone
Bright Bodies	http://www.brightbodies.org/	203.785.6459
Cornell Scott Hill Health Center	http://www.hillhealthcenter.com/	203.503.3000
Fair Haven Community Health Center	http://fhchc.org/	203.777.7411
Haven Free Clinic	http://www.havenfreeclinic.org/hfc/	203.314.9305
Health and Wellness – PAW Physical Activity + Wellness	http://www.nhps.net/node/362	203.530.4634
New Haven Parks Department	http://www.cityofnewhaven.com/parks/	203.946.8027 or 203.946.8020
Yale-New Haven Hospital – Children’s Hospital	http://www.ynhh.org/yale-new-haven-childrens-hospital/	203.785.4081
YMCA – Central Connecticut Coast – New Haven Youth Center	http://www.cccymca.org/	203.776.9622

The community partners on the above list are part of the partnership between United Way of Greater New Haven, New Haven Public Schools, and the City of New Haven – known as Boost!



Critical supervision skills

According to supervision guidelines provided by Safe & Civil Schools (Sprick, 2012), an effective recess supervisor will possess the following skills:

- **BE THERE:** Arrive at assigned location on time every day; be there both physically and mentally.
- **LOOK and LISTEN:** Scan constantly both your assigned location and the general area for how it looks and sounds.
- **BE MOBILE:** Move continuously throughout your assigned location without establishing a predictable pattern.
- **KNOW WHAT'S EXPECTED:** Know the rules, procedures, and basic civilities that students are expected to use when entering the recess space, while in the space and when leaving the space.
- **BE PROACTIVE:** Intentionally interact with those students who often have difficulty in that setting within the first five minutes. Connect positively by smiling, making positive comments about appropriate behavior and/or briefly talking about something that interests the student.
- **ALWAYS RESPOND:** Respond to all misbehavior, even low-level misbehavior, with good intentions.
- **RESPOND QUICKLY:** Step in at the onset of potential student problems and also be available to assist a colleague who is dealing with a problem situation.
- **MAXIMIZE YOUR DELIVERY:** Communicate and deliver corrections calmly and respectfully by getting the student's attention without creating an audience, talk quietly and slowly, deliver short and clear directions, keep your cool, be aware of personal space and don't glare/stare at the student.
- **CHOOSE CORRECTIONS WISELY:** Assign a mild correction that logically fits the misbehavior (e.g., verbal reminder for talking too loud, brief delay for running, positive practice for slamming locker doors, proximity management when students are starting to get rowdy, and restitution for writing a formal apology for disrespectful comments.)
- **REACH OUT AND CONNECT:** Greet all students everyday in a welcoming and positive manner as they enter the setting (be positive, smile, and call students by name) and give students specific, descriptive feedback when they follow the expectations.

Playground supervision

Safe & Civil Schools (Sprick, 2012) recommends that supervisors adhere to the following tips for effective supervision on the school playground:

- Know the boundaries, especially when portable units are present.
- Know the "rules" for games and equipment - even write them down to achieve consistency.
- Watch out for strangers or vehicles on the perimeter and report immediately to the office.

- If students have problems playing games, make that game “off limits” for 3-4 days. After that time period, monitor the game to ensure students are playing it appropriately.
- Tattling:
 - If someone is hurt or serious problem (bullying), thank the student for sharing.
 - If complaint is about game playing, inform student that you are glad he/she knows the rules and you will monitor the game.
- Create a “transition” area where students line up before being dismissed. Identify how you expect the students to wait.
- Model by walking stragglers to dismissal.
- Establish and follow a protocol for asking permission to leave the playground.
- To increase safety on the playground:
 - Make sure that at least one supervisor brings a first aid kit to recess.
 - Twice a year, identify which staff members have current CPR, AED, first aid training. Give this list to all staff members at the school. At least one playground supervisor should be current in CPR, AED, and first aid training.
 - Make sure that there is at least one walkie-talkie or cell phone available between the playground supervisors so that the office can be called in case of an emergency.
 - Develop a “red card” back-up communication system in case the walkie-talkies or cell phones aren’t working or aren’t available. A “red card” system is designed to allow the supervisor to remain on the playground and to deal with the emergency while notifying the office to send for emergency services. The system requires the playground supervisors to keep a red card in their fanny pack. The red card says: “There is an emergency on the playground. Send help immediately.” Train 2-3 students on how to deliver the red card to the office by running straight to the office and interrupting any adult in the office in order to deliver the card.

One-liners for misbehavior on playground

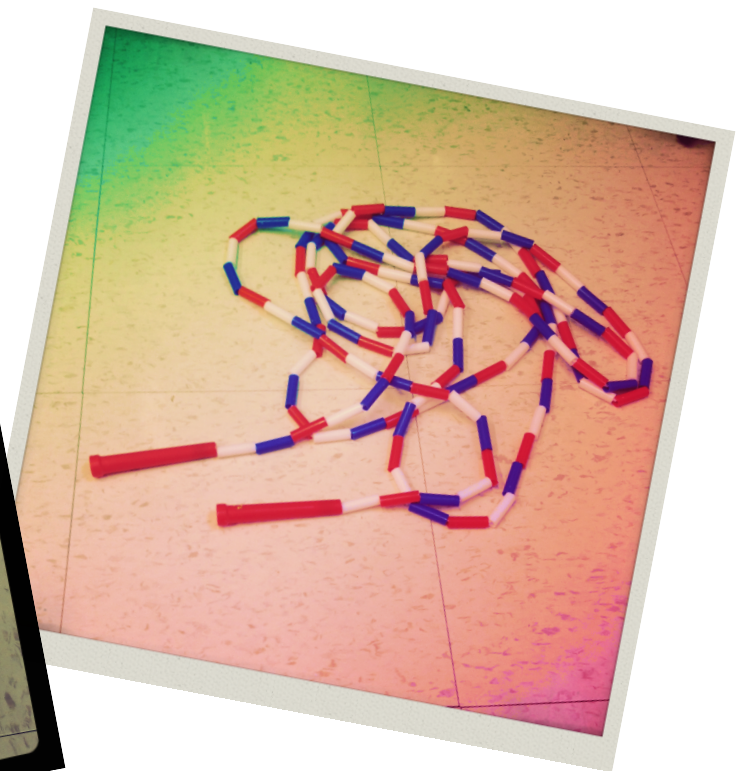
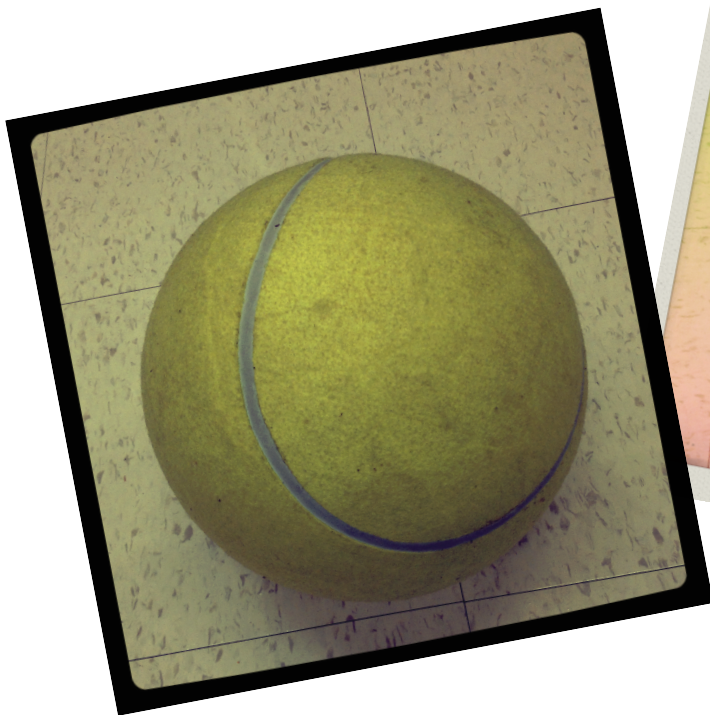
- Not playing the game appropriately: Tell me (or show me) the right way to . . .
- Minor problems playing game or activity: At this time, either play responsibly or move to another game.
- Repeated misbehaving during game: This game is off limits for the remainder of recess.
- Assigning time out: Take a time out and when I come back, be ready to tell me what you need to do.

Recess Support

The Office of Student Health and Wellness will provide schools and recess supervisors with support throughout the school year. Support will include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Helping schools create a structured and high-quality recess plan
- Coordinating and assisting with central-level logistics, such as facility concerns related to recess
- Assisting schools in resolving school-level challenges related to recess
- Finding and connecting schools with resources that will improve recess facilitation and outcomes
- Providing opportunities for school staff to share best practices and possible solutions to challenges

For recess support or questions related to recess, please contact Kim Johnsky, Director of Instruction for New Haven Public Schools at 203-691-2638 or via email at kim.johnsky@new-haven.k12.ct.us.



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APPENDIX

Playground

SAFETY

CLOTHING

Avoid drawstrings on sweatshirts and other similar clothes that can get caught on equipment and cause injury.

WATCH

Always supervise kids at play. Adults need to watch for hazards and assist children if an injury takes place.

EQUIPMENT

Children should only play on age-appropriate equipment. Limit kids to areas specifically designed for their age and developmental abilities.

FALLS

To guard against falls, make sure your child's playground has guardrails on all elevated equipment and a canopy at the top of slides.

SWINGS

Swing sets should have only two swings. When there are three, the two end swings can smash into the center swing.





New Haven School Change
NEW HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

2013 Recess Implementation Plan



School:

Principal:

Recess Contact person:

Recess committee members:

Scheduling

Use the sample tables to complete the time allotment and schedule details:

	Example	Proposed time allotment
Literacy (RW, WW, Core)	150	
Math	60	
Science/SS	60	
Specials	45	
Recess	20	
Lunch	25	
TOTALS	360	

Example four-section recess/lunch schedule:

	Lunch Only		Recess	Lunch
Group 1	11:20-11:50	Group 1	11:00-11:20	11:20-11:45
Group 2	11:55-12:25	Group 2	11:35-11:55	11:55-12:20
Group 3	12:30-1:00	Group 3	12:10-12:30	12:30-12:55
Group 4	1:05-1:35	Group 4	12:45-1:05	1:05-1:30

NOTE: This schedule option allows classroom teachers to spend the first 10 minutes of recess with their students and then transfer supervision to the lunch monitors for the normal 30 minutes of lunchtime.

	Recess	Lunch
Group 1		
Group 2		
Group 3		
Group 4		
Group 5		

Space

Describe the outside area where recess will take place; include plan for improvement to the existing space (e.g., painting four-square boxes):

Inclement weather space

Describe the indoor recess area(s):

Recess modifications for shortened school days

Describe how the current plan will change on shortened days:

Supervision

Recess supervisors (no more than 25 students per adult):

-

Equipment

Provide a brief description about what types of recess equipment your school will utilize and the method of acquiring the equipment:

Method of communicating plan to families

List the ways you will communicate your recess plan to families of your students:

-

Site Plan Drawing

Use the following shapes to design the layout of your outside play area, or delete the shapes by clicking on them and pressing “delete” or “backspace” and draw out your map by hand after printing:

NOTE: Place supervisor symbols in assigned locations to ensure ALL areas are visible.

