



# Recess **BEFORE** LUNCH

playtime before lunchtime!



## Listen!

Comments from school staff and a parent:

“Recess before lunch seemed like a natural way to increase students’ nutritional intake, as well as enhancing their ability to learn.”

—Kristin Tucker, parent  
Stein Elementary  
Jefferson County Public Schools

“We are very happy with the recess before lunch. Our kids eat better...our kids behave better...and it just makes sense.”

—Karen Ortiz, Principal  
Columbian Elementary School  
Pueblo School District No. 60

“I would recommend Recess Before Lunch; lunch sales have increased and students eat more since no one is racing to finish their lunch to get to the playground first.

—Walter Chisman, Food Service Director  
Ellicott Elementary  
Ellicott School District

## Benefits!

### **Improved cafeteria atmosphere**

- students are more relaxed and focused on eating rather than the playground

### **Less supervision in the cafeteria**

- students have improved behavior

### **Fewer classroom discipline problems**

- students are calmer when they return to the classroom

### **Increase in classroom time on-task**

- students return to the classroom ready to learn

### **Increased milk, vegetable, and entree consumption**

- less plate waste, less trash
- results in increased nutrients and fluid intake

### **Decreased number of nurse visits for tummy aches after recess**

- Include recess before lunch as part of your wellness policy
- Low or no-cost to implement
- After a morning of classes, kids are ready to play



For more information:  
download the Recess Before Lunch Guidebook  
from the Montana Team Nutrition Program

[www.opi.state.mt.us/schoolfood/recessBL](http://www.opi.state.mt.us/schoolfood/recessBL)



# Recess BEFORE LUNCH

playtime before lunchtime!



## Ready, set...

**Seek input from the beginning within the school and community**

**Gain a commitment from administrators, food service staff, parents and teachers**

**Observe schools that have Recess Before Lunch**

**Plan a new recess and lunch schedule that allows adequate time to eat**

- incorporate a hand-washing plan into the schedule
- after recess, provide space for storage of coats, toys, etc.
- encourage students to prepay for lunch to avoid losing money on the playground

## go!

**Focus on the benefits rather than the obstacles**

- think about what's best for the students

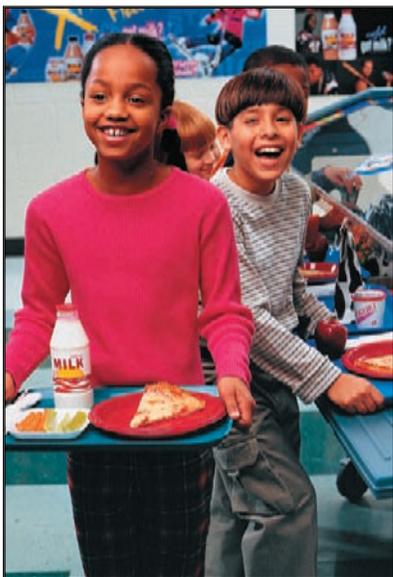
**Students are likely to be hungrier and thirstier with this change**

- have cold water available
- promote the school's breakfast program

**Anticipate some resistance to change**

**Expect the schedule to be a work-in-progress**

- practice the new routine and trial for at least a year



This piece was produced in partnership with Colorado Action for Healthy Kids, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Colorado Physical Activity and Nutrition Program, and Colorado Connection for Healthy Schools. For more information, visit:

[www.actionforhealthykids.org](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org)

[www.cdph.state.co.us/pp/COPAN/SchoolSite.html](http://www.cdph.state.co.us/pp/COPAN/SchoolSite.html)

[www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprevention/index.htm](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprevention/index.htm)



COPAN

Colorado  
Physical Activity &  
Nutrition Program



Living the Colorado Lifestyle

## Create a lunch atmosphere that supports healthy eating

Recess after lunch often finds the student focused on the playground, not his or her lunch. Enhanced nutrition and better behavior go hand-in-hand; recess before lunch offers an opportunity for students to benefit from both.

## Supporting research for Recess Before Lunch programs

A Montana Recess Before Lunch pilot study documented improvement in the mealtime atmosphere and students' behavior. Discipline problems on the playground, in the lunchroom, and in the classroom decreased.

A 2004 study by Bergman and colleagues of recess before lunch showed comparable results to a previous study by Mary J. Getlinger, et al. After implementing recess before lunch, plate waste decreased from 40 percent to 27 percent. In addition, consumption of calcium-rich foods increased 35 percent along with significant increases in most other vitamin- and mineral-rich foods.\*

Research repeatedly shows recess before lunch can help students perform better in school, eat healthier, and promote a lunchroom atmosphere conducive to eating.

\*Bergman, E.A., et al, "Relationship of Meal and Recess Schedule to Plate Waste in Elementary Schools." National Food Service Management Institute. Insight, Spring 2004.

\*Getlinger, M.J., et al, Food waste is reduced when elementary-school children have recess before lunch. J Am Diet Association 1996; 9:906-908.