



# Listen!

## Comments about Recess Before Lunch:

“By having recess before lunch, our students make better choices about what they eat. They eat more food and always drink their fluids. It is easier to settle them in to the classroom after lunch...rather than after recess. Teachers get their break when kids are at recess so lunchtime is organized ‘family style’ with teachers sitting with their classes. It is a great way to build community in our school”.

— Gretchen Peters, Principal  
McKinley Elementary  
Tacoma, Washington

### For more information:

The Montana Team Nutrition Program developed guidelines for schools interested in switching to recess before lunch. To download, visit:

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

To look at Montana schools’ success stories with implementing Recess Before Lunch, visit:

[http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_admin/admin/admin389.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin/admin389.shtml)

# Recess **BEFORE** LUNCH

playtime before lunchtime!



## 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
- increased nutrient and fluid intake; decreased number of nurse visits

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- Include Recess Before Lunch as part of your wellness policy
  - Low cost to implement
  - After a morning of classes, kids are ready to play





Action for Healthy Kids™

—Washington—

# Recess BEFORE LUNCH

playtime before lunchtime!



## Ready, set...

**Seek input from the school and community**

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

**Observe schools that have Recess Before Lunch**

**Plan recess and lunch schedules that allow adequate time to eat**

- incorporate a hand-washing plan into the schedule
- 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**

- 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



Action for Healthy Kids™

—Washington—

Healthy eating and activity can improve

- attendance
- energy levels
- participation
- school behavior
- test scores
- academic success

Action for Healthy Kids:  
[www.ActionForHealthyKids.org](http://www.ActionForHealthyKids.org)  
[www.eatsmart.org](http://www.eatsmart.org)

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.