

Recess, P.E. and Physical Activity in Elementary Schools

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RECESS, P.E. AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AT APS

The Wellness Policy presentations to the APS Board of Education gave rise to questions about student participation in the physical activity at schools. RDA developed and implemented a survey around the status of recess, P.E., and physical activity in elementary schools.

Eighty-two elementary schools responded to the survey. A few highlights of the report follow:

- There is a significant variability in the recess and P.E. minutes that the students receive across APS elementary schools.
- Seventy-five out of 82 schools provide at least 30 minutes of recess per day.
- Students in K-5 grades receive on average close to an hour of P.E. per week.
- A total of 69 schools report offering before- and/or after-school programs that provide opportunities for the students to engage in physical activity at the school site outside school hours.

RECESS, P.E. AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AT APS

The Wellness Policy presentations to the APS Board of Education gave rise to questions about student participation in the physical activity at schools. In particular, board members asked for more information on recesses, P.E., and physical activity available at the school sites.

In response to this inquiry, RDA developed a focused questionnaire around the status of recess in elementary schools. RDA disseminated a survey requesting school-specific information about recess. Principals were asked to identify when they provided recess and how long the recess was. The survey included questions about P.E. and before- and after school physical activity.

Eighty-two elementary schools responded to the survey. The summary of the information from the survey follows.

Types of Recess

- Twenty-six schools provide three recesses to all grades (A.M., P.M., and lunch).
 - These schools provide an average of about 49 minutes of recess per day.
 - The mode is 45 minutes while the recess time ranges between 30 minutes/day to 90minutes/day.
- Twenty-nine schools provide two recesses to all grades (two out of the three - A.M./P.M./lunch).
 - These schools grant an average of about 40 minutes of recess time to all grades.
 - The distribution has a mode of 45 minutes and the recesses range between 20 and 65 minutes a day.
- Nineteen principals report a combination of two or three recesses with the time duration somewhat different for different grades.
 - The total of recess time typically ranges from 30 minutes to 45 minutes, with one school reporting 55 minutes of total recess time per day.
- Eight principals report one recess for their school.
 - Three schools provide one 15-minute recess, four schools have one 30-minutes recess, and one school reports one 45-minute recess per day.

RECESS REDUCTION

Twenty-two principals report reducing the recess time in the past three years. Of these 22, six principals say that they shortened the recess to meet the instructional minutes requirement. Six principals, who picked the option 'other', report reasons that include 'to meet state compliance', '4th and 5th grades only', and 'Difficulties with lunch personnel on a multi-track year round schedule.'

Reasons for Recess Reduction

	Instructional minute requirement	Literacy block	Test prep	Other
6 schools	X			
2 schools		X		
3 schools	X	X		X
1 school			X	
2 schools		X		X
6 schools				X
1 school	X	X	X	X
Total 21*	10	8	2	11

*One school gave no reason for reducing the recess.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Principals report a wide range in the P.E. activity for students, from 25 minutes to 240 minutes per week. Students in grades K-5 have just short of an hour of P.E. each week on average.

PE Minutes/Week by Grade Mean/Mode/Median

	No of Schools	Mean	Median	Mode
K	81	52	45	45
1	80	56	45	45
2	80	56	45	45
3	81	56	45	45
4	81	57	45	45
5	81	58	45	45
6	7	69	60	60
7	1	120	120	120
8	1	120	120	120

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY BEFORE- AND AFTER SCHOOL

Principals were asked to estimate the number of students at their site who participated in some sort of physical activity before or after school. A total of 69 schools report physical activity for students at the school site outside school hours.

- Forty-nine principals report that their students engage in after-school physical activity at their site.
- Nineteen say that their school offers before-school physical activity.
- Twenty-three principals say that physical activity is available to their students both before- and after school.

An Estimated Number Students Participating in Before-After School Physical Activity

Number of Schools	Number of Students Participating in Physical Activity
50 schools	15-100
17 schools	101-250

Two principals report that all students at their school participate in before-after school physical activity. That simply may mean that students attend the City-sponsored Park and Recreation before- and after school care or other privately sponsored childcare. There is no assurance that students are actually engaged in sports or other physical exercise when enrolled in these programs.

ADDENDUM

Two schools provided their recess information to RDA after the publication of the Recess Report. This Addendum has been added to the Recess Report to complete the recess information on all APS elementary schools.

School 1 has two recesses. Students either have a morning OR an afternoon recess and a recess attached to lunch.

School 2 has a recess everyday from 1:45 to 2 pm.