



Taking away recess to punish children for their behavior is a counterproductive strategy.

Children Need Recess

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day for all children, and states that schools should not take away recess for punitive or academic reasons. As educators of the whole child, it is our duty to provide recess.

Benefits of Recess

- ✓ Physical activity for healthy bodies
- ✓ Cognitive breaks for increased focus
- ✓ Social time to improve communication, problem-solving, and friendship skills
- ✓ Stress relief to reduce cortisol (elevated in children who have experienced trauma)

Punishment, including taking away recess, does not...

- ✗ address the why of the behavior
- ✗ teach students how to get their needs met using appropriate behavior

Why shouldn't we rely on taking away recess as a behavior policy?

Taking away recess often works in the short-term: Children who love recess are motivated to change their behavior so that they maintain access to this preferred part of their day. However, when students are older and no longer have recess on their schedule, they may revert to previous inappropriate behaviors because they never gained the skills to manage their behaviors and actions. Changing students' behavior in ways other than punishment is a long game - but worth the effort!



Whole Child Practice: Structured Recess

For children who are engaging in physically unsafe behaviors, Structured Recess offers an alternative strategy to teach play skills in a safe setting.