

Restoring a Research-Based 20-minute Daily Recess Period for Florida's Elementary School Students

Senate Bill 78 by Sen. Anitere Flores/House Bill 67 by Rep. Rene Plasencia

- Scientific research is clear that providing a daily recess period for our elementary students serves to **optimize social, psychological, emotional, physical and cognitive development; maximize learning effectiveness and retention; improve classroom behavior, memory and attention; and positively affect student achievement.** Requiring a daily 20-minute recess period for Florida's elementary school children ensures regular access to an unstructured break in the school day that is proven to foster multiple critical components of healthy childhood development, including **lifelong skills relating to communication, negotiation, cooperation, sharing, problem solving, and coping.** These skills are not only foundations for healthy development but more predictive of future success than any other measure. In the current era of evidence-based practice, empirical research must be utilized when making decisions regarding educational policy. **Empirical research does not support the elimination or reduction of recess.** Recess is a critical part of the school day.
- If enacted in 2017, beginning with the 2017-2018 school year:
 - Each district school board shall be required to provide at least 100 minutes per week of supervised, safe, and unstructured free-play recess for all elementary school students
 - At least 20 consecutive minutes of free-play recess are required per day
- Recess is a compliment to, but not a replacement for, physical education. This legislation does **not** adversely affect the State's requirement, via Section 1003.455(1)(3), Florida Statutes, that district school boards provide 150 minutes weekly of physical education instruction at the elementary level. Recess and physical education are different, each provides unique benefits, and both are integral parts of a child's education.
- **Research shows that state recess laws correlate with higher odds of schools having 20 minutes of recess daily** and that district policies are not significantly associated with school-level recess practices. Additionally, schools with students of predominantly white race/ethnicity were more likely than all other racial/ethnic groups to have daily recess, and schools with the highest number of students receiving free or reduced-cost meals were less likely to have 20 minutes of recess daily.
- The State of Florida requires (1) a 90-minute uninterrupted reading block, (2) 150 minutes of structured physical education per week, and (3) 720 annual instructional hours for grades K-3 (approximately 4 hours of instruction daily) and 900 annual instructional hours for grades 4-12 (approximately 5 hours of instruction daily). In Florida, the school day is generally 6-7+ hours long, with an additional hour added for the bottom 300 schools. There is plenty of time in the already-existing school day for 20 minutes of recess so that children are allowed the opportunity to decompress from the rigor and curriculum of the classroom.
- As of January 2016, 13 states required recess for elementary school children. In December 2015, the New Jersey legislature voted unanimously to require 20 minutes of daily recess for its elementary school students. Four months later, Georgia lawmakers passed a resolution urging schools to allow more recess time for its school children. In June 2016, Rhode Island mandated 20 minutes of daily recess at the elementary level. **No additional funding was required.**

Endorsed by:

