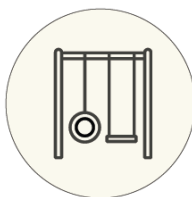


School Discipline, Physical Activity, and Recess: Best Practices for School Leaders

Recess and opportunities for students to participate in physical activities during the school day are critical features of a healthy school community and supportive learning environment. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends 60 minutes of daily physical activity. Unfortunately, sometimes school is the only place where students can participate in regular physical activities. Withholding recess or using physical activities as a form of punishment is inappropriate. Schools have the opportunity to provide meaningful physical activities as a way of ensuring students develop positive attitudes and confidence to be physically active for a lifetime.

All students should be provided equitable opportunities to engage in recess and physical activities during the school day. School leaders can lead the way by supporting staff to use positive behavioral strategies in the classroom and across various school settings. Best practices and strategies should align with existing school wide behavioral initiatives, such as positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), to enhance student social-emotional learning (SEL) and academic achievement.



Recess

Recess is defined as unstructured physical activity and is a critical part of a student's social and

emotional learning. Best practices for school leaders include:

- Establishing classroom routines leading up to recess times, including visible

schedules, clear behavior expectations, and verbal prompts

- Communicating behavioral expectations for recess to students, staff, and parents
- Posting expectations in all physical activity areas and near play structures
- Supporting positive behaviors by teaching, modeling, and reinforcing behavioral expectations for recess
- Teaching conflict resolution skills and increasing opportunities for students to practice problem-solving strategies
- Providing positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) training to all staff, including recess monitors
- Adopting district policies that explicitly prohibit the withholding of recess in response to student behavior. Many districts have adopted the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) model policy, which explicitly provides that physical activities during the school day, including recess, "will not be used or withheld as punishment for any reason."
- Offering behavior specific praise, positive acknowledgment, and healthy incentives



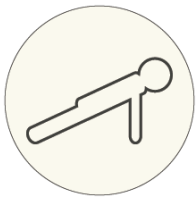


Physical Activity

School-based physical activities have many academic, behavioral, and health-related benefits.

Best practice for school leaders include:

- Developing and adopting policies, standards and guidelines to promote physical activity in schools
- Establishing and communicating behavior expectations for physical activity to students, staff, and parents
- Promoting positive behaviors by teaching, modeling, and reinforcing behavioral expectations within the learning environment
- Integrating physical activities into classroom routines and incentivizing movement
- Offering positive feedback and rewarding students for demonstrating appropriate behaviors during physical activities
- Providing programs that are voluntary and student-centered, and offering equal opportunity for all students to participate
- Designing before and after-school activities, extended learning opportunities, and enrichment programs to include physical activities



Corporal Punishment

Requiring students to run laps, do extra push-ups, etc. for behavioral violations can

lead to shaming of students and loss of interest in engaging in such healthy activities. Using physical activity in a punitive manner may constitute corporal punishment, which is prohibited under WA state law. See RCW [28A.150.300](#); WAC [392-400-825](#).

OSPI Resources and Contact Information

[Health and Physical Education Resources](#)

[Healthy Schools Washington](#)

[Student Discipline](#)

[Behavior Menu of Best Practices and Strategies](#)

References

SHAPE America [Position Statement on Using Physical Activity as Punishment and/or Behavior Management](#)

American Academy of Pediatrics [Policy Statement: The Crucial Role of Recess in Schools](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [Physical Activity Guidelines for School-Aged Children and Adolescents](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and SHAPE America—Society of Health and Physical Educators. [Strategies for Recess in Schools](#). Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US Dept of Health and Human Services; 2017.

[WSSDA 6700P Procedure – Nutrition, Health, and Physical Fitness](#)

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