Madison King

Recess in Schools

“My favorite subject was recess. Fortunately for me, I had a mother who believed I was smart” (Benjamin Carson). Recess has been in our school systems for as long as we can remember. Administrators and parents see recess as merely a time where children “play” and have fun, but in actuality, it is much more than that. Administrators see recess as a waste of time and a means of bullying. However, recess is necessary for the health and development of all children.

Our school systems today are trying to do away with recess for our students. Their argument is that they want to do a better job of educating our kids, and that they want all of our students to be “ahead of the curve”. They see recess as a break from much more serious learning subjects, such as math, language arts, science, and social studies. Because what is seen during recess does not seem serious, they think it is not needed and that it interferes with the educational purpose of school. Administrators claim that not only is recess a waste of time, but it is also a means of bullying for the students.

On the other hand, recess is important, if not the most important part of the day for children. When kids get breaks, they are more able to learn and are willing to focus longer. To put it in perspective of why this is true, think about the last time you took a long road trip where you were driving. The longer you drove, the more tired, and inattentive you got. This is the same thing with children. When they’ve exerted all of their energy toward their school work, they get tired and start to not focus as hard. These breaks are crucial for students to put out their best effort in their school work.

Kids also need exercise. The AAP () recommends an hour a day, and recess helps with that. Many factors affect children’s participation in physical activities, such as gender, physical abilities, availability of parks and recreational centers, video games, and the amount of T.V. that they watch. Children might not get the correct amount of physical activity that is needed of them due to their access to a safe, outdoor play area. Recess provides this safe environment for students of all abilities to let loose and get active.

Through play at recess, kids also learn communication skills such as negotiation, cooperation, sharing and problem-solving. At recess, children are faced with real life problems that they will have to deal with on their own. These real-life simulations are crucial for the development of these children. Recess ensures children are safe and properly supervised during their break. Teachers are trained to look for signs of bullying, and there are mandatory policies set up to go against bullying itself.

The bottom line here is that kids need recess. They need it as much as anything else they get at school. It is crucial to the health and development of children. “Unfortunately, in many districts, less time is spent in physical education in order to allow more time for academic studies, in an effort to meet the federal testing requirements in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Time for active recess, in which children get unstructured physical activity, is also being lost to academic studies. The result is a sedentary day for most school children. Policies can create the optimal environment by requiring children to attend daily physical education classes taught by credentialed teachers, in which all the children are active for the majority of the class period” (Friedman, Schwartz, 2008).

References

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