



# RECESS PLANNING IN SCHOOLS

A Guide to Putting Strategies for Recess into Practice

January 2017



U.S. Department of  
Health and Human Services  
Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention



**SHAPE** SOCIETY  
**America** OF HEALTH  
AND PHYSICAL  
EDUCATORS®

health. moves. minds.

This document was prepared by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Population Health in collaboration with SHAPE America—Society of Health and Physical Educators. It was supported by conceptual, technical, and editorial assistance from subject matter experts at CDC and others from the fields of health and education.

**For copies of this document:**

- Download from CDC’s website: [www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/)
- Download from SHAPE America’s website: [www.shapeamerica.org/recess](http://www.shapeamerica.org/recess)
- Request online: CDC-INFO ([www.cdc.gov/cdc-info](http://www.cdc.gov/cdc-info))
- Call toll-free: 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636); TTY: 1-888-232-6348

**Suggested Citation**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and SHAPE America—Society of Health and Physical Educators. *Recess Planning in Schools: A Guide to Putting Strategies for Recess into Practice*. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US Dept of Health and Human Services; 2017.

Website addresses of nonfederal organizations are provided solely as a service to readers. Provision of an address does not constitute an endorsement of this organization by CDC or the federal government, and none should be inferred. CDC is not responsible for the content of other organizations’ web pages.

A **school recess plan** identifies the strategies a school will use to organize and implement recess at the school. This plan should be a written document that can be shared with all school staff, students, and parents. This document will help schools develop the written recess plan.

## Introduction

Recess is an important part of an active school environment. It provides physical activity to all students during the school day outside of physical education and classroom physical activity. Recess is defined as a regularly scheduled period within the school day for physical activity and play that is monitored by trained staff or volunteers.<sup>1-3</sup> Recess is a period of time when students are encouraged to be physically active and engaged with peers in activities of their choice, at all grade levels, kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade (K–12).

This document, *Recess Planning in Schools: A Guide to Putting Strategies for Recess into Practice* is designed to help schools develop a school recess plan. A school recess plan identifies the strategies a school will use to organize and implement recess at the school. This plan should be a written document that can be shared with all school staff, students, and parents.

This guide is a companion document to *Strategies for Recess in Schools*, and both documents were developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and SHAPE America—Society of Health and Physical Educators.<sup>3</sup> The main audience for this guide is school staff that are responsible for leading recess in schools. It can also be used by state and school district staff to provide technical assistance and professional development on recess. The intent is for school staff working on recess to identify what is currently happening or not happening with recess in their school, and then use this information to develop a written recess plan that serves all students.

## How This Guide Is Organized

This guide provides the following:

- Questions that schools can consider to help them choose strategies identified in *Strategies for Recess in Schools* to implement or to help them evaluate their current efforts.
- Templates that schools can use to record information about the strategies they choose for their school recess plans.
- Key resources that align with the recommended recess strategies and provide additional information and examples of how to address these strategies.

## How to Use This Guide

School staff that are responsible for leading recess in schools can use this guide to:

- Discuss the recommended strategies and use the questions provided to choose strategies for their school recess plan or to identify ways to strengthen the strategies they are already using. The results of these discussions can help schools that currently have a school recess plan make their plans more comprehensive. They can help schools without a recess plan develop one.
- Choose recess strategies to use and decide how to implement them. If needed, schools can address strategies in stages. For example, a school might develop weather guidelines to keep students safe during inclement weather the first year, and then designate spaces for indoor recess the following year.
- Identify resources to help schools address each strategy.



## Planning for Recess

The *Strategies for Recess in Schools* document identifies five broad categories of strategies for schools to consider. Each category includes strategies that can be implemented by school staff that are responsible for leading recess (see Figure). For a detailed explanation of each strategy, see the *Strategies for Recess in Schools* document.

This guide provides specific questions that schools can consider to help them choose strategies to implement or to help them evaluate their current efforts. The Resources section on [pages 25–26](#) provides additional information and examples of how to address these strategies.

## How to Develop Your School Recess Plan

This section provides questions and templates to help you develop your school recess plan. In addition, there is a customizable School Recess Planning Template that you can download to record the information for your school recess plan. Use the questions to guide your discussions about what information to include in your written plan.

Figure. Strategies for Recess in Schools



1

### Make Leadership Decisions

1. Identify and document recess policies.
2. Put documented recess policies into practice and revise as needed.
3. Develop a written recess plan.
4. Designate spaces for outdoor and indoor recess.
5. Establish weather guidelines to ensure student safety.
6. Train school staff and volunteers for recess.



2

### Communicate and Enforce Behavioral and Safety Expectations

7. Establish and communicate behavior management strategies.
8. Teach conflict resolution skills.
9. Ensure that recess spaces and facilities meet recommended safety standards.



3

### Create an Environment Supportive of Physical Activity During Recess

10. Provide adequate physical activity equipment.
11. Add markings to playground or physical activity areas.
12. Create physical activity zones.
13. Provide planned activities or activity cards.
14. Provide a combination of recess strategies.



4

### Engage the School Community to Support Recess

15. Establish roles and responsibilities for supervising and facilitating recess.
16. Involve students in planning and leading recess.
17. Mobilize parents and others in the school community to support and sustain recess at school.



5

### Gather Information on Recess

18. Track physical activity during recess.
19. Collect information on recess to show the effect on student and school outcomes.



## CATEGORY 1: MAKE LEADERSHIP DECISIONS

### Strategy 1: Identify and document recess policies.

#### Questions to Consider

1. Does your school currently have recess policies in place? If so, how often are they reviewed and by whom?
2. Who makes decisions about recess policies at your school?
3. Does your local school wellness policy address recess?
4. Are your current school recess policies aligned with the policies recommended by CDC and SHAPE America?
5. Do you share your recess policies with stakeholders, such as school staff, students, and parents? If not, how do you ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the policies?

#### Information to Include in Your School Recess Plan

Use the template provided here to document policies in your school recess plan and how they are shared with your school community. Download the customizable *School Recess Planning Template* to record this information.

Your school recess plan should include some or all of the following key policies, which are recommended by national and state organizations:<sup>1,4-6</sup>

- School prohibits the replacement of physical education with recess or the use of recess to meet time requirements for physical education policies.
- School provides students with adequate spaces, facilities, equipment, and supplies for recess.
- School ensures that spaces and facilities for recess meet or exceed recommended safety standards.
- School prohibits the exclusion of students from recess for disciplinary reasons or academic performance in the classroom.
- School prohibits the use of physical activity during recess as punishment.
- School provides recess before lunch.
- School provides staff members who lead or supervise recess with ongoing professional development.

#### School Recess Policies

**(Name of school)** will use the following school recess policies during the **(school year)**:

These policies are documented in the following ways (*indicate how and where policies are documented*):

These policies are shared with school staff, students, parents, and other stakeholders in the following ways (*indicate how policies are shared*):



CATEGORY 1: MAKE LEADERSHIP DECISIONS

Strategy 2: Put documented recess policies into practice and revise as needed.

Questions to Consider

1. Is your school implementing its recess policies as intended?
2. Does your school recess plan include accountability measures to ensure that recess is being implemented as intended?
3. How can your recess policies be strengthened to meet the needs of every student, including those with special needs?
4. Have you established ongoing support and accountability measures for school staff who are implementing recess? Examples include weekly checklists and participation reports, weekly recess staff meetings, and performance checklists.

Information to Include in Your School Recess Plan

Use the template provided here to describe the accountability measures in your school recess plan. Download the customizable *School Recess Planning Template* to record this information.

Accountability Measures for School Recess Policies

School recess policies for **(name of school)** are reviewed **(timeframe)** by **(name of person who conducts review)**.

The following process is used to monitor implementation of the school recess plan *(describe process)*:

The following table provides details about the policies in the school recess plan and how they are monitored *(provide details in appropriate columns)*:

School Recess Policy	Accountability Measure for Policy Implementation	Person Responsible for Monitoring Each Policy	How Policy Implementation Is Reported and Shared



## CATEGORY 1: MAKE LEADERSHIP DECISIONS

### Strategy 3: Develop a written recess plan.

#### Questions to Consider

1. What is your school's vision for recess? (For example, school officials at Jefferson Middle School believe that active students are better learners; therefore, they provide daily recess as an academic support for all students.)
2. What are your goals and objectives for recess for the upcoming school year? (For example, your goal could be to increase the number of students who participate in at least one 20-minute recess period each day. Your objective could be to add at least one policy requiring daily recess for all students to your local school wellness policy by the end of the school year.)
3. Who is responsible for organizing and managing recess at your school?
4. Does the recess schedule at your school include the following components?
  - Specific times and locations for students at each grade level.
  - Assigned recess times that are not scheduled adjacent to assigned physical education class times.
  - Recess before lunch.
  - Limitations on the number of students who are outside at the same time.
5. Does your school recess plan include protocols that are aligned with overall school protocols? Do these protocols include instructions for the following components?
  - Transitions to and from recess.
  - Use and storage of recess equipment.
  - Student movement from one activity to another.
  - Access to restrooms and drinking water.
6. Does your recess plan align with recommended recess strategies? (See Figure on [page 3](#).)

#### Information to Include in Your School Recess Plan

Use the template provided here to describe the details of your school recess plan. Download the customizable *School Recess Planning Template* to record this information. You can also use the guidance in CDC's [Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs: A Guide for Schools](#) to help you develop goals and objectives.<sup>2</sup>

*Template on next page*



## Vision, Goals, Objectives, and Key Protocols for Recess

**(Name of school)** believes that recess *(describe your school's vision for recess)*:

The goals and objectives for recess are as follows *(identify goals and objectives for recess)*:

The following staffing structure is used for recess *(describe recess staffing)*:

The recess schedule for the **(current school year)** is as follows *(identify recess schedule)*:

The protocols for recess are as follows *(identify and describe your recess protocols)*:

Transitions to and from recess:

Use and storage of equipment:

Movement between selected activities:

Access to restrooms and drinking water:

Other protocols *(list and describe)*:



CATEGORY 1: MAKE LEADERSHIP DECISIONS

Strategy 4: Designate spaces for outdoor and indoor recess.

### Questions to Consider

1. Who decides where recess areas are located?
2. Is there adequate space to accommodate free movement for the number of students assigned to the physical activity areas?
3. Where are the designated outdoor physical activity areas at your school?
4. Is there a map or diagram of the outdoor physical activity areas at your school?
5. Has your school identified situations that would require recess to be held indoors? Examples include extreme heat or cold, poor air quality, construction projects, or safety constraints.
6. Where are the designated indoor physical activity areas at your school? These areas can include a variety of spaces, such as classrooms, multipurpose rooms, cafeterias, auditoriums, and auxiliary gyms. Make a list of indoor spaces that are appropriate for specific activities.
7. Is there a map or diagram of the indoor physical activity areas at your school?
8. Are outdoor and indoor physical activity areas accessible for children who use wheelchairs or have other mobility impairments?

### Information to Include in Your School Recess Plan

Use the template provided here to describe the physical activity areas at your school. Download the customizable *School Recess Planning Template* to record this information.

### Spaces for Outdoor and Indoor Recess

**(Name of school)** will use the spaces described below for recess.

Outdoor physical activity areas for recess (*list and describe outdoor areas*):

Map of outdoor physical activity areas (*provide map*):

Indoor physical activity areas for recess (*list and describe indoor areas*):

Map of indoor physical activity areas (*provide map*):

The following situations have been identified as requiring recess to be conducted indoors (*list and describe situations*):



CATEGORY 1: MAKE LEADERSHIP DECISIONS

Strategy 5: Establish weather guidelines to ensure student safety.

### Questions to Consider

1. Has your school identified extreme weather conditions that would require recess to be held indoors? Examples include extreme heat or cold or poor air quality.
2. Has your school developed documented guidelines for weather conditions and shared these guidelines with all school staff, students, and parents?
3. Has your school considered using available technology to help school officials make daily weather-related decisions?

### Information to Include in Your School Recess Plan

Use the template provided here to describe the weather guidelines in your school recess plan. Download the customizable *School Recess Planning Template* to record this information.

### Weather Guidelines for Recess

Weather guidelines for when students and staff at **(name of school)** can go outside for recess during the school year will be developed by **(identify person or group)**.

Information about how to dress for the weather conditions will be provided to students in the following way *(describe process)*:

Weather guidelines will cover the following situations *(provide details for each situation)*:

Heat-related conditions:

Cold-related conditions:

Extreme weather conditions:

Weather guidelines will be shared with school staff, students, parents, and other school stakeholders in the following way *(indicate how guidelines will be shared)*:



## CATEGORY 1: MAKE LEADERSHIP DECISIONS

### Strategy 6: Train school staff and volunteers for recess.

#### Questions to Consider

1. Who supervises recess at your school? Is it classroom teachers or other trained staff? Volunteers?
2. Do recess supervisors follow established school protocols for what occurs during recess? Examples include protocols for lining up, entering and leaving school facilities, walking to and from recess areas, moving between specific activities, managing equipment, teaching new games or activities, and handling disciplinary problems.
3. Do recess supervisors have protocols in place for medical emergencies, such as injuries on the playground or incidents involving students with asthma, diabetes, or food allergies?
4. Are recess supervisors trained in playground safety, conflict resolution, communications, recess management, student engagement, and play facilitation? Who designs and provides the training?
5. Do recess supervisors have an identified way to communicate with the school office in an emergency, such as through a two-way radio system or by cell phone?
6. Do recess supervisors have a back-up plan for communication, such as hand signals or flash cards?

#### Information to Include in Your School Recess Plan

Use the template provided here to describe how recess supervisors are trained at your school. Download the customizable *School Recess Planning Template* to record this information.

#### Training for Recess

At **(name of school)**, recess will be supervised by **(identify person who will supervise recess)**.

Training will be conducted at the following times *(indicate when training will be provided)*:

The following topics will be covered in training for recess supervisors, staff, and volunteers *(list and describe topics)*:

**(Name of school)** will use the following emergency protocols during recess *(list and describe protocols)*:

Information about student medical conditions will be shared with recess staff in the following ways *(indicate how information will be shared)*:

Recess supervisors will use the following process to communicate during an emergency *(describe process)*:



## Questions to Consider

1. Does your school use a schoolwide initiative that promotes social and emotional learning or personal responsibility that can be used during recess? For example, the US Department of Education's [Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports](#) framework.
2. Who sets the rules, protocols, and expectations for recess at your school? Do students help?
3. How are the rules, protocols, and expectations at your school communicated to staff and students?
4. What are the established protocols for managing behavior issues during recess?
5. Taking away recess as a punishment is not appropriate. Does your school prohibit this practice?
6. Assigning physical activity as punishment for in-class behavior during recess is not appropriate. Does your school prohibit this practice?
7. Are all staff and students aware of the consequences for inappropriate behavior or for not following rules, protocols, and expectations during recess?

## Information to Include in Your School Recess Plan

Use the template provided here to describe the behavior management strategies used at your school. Download the customizable *School Recess Planning Template* to record this information.

## Behavior Management Strategies for Recess

At **(name of school)**, rules, protocols, and expectations for behavior during recess will be developed by **(identify person or group)**.

**(Name of school)** will use the following rules, protocols, and expectations during recess (*list and describe rules, protocols, and expectations*):

School staff will use the following behavior management strategies to ensure that rules, protocols, and expectations are followed during recess (*list and describe strategies*):

School staff will communicate rules, protocols, and expectations for recess in the following ways (*indicate how information will be communicated*):

School staff will apply the following consequences for inappropriate behavior or not following rules, protocols, and expectations during recess (*list and describe consequences*):



## CATEGORY 2: COMMUNICATE AND ENFORCE BEHAVIORAL AND SAFETY EXPECTATIONS

### Strategy 8: Teach conflict resolution skills.

#### Questions to Consider

1. Are the conflict resolution initiatives used at your school being used during recess?
2. Are students taught conflict resolution strategies to prevent and end conflicts on their own?
3. What specific conflict resolution strategies are being taught at your school?
4. How are conflict resolution strategies being taught at your school? These strategies can be taught in a variety of ways. For example, they can be taught by a guidance counselor during a designated time, by a teacher in the classroom, or by a recess supervisor at the beginning of a recess period.

#### Information to Include in Your School Recess Plan

Use the template provided here to describe how your school teaches conflict resolution strategies to students. Download the customizable *School Recess Planning Template* to record this information.

#### Conflict Resolution Strategies for Recess

At **(name of school)**, students will be taught conflict resolution strategies from *(indicate who will teach students)*:

Students will be taught conflict resolution strategies in the following ways *(indicate when, where, and how strategies will be taught)*:

The following conflict resolution strategies will be used for recess *(list and describe the strategies)*:



## Strategy 9: Ensure that recess spaces and facilities meet recommended safety standards.

### Questions to Consider

1. Who is responsible for daily or weekly inspection of recess spaces, facilities, and playground structures (e.g., slides, ladders)?
2. Does your school have a protocol for reporting repairs for recess spaces, facilities, and playground structures?
3. Does your school use the safety checklist and equipment guidelines published by the US Consumer Product Safety Commission in the [Public Playground Safety Handbook](#)?
4. Does your student handbook include rules about recess and playground safety?
5. Do teachers in your school teach students about playground safety? If so, when and how?
6. Does your school post rules for the safe use of specific types of playground structures?
7. Is the ratio of supervisors to students during recess reasonable and safe?

### Information to Include in Your School Recess Plan

Use the template provided here to describe how your recess spaces, facilities, and playground equipment meet recommended safety standards. Download the customizable *School Recess Planning Template* to record this information.

### Safety Standards for Recess

At **(name of school)**, regular inspections of physical activity spaces, facilities, and playground structures (if applicable) are done by **(identify person or group)**. This inspection is done **(indicate whether inspection is done daily or weekly)**.

Inspections will examine the following areas identified on the recess map or diagram *(describe what the person or group is looking for)*:

Problems with physical activity spaces, facilities, and playground structures are reported to **(identify person or group)**.

The following process is used to correct problems and ensure that safety standards are met *(indicate how problems are handled)*:

Safety standards are communicated to school staff, students, and parents in the following ways *(indicate how information is shared)*:



## Strategy 10. Provide adequate physical activity equipment.

### Questions to Consider

1. Do your school grounds have playground structures? If these structures are designed for students of specific ages, is this information clearly provided to students?
2. Is physical activity equipment that can be used for a variety of games and activities—such as jump ropes, hula-hoops, beanbags, and balls—given to students at the beginning of recess?
3. Does your school’s physical activity equipment include items that can be used by students with varying abilities, including those with disabilities?
4. How is equipment transported to recess areas and used during recess periods?
5. How is equipment stored when not in use? Examples include in boxes near exits that lead to physical activity areas or other convenient locations.
6. Does your school have an established process for funding, buying, inspecting, maintaining, and replenishing physical activity equipment?
7. Do students have input on the kind of equipment provided?
8. Is there enough equipment to allow all students to be physically active?
9. Does your school have established practices for storage, use, and funding for equipment to be purchased?

### Information to Include in Your School Recess Plan

Use the template provided here to describe the physical activity equipment used at your school and where it will be stored. Download the customizable *School Recess Planning Template* to record this information.

### Physical Activity Equipment

At **(name of school)**, physical activity equipment for recess will be purchased by the school. It will be stored in the following ways *(identify location and any important details)*:

The following equipment will be available to students *(list or describe equipment)*:

Equipment can be used for the following types of activities *(list or describe activities)*:

Equipment is transported to recess areas in the following way *(describe process)*:

Equipment is returned to storage in the following way *(describe process)*:





## Strategy 11. Add markings to playground or physical activity areas.

### Questions to Consider

1. Does the playground or physical activity area at your school have markings, such as number grids or lines for games like basketball, four square, hopscotch, or beanbag toss?
2. Does the playground or physical activity area at your school have murals—such as pictures of castles, dragons, or mazes—that would allow for a mixture of individual, small group, large group, and team games and activities?
3. Are the markings logically separated into zones for play that do not conflict with adjacent activities?
4. Does your school have a plan for periodically reviewing and updating playground or physical activity area markings?
5. How does your school raise money or build community support for playground or physical activity area markings?

### Information to Include in Your School Recess Plan

Use the template provided here to describe how your school's playground or physical activity area is marked. Download the customizable *School Recess Planning Template* to record this information.

### Playground or Physical Activity Markings

At **(name of school)**, the playground or physical activity area will include the following markings *(describe markings)*:

The following types of activities can be performed in areas with physical activity markings *(describe activities)*:

The following map or diagram shows the location of physical activity markings and the activities that can be performed in each area *(provide map or diagram)*:

Physical activity markings will be updated or replaced as needed in the following ways *(indicate how markings will be updated)*:



## Strategy 12. Create physical activity zones.

### Questions to Consider

1. Has your school created physical activity zones and provided corresponding physical activity equipment?
2. Are physical activity zones located so that they do not interfere with adjacent activities? Specifically, are boundaries marked by safety cones, chalk, paint, or other markings?
3. Do physical activity zones provide multiple opportunities for play by individuals, partners, small groups, large groups, and teams?
4. Do physical activity zones include activities that students have recommended?

### Information to Include in Your School Recess Plan

Use the template provided here to describe the physical activity zones at your school. Download the customizable *School Recess Planning Template* to record this information.

### Physical Activity Zones

At **(name of school)**, physical activity zones will be created in the following areas *(list and describe physical activity zones)*:

The following map or diagram shows each physical activity zone *(provide map or diagram; include directions if needed)*:

The following activities can be performed in each physical activity zone *(list and describe activities)*:

The following schedule will be used to rotate different activities and groups of students in the physical activity zones *(provide schedule with as much detail as needed)*:



## Strategy 13. Provide planned activities or activity cards.

### Questions to Consider

1. Has your school developed a menu of activities for recess that students can choose from? For example, your school might offer or set up a variety of games, encourage students to set up or lead games, or provide activity cards.
2. Do students know how to play the games offered in the physical activity zones?
3. Are the games that are offered age appropriate?
4. Are a variety of games offered that are inclusive and accessible to all students, including those with disabilities?

### Information to Include in Your School Recess Plan

Use the template provided here to describe the planned activities or activity cards used at your school. Download the customizable *School Recess Planning Template* to record this information.

### Planned Activities for Recess

At **(name of school)**, activities will be offered to students in the following ways *(indicate how activities are offered and how students can access them)*:

Students can participate in the following planned activities or activities from activity cards *(list and describe activities)*:



## Strategy 14. Provide a combination of recess strategies.

### Questions to Consider

1. Does your school provide a combination of opportunities for physical activity during recess, such as physical activity equipment, playground markings, physical activity zones, planned activities, and activity cards?
2. How do students learn about the different opportunities?
3. Are students given a choice of what activities to participate in?

### Information to Include in Your School Recess Plan

Use the template provided here to describe the different recess strategies used at your school. Download the customizable *School Recess Planning Template* to record this information.

### Combination of Recess Strategies Used During Recess

**(Name of school)** is using the following combination of physical activity strategies for recess (*select which strategies you are using*):

- Variety of physical activity equipment.
- Markings on the playground or physical activity areas.
- Physical activity zones.
- Planned activities.
- Physical activity cards.

The variety of opportunities for physical activity is communicated to students (*describe how this information is shared with students*):



#### CATEGORY 4: ENGAGE THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT RECESS

### Strategy 15. Establish roles and responsibilities for supervising and facilitating recess.

#### Questions to Consider

1. Do recess supervisors monitor what is going on during recess at your school?
2. Do recess supervisors implement or model positive group management techniques with students?
3. Do recess supervisors redirect negative behavior as soon as it happens and discuss more appropriate behavior with students?
4. Do recess supervisors make an effort to engage students who are not engaged in physical activity or play?
5. Does your school use physical activity facilitators in addition to recess supervisors? Some schools have different staff members serving as recess supervisors and physical activity facilitators. Others have recess supervisors who serve in both roles.

#### Information to Include in Your School Recess Plan

Use the template provided here to describe the roles and responsibilities assigned to recess supervisors and physical activity facilitators at your school. Download the customizable *School Recess Planning Template* to record this information.

#### Roles and Responsibilities for Recess

At **(name of school)**, the following supervision structure is used for recess (*describe your supervision structure*):

All recess staff, including physical activity facilitators, have specific roles and responsibilities. These roles and responsibilities are defined as follows (*list and describe each person's roles and responsibilities*):



CATEGORY 4: ENGAGE THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT RECESS

Strategy 16. Involve students in planning and leading recess.

### Questions to Consider

1. Does your school have a student leadership program to elevate the role of students during recess or physical activity periods?
2. Does your school use student leaders to set up and lead activities?
3. Do older students help with recess for younger students?
4. Are student leadership privileges rotated?
5. Does your school have a recognition program for positive student leaders?

### Information to Include in Your School Recess Plan

Use the template provided here to describe how you are empowering students during recess at your school. Download the customizable *School Recess Planning Template* to record this information.

### Student Leadership During Recess

**(Name of school)** will implement a student leadership program for recess. This program will be organized and implemented as follows (*describe program*):

Student recess leaders will be trained as follows (*describe training program*):

The following topics will be covered in training (*list and describe topics*):

This training will be conducted during (*indicate when training will occur*):



#### CATEGORY 4: ENGAGE THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT RECESS

### Strategy 17. Mobilize parents and the school community to support and sustain recess at school.

#### Questions to Consider

1. Do parent volunteers help supervise recess or physical activity periods at your school?
2. Does your school's Parent-Teacher Association or Parent-Teacher Organization support recess or physical activity periods with grants or volunteers?
3. Do parents help make decisions about recess or physical activity periods at your school?
4. Do community volunteers with experience leading physical activities support your school by leading activities during recess or physical activity periods? Examples include health club instructors; personal trainers; and yoga, Zumba®, or karate instructors.
5. Do parent and community volunteers advocate for school recess or physical activity periods to your school board?

#### Information to Include in Your School Recess Plan

Use the template provided here to describe how you are mobilizing parents and the school community to support and sustain your school recess plan. Download the customizable *School Recess Planning Template* to record this information.

#### Parent and Community Engagement to Support Recess

**(Name of school)** will work with parents and community volunteers to support recess in the following ways *(list and describe strategies you will use to engage parents and volunteers)*:

Blank area for writing strategies to engage parents and volunteers.



CATEGORY 5: GATHER INFORMATION ON RECESS

Strategy 18. Track physical activity during recess.

Questions to Consider

1. Will your school measure physical activity during recess or physical activity periods?
2. How will your school measure physical activity? Examples include watching the types of activities students select, using measurement devices like pedometers or accelerometers, or setting target activity levels for students.
3. Will your school use a tool like the System for Observing Play and Leisure Activity in Youth ([SOPLAY](#)) to observe and measure activity?
4. If your school uses tools like pedometers or accelerometers, how will you distribute these tools and how will you download or track the data?

Information to Include in Your School Recess Plan

Use the template provided here to describe how you will track physical activity during recess at your school. Download the customizable *School Recess Planning Template* to record this information.

Tracking Physical Activity During Recess

**(Name of school)** will track student physical activity during recess in the following ways *(list information to be collected and describe collection methods)*:

Blank area for listing collection methods.

Data collected will be used in the following ways *(describe how data will be used)*:

Blank area for describing data usage.





## CATEGORY 5: GATHER INFORMATION ON RECESS

### Strategy 19. Collect information on recess to show the effect on student and school outcomes.

#### Questions to Consider

1. Does your school regularly review the data collected about the recess strategies being used? Do you use this information to modify your school recess plan and the strategies used as needed?
2. Is someone tracking basic information about recess and physical activity periods at your school? Examples include recording the number of students in recess or physical activity areas at specific times, the number of recess supervisors, the ratio of students to supervisors, and the length of time spent transitioning between recess and other school activities. Other examples include the way students behave during recess, the number of injuries, the types of games played, the types of equipment used, and the number of students not participating in physical activities.
3. Do recess staff meet regularly to discuss what strategies are working well and what changes need to be made to strengthen their efforts?
4. Is your school collecting data on academic achievement, such as classroom attention, on-task behavior, grades, and disciplinary actions?

#### Information to Include in Your School Recess Plan

Use the template provided here to describe how you are collecting information about recess to show how it is affecting student achievement at your school. Download the customizable *School Recess Planning Template* to record this information.

#### Documenting the Impact of Recess

**(Name of school)** will collect the following information about recess *(describe information you will collect and your collection methods)*:

Data collected will be used in the following ways to show how recess is affecting student achievement *(describe how data will be used)*:



## Resources for Recess

The resources provided align with the recess strategies recommended in the *Strategies for Recess in Schools*. They provide additional information and examples of how these strategies can be used. All of the resources listed are available online. They can be accessed by clicking on the title in the electronic version of this guide or by searching for the title on the Internet.

### Make Leadership Decisions

- ❑ SHAPE America  
[\*Guide for Recess Policy\*](#)
- ❑ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[\*School Health Index: A Self-Assessment and Planning Guide, Elementary School version\*](#)
- ❑ Designing a Strong and Healthy New York (DASH NY)  
[\*Time to Play: A Mandatory Daily Active Recess Policy Implementation Guide\*](#)
- ❑ Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support  
[\*Play to Learn: Active Recess Through Systematic Supervision\*](#)
- ❑ Montana Office of Public Instruction  
[\*Recess Before Lunch: A Guide for Success\*](#)
- ❑ Minnesota Department of Education  
[\*Recess Moves: A Toolkit for Quality Recess\*](#)
- ❑ CIRA Ontario  
[\*Recess Revival: An Implementation Guide to an Active Recess\*](#)
- ❑ Playworks  
[\*The Playbook\*](#)
- ❑ Playworks  
[\*Guide for Inclement Weather\*](#)
- ❑ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[\*Increasing Access to Drinking Water in Schools\*](#)
- ❑ Peaceful Playgrounds  
[\*60 Alternatives to Withholding Recess\*](#)

### Communicate and Enforce Behavioral and Safety Expectations

- ❑ Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support  
[\*Play to Learn: Active Recess Through Systematic Supervision\*](#)
- ❑ Minnesota Department of Education  
[\*Recess Moves: A Toolkit for Quality Recess\*](#)
- ❑ US Consumer Product Safety Commission  
[\*Public Playground Safety Handbook\*](#)
- ❑ National Program for Playground Safety  
[\*Playground Safety\*](#)
- ❑ National Program for Playground Safety  
[\*Safety Report Card\*](#)
- ❑ Playworks  
[\*Four Conflict Resolution Techniques for School Children\*](#)
- ❑ US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs  
[\*Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports\*](#)



## Create an Environment Supportive of Physical Activity During Recess

- ❑ Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support  
[\*Play to Learn: Active Recess Through Systematic Supervision\*](#)
- ❑ Minnesota Department of Education  
[\*Recess Moves: A Toolkit for Quality Recess\*](#)
- ❑ Active Play Active Learning Project  
[\*Playground Markings Guide\*](#)
- ❑ [\*Fit & Fun Playscapes\*](#)
- ❑ [\*Peaceful Playgrounds\*](#)
- ❑ Playworks  
[\*Playworks Game Guide\*](#)

## Engage the School Community to Support Recess

- ❑ Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support  
[\*Play to Learn: Active Recess Through Systematic Supervision\*](#)
- ❑ Minnesota Department of Education  
[\*Recess Moves: A Toolkit for Quality Recess\*](#)
- ❑ Brock University  
[\*The Recess Project Program Manual\*](#)
- ❑ Playworks  
[\*The Playbook\*](#)
- ❑ Government of Alberta  
[\*Using Active Supervision: Teacher Tip Sheet\*](#)
- ❑ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Parents for a Healthy School website  
[\*Recess: How Can You Help?\*](#)

## Gather Information on Recess

- ❑ Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support  
[\*Play to Learn: Active Recess Through Systematic Supervision\*](#)
- ❑ Minnesota Department of Education  
[\*Recess Moves: A Toolkit for Quality Recess\*](#)
- ❑ [\*System for Observing Play and Leisure Activity in Youth \(SOPLAY\)\*](#)
- ❑ Government of Alberta  
[\*Using Active Supervision: Teacher Tip Sheet\*](#)



## References

1. Institute of Medicine. *Educating the Student Body: Taking Physical Activity and Physical Education to School*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press; 2013. [http://books.nap.edu/openbook.php?record\\_id=18314&page=R1](http://books.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=18314&page=R1). Accessed November 7, 2016.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs: A Guide for Schools*. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US Dept of Health and Human Services; 2013:22–25.
3. 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.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. School health guidelines to promote healthy eating and physical activity. *MMWR Recomm Rep*. 2011;60(RR-5).
5. SHAPE America. *Guide for Recess Policy*. Reston, VA: SHAPE America; 2016.
6. Murray RC, Ramstetter C, Devore M, et al. The crucial role of recess in school. *Pediatrics*. 2013;131(1):183–188.

## Writing Team

Shannon L. Michael, PhD, MPH  
 CDC, National Center for  
 Chronic Disease Prevention  
 and Health Promotion

Francesca Zavacky, MEd  
 SHAPE America—Society of Health  
 and Physical Educators

## Contributors

Kymm Ballard, EdD  
 Campbell University, SPARK

Xiangli Gu, PhD  
 University of North Texas

Lynn Barnes-Wallace  
 San Diego Unified School District, CA

Dana Henry, BEd, MT, NBCT  
 Federal Way Public Schools, WA

Martin E. Block, PhD, CAPE  
 University of Virginia

Jennifer Huberty, PhD  
 Arizona State University

Melinda Bossenmeyer, EdD  
 Peaceful Playgrounds, Inc.

Sarah M. Lee, PhD  
 CDC, National Center for Chronic  
 Disease Prevention and Health  
 Promotion

Charlene R. Burgeson, MA  
 Let's Move! Active Schools  
 Partnership for a Healthier America

Sally Mancini, MPH  
 UConn Rudd Center for  
 Food Policy & Obesity

Angelika Claussen, PhD  
 CDC, National Center for Birth Defects  
 and Developmental Disabilities

Lisa K. Perry, MEd  
 Alliance for a Healthier Generation

Elizabeth Cushing  
 Playworks

Debbie Rhea, PhD  
 Texas Christian University

Lori S. Dunn, MA  
 Seattle Public Schools, WA

Amy S. Riggio, MEd  
 Loudoun County Public Schools, VA

Mikki Duran  
 Appleton Area School District, WI

Abigail Rose, MSED  
 CATCH Global Foundation

Sarah Dutton  
 The Virtuous Circle

Alyson D. Shoaf, MAEd  
 Thomasville City Schools, NC

Heather Erwin, PhD  
 University of Kentucky

David Gallagher  
 Playworks

Sarah Sliwa, PhD  
 CDC, National Center for Chronic  
 Disease Prevention and Health  
 Promotion

Teri Galloway  
 Federal Way Public Schools, WA