

5-2019

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Benefits of Increasing Unstructured Recess Time for Elementary School Students

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Abstract

Over the years, there has been a steady decline in students' unstructured recess time which has an impact on students' development. The factors that have contributed to this decline are standardized testing and other activities. These are important to students because they affect their health and development both inside and outside of the classrooms. This senior capstone examines the benefits of increasing unstructured recess time for elementary school students through the use of literature review and survey with teachers, school administrators, and parents.

Keywords: Unstructured recess time, health, and development

Introduction and Background

Over the past two years, I have done service learning in different classrooms at different schools throughout the Monterey Peninsula School District and there is always a repeating theme. When a child is bad or is misbehaving in the classroom, the teacher may tell the child they cannot participate in recess or other physical activity. In one case, there was a fourth-grade class in particular that had a student named *Hennery*. He was labeled as a troubled student who had mild behavioral issues. I had come to find out from his teacher and other fourth-grade teachers that he would often leave his seat to wander the classroom, ignore instructions, and distract other students from completing their work. It had come to the point where if he were to do this in the classroom, the teacher would completely ignore him as long as he wasn't hurting anyone, and the other students knew to just ignore him as well. As I continued to observe the class, it was clear to me that *Hennery* was doing exactly what the teacher said he was going to do. I did not want to let what the teacher told me to determine what I thought of *Hennery*. So, I started observing *Hennery* as the class went through their daily routine. As my time in the classroom progressed, I noticed that when *Hennery* was misbehaving in the classroom, he would not be allowed to go to recess or would have a short recess as a form of punishment. I came to the conclusion that his punishment might be what was causing him to act out.

As adults, we sometimes forget what it's like to be a kid and to have so much energy that you don't know what to do with it. Play is a big part of childhood! The average elementary school student is usually given two 10-minute breaks, one at the beginning of school and one towards the end and a lunch period of about 40 minutes. But the State of California has a no general physical activity policy. This means that there are no regulations on the amount of time kids get or don't get for recess. But as policies and schools begin to change, the time for students

unstructured recess time gets cut shorter and shorter. In school, students are told what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. Their day is extremely structured, and every minute is accounted for. This leaves little time for students to make decisions for themselves. Unstructured recess time for students allows them to decompress from their rigorous school work and gives them the opportunity to do what they want to do.

Unstructured recess time isn't like P.E., but it is where the students have little to no adult instruction and they are allowed to do what interests them. For example, some students may want to make flower crowns in the grass, other might want to play a game of basketball, or some might want play make-believe with their friends. Unfortunately, schools don't have the time and resources to allow for longer periods of unstructured recess time. In most schools, unstructured recess time isn't seen as a necessity and it is often overlooked. The purpose of my research is to raise awareness about increasing unstructured recess time for elementary school students and to educate the public about the developmental role it plays in the lives of young children.

This topic is interesting because it affects children all throughout the state and the country. With student's unstructured recess time getting cut shorter and shorter every year, students have little to no outlets to blow off steam. As a result, many students are having difficulty with sitting still, focusing, and remain silent during important times such as testing preparation. Also, students are being diagnosed with ADHD, obesity, depression, and anxiety at an alarming rate. Unstructured recess time is a designated time set aside during the school day for a student's physical, cognitive, and social pursuits that they otherwise aren't able to accomplish in the classroom. By restricting a student's unstructured recess time, we are not allowing them to reach their full potential, academically, emotionally, and physically.

This information is important for educators, parents, and the board of education. The information provided would help them make better decisions about how much unstructured recess time children get and how much they need to function properly. These questions are structured around the main problems I have seen while doing my service learning and from the research I did on this topic. When I first started my research, my primary research question was, “*How does increasing unstructured recess time benefit elementary school students?*” Additional secondary questions also started to develop as my research continued. My secondary or related questions are as follows:

- 1) Are there models of unstructured recess time in U.S. schools and other countries?
- 2) Is increasing unstructured recess time necessary for elementary school students?
- 3) How do teachers in Monterey County implement unstructured recess time?
- 4) What kinds of actions should be done to increase the unstructured recess time for elementary school students that will eventually benefit them?

Schools have become so stressful for students throughout the days for students. Activities are filled with rigorous contents, so students have become so stressful. Given this, schools should allow students to have some unstructured recess and play time for children to break away from the rigors. To order to seek the answers to the aforementioned secondary or related research questions, a review of literature is being done on this topic.

Literature Review

The primary purpose of increasing a child’s unstructured recess time is not only to help improve a child’s health and wellbeing, but to allow children to have downtime and to make free choices. Many schools in the State of California have a designated time slot for recess, but over

the years there has been a significant decrease in the amount of time they get. Hence, you will read about the purpose and history of unstructured recess time, the benefits unstructured recess time have on children, and a few opposing viewpoints. I have narrowed the literature review into three components; however, each is set forth expand upon influencing factors that are relevant to this research.

During the early 2000's, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was put into place. The NCLB was a U.S. Act of congress that reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; it included provisions applying to disadvantaged students. It also supports standards-based education-reform. The Act required states to develop assessments in basic skills. To receive federal school funding, states had to give these assessments to all students at select grade levels (Tomar, 2016). For the many years that followed, there has been an increased focus on standardized testing and test preparation. As a result, children's unstructured recess time has been shortened. More children are being diagnosed with ADD, obesity, depression, and anxiety. With little time in the day, recess is getting shorter in order to counteract poor test scores. Schools in states like Wisconsin and Nevada have removed recess from their daily schedule to better focus on "core academic areas." Other states, such as Alabama, have replaced kindergarten nap time with test preparation and some states have shortened the time children get for recess.

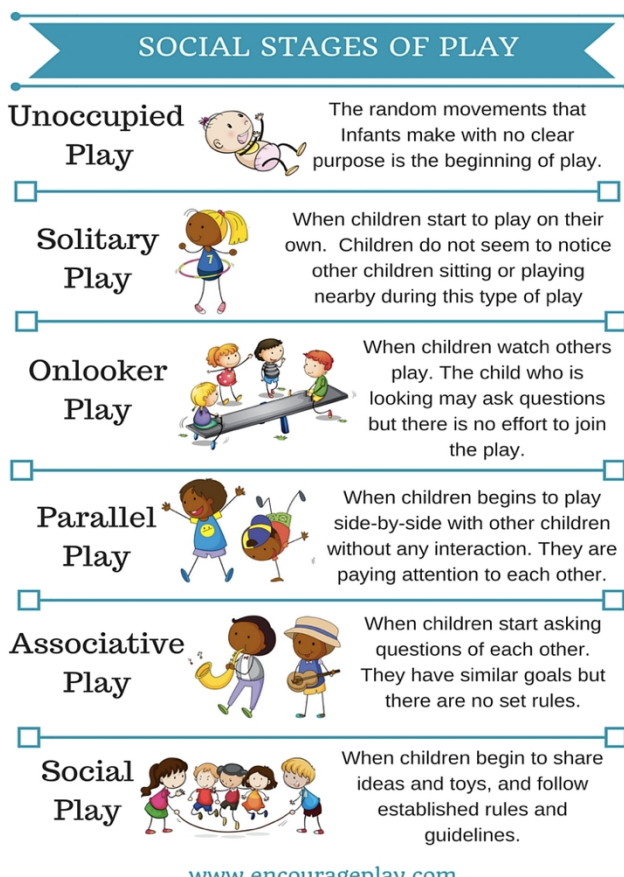
Recess time during the course of a school day is healthier, more natural, beneficial, and a critical part of childhood development (Murray, 2013). Recess is a period during the day that is set aside for the social, cognitive, and physical pursuits that can't otherwise be achieved in the classroom. In Monterey County, elementary schools originally had two 20-minute recesses and an hour lunch. In 2004, schools changed it to two 15-minute recesses and a forty-minute lunch. Older students are separated from the younger students and when the weather is good all the

children go outside. Most school playgrounds are set up into three sections: they can play on the play structure that has challenging elements such as climbing towers, they can play in the grassy area; or they can join an organized game, such as basketball.

During the unstructured recess time or recess, they may be used interchangeably, and can mean many different things, but for the purpose of this paper, it will be defined as a necessary break in the day for optimizing a child's social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development (Murray, 2013). Unstructured recess time for students can have the potential to promote activity and a healthy lifestyle, unstructured recess also provides creative, social, and emotional benefits of play (Murray, 2013). Recess is unique from, and a complement to, physical education—not a substitute for it. The more I read about unstructured recess, the more I found that unstructured recess time was being cut short because of legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002. This bill created a time of high stress testing and high stakes that changed the average school day by dramatically increasing the time that students stay in their seats and shortening the time they have to play outside. In the country, there are only seven states that have mandatory-recess legislation that requires students to get between 20 to 30 minutes of daily physical activity for elementary schools and sadly, California is not on that list. The American Academy of Pediatrics (2014) believes that recess is a crucial and necessary component of a child's development. If this is true, then why do we keep decreasing the amount of unstructured recess time that students receive?

There is a plethora of research about the benefits of increasing unstructured recess time for elementary school students. Recess and free play may be used interchangeably. According to (Wenner, 2009), a common interpretation of play (games) from the idea of free play by stating that, “games have a priori rules—set up in advance and followed. Play, on the other hand, does

not have a [sic] priori rules, so it affords more creative responses. “Free play,” as scientists call it, is critical for becoming socially adept, coping with stress and building cognitive skills such as problem solving. Unstructured recess time is crucial for the development of young children. They learn how to interact with their peers, self-regulate, gain problem solving skills, improve their social skills, improve their overall wellness and the list goes on and on. In free play, kids use their imagination and try out new activities and roles” (p. 24). Goncu and Vadeboncoeur (2017) attempt to further clarify this idea by discussing the four criteria for play in the study of human development and by stating that “the existing criteria for childhood play in the allied fields of developmental psychology and early childhood education using the general principles of sociocultural perspectives” (p. 23). There are many different stages of play that are crucial to the growth of children. To be exact there are “six types of play that a child will take part in, depending on their age, mood, and social setting” (Rock, 2019). As a child grows, they



participate in the different stages of play that are crucial to their development.

They are as follows (1)

Unoccupied Play: which starts at birth and are the random movements that an infant makes without a clear purpose. It is the beginning of play. (2) *Solitary Play:* This stage starts in infancy and is common in toddlers and they start to play on their own, but all ages participate in solitary play. (3) *Onlooker*

Play: This type of play happens more with toddlers but again it can happen at any age. This is when a child watches other child play but there is no direct effort to participate. (4) *Parallel*

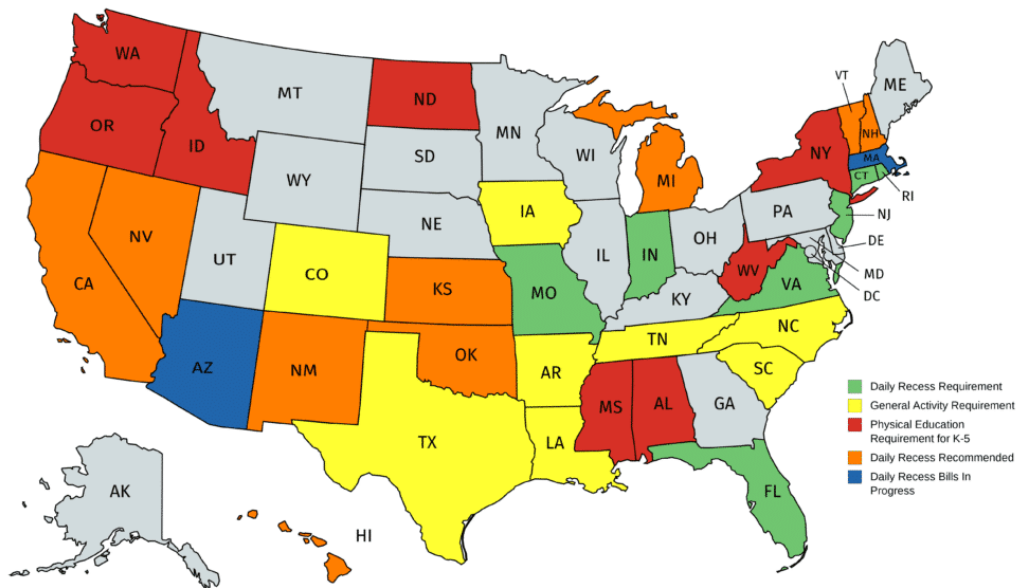
Play: It happens with toddlers and is when children begin to play side-by-side with other children but without interaction. But even though it may seem like they are not interacting the children are paying attention to each other. This is when children start to have the desire to play with other children. (5) *Associative Play:* At the ages of around 3 and 4 they start to become interested in playing with other children rather than just playing by themselves or with toys.

They begin interacting with other children more and more. They learn how to work together and get along with each other. Children in the group usually have the same goals such as building a structure from blocks or playing a game of pretend. There is no strict rules or organization. (6)

Social Play: At the ages of 3-4 years old children start to socialize They start to share ideas, toys, and they have organized rules and structure to their play. Children start to play family and they establish designated roles; they work together to build something or play a game of tag together. This is where children start to develop skills such as social skills, cooperation, taking turns, and problem solving (Grey, 2012).

Also, recess can have many effects on the development of children. According to Grey (2012), "In play, children practice many skills that are crucial for healthy development. They practice physical and manual skills, intellectual skills, and social skills" (p.38). All of these things help to create a happy, healthy and successful individual. According to Pellegrini (2006), the perceived value of recess and the movement to eliminate or reduce the school recess period from the primary school day. Due to the lack of funding and a higher emphasis on standardized testing many elementary schools have opted to eliminated recess, physical education and play periods which can in fact harm the very students that schools are supposed to help.

There are only a few states in the U.S. that require unstructured recess time and those states are Missouri, Indiana, Virginia, Florida, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Rhode Island.



Nowadays, kids spend more and more time in front of a computer screen and there is an increase in academic pressure and as a result, recess continues to get shorter. This graph shows specific policies state by state across the country. As you can see from the diagram, the yellow states, like Colorado and South Carolina, have general activity requirements. That means that students have to participate in a certain number of hours of physical activity per week or month. The red states, such as Oregon and North Dakota, have physical education requirements for grades k-5. That means that they are based on physical education (PE) classes. Only nine states formally recommend unstructured recess and only Arizona and Massachusetts are trying to change their policies and mandate daily unstructured recess time. Many flaws with these systems, for example states, such as New York, mandate 120 minutes of physical education a week, but they don't

require unstructured recess time. This means that unstructured recess time is left to the schools and districts to decide. That leaves over 2 million students in the state of New York without required daily unstructured recess time. Putting students at a higher risk of developing behavioral issues such as ADHD and obesity.

Arguments Against Unstructured Recess Time

A number of arguments are made against unstructured recess time. According to Gavin (2016) eliminating or shortening recess can provide additional time that teachers can use to improve students' academic performance. There are also liability reasons: outdoor play can lead to injuries in children which may result in a lawsuit. On average, seventeen children die a year playing on playgrounds (Bossenmeyer, 2012). Many of the deaths and injuries are preventable and they can be caused by things such as equipment and surfacing layout, but safety is always at the forefront of designing play structures. Typically, when a student is hurt on a school playground, the child should be offered first aid by staff and the parents should be notified if it is a serious issue and more treatment is required. Fortunately, many playground injuries are minor and don't require further action. However, it is estimated that 10% of injuries that happen on school playgrounds in elementary schools are major and require follow-up care. According to Bossenmeyer (2012), 70% of injuries occur during physical education or recess. A review of injury data has revealed that the lack of proper supervision is considered a "contributing factor in playground injuries over 40% of the time" (p.75). School officials are also concerned about strangers' access to children on school grounds and the shortage of teachers and volunteers to supervise the children. Administrators are also aware of the bullying that takes place on the playground during unsupervised activities.

Methods and Procedures

Over the past two years at California State University Monterey Bay, I have thought long and hard about what I wanted to do for my senior capstone research project on. During my time, on the pathway of becoming a future educator in California, I have seen many issues that take place within the nation's education system. The one that stuck out to me the most was children's unstructured recess time within k-5 schools in both the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District and the Salinas Unified School District. That is what stuck out to me the most. There are multiple benefits to increasing children's unstructured recess time and to find out how much time students were actually receiving, I sent out an anonymous survey to 27 teachers, 20 principals, and 15 parents. From these surveys, I want to find out how much unstructured recess time students are actually receiving on a daily basis and what the opinions of teachers and principals are. I chose schools throughout the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District and the Salinas Unified School District to conduct this senior capstone project.

Participants

I chose elementary schools within the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District and the Salinas Unified School District. I sent the survey to teachers at random and from all grade levels within K-5 (See Appendix A for Survey Questions to Teachers) and I chose 20 schools at random to send out the anonymous survey for principals (See Appendix B for Survey Questions to Principals). I was also able to come up with my own survey questions to pose to parents (See Appendix C for Parents) and some of which tied into a few of my secondary research questions. The questions focused on the benefits of unstructured recess time and if schools were meeting the needs of students.

Procedures

After I completed the survey, I sent them in an email to 27 teachers, 20 principals, and 15 parents within both the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District and the Salinas Unified School District. After about 3 weeks I sent it out again and on the fourth week I closed the survey.

Results and Findings

The following subsequent paragraphs are the results of the syntheses of literature review and analysis of data that have been collected from the field around the secondary or related research questions posed in the Introduction and Background section specifically based on the results from the Teacher Surveys (See Appendix A), Principal Surveys (See Appendix B) and Parent Surveys (See Appendix C). .

1) Are there models of unstructured recess time in U.S. schools and other countries?

Recently, the topic of recess has been constantly a subject of debate in schools, particularly whether children should be allowed to have either unstructured or structured recess time or not. Ramsletter, Murray, and Garner (2010) did a study on the role of recess in schools and found that unstructured recess and free play for children in particular contribute to their social, creative and emotional development and recommend that they should not be withheld for any reasons. In addition, the American Academy of Pediatrics (2013) put out a very strong policy statement stating that recess is unique, complements to physical education, and is very crucial to children's development, and again, should not be withheld from children for any reasons. After reviewing a plethora of literature regarding the models of unstructured recess, there are no specific models suggested by researchers. However, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2017) did a study on building a culture of health through safe and healthy elementary school recess and offered a training model program to schools called "Playworks

TeamUp” to implement it in schools and concluded that “establishing safe and healthy recess is essential to promoting a culture of health in schools” (p. 5).

Regarding the models of unstructured recess time for other countries, Finland was found to be the most recess friendly country for elementary school children (Yli-Piipau et al, 2019). Teachers in Finland send their students to recess rain or shine for 15 minutes per 45 minutes of instruction throughout their school day. Children in Finland don't start school until the age seven and elementary school students only spend an average of 4-5 hours a day at school. As the child grows older their school hours increase and there is no standardized testing. Teachers are required to have a master's degree and only 10% of applicants are admitted to teacher education. Overall, schools in Finland are very different from schools in America. Students in Finland receive 60-75 minutes a day of recess and their school days are much shorter.

Within the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District and the Salinas Unified School District, once I started to receive my completed survey, I was able to compile my data and the results were similar to what I thought they would be. Out of the 27 teacher surveys, I was able to get 9 responses back. Out of the 20 surveys I sent to principal in the two-school districts, I was able to get 3 responses back and out of the 15 parents, I was able to get 2 survey responses in return. I don't believe that the total number of responses is enough to accurately gauge public opinion, but it is enough to get a rough idea. The following contains discussion of the analysis of the data collected from the field around some of the secondary or related research questions posed in the Introduction and Background section. That is also based on responses from the three sets of survey questions sent out to the three categories of subject participants, consisting of 9 teachers, three principals, and two parents.

- 2) *Is increasing unstructured recess time necessary for elementary school students? If it is, how does it benefit students' physical, social, and cognitive development? If it is, how does it benefit students' physical, social, and cognitive development?*

After compiling my data, I was able to answer some of my secondary research questions. I was able to see what teachers, principals, and parents thought about unstructured recess time. Teachers, principals and parents were surveyed on Survey Question (1) on how much unstructured recess time that their students received. Nine out of nine teachers responded that their students received an average of 60 minute of unstructured recess time; whereas all three principals and two parents responded that they knew how much unstructured recess time their students receive.

Survey questions (6) was posed to teachers, principals, and parents on *some possible disadvantages or drawbacks of increasing your student's unstructured recess time?* Out of the 9 teachers, 7 teachers responded that they would not be able to complete their class work if they spent more time outside. The other 3 teachers said that there aren't enough people to supervise the children or it would cost the school money to have to hire more people. For the principals, three 3 out of 3 responded that standardized testing and teachers have to teach a lot of information in a short amount of time. There aren't enough hours in the school day to included extend time for unstructured recess time. At the same time, both parents said that there would be less time for in class activities and less time for their child to work on what they need to work on, this includes reading and writing.

Teachers, principals, and parents were asked survey question (7) on *the benefits of unstructured recess time for students?* All of the teachers agreed that it would increase concentration. It helps students develop social and cognitive skills. They develop friendships,

learn how to self-regulate and work together as a team. Teacher 1 said that it can even treat behavioral issues in the classroom and reduce the number of students being diagnosed with ADHD (Teacher 1, Survey Respondent, 10 April 2019). Whereas three (3) principals indicated that unstructured recess time has many proven benefits but because of the way the California school system is set up and the large emphasis that's placed on standardized testing there unfortunately isn't enough time for students to get the unstructured recess time they need. For the parents, Parent 1 said that her son who had ADHD would be able to get out some his energy and had time to decompress from his classwork (Parent 1, Survey Respondent, 10 April 2019). The other parent (Parent 2) said that she thinks that her child would be able to get a chance to hang out with her friends more (Parent 2, Survey Respondent, 10 April 2019).

3) How do teachers in Monterey County implement unstructured recess time?

Teachers, principals, and parents were surveyed on Survey Question 2 on how much time students receive recess a day. Teacher 1 said that her students received about 70 every other day because she allowed her children to have an extra 10-minute break as a reward for good classroom behavior. But this wasn't an everyday thing (Teacher 1, Survey Respondent, 10 April 2019?? – get the correct date that you received the survey from teachers) while all 9 of the teachers stated that their schools have a set schedule of two 10-minute breaks and one 40-minute lunch period for their students. Whereas for the principals, 3 out of 3 said that, on average their students receive around 60 minutes of unstructured recess time. Principal 1 said that they know a few teachers who offer more recess time to their class, but it is something that the teacher came up with on their own (Principal 1, Survey Respondent, 10 April 2019). As for parents, Parent 1 stated that they think their child receives probably about 45 minutes (Parent 1, Survey Respondent, 10 April 2019) while

the other parent (Parent 2) stated that their child receives about 1 hour of unstructured recess time (Parent 2, Survey Respondent, 10 April 2019).

Teachers, principals, and parents were asked Survey Question 3 whether the amount of unstructured free time was meeting students' needs. Nine (9) out of 9 teachers said that they believed that students are not receiving enough unstructured recess time. Three (3) of them stated that they believed that a lot of their time was spent on rushing through the curriculum and meeting deadlines. As for principals, two (2) out of the 3 principals stated that they believed that their students were getting enough unstructured recess time. Principal 1 said that they believed that their students were not getting enough unstructured recess time and that most of the students' time was spent inside of the classroom. As for parents, parent (Parent 1) said that they thought their child was getting enough unstructured recess time (Parent 1, Survey Respondent, 10 April 2019) while the other parent [Parent 2] said that she doesn't believe that her child is receiving enough unstructured recess time because her son was diagnosed with ADHD and a lot of the child's time is spent in the classroom and his time outside is very limited. Also, when he has episodes of bad behavior her son may get his recess time taken away as a form of punishment (Parent 2, Survey Respondent, 10 April 2019).

In addition, teachers, principals and parents were asked whether Survey Question 5 *whether increasing unstructured recess time for elementary school students was necessary*. Nine (9) out of the 9 teachers said that increasing unstructured recess time is necessary for elementary school students. Teacher 1 went on to talk about how it improves concentration in her students, and it motivates them to do well in class because she gives them an extra 10-minute break (Teacher 1, Survey Respondent, 10 April 2019). The three principals were asked about the same survey questions.

Three (3) out of 3 gave a positive response because it had many proven health benefits for young children and also gives them a chance to relax. Principal 1 said “necessary, yes. Possible? Probably not because of standardized testing and teachers have to teach a lot of information in a short amount of time” (Principal 1, Survey Respondent, 10 April 2019). Whereas for the parents, both parents agreed that students recess time should increase due to the rising number of children being diagnosed with different attention disorders.

4) *What kinds of actions should be done to increase the unstructured recess time for elementary school students that will eventually benefit them?*

The teachers, principals, and parents were asked Survey Question 4 about what is being done (if anything?) to increase students unstructured recess time? And by whom? Eight (8) out of the 9 teachers said, that there was nothing they knew of that is being done to increase their students unstructured recess time. The other one [Teacher 2] said that her principal and other staff members set up a field day once a month so they may take a break from their studies and enjoy a day outside (Teacher 2, Survey Respondent, 10 April 2019).

Three principals were surveyed about the same survey question, two (2) out of 3 principals said that there was nothing being done to increase elementary school students unstructured recess time. Principal 1 stated that the staff put on a field day once a month for the kids so they can get outside and exercise and participate in activities (Principal 1, Survey Respondent, 10 April 2019). At the same time, three parents were asked about the same survey question. Both parents said that there was nothing that they knew of that was being done to increase students unstructured recess time.

Finally, the same teachers, principals, and parents were asked Survey Question 8 on the *kinds of actions should be done to increase the unstructured recess time for elementary school*

students that will eventually benefit them? Five (5) out of 9 teachers said to reduce the amount of time preparing for standardized testing. Teacher 1 went on to say that they sent a lot of their time preparing for state testing and getting students ready for the computer-based testing. A lot of the time the testing puts stress on both the teachers and the students, and she went on to say, “I don’t believe that they are really learning anything.” The other 4 teachers said that would like to increase students 10-minute break to 15-minutes” (Teachers 2,3, 4, and 5, Survey Respondents). Whereas two (2) out of 3 principals said, there should be less time testing and more time enjoying the outside, especially after long class sessions. Principal 1 said that longer recess periods should be mandated in the state (Principal 1, Survey Respondent, 10 April 2019). Finally, for the parents said they should increase recess so that the children have enough time to play, go to the bathroom, and do other thing that they need to do (Parent 1, Survey Respondent, 10 April 2019); whereas Parent 2 said that they should cut down on the amount of time spent in the classroom and give some of that time to increasing recess (Parent 2, Survey Respondent, 10 April 2019).

Discussion

I feel that the number of surveys I received back were not enough to get an accurate representation of what teachers and principals thought of unstructured recess time. I would have hoped for about 10 of each from both teachers and principals. I also wanted to include a lesson plan in this research paper but unfortunately the students were preparing for testing and I didn’t want to take away from their preparation time. Another limitation was that I should have sent out a survey to students and parents to see what their thoughts were on the issue and to also raise awareness about unstructured recess time.

Problems and Limitations

I did encounter some problems and limitations during my research. Such as, I sent out 50 surveys and I only received 25 back, resulting in a limited amount of data. I also, had time constraints to receive the surveys back, analyze the data, and submit my research project in a limited time. If I had more time, I would have been able to collect more data from all three of my categories of subject participants.

Recommendations

After completing my research and see what the state laws are and what teachers and principals think of the matter. I believe there are some simple solutions to increasing students recess time. The first is that schools and teachers should not take away recess as a form of punishment. More often than not small children are misbehaving because they have pent up energy and they need away to express it. Second, teachers should try to teach more lessons outdoors. Even though this isn't directly related to unstructured recess time, being outside is a total change of pace and having different scenery can have its own benefits, including wiggle breaks and have good impact on students. This will give students a few minutes to decompress, stretch their legs or do what they want. By doing so, students could benefit both mentally and physically. To help increase unstructured recess time, teachers should involve the community, talk to principals, and staff. Teachers should involve parents to participate as volunteers and become a yard duty!

Conclusion

This senior capstone research project examines my primary research question: *How does increasing unstructured recess time benefit elementary school students?* As a result, unstructured recess time for students can have the potential to promote activity and a healthy lifestyle. Unstructured recess also provides creative, social, and emotional benefits. It is critical for

becoming socially adept coping with stress and building cognitive skills, such as problem solving. Unstructured recess time is crucial for the development of young children. They learn how to interact with their peers, self-regulate, gain problem solving skills, improve their social skills, improve their overall wellness. Unstructured recess time promotes social skills, cognitive development, physical activity which improves brain function, it helps fight childhood obesity, reduces stress, increases creativity, and can improve concentration in the classroom.

There are more and more students being diagnosed with ADHD and other behavioral issues, but with enough physical activity and unstructured recess time, teachers may be able to help change that. Unstructured recess time has many proven benefits and with increasing their time outside and making unstructured recess time mandatory in all states, we could help create a society of well-rounded, creative, and healthy individuals.

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Appendix A

Anonymous Teacher Survey Questions

1. Are you aware of how much unstructured recess time students receives on a daily basis?

Yes No

2. If yes, how much time do they receive a day?

3. Do you think the amount of unstructured free time is meeting student's needs?

Yes No

4. If not, what is being done (if anything?) to increase students unstructured recess time?

And by whom?

5. Is increasing unstructured recess time for elementary school students necessary?

Yes No

6. What are some possible disadvantages or drawbacks of increasing your student's unstructured recess time?

7. What are the benefits of unstructured recess time for students?

8. What kinds of actions should be done to increase the unstructured recess time for elementary school students that will eventually benefit them?

Appendix B

Anonymous Principal Survey Questions

1. Are you aware of how much unstructured recess time students receives on a daily basis?

Yes No

2. If yes, how much time do they receive a day?

3. Do you think the amount of unstructured free time is meeting student's needs?

Yes No

4. If not, what is being done (if anything?) to increase students unstructured recess time?

And by whom?

5. Is increasing unstructured recess time for elementary school students necessary?

Yes No

6. What are some possible disadvantages or drawbacks of increasing your student's unstructured recess time?

7. What are the benefits of unstructured recess time for students?

8. What kinds of actions should be done to increase the unstructured recess time for elementary school students that will eventually benefit them?

Appendix C

Anonymous Parent Survey Questions

1. Are you aware of how much unstructured recess time your child receives on a daily basis?

Yes No

2. If yes, how much time do they receive a day?

3. Do you think the amount of unstructured free time is meeting children's needs?

Yes No

4. If not, what is being done (if anything?) to increase your child's unstructured recess time? And by whom?

5. Is increasing unstructured recess time for elementary school students necessary?

Yes No

6. What are some possible disadvantages or drawbacks of increasing your child's unstructured recess time?

7. What are the benefits of unstructured recess time for students?

8. What kinds of actions should be done to increase the unstructured recess time for elementary school students that will eventually benefit them?