Recess, Recess, All About Recess

There are several beliefs about recess that are universal in all schools. No child believes that there is enough recess in the school day. All children believe that their teachers’ watches are broken and that they do not time the recess correctly. Everyone believes in a different temperature at which it’s “too cold” to be outside. In our experience, these beliefs are held by most students.

However, even if we cannot reconcile these beliefs with fact, we do think there should be consistency among the Reading elementary schools in terms of minutes of recess. Last year, the elementary principals embarked on a mission to standardize the school day across the schools and as a result, increased overall recess time in the elementary schools. As a result of that work, the following recess standard was adopted by all the Reading elementary schools:

- Full day kindergarteners through fifth graders have 120 minutes of recess time each week.
- Full day and half day kindergartners get 100 additional minutes of play each week.

While we set a common standard for minutes, we did not set a common way that time is spent. Each building has its own building based programs and specialists allocation which present different scheduling challenges between the schools. In some schools recess is scheduled in 15 minute blocks and in others in 30 minute blocks. Some schools schedule recess on Wednesday (our short day) and some do not.

Recess is a crucial and necessary component of a child’s development and plays a significant role in promoting the overall development of the whole child (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013). The benefits of physical education and physical fitness are well-recognized, leading to improved personal and academic performance. We continue to look at our practices and focus on meeting the needs of all students.

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