



# Recess BEFORE LUNCH

playtime before lunchtime!



## Listen!

### Comments about Recess Before Lunch:

“Previously we had four adults in the cafeteria supervising students...we now manage our lunchroom with two adults and our trash has reduced from 8 cans to 2½. It seems logical that schools will do everything in their power to encourage students to eat healthier meals.”

— Brent Caldwell  
Principal  
Sberidan County SD #1

“RBL is definitely worthwhile; everyone is positive about it and will work to see it continues as part of our schedule.”

— Donna Toly  
School Food Service Director  
Sweetwater County SD #1

“Teachers like Recess Before Lunch as the students are more ready to settle down in the classroom after lunch than they used to be coming in from recess; students also eat better.”

— Carol Boal  
School Nurse  
Natrona County SD #1

## Benefits!

### **Improved cafeteria atmosphere**

- students are more relaxed and focused on eating rather than the playground
- less supervision in the cafeteria
- students have improved behavior

### **Fewer classroom discipline problems**

- students are calmer when they return to the classroom

### **Increase in classroom time on-task**

- students return to the classroom ready to learn

### **Increased milk, vegetable, and entree consumption**

- less plate waste, less trash
- increased nutrient and fluid intake; decreased number of nurse visits

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- Include recess before lunch as part of your wellness policy
  - Low cost to implement
  - After a morning of classes, kids are ready to play



### For more information:

download the Recess Before Lunch Guidebook from the Montana Team Nutrition Program

[www.opi.state.mt.us/schoolfood/recessBL](http://www.opi.state.mt.us/schoolfood/recessBL)



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## Ready, set...

**Seek input from the school and community**

**Gain a commitment from administrators, food service staff, parents and teachers**

**Observe schools that have Recess Before Lunch**

**Plan recess and lunch schedules that allow adequate time to eat**

- incorporate a hand-washing plan into the schedule
- encourage students to prepay for lunch to avoid losing money on the playground

## go!

**Focus on the benefits rather than the obstacles**

- think about what's best for the students

**Students are likely to be hungrier and thirstier**

- have cold water available
- promote the school's breakfast program

**Anticipate some resistance to change**

**Expect the schedule to be a work-in-progress**

- practice the new routine and trial for at least a year



Healthy eating  
and activity can improve

- attendance
- energy levels
- participation
- school behavior
- test scores
- academic success

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## Create a lunch atmosphere that supports healthy eating

Recess after lunch often finds the student focused on the playground, not his or her lunch. Enhanced nutrition and better behavior go hand-in-hand; recess before lunch offers an opportunity for students to benefit from both.

## Supporting research for Recess Before Lunch programs

A Montana Recess Before Lunch pilot study documented improvement in the mealtime atmosphere and students' behavior. Discipline problems on the playground, in the lunchroom, and in the classroom decreased.

A 2004 study by Bergman and colleagues of recess before lunch showed comparable results to a previous study by Mary J. Getlinger, et al. After implementing recess before lunch, plate waste decreased from 40 percent to 27 percent. In addition, consumption of calcium-rich foods increased 35 percent along with significant increases in most other vitamin- and mineral-rich foods.\*

Research repeatedly shows recess before lunch can help students perform better in school, eat healthier, and promote a lunchroom atmosphere conducive to eating.

\*Bergman, E.A., et al, "Relationship of Meal and Recess Schedule to Plate Waste in Elementary Schools." National Food Service Management Institute. Insight, Spring 2004.

\*Getlinger, M.J., et al, Food waste is reduced when elementary-school children have recess before lunch. J Am Diet Association 1996; 9:906-908.