Why We Need More Playgrounds

7 Reasons Why We Need Playgrounds, Play and Recess
As far back as 1885 and 1901 the research is quite clear on this: both children and adults learn better and more quickly when their efforts are distributed (breaks are included) than when concentrated (work is conducted in longer periods). More recently, the novelty-arousal theory has suggested that people function better when they have a change of pace. Because young children don’t process most information as effectively as older children (due to the immaturity of their nervous systems and their lack of experience), they can especially benefit from breaks.

Playgrounds give kids a break from the hectic shuffle of daily life.
Recess Increases On-Task Time

Dr. Olga Jarrett and her colleagues approached an urban school district with a policy against recess. They received permission for two fourth-grade classes to have recess once a week so they could determine the impact on the children’s behavior on recess and non-recess days.

The result was that the 43 children became more on-task and less fidgety on days when they had recess. **Sixty percent of the children, including the five suffering from attention deficit disorder, worked more and/or fidgeted less on recess days.** Dr. Jarrett’s research demonstrated that a 15-minute recess resulted in the children’s being 5 percent more on-task and 9 percent less fidgety, which translated into 20 minutes saved during the day.

Having time to **PLAY** helps kids **FOCUS** on other aspects of their life—studies and cooperation.
Children Need Outside Light

The outside light stimulates the pineal gland, the part of the brain that helps regulate our biological clock, is vital to the immune system, and simply makes us feel better. Outside light also triggers the synthesis of Vitamin D and a number of studies have demonstrated that it increases academic learning and productivity.

Playgrounds are where kids can find constructive, safe places to be outside playing.
The National Association for the Education of Young Children recommends unstructured physical play as a developmentally appropriate means of reducing stress in children’s lives – and studies show that stress has a negative impact on learning as well as on health.

For many children, especially those who are hyperactive or potentially so, recess is an opportunity to blow off steam. Outdoors, children can engage in behaviors (loud, messy, and boisterous) considered unacceptable and annoying indoors. And because recess is a break from structure and expectations, children have an opportunity to take control of their world, which is a rarity in their lives.
Recess may be the only time during the day when children have an opportunity to experience socialization and real communication. Neighborhoods are not what they used to be, so once the school day ends, there may be little chance for social interaction. And, of course, while in school children are generally not allowed to interact during class, while lining up, or when moving from one area of the school to another. Some school policies even prevent children from talking to one another during lunch. How can children with so few opportunities to socialize and communicate be expected to live and work together in harmony as adults? When and where will they have learned how?
We’re all aware that many of our children are suffering from being overweight and obesity, but even children who have no weight issues require physical activity to sustain optimal health. The outdoors is the best place for children to practice emerging physical skills, to experience the pure joy of movement, and to burn the most calories. Research has even shown that children who are physically active in school are more likely to be physically active at home. Moreover, children who don’t have the opportunity to be active during the school day don’t usually compensate during after-school hours.

Our Children’s Health Is At Risk
Physical Activity Feeds the Brain

Thanks to advances in brain research, we now know that most of the brain is activated during physical activity – much more so than when doing seatwork. Movement increases the capacity of blood vessels (and possibly even their number), allowing for the delivery of oxygen, water, and glucose (“brain food”) to the brain. **This optimizes the brain’s performance!** Furthermore, numerous studies have shown that students who are physically active have improved academic performance, achieve higher test scores, and demonstrate a better attitude toward school.
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✴ Everyone Benefits From a Break
✴ Recess Increases On-Task Time
✴ Children Need Outside Light
✴ Unstructured Physical Play Reduces Stress
✴ Children Need to Learn to Be Social Creatures
✴ Our Children’s Health Is At Risk
✴ Physical Activity Feeds the Brain

Source: Rae Pica, children’s physical activity specialist and author of 18 books for teachers and parents.