

ACTION ITEM

Citizen Advisory Committee-Executive Committee

Presented by: CAC Equity Subcommittee

Sub Committee Members: Holly Slack, Jessica Greer, Morgan Van Arsdall, Laura Boone, Lisa Shore, Cara McCandless, Maggie Cerria and Stacey Creque-Smoot

Topic: Recess

Overview: Recess, and the benefits it provides to both students and educators, was the focus of our research. The county has developed helpful guidelines on the issue, but there is currently no specific policy to address it. Recess has been withheld for weather related reasons or as a means of punishing poor behavior and/or missed academic expectations. When recess is withheld, it can impact students academic and social performance. Sometimes the children who could gain the most from outdoor free play are withheld from it.

CAC Review:

- Conduct a survey of PTA and PTO countywide to solicit feedback on the current state of recess and the expectations parents have regarding recess.
- Review reputable studies providing support of the benefits of outside, free play.

Conclusion:

The value of daily, dedicated free play time has been shown to be beneficial and has been supported by countless studies provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention¹, the National Network of Public Health Institutes² and the American Academy of Pediatrics³.

The benefits of recess and free-play include but are not limited to:

- Recess is a necessary break in the day for optimizing a child's social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. Free play allows children to develop conflict resolution skills and learn to take turns. It also helps children develop their skills as leaders and as followers.
- Free play builds creativity and ability to come up with unique ideas.
- Free play develops motor skills, idea execution, physical actions, and activities.
- Free play fosters decision-making skills and independent thinking.

The American Academy of Pediatrics believes that recess is a crucial and necessary component of a child's development and, as such, it should not be withheld for punitive or academic reasons.

Additionally, parents and educators who participated in the CAC survey overwhelmingly support efforts to protect and even increase recess in our elementary schools. Summarized survey results are attached. Full survey is footnoted here.⁴

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/recess.htm>

² https://nnphi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Recess-Data-Brief_FINALversion_071817.pdf

³ <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/131/1/183>

⁴ <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/12dthJ8DKjkwB5F8Gk0DKVWjeRQptwXH7NoiT1qp9Y1c/edit?usp=sharing>

CAC Recommendations to the Board of Education:

- 1) Adopt and augment the current recess guidelines as a policy to ensure equitable access to the benefits of recess for all elementary students. The policy should expressly include the following:
 - a. Specify that at least 30 minutes of free play is the minimum recess time, and that time does not include transition to and from recess.
 - b. Direct elementary schools to develop indoor recess plans that maximize physical movement opportunities for students. Highlight the Indoor Recess Toolbox as a resource.
 - c. Direct elementary schools to develop alternate recess plans for days when the weather allows for outside play but the playground is unavailable (for example muddy conditions).
- 2) Revise recess flyer to reflect all adopted policies. Change the wording in the flyer from “all schools” to “all elementary schools” to accurately reflect that middle and high schools do not currently have recess.

Highlights of the CAC Equity Committee Recess Survey (As of May 6, 2019)

The CAC Equity Committee distributed a recess survey via all CAC members on March 18. Members were asked to forward it to their contacts whom they represent (typically PTO presidents, school guidance counselors or Principals, etc.) The survey was also distributed on several social media outlets, both by CAC members and by individuals who shared it with their friends and families.

There were 4,789 responses. Of those, the vast majority (75.3%) were parents of elementary school students. These are the major findings:

- Approximately half of the respondents believe that students receive 20 minutes of recess, with an additional 30% believing they receive either 15 or 25 minutes. This confirms that the majority of schools seem to be following the AACPS recess guidelines within 5 minutes.
- Over 90% of respondents believe elementary school students should have 30 or more minutes of recess each day.
- 87% of respondents believe the amount of recess should be increased for all elementary school students with an additional 8% suggesting an increase for K-2 students.
- Nearly 70% of respondents indicate that students stay in their homeroom with board games, computer games, etc. during indoor recess. This suggests that schools are not using the Indoor Recess Toolbox or other creative ideas to ensure that students still get movement and free play on indoor recess days.
- Over 60% of respondents feel that the current cold weather temperature limit of 32 degree windchill is appropriate and no change is needed.
- Over 75% of respondents feel that an official Board of Education policy is needed to address recess policies.
- 1,377 people added additional comments. The complete text of those comments is available here:
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1iHaSaB8Ywszk7ClgPokffyyQFKHP5J6xBdlieQposW0/edit?usp=sharing>
- Frequent topics from the comments include:
 - the lack of recess and breaks in middle school. While this survey did not explicitly address middle school recess, it is clearly a topic that should be considered in the future.
 - the suggestion of having two breaks, instead of just one longer recess.
 - Mentions of the extensive research documenting the benefits of recess to academic success and health.
 - Examples of recess being less than 20 minutes due to lining up, logistics of getting ready for recess, etc.

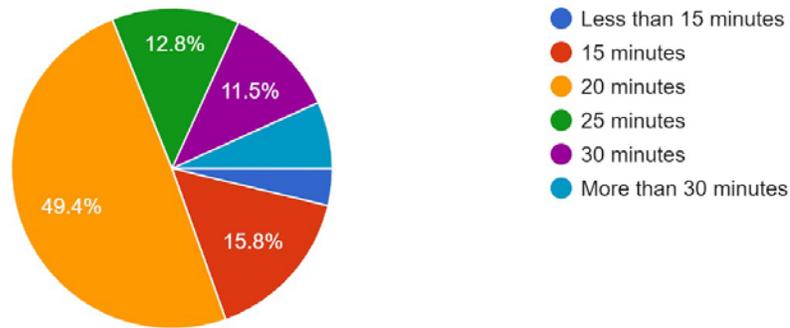
Complete survey results as of May 6, 2019:

Respondents' relationship to AACPS (can check more than one)

- 75.3% - Parents of Elementary School Students
 - 24.6% - Parents of Middle School/High School Students
 - 14.2% - Elementary School Teacher/Guidance Counselor
 - 3.2% - Middle/High School Teacher/Guidance Counselor
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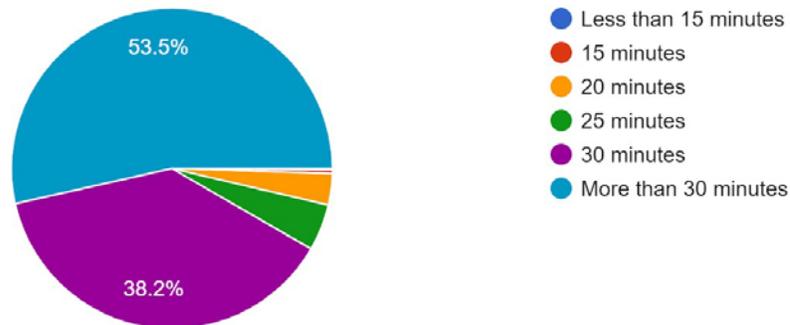
How much recess time do you believe elementary school students receive on a normal school day?

4,771 responses



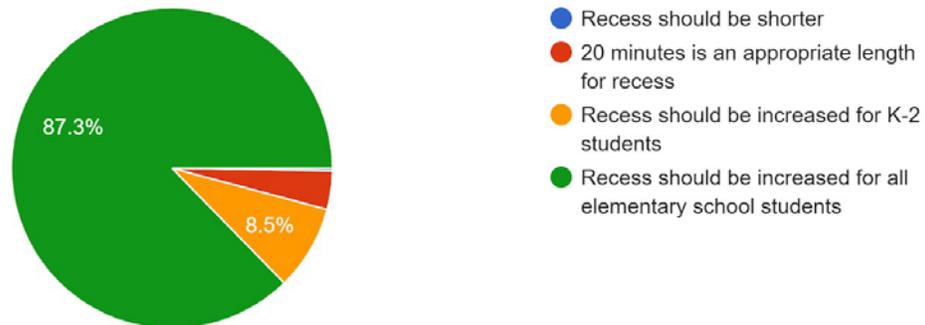
What do you feel is the appropriate amount of time for recess on a normal school day?

4,779 responses



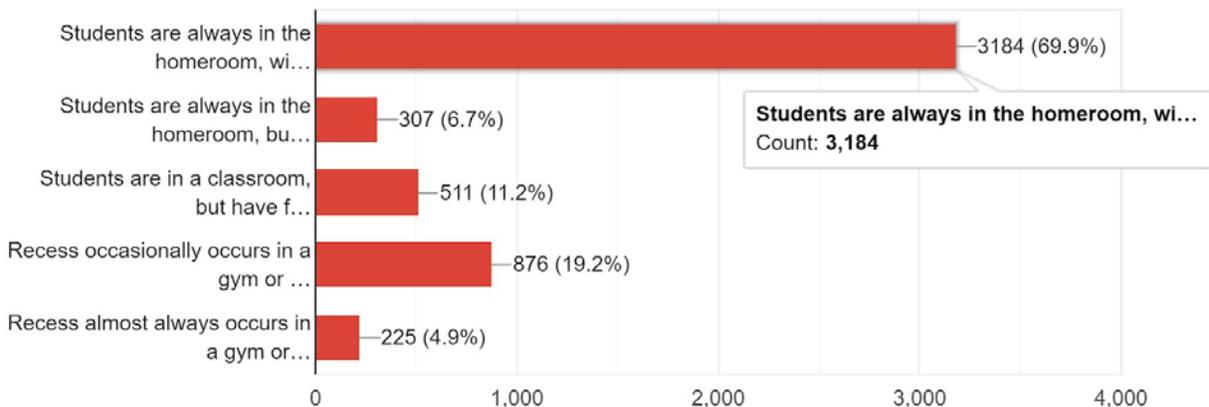
The guidelines specify that all schools should have a minimum of 20 minutes for recess. Should this guideline be adjusted?

4,772 responses



The guidelines encourage creative scheduling and activities for indoor recess. In your personal experience, how is indoor recess? (Check all that apply)

4,555 responses



Possible responses:

- Students are always in the homeroom, with board games, computer games, etc.*
- Students are always in the homeroom, but desks are rearranged to allow movement*
- Students are in a classroom, but have flexibility to choose a different classroom for indoor recess*
- Recess occasionally occurs in a gym or multipurpose room with room to run*
- Recess almost always occurs in a gym or multipurpose room with room to run*

The guidelines require students to have indoor recess whenever the wind chill temperature is below 32 degrees. For your child, is that limit appropriate?

4,764 responses



Possible responses:

Yes, wind chill of 32 degrees is a good outdoor cut-off

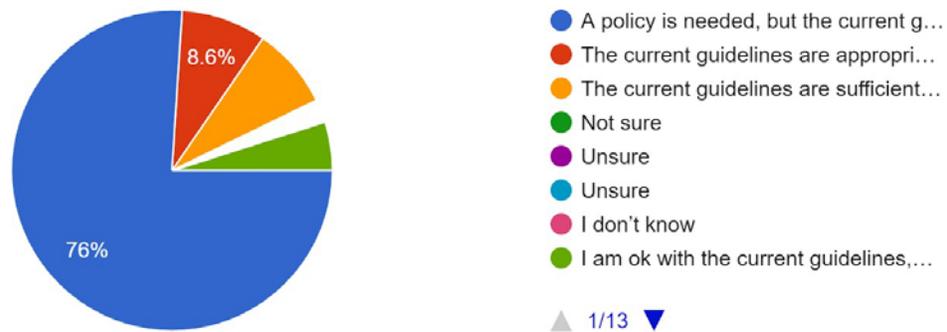
No, children should be outdoors whenever possible and the temperature limit should be lowered

No, a wind chill of 32 degrees is too cold for children to be playing outside and the temperature limit should be raised

Other

The CAC is considering a recommendation to create a Board of Education policy surrounding recess that will be...el is the appropriate recommendation?

4,524 responses



Possible responses:

The current guidelines are appropriate and should be made into policy.

The current guidelines are sufficient, and no policy is needed.

A policy is needed, but the current guidelines are not appropriate.

Other