

How physical education and recess benefit children education essay



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Imagine a child sitting in a classroom for eight hours without a break for recess or a physical education class. Many schools today are doing this because they don't want to take time away from standardized testing. In 1991, four in ten high school students took daily physical education classes; 10 years later, barely a third did (Kemper). In recent years, many school districts have been eliminating recess from the schedule because they wish to spend more time preparing for standardized tests. Bad economic times and budget cuts have caused school districts to also cut back on formal physical education classes and other electives. Instead of cutting recess and physical education classes, schools throughout the United States should improve their methods of teaching physical education because this can increase academic achievement, and improve lifelong physical fitness.

Because children learn through play, physical education should be included in the school schedule. The importance of play becomes very evident in a child's life at a young age, both physically, and academically. Despite the perception that recess is academically unnecessary, research shows that recess is actually very educational (Gross-Loh). According to *Mothering* magazine, "A recent report by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) defends the importance of play in young children's school lives. 'Play is integral to the academic environment. It has been shown to help children adjust to the school setting and even to enhance children's learning readiness, learning behaviors, and problem-solving skills'" (Gross-Loh). The AAP report states, "As children master their world, play helps children develop new competencies that lead to enhanced confidence and the resiliency they will need to face future challenges" (Gross-Loh). Recess time

allows children to socialize with their friends and get an idea of how the real world functions. It's important to get a child started early on adjusting to their surroundings and the real world. Recess allows them to work both individually and with others, which becomes evident in classroom settings. "Children who are physically fit do better in school. That's a statement we can make," Gabbard says. "Physical activity doesn't make students smarter, but makes they are more alert and they concentrate better" (Weir). Especially at an elementary level when kids are distracted so easily, they need something to make them concentrate more.

Since children can have problems such as ADHD, physical activity must be provided to let them work off tensions and improve academic achievement. Experts estimate that just over four percent of American adults (thirteen million people) have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, ADHD (Ratey 144). This disorder is just as effective among young children. The benefits of recess are evident for boys in a crucial way. More boys than girls are diagnosed with ADHD (Gross-Loh). Many children who have ADHD can use recess and breaks to their advantage. According to Pellegrini and Holms, "Recess breaks are especially effective in maximizing boys' attention by minimize fidgeting and maximizing attention, which are two dimensions of ADHD" (Gross-Loh). Something as simple as spending time outdoors can be very helpful and soothing to a child's mind. Dr. William Crain says:

In natural settings, children become very patient observers. They'll look at bugs, insects, and ponds.... There's a connection with ADHD to the loss of nature in children's lives as well as the increase of electronic media which speeds up their sensations, creating a revved up, over stimulated child who

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can't sit still. Crain has observed that the vast majority of children's creative output--poems, stories, and artwork--pertains to the natural world. He believes that when children are deprived of freely exploring this world, their creativity and capacity for individual expression are stifled. (Gross-Loh)

Being outdoors and in nature may not seem very interesting for an adult; however children are still getting use to the outside world and learning new things. Their observations tend to help a child become more creative and use their imagination to a higher extent.

In terms of academic benefits, physical education and recess can have a direct connection on brain chemistry. Physical exercise is particularly important, because moving the body promotes blood flow through the brain, and that blood flow supplies nerve cells with more oxygen and nutrients (Corrigan). Nutrients and vitamins can be extremely healthy in a child's daily life. The constant blood flow can help you sleep better, and scientists say the brain processes the experiences of the day while you sleep, consolidating learning and memory while your body takes it easy (Corrigan). This may be why children seem to get tired so quickly when in classrooms. Exercise can also optimize your mind set to improve alertness, attention and motivation. It also prepares and encourages nerve cells to bind to one another, which allows you to log in new information (Ratey 52). All of this indicates that exercise in physical education or recess actually has a beneficial effect on brain activity. Many people tend to not understand that physical fitness and academics have the same correlation. A psycho physiologist named Charles Hilman took a group of forty kids that were half fit and half unfit. He measured their attention, working memory, and processing speed. As he <https://assignbuster.com/how-physical-education-and-recess-benefit-children-education-essay/>

tested the kids the electroencephalogram showed more activity in fit kids brains, indicating that more neurons involved in attention were being recruited for a given task. This showed that better fitness resulted in better attention, and better results (Ratey 26). Completing a task is a fundamental skill that every child should know, and this study showed that exercise and fitness can help you achieve an everyday skill.

The cutting of physical education and recess is also affecting children physically. All across the country students are gaining weight, as their schools are lowering their physical education standards to meet other academic requirements. In 1980, just five percent of school-age children were severely overweight; twenty years later, the number had jumped to fifteen percent (Kemper). This statistic shows how much has changed among school age children, who are only getting worse as time passes. The lack of physical activity both in and out of schools is a significant contributor to obesity and the rise among overweight children. In Hawaii, where one in every four children is obese, there is no minimum physical education requirement for elementary and middle schools (Kemper). Places like Hawaii, who need physical education most, should not even come close to cutting physical education requirements.

Overweight children are much more likely to become overweight adults unless they adopt a healthy exercise that can lead to lifelong fitness. A dramatic rise in childhood obesity--10 percent to fifteen percent of American kids are overweight or obese, as many states have dropped requirements that kids take gym class every day, as recommended by the U. S. Surgeon General (Gullo). Every student should have some type of physical activity <https://assignbuster.com/how-physical-education-and-recess-benefit-children-education-essay/>

requirement. Only twenty one percent of adolescents are taking one or more gym classes a week, according to a recent University of North Carolina study that thought gym class cutbacks were partly to blame for the rise in overweight and obese kids (Gullo). Being overweight at a young age can lead to more severe diseases. Fairfax Country's Marks states, " Kids who don't get enough exercise could be at greater risk for diabetes, heart disease and other ailments, so teaching them to stay active when they're young is important to staving off health problems later in life" (Gullo). The last thing America needs is our future generations to be unhealthy.

In order to have lifelong physical fitness, all children should participate in fitness activities both in school and outside of school. Many schools that are cutting recess and physical education are assuming that children have some sort of out of school physical activities. However, many children rely only on school for their activities and play time. The need for in-school exercise was underscored in the results of a recent national survey by the CDC that found that almost two-thirds--61. 5%--of 9- to 13-year-olds participate in no organized physical activities outside of school (Kemper). In today's world, many children only get physical activity while at school because they live in apartments or otherwise stay inside their homes for safety reasons. None of this needs to be happening; however, if schools would take a look at the consequences of restricting the physical activity of children, they might understand how beneficial a break can be to a child. Many of the wealthier families may argue that their children can have outside community activities like baseball or soccer teams. However less affluent families lack the money and time to take advantage of these sports. " With No Child Left Behind, one

of the things that was left behind was physical education", says Stephen Jeffries, NASPE's president and a professor of physical education at Central Washington University (Bernstein). Something that teachers tend to do, is give their students five minute in class breaks. These five minutes allow children to stretch, walk around, and talk to their classmates. However, an in class breaks as short as this does not do much good to a student who sits hours in a class without any type of movement. The National Association for Sport and physical education (NASPE) recommends that schools provide at least 150 minutes of exercise per five-day school week at the elementary school level and 225 minutes a week for middle and high school students (Bernstein). Schools should not have any problem serving a requirement as low as this. However, according to a 2005 report by the National Center for Education Statistics, it has been shown that public elementary schools provide just 85 minutes a week for first-graders and ninety-eight minutes a week for sixth-graders (Bernstein). If a teacher was given a certain amount for a lunch break, that teacher wouldn't even think about wasting a minute of it.

Nevertheless, there are several schools that do provide recess breaks, and physical education, however many of these schools are not teaching it properly. One major mistake is the lack of adequate physical education teachers. At the elementary level, it has been estimated that in many states as much as eighty percent of physical education is provided by classroom teachers rather than physical education specialists (Treanor). Not just anyone can teach a physical education class. A physical education program should be taught by a licensed physical education teacher who has obtained

a four-year degree in physical education and passed appropriate state tests for licensure (Treanor). Similar to any other subject a teacher is set to teach, they must be well familiar with the subject. In many states, elementary school classroom teachers are licensed in a variety of subjects, including art, music, and physical education, but these teachers often receive only a course or two in physical education programming (Treanor). Not only does the class become unsuccessful, but even safety issues becomes a factor. Because physical education is a dynamic area with moving bodies, objects, and striking implements, teachers with inadequate preparation can place children at risk of injury. Liability becomes a very real concern (Treanor). You should also consider where you teach your program. In many schools, particularly at the elementary level, physical education is taught in hallways, cafeterias, or other makeshift facilities. Coaches wouldn't think of playing their football games on just half a field or their baseball games indoors. By the same logic, physical education classes should be taught daily in appropriate gymnasiums and outdoor field spaces (Treanor).

To get the most out of school physical education programs, schools should imitate successful programs at other schools such as Naperville, Illinois. The Naperville school district's approach to physical education has led to it being named a model program by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Weir). Students in this district leave high school with a second kind of transcript besides the one that tracks classes and grades. It is a fitness profile dating to the sixth grade, and it provides a personal history on blood pressure, cholesterol levels, body fat percentage and the student's cardiovascular performance (Weir). This allows the children to see for

themselves how much they have improved from their physical activities. One of the first steps forward was realizing that in this age of technology, children react best to a computer-driven physical education system (Weir). So many schools feel it is important to take away phones, computers, and any type of electronic from children, however the Naperville district allows children electronics, in an educational matter. " We have computers hooked up to every weight machine," Lawler says of the 40-station fitness centers his district has at five junior highs. In the first year of cholesterol screening, Naperville teachers could determine that fifty percent of their students had elevated levels (Weir). If every school can start using modern day methods, and make physical education class fun again, they will see improvements in generations to come.

Many may argue that Daily physical education in elementary schools would require the hiring of more specially trained teachers, leaving the schools with fewer classroom teachers and larger classes. Offering daily physical education in schools would require adding five physical education teachers at a cost of roughly \$200, 000 a year--or cutting electives like band, drama and choir, or even lengthening the school day (Kemper). All of this falls in a pile of luxury expenses that schools feel they shouldn't waist there tight budgets on. They do not realize how beneficial physical education classes and recess breaks can be to their students. Their main goal is to improve academic test scores, and get a child educated, and breaks, and exercise can help them achieve this goal. Many may also argue that other factors contribute to the obesity epidemic, including school lunches loaded with fat and vending machine junk food on and off campus. But officials increasingly

point to the loss of physical education classes as one of the culprits (Kemper). Schools should stop making excuses for the lack of physical education and avoiding the fact that they are causing our future generations of adults to be unhealthy.

Instead of cutting recess and physical education classes, schools throughout the United States should improve their methods of teaching physical education because this can increase academic achievement, improve lifelong physical fitness, and help prevent many health concerns that children might face in the future. The CDC, the American Heart Assn. and the National Assn. for Sports and physical education are among the many organizations that recommend daily physical education from kindergarten through 12th grade (Kemper). There are 52 million children from kindergarten through 12th grade who attend public and private schools in the United States (Ratey 31). If all these children had some type of physical exercise in their schools our future generation of adults would be a lot healthier. Try to remember how it was in elementary school, and the recess bell meant a break from hours of sitting in the same seat and studying. Today's students may not have the opportunity to socialize with their friends during recess, or move around and play in a physical education class. If this does not change, many students will face consequences in health that may stick to them for the rest of their lives.