

Let Them Play!

By now, many of us are convinced that kids need more recess time than they currently have. A recent article in the [Washington Post](#) confirms this.

According to Debbie Rhea, when it comes to solutions and strategies to improve education, more time for play is crucial. She notes:

"Kids are built to move, and having more time for unstructured, outdoor play is essentially like a reset button. It not only helps to break up the day, but it allows kids to blow off steam and apply what is taught in the classroom to a play environment where the mind-body connection can flourish."

When any human sits for longer than about 20 minutes, the physiology of [the brain and body changes](#), robbing the brain of needed oxygen and glucose, or brain fuel. The brain essentially just falls asleep when we sit for too long. Movement and activity stimulate the neurons that fire in the brain. When we sit, those neurons aren't firing."

Ms. Rhea goes on to describe a research project she recently headed in a couple of schools. Instead of adding more academic subjects and study time, Ms. Rhea's program implemented regular breaks and character lessons. The results were quite impressive:

**The children looked forward to each recess and demonstrated social growth and development through the change in peer interactions from pre to post assessments.*

**Transition time from classroom to recess and back decreased from three to four minutes each way to less than one minute each way with the intervention schools.*

**Children were more disciplined and focused in the classroom. Off-task behaviors like fidgeting decreased in the intervention schools consistently by 25 percent while the control school students maintained higher percentages of off-task behaviors from pre to post assessments.*

**Intervention children improved by 30 percent on attentional focus while the control school children changed only slightly.*

**Academic performance on reading and math significantly improved.*

**Misbehavior during recess significantly decreased.*

We commonly hear that schools need more class time in order to ensure that kids are learning all that they need to. They've assumed that recess takes away from valuable class time, and have gradually eliminated it. But have they eliminated the very thing that will actually encourage more academic growth? That certainly seems to be the case.

[Image Credit](#)