

'Recess Coaches' are Being Hired by Schools to Manage How Kids Play

A few years ago, recess was on the verge of extinction, crowded out by high-stakes testing and concerns over potential injuries or schoolyard bullying.

Recess, however, has come roaring back in popularity as parents and teachers have realized how essential it is to the growth and development of children.

Yet in spite of this resurgence, there are indicators that experts are still hijacking this essential component of childhood. Exhibit A of this problem was recently explained in a *Wall Street Journal* article entitled, "[Does Recess Need Coaching?](#)" According to the article:

"Schools across the country are revamping recess.

Some have it two or three times a day in shorter increments. Others bring in recess coaches to facilitate games. Many now have activity zones—all to encourage more physical fitness.

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'Sometimes kids may be out for recess but they're not being active,' said Michelle Carter, senior program manager of SHAPE America. 'So if you have zones with different activities and such, it encourages more participation.' Students are given choices of activity zones."

On the surface, the idea of structured recess sounds like a good thing. After all, we're letting kids have recess once again because it's good for their mental and physical health. If they're not maximizing this opportunity, why not help them?

But as Professor Anthony Esolen explains, it is this mentality that has killed childhood play and imagination in the first place. In his book, [Ten Ways to Destroy the Imagination of Your Child](#), Esolen explains:

“People will blame indoor amusements, and certainly that’s a large part of it. Television comes easy and deadens the brain. Electronic entertainment, too, is solitary and follows strictly delineated patterns. But that’s not the whole of it, for we must remember that the premise of our educational system is that children need to be socialized into a managed world. We talk a great deal about independence, but we loathe it as much as we loathe the blessed freedom of nothing to do. Children no longer play because we have taken from them the opportunity and, I’ll insist, even the capacity to play. And this, if we want to kill the imagination, is an altogether healthy thing.”

It has become a common complaint that today’s young people are no longer turning into capable adults, who can function, create, and thrive on their own. Is it possible that we have created such a problem by continually training them to operate in structured, adult-directed environments, even in something as basic as daily play?