

Students

Discipline

RECESS, PLAY-BASED LEARNING, AND DISCIPLINE

5144.4(a)

The Board of Education recognizes that a positive approach toward exercise and physical activity is important to the health and well-being of students. The Board requires that each student in elementary school shall have not fewer than twenty minutes daily in total devoted to physical exercise, except that a Planning and Placement Team may alter such schedule for a child requiring special education and related services. Further, the elementary schools will include an additional amount of time not fewer than ten minutes beyond the required twenty minutes for physical exercise devoted to undirected play, mindfulness activities, and/or physical movement during the regular school day, subject to the approval of building administration.

I. Disciplinary Consequences

All aspects of the school experience should encourage students to have a healthy attitude toward exercise and promote the life-long enjoyment of physical activity. Therefore, when school employees impose disciplinary consequences for student misconduct during the regular day, the following restrictions shall apply:

A. Loss of Recess as Disciplinary Consequence

Except as provided below, school employees may not prevent a student in elementary school from participating in the entire time devoted to physical exercise or undirected play, mindfulness activities, and/or physical movement in the regular school day as a form of discipline. Recess and other physically active learning opportunities may include movement-oriented learning activities in the academic environment, physical activity breaks, and regularly scheduled school wide routines and events that engage students in physical activity that is the time devoted each day (at least 20 minutes) to physical exercise in the District's elementary schools.

This restriction shall not apply to students who are receiving in-school suspension or when a student poses a danger to the health or safety of other students or school personnel.

B. Physical Activity as Punishment

School employees may not require students enrolled in grades PK-12, inclusive, to engage in physical activity as a form of discipline during the school day.

Students

Discipline

RECESS, PLAY-BASED LEARNING, AND DISCIPLINE

5144.4(b)

C. Physical Education and Health Education

School employees shall not prevent students from participating in physical exercise or undirected play, mindfulness activities, and/or physical movement during physical education and health education as a form of discipline.

This restriction does not apply to brief periods of respite/time-outs, referrals to the building administrator, or for safety reasons.

At no time shall an entire class be prevented from participating in physical education and health education or physical exercise activity as a disciplinary consequence.

D. Deprivation of Play-Based Learning as a Form of Discipline

School employees may not discipline elementary school students by preventing them from participating in the full time devoted to play-based learning, if any, during the regular school day, except when a student poses a danger to the health or safety of other students or school personnel, or as determined by a student's Section 504 team or PPT.

II. Play-Based Learning Requirements for Pre-Kindergarten to Grade Five

Effective July 1, 2024, the Board directs the District administration to provide for play-based learning during the instructional time of each regular school day for all students in kindergarten and any preschool program operated by the Board and permit a teacher to utilize play-based learning during the instructional time of the regular school day for all students in grades one to five, inclusive.

A. Definitions for Section II

1. "Free Play" means unstructured, voluntary, child-initiated activities that are performed by a child for self-amusement and have behavioral, social, and psychomotor rewards, except free play may be structured to promote activities that are child-directed, joyful, and spontaneous.

Students

Discipline

RECESS, PLAY-BASED LEARNING, AND DISCIPLINE

5144.4(c)

2. “Guided Play” means learning experiences that combine the child-directed nature of free play with a focus on learning outcomes and adult guidance.
3. “Play-based learning” means a pedagogical approach that emphasizes play in promoting learning and including developmentally appropriate strategies that can be integrated with existing learning standards. Play-based learning does not mean time spent in recess or as part of a physical education course or instruction.
4. “Mobile electronic device” means any hand-held or other portable electronic equipment capable of providing data communications between two or more individuals, including, but not limited to, a text messaging device, a paging device, a personal digital assistant, a laptop computer, equipment that is capable of playing a video game or a digital video disk, or equipment on which digital images are taken or transmitted.
5. “Instructional time” means the time of actual school work during a regular school day.

B. Play-Based Learning Requirements for Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten

Play-based learning shall be provided during the instructional time of each regular school day for all students in kindergarten and any preschool program operated by the Board. Such play-based learning shall:

1. Be incorporated and integrated into daily practice;
2. Allow for the needs of each student to be met through free play, guided play, and games; and
3. Be predominantly free from the use of mobile electronic devices.

C. Play-Based Learning Requirements for Grades One to Five, Inclusive:

The Board permits teachers to use play-based learning during the instructional time of a regular school day for all students in grades one to five, inclusive. Such play-based learning:

1. May be incorporated and integrated into daily practice;

Students

Discipline

RECESS, PLAY-BASED LEARNING, AND DISCIPLINE

5144.4(d)

2. Shall allow for the needs of such students to be met through free play, guided play, and games; and
3. Use of mobile electronic devices shall be rare.

The Superintendent of Schools is authorized to develop guidelines to implement this policy.

Nothing in this policy shall prevent a school employee from acting in accordance with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) developed by the student's Planning and Placement Team (PPT).

For the purpose of this policy, "school employee" means a teacher, substitute teacher, school administrator, school superintendent, guidance counselor, psychologist, social worker, nurse, physician, school paraprofessional or coach employed by the Board or working in a public elementary, middle or high school; or any other individual who, in the performance of his or her duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to, or on behalf of students enrolled in a public elementary, middle or high school, pursuant to a contract with the Board.

(cf. 6142.10 – Health Education Program)

(cf. 6142.101 – Wellness)

(cf. 6142.61 – Physical Activity)

(cf. 6142.6 – Physical Education)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
10-221o Lunch periods. Recess (as amended by P.A. 12-116, An Act Concerning Educational Reform, and P.A. 13-173, An Act Concerning Childhood Obesity and Physical Exercise in Schools)
10-221u Boards to adopt policies addressing the use of physical activity as discipline.
Public Act No. 23-101, "An Act Concerning the Mental, Physical, and Emotional Wellness of Children"

Adopted 6/7/2016

Revised and Adopted 9/24/19

Revised and Adopted 11/14/2023