

THE TRUE ROLE OF RECESS ACCORDING TO REGULAR AND SPECIAL EDUCATORS

by

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Due to recent trends to eliminate or reduce the time devoted towards school recess, the current study investigates the experiences and overall perceptions of school recess held by both regular and special veteran educators. The purpose of this study was to use semi-structured interviews to investigate the view educators hold toward school recess, the past and present role school recess has played within their school districts and provide educators with a voice for suggestions and opinions about recess towards the future of elementary education. The sample consisted of 12 veteran educators with a mean teaching experience of 23.5 years, employed at one of six districts within the Marathon County Special Education Consortium in Wausau, WI. Data were analyzed using thematic content analysis. Results indicate that recess is valued by school educators and that increased academic pressure has contributed to a reduced amount of time for school recess. This study additionally presents overall findings that educators have numerous suggestions and ideas for the future of elementary education, but the voice of veteran educators has failed to be recognized when making and implementing decisions towards bettering schools, in particular the battle between increased academic focus at the expense of school recess. Future efforts to implement curriculums geared towards higher achievement may benefit from the understanding of educators who believe that maintaining a healthy balance between recess and academics is necessary.

THE TRUE ROLE OF RECESS ACCORDING TO REGULAR AND SPECIAL EDUCATORS

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

American school systems have been searching for the missing ingredient to further students' academic success. Academic settings have begun to focus on quality teaching and learning outcomes for students to meet high academic standards. Therefore, accountability of staff for student learning and increased academic pressure have led many schools to reconstruct curricula which, in turn, devotes more time directed toward academic instruction. In particular, research has shown that increased pressures for student achievement have included more time devoted towards school instruction, among elementary aged students (Pre-K – Fifth), at the expense of school recess (Barros, Silver, & Stein, 2009; Chaker, 2006; Malone, 2009; Pellegrini, 1995).

A once uncomplicated and important aspect of children's lives and educational experience, recess is a global experience that has been an established part of the school environment since the foundation of formal educational (Banner, 2005; Pellegrini & Bjorklund, 1997; Ridgway, Northup, Pellegrini, LaRue, & Hightshoe, 2003). Recess can be defined as a break or discretionary period, typically outdoors, that allows children to freely engage in unstructured free play with peers or alone (Beighle, Morgan, Le Masurier, & Pangrazi, 2006; Pellegrini & Smith, 1993; Sindelar, 2002). Importantly, this provision of play provides all students an opportunity, during the school day, to engage in and reap the benefits associated with unstructured free play. As the focus increases towards higher academic achievement throughout American school systems, adverse effects may be seen on the development of children who are enrolled in schools where the curriculum has focused solely on classroom instruction and minimal recess opportunities.

Teachers observe the most beneficial components associated with academic success and overall development of the children, as 40-50% of schoolchildren's waking hours are spent in formal education, under the care of school staff (Fox, Cooper, & McKenna, 2004). However, when addressing the topic of elementary school recess, the literature lacks the perspectives of school educators. There are few studies that include the perspectives of teachers regarding the true role of recess within the school day (Sutton-Smith, 1990) and there are few, if any, studies that include the perspectives of both regular and special educators. Wechsler, McKenna, Lee, and Dietz (2004) stated 95% of young people attend school. Therefore, obtaining the educator perspective regarding school recess is important as these professionals are able to provide insight into understanding the key ingredients for overall child development and academic success.

Theoretical Foundation

School recess is an important venue of early education as it offers children time within the school day to participate in and reap the benefits associated with unstructured free play. Participation in unstructured free play has been highlighted by many theorists as a crucial proponent for the developing child. Furthermore, the following theoretical frameworks highlight the work of several theorists (Erikson, 1959; Piaget, 1969; Vygotsky, 1967) who have described and defined play as an important aspect and learning opportunity during child development (Cohen, 2006; Crain, 2011; Newman, Brody, & Beauchamp, 1996).

Explained by Cohen (2006), Jean Piaget approached play as an extension to his theory of intellectual development, which explained that as children move through the world they began to acquire schemas (an idea). Piaget suggested that children's patterns of play evolve as their cognitive-developmental levels change, allowing children to utilize and refine cognitive skills (Newman, et al., 1996). Piaget introduces through his theory of cognitive development that true

learning is not something handed down by the teacher, but something that comes from the child, as there is a greater educational value in social interactions where children are encouraged to think logically and consider other perspectives when interacting with others (Piaget, 1962). Childhood intellect is shaped by adult teachings and environmental influences, where children further develop by interacting with their environment. However, real learning comes from experiences that arouse children's curiosity and give them opportunities to work out their solutions on their own (Crain, 2011). Piaget further explained that children are able to overcome egocentrism through play as children are able to see or take other perspectives through repeated interactions with others. Cohen (2006) further acknowledged Piaget's theoretical framework highlighting the value that play in furthering children's knowledge of symbols, as players learn that an object can be represented by other items, as play is a symbolic representation of the child's inner world.

Provenzo and Brett (1983) described Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development focusing on play as an activity that allows individuals to become capable of performing complex tasks through experimenting, modeling and planning various situations. Play experiences, such as recess, provide children with learning experiences to partake in activities where they develop a sense of pride in their activities and accomplishments, which is explained by Erikson through stage four of his theory, "industry versus inferiority". Additionally, Erikson suggested children gain autonomous characteristics through play experiences where they are able to handle problems on their own and performing numerous tasks (Crain, 2011). Autonomy allows children to take charge, control the situation and enjoy the experience away from adult guidance. Such play experiences are highlighted by recess as students master various forms of play without adult assistance.

Finally, it has been noted that play is responsible for further developing a child's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1967). Lev Vygotsky highlights this by explaining that peers and adults may provide assistance to children, but it is the interactions during times such as school recess that motivate children to stretch their development to learn and complete tasks on their own (Crain, 2011). Engaging in unstructured play allows children to understand how to problem solve and creates competent individuals who are able to create their own meaning, rules, and understanding which allows participants to grow throughout their play experiences. Also, Vygotsky (1967) proposed that children are able to make meaning from concrete objects during symbolic play. It is through symbolic play that children are able to exercise their creativity and pretend certain objects exist as other fantasized objects.

Theoretical frameworks by Piaget, Erikson and Vygotsky have established the foundation for play as an integral part of child development. Such frameworks demonstrate the importance of unstructured play, which is provided in schools through recess. This provision of play is one of the few times that children are able to participate, grow, and learn through play during the academic day. As children engage in recess, they simultaneously learn to imagine, dream, manage a variety of situations, and practice life skills. Theoretical frameworks of Piaget, Erikson, and Vygotski will provide the framework for the study as it seeks to address the experience of unstructured play, exhibited during elementary school recess, through the voices of experienced educators.

Statement of Purpose

The lack of empirical literature surrounding the perspective of educators regarding the experience of school recess, has led to the present study. The overall purpose of this study is to investigate the overall thoughts, experiences, benefits, the current state of recess and input

offered surrounding the provision of play, through recess, within academic institutions from the standpoint of veteran regular and special educators. There have been past and many current pressures toward increased achievement and academic success that have affected the time devoted to school recess (Pellegrini, Huberty, & Jones, 1995). Therefore, this study seeks additionally seeks to advance the literature by addressing changes and pressures experienced by educators throughout their careers and the effect these changes have had the on the provision of recess.

By providing a voice to experienced teachers, this study will provide first-hand experiences, opinions, and thoughts of teachers towards the topic of school recess. Information gathered from this study attempts to add to the knowledge base surrounding school recess. Lastly, this research study may help the academic world answer questions regarding the role recess plays within the school environment and whether it is really worth tipping the scale too much towards academics, at the expense of experiences such as recess.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The empirical literature highlights that school recess is an experience associated with both positive and negative aspects and that time devoted towards this division of play has been altered. The following literature review is divided into seven sections. The review of literature will first discuss empirical knowledge surrounding the overall experience of recess within formal education before addressing the positive and negative aspects associated with school recess. Additionally, the effects of recess on students within regular and special education classroom assignments are highlighted. Empirical documentation addresses the debate of physical education versus recess and why physical education is not an appropriate replacement for recess as these two experiences provide beneficial, yet diverse, benefits to students is also presented. The literature review also acknowledges the trend toward increased academic pressure at the expense of other school experiences, such as recess. The final segment of the literature review highlights the importance of gathering the perspectives of educators in order to best recognize aspects of formal education that yield higher achievement, while understanding how school recess plays a role in the development of students and the academic setting.

Brief Overview of Recess and Formal Education

Childhood is a time for individuals to be carefree, acquire new friends, and create memories. Memories of early education often include experiences from school recess. Until the 1950's children experienced up to three recess opportunities per day (Mulrine, 2000). However, recess became a source of controversy in the late 1980's when researchers began to question its role within school curricula and its contributions to student achievement (Hart, 1993; Lindsay, 1994; Malone, 2009; Pellegrini, 1995; Ridgway, Northup, Pellegrini, LaRue, & Hightshoe, 2003; Sutton-Smith, 1990). Implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001 (United States

Senate, 2001) increased academic standards and accountability of both teachers and schools, pushing students to excel and meet academic standards (Barros, Silver, & Stein, 2009; Chaker, 2006; Malone, 2009; Millner, 2010).

Elkind (1981) characterized modern children as “hurried” through an adult agenda to accelerate growth in narrowly defined ways, stressing that an over emphasis upon formal education which sacrifices outlets for personal expression by diminishing play time. Advocates for student success support this time for free play as children’s “down time”. These schedule period of “down time” provide students with a break from instruction, allowing children to process what is going on within the classroom setting and a chance to release pent up frustrations and anxieties caused by educational pressure (Ramstetter, Murray, & Garner, 2010).

A developmentally appropriate education program focuses on the ‘whole child’, where teachers are able to enhance the mental, emotional, social, and physical life of their students (Rushton, 2011). However, schoolchildren today experience more time within the classroom at the expense of recess, leaving students at risk for not acquiring valuable skills associated with unstructured free play, through school recess. The majority of research surrounding this play experience focuses on the benefits recess provides to the school children, as well as the class environment (Jarrett, Maxwell, Dickerson, Hoge, Davies, & Yetley, 1998; Malone, 2009; Newman, Brody, & Beauchamp, 1996). These benefits include developing a variety of life skills, providing children benefits of free unstructured play that foster skills such as imagination, creativity, organization of games, recognition of rules, problem-solving, and leadership (Barros et al., 2009).

Recess, the Pros

Recess is an important venue of the educational experience for developing children. The literature surrounding school recess suggests that eliminating time devoted to unstructured free play is counterproductive to the overall development of these young scholars (Skrupskelis, 2000; Clements, 2000; Malone, 2009; Newman et al., 1996). As an important part of the school day, recess provides children with an opportunity to practice taking others' perspectives communicate effectively and follow negotiated rules with peers (Holmes, Pellegrini, & Schmidt, 2006). Also, this time period provides an effective learning environment that provides valuable opportunities to enhance players' skills and well-being.

School children may internalize recess as freedom away from the classroom walls and a time to explore the outdoor play environment, seen as their personal "playscape" (Trimble, 1979). Encouraged by one another, school children imagine, dream and interact with nature during recess. Such activities develop childhood cognition and a strong foundation for creative thinking (Brownlee, 1997).

A child's play environment is important as it nourishes, stimulates, and challenges the child and builds a child's cognitive structure (Crain, 2011). However, a child's level of play is dependent on the brain's maturation. Recess is able to enhance the brain as it provides students with a stimulating environment where they are free to select their own forms of learning. With a stimulating environment, such a school recess, children's brains are able to connect millions of neuro-pathways, aiding in stress reduction and allowing greater flexibility and creativity (Rushton, 2011). As children play, the pre-frontal lobe is activated. The pre-frontal lobe is considered the executive decision-making center of the brain, and as children grow, this portion continues to develop allowing children to make sound judgments (Rushton, 2011). Additionally,

through play experiences such as those engaged in during school recess, children may feel an increased emotional well-being as free play releases neurochemicals, dopamine and serotonin, which are associated with pleasure and excitement (Bergen, 2002). As neurochemicals are released, children are able to feel happier and better after playing, which ultimately impacts an individual's desire to learn or simply respond to the external environment (Rushton, 2011).

In addition to increased cognitive functioning, children are further exercising their imagination and creativity through recess. This natural play experience advances into an increased complex, sophisticated and symbolic form of play that allows children to practice real life situations (Monighan-Nourot, Scales, Van Hoorn, & Almy, 1987; Whitebread, Coltman, Jameson, & Lander, 2009). Imaginative desires and emotions are uniquely expressed through pretend play activities of recess. Pretend play is defined as a child using an object *as if* it is another object, *or* attributes properties to an object which it does not, *or* refers to absent objects as if they were present (Baron-Cohen, 1987). Participating in this form of play involves transforming objects and actions as children symbolically role play, use script knowledge, and improvisation (Bergen, 2002).

School playgrounds are home to numerous play experiences and diverse groups of individuals. As children of all sorts come together to play, they learn how to get along with different genders, cultures and racial identities (Blatchford, 1998). Children are able to engage in a variety of free play activities and freely choose with which peers they engage in play during recess. Children who participate in recess collaborate with others in similar games and interest on the school playgrounds. This collaboration increases friendships, new and old, and the level of social support a child has at school. Levels of support and friendships ease the school experience of a child, as a child feels more comfortable among the school environment (Ladd,

Kochenderfer, & Coleman, 1996). During school recess, friendship can be initiated among children of different class assignments and children are encouraged to use social skills, build confidence, and expand their friendship networks. Through co-operative play, children exercise skills such as emotional self-regulation, reflect before reacting, and acknowledging other's perspectives (McArdle, 2001). Children are able to joint plan, problem-solve and take turns (Jarrett, 2002) in order to keep their play experiences alive as they learn on their own how to resolve conflicts and negotiate with one another (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009). Interactive social dialogue and negotiation between individuals enriches the level of pretend play and a child's overall play experience.

School recess offers numerous socialization, creative and imaginative play experiences; however, it also supplements the experience of the participants with a time to meet their bodies' physical needs. The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (2013) previously issued guidelines stating physical activity is needed for children, recommending at least 60 minutes of a child's day for to physically active play. Without physical activity children may experience negative repercussions. Inactivity is a major risk factor for childhood health problems (Barros et al., 2009), and remains a significant health issue among our society. Approximately 17%, or 12.5 million, of children and adolescents 2-19 years of age have been diagnosed as obese (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010). Advocates for childhood physical activity are aware of the potential that recess has towards providing children time to exercise and provide a foundation for lifelong wellness and quality of life (Barros et al., 2009; Robinson & Wadsworth, 2010; Walker, 2009). Cardon, Van Cauwenberghe, Labarque, Haerens, and Bourdeaudhuij (2008) explained that children participate in a higher level of physically active play when teachers are not in control of children's choice of physical activities and observe from

a distance. However, teachers are encouraged to motivate students to participate in physically active experiences as physical activity provides children with higher brain functioning, increased energy levels, self-esteem and a relief from boredom (Linder, 2002). Such benefits may positively contribute to a child's classroom learning experience.

Recess, the Cons

Many authors have documented concerns regarding school recess (Barrios, Jones, & Gallagher, 2007; Blatchford, 1998; Chmelynski, 1998; Malone, 2009; Pellegrini, 1995; Simon & Childers, 2006). The literature surrounding recess highlights increased injuries, this environment as one that encourages aggression and antisocial behavior, and a time period that takes away from student learning as main concerns and negative aspects. School districts may argue that decisions to decrease time for recess are appropriate when acknowledging the concerns and potentially negative effects of recess.

Fears and concerns regarding school recess may have reinforced decreased time for towards these play experiences and changes within the school curriculum. The motivation behind such fears started with the liability, due to unsafe playground equipment. 'Insufficient playscapes' posed as possible threats of lawsuits regarding injuries that occur on the playground (Chmelynski, 1998). Children occasionally are hurt on blacktop surfaces and injured on the challenging equipment. Since a litigious society in the 80's, schools started eliminating the possibility of recess accidents (DeGregory, 2005). Currently playground standards must meet terms of the Americans with Disabilities Act. (2005), which the United States Access Board (2007) further explains that newly constructed facilities, for children ages 2 and older, must readily accessible to, and usable by, individuals with disabilities such as parks, schools, childcare facilities, and public gathering areas.

Regardless of increased playground standards, numbers vary regarding number of injuries caused on playgrounds as Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2006) estimate 200,000 children are injured annually, while the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons (2013) estimates that 220,000 children are injured annually on playgrounds. Regardless of the actual amount of children who are hurt among playgrounds, only 10-25% of child and adolescent injuries occur in school (Barrios et al., 2007). Simon and Childers (2006) described the perceptions of principals reporting “student safety” and “liability for serious injury” rather than “poor or lack of playground equipment as major drawbacks of recess. Playground injuries leave schools potentially liable for their students’ safety and responsible for injuries that take place. Barrios et al. (2007) study reviewed legal documents of schools, finding approximately two-thirds of cases reviewed resulted in schools paying a median award of \$50,000, to the maximum award of \$15 million, due to injuries of students.

The school playground additionally has acquired a negative image as school officials and parents have expressed concerns of the dangerous effects of the playground hierarchy and bullies emerge during recess (Boulton, 1997). School playgrounds have been noted to have a ‘socialization model’, which reveals how children practice dealing with many issues that they may face throughout their lives (Pellegrini, 1995). Problems associated with the playground hierarchy include peer bullying, intimidation and violence (Blatchford, 1998). Among this hierarchy, there are child “bullies” who use strength in words, physical power, or intimidation to harm other, weaker peers (Farmer et al., 2010). Playgrounds are one of the main arenas where bullies have been seen to reign free. Whitney and Smith (1993) found that of those pupils who reported that they were bullied 76% indicated this occurred in the playground, compared to 30% in the classroom, 13% in the corridors, and 7% elsewhere. Although social hierarchy and

bullying experiences among the playground require children to practice social skills; high quality staff should be appropriately educated in how to manage the issue of bullying, while recognizing aggression and conflict are also ways children negotiate and solve their differences (Rodkin, 2012). Negative behaviors and situations that students face among the playground are troublesome; however studies have shown that these behaviors have been on the decline (Blatchford, 1998).

Further justifications surrounding the decreased popularity of recess were expressed in the literature as a time that takes away from academic instruction. Simon and Childers (2006) studied principals' perceptions of recess, with a common theme emerging: "less time devoted to academics" (p. 42). Due to recent statewide and national efforts to hold schools accountable for academic progress to each student, principals have increased their focus toward more time devoted to academics as a way to meet new educational standards (Simon & Childers, 2006). Additionally, 20% of districts within a national survey during the 2006-2007 school year reported reducing recess by an average of 50 minutes per week to allocate more instructional time for English and Math.

With increased attention towards student safety and meeting required academic standards, children are seeing less time on the playground. The result of decreased time for schoolchildren to participate in free play has been linked with school difficulties, increased childhood anxiety, disconnection from nature, attention deficit disorder and epidemic of childhood obesity (Gross-Loh, 2007). To counteract the school difficulties, eliminating student's time to participate in unstructured free play may not be the answer.

Classroom Behaviors

Recess could, and should, be considered an educational tool that aids in developing the “whole child” as well as a tool used to increase appropriate classroom behaviors and academic success. With increased time devoted to academics and longer requirements for on-task learning, children tend to become fidgety, unengaged, or daydream, which directly affects real learning (Jarrett et al., 1998; Malone, 2009). It is possible that both students and teachers may both experience a feeling of relief during scheduled their recess breaks. Time dedicated to recess is therapeutic to children as it functions as a respite from stress caused by adult expectations and pressures (Newman et al., 1996), contributing to more appropriate classroom behavior and increased attention of students. With breaks among structured learning, the brain is able to refresh itself and make stronger connections between neurons, resulting in stronger and faster reactions in recalling information (Gallagher, 2005).

Strategically scheduled breaks during and between challenging educational tasks increases a child’s attention span and possibly increases learning (Pellegrini & Bjorklund, 1997). Recess serves as a perfect opportunity for brain breaks. Madigan (2004) explains the impact that providing children a break from learning has on individuals as neuroscience shows the brain shifts attention and focus every 90 minutes, and when a human sits for longer than about 20 minutes, the physiology of the brain and body changes because gravity has pooled blood into the hamstrings and has robbed the brain of needed oxygen and glucose, i.e. brain fuel. Therefore, providing the brain with a short break allows for information to consolidate for increased retention and retrieval of memory.

Filling the school schedule with breaks such as unstructured free play opportunities allows children to blow off steam and release pent-up energy (Barros et al. 2009; Jarrett et al., 1998; Simon & Childers, 2006). When students are given the chance to move around, they return to the classroom refreshed and better able to deal with the task at hand and learn more effectively (Chmelynski, 1998). With increased attention and more appropriate student behavior, the literature shows the important role that education breaks, such as recess, have in possibly creating an effective learning environment among the classroom.

Why Physical Education Is Not Enough

Searching for a complete balance between academic achievement and appropriate breaks for student revitalization, some may believe that physical education courses are enough to supplement recess. However, recess and physical education provide students with a diverse learning environment and benefits. Wingert (2000) expressed that recess and physical education are provided less to today's schoolchildren compared to children in the 1970s. Decreased play experiences within the school setting for today's generation of students makes children suffer the consequences of decreased time to engage in important play experiences and physical activity. Due to eliminated opportunities to participate in play activities, today's schoolchildren are unable to take full advantage of the numerous benefits toward physical and psychological health (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010), such as development of motor skills, self-efficacy and a healthy body composition (Dale, Corbin, & Dale, 2000). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2010) conducted a review of literature examining the association between school-based physical activity and academic performance. Fifty articles were reviewed to explore the relationship between physical education and school academics. Collectively, physical activity was found to be positively correlated with students' academic performance in

addition to demonstrating few, if any, negative implications that result from physical activity. The literature does illustrate the understanding that school administrators have in regards to the important role physical education class and recess have in providing opportunities for students to participate in recommended amounts of physical activity (Dale et al., 2000).

Although recess and physical education both have the potential to promote physical activity and healthy lifestyles, both settings provide adverse learning environments and benefits for children. Recess is an essential component of the total educational experience, providing schoolchildren discretionary time and opportunities to develop healthy bodies and practice life skills such as conflict resolution, cooperation, respect for rules, taking turns, sharing, using language to communication, and problem solving. Sindelar (2002) explains that with such unique experiences provided by the recess environment, learning can be achieved on the playground in a way that is not possible in a structured classroom, such as physical education. Physical education, on the other hand, is a structured class that is teacher facilitated (Ramstetter et al., 2010), where students learn an activity, that is chosen by the teacher and are expected to participate in the activity. The literature reveals that physical education courses differ from recess as these structured classes are not up to par in providing an overall experience for schoolchildren. Physical education has been defined as a school-based learning area that is typically articulated, in official curriculum documents and texts, as the premise for promoting lifelong participation in physical activity (Garrett & Wrench, 2007). Physical Education environments were studied by researchers and concerns were expressed towards increased emphasis on quality instruction and time as classrooms tend to be over-crowded, and in some cases, held in poorly equipped facilities (Frost, n.d.). The International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (2011) issued a statement urging schools to “recognize that quality

Physical Education depends on well qualified educators and scheduled time within the curriculum, both of which are possible to provide even when other resources like equipment are in short supply” (p. 4). Additionally, the UCLA Center to Eliminate Health Disparities (2007) emphasizes that the poor quality of physical education courses leads to minimal levels of physical activity of children. Millner (2010) described a study by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, where the authors acknowledge that 42% of our nation’s schoolchildren get most of their total daily exercise at recess, more than Physical Education class and after-school programs. It is seen through empirical research that children are more active in spacious, compared with restricted, environments (Pellegrini & Smith, 1993).

Recess is one of the few inexpensive, readily available opportunities our school system has to offer for getting kids moving (Millner, 2010). However children should be encouraged, but not required, to be physically active during recess, and as such, recess should complement, not replace or substitute for physical education class (Ramstetter et al., 2010). With difference in the environment and benefits surrounding student participation, recess and physical education should be considered as separate settings, comprised of different goals, benefits and experiences for students.

Recess Effects: Regular vs. Special Education Classrooms

School children spend countless hours accumulating pent-up energy, during classroom instruction, which needs to be exerted. Both regular and special education classrooms are offered unique benefits from recess. Crucial for students with disabilities, recess provides an opportunity for all students to be socially integrated through play. “Included” students, defined as students with a disability that are included within the regular education classroom during instruction, are often rejected by classmates and fail to form positive relationships with their

peers in the classroom setting (Miller, Cooke, Test, & White, 2003). Therefore, recess provides more than physical integration into the school experience, as students with special needs are able to join peers from regular education classrooms in play, establishing friendships. Hocutt (1996) explain how the establishment of such relationships between students with disabilities and their peers without disabilities is viewed as an important outcome of school integration efforts. The literature surrounding recess effects on both regular and special education classrooms support positive effects for students and classroom learning environments.

Regular education. Literature surrounding regular education classrooms support recess as a component which increases the learning environment for the students (Barros et al., 2009; Jarrett et al., 1998; Millner, 2010; Pellegrini & Smith, 1993). Recess not only benefits a child in a variety of developmental areas, but it also benefits the classroom environment with increased appropriate behaviors, increased attention and less fidgeting experienced after students participate in recess. Effects of recess on third-grade classroom behaviors were observed by Barros et al. (2009). The study examined the amount of recess that children 8 to 9 years of age receive in the United States and compared the group classroom behavior of children of the same age receiving daily recess or not receiving recess. Results from the study support more appropriate group behavior among students who receive the minimum of one recess a day for fifteen minutes, in addition to increased teacher's rating of classroom behavior scores. In addition to Barros' study, the literature suggests that children who participate in at least 15 minutes of recess, a day, behave better in class. Conclusions were based on a multicenter study of more than 11,000 eight- and nine-year-olds at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine (as cited in Millner, 2010).

Recess and student behaviors were also examined in a study by Pellegrini, Huberty, and Jones (1995). The findings showed children, especially boys, exhibited signs of inattention as length of play deprivation increased. To demonstrate the effects of recess on students that do not experience recess, Jarrett et al. (1998) conducted a study in an urban school district, implementing recess into the school day one time a week for fifteen to twenty minutes, in two fourth grade classrooms. Students did not know what day they would have recess, until just before the recess period. As an overall group, on-task behaviors increase from 85% to 90% when students had recess. However, individual differences found 60% of the participants benefited from the recess experience with considerably higher levels of on-task behavior and less fidgety. Jarrett et al. (1998) and Pellegrini (1995) concluded from the results of their studies that recess makes children more on task and less fidgety and most children are renewed by a break rather than disrupted by it.

In sum, literature on recess's effect on regular education class, Jarrett et al. (1998) discussed "mass versus distributed" and Novelty-Arousal Theory to help illustrate why students fare better when recess is included within the school day. The principle of "massed versus distributed" has been used to explain the importance of breaking up classroom instruction, with activities such as recess, to best increase a student's success of acquire the information. Additionally, this perspective supports increased memory recall when learning is spaced rather than compiled. Novelty-Arousal Theory explains that individuals function better when they experience a change of pace, highlights that schoolchildren become habituated after being engaged in an activity for a long period of time, causing boredom to set in. Increased learning, attention, and behaviors can be explained through the theory of novelty-arousal. As boredom sets in, the student seeks novelty. From the many studies surrounding the effect of recess on

students within regular education classrooms, one can confidently use these two principles to understand the relationship between recess and appropriate class behaviors within the classroom environment. Providing a break to students who are in regular education classrooms refreshes their mind and body, allowing students to be more engaged during time devoted to academics.

Special education. Special education classrooms additionally benefit from the recess experience. Students who receive special education services gain additional benefits from recess, in addition to a break from class instruction to participate in free play. The playground is an environment that provides a variety of equipment to challenge all children's body types, regardless of their disability. Additionally, special education students use recess to move freely through the environment, interact with peers and learn important social skills.

At 4.9% of students nationwide (Scull & Winkler, 2011), children with learning disabilities obtain many benefits from recess. Children diagnosed with learning disabilities find recess as a relief from academics as learning to develop written language may be a struggle for students with learning disabilities. Take Carlos for example, a student mentioned in a study by Gregg and Mather (2002) surrounding students with learning disabilities, who perceives that his only salvation from the third grade, writing intensive curriculum, is recess. Often, students with learning disabilities create negative perceptions of writing as well as their own capabilities, affecting their attitudes about school (Gregg & Mather, 2002). Faison-Hodge and Porretta (2004) concluded through their study of children with intellectual disabilities that this population of children accrued more moderate to vigorous physical activity during unstructured recess periods than physical education (i.e. 65% vs. 23% of observed time). Suggestions for these figures have included that physical education have less room children to move freely and that

students were aware of the need to exert more of their energy due to minimal time available for recess.

Students receiving special education services for their diagnosis with Attention Deficit Hyper-Disorder (ADHD) experience less negative behaviors when they engage in recess. For children with ADHD, recess is not a pleasant gesture or pastime; it is a fundamental activity (Banner, 2005). Recess can be seen as fundamental when acknowledging thoughts from Ormrod (2000), that as an accommodation for children with ADHD, “we must certainly make sure that our students have regular opportunities to release pent-up energy, such as during recess and physical education” (p. 184). Ridgway et al. (2003) concluded a behavioral study which observed three boys, in second grade, who have been diagnosed with ADHD. After observations were completed, the authors cited the mean percentage of inappropriate behavior at 70% on days where recess was not provided for students diagnosed with ADHD versus 35% on days that recess was provided. Inappropriate behaviors increased the longer the students went without recess.

More attention has been given towards the increased population of children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and most literature surrounding special education students and recess focus on this population of student’s experience of recess. For students diagnosed with ASD, recess can be used to embed interventions as children with ASD may lack the skills to fully experience the true benefits of recess. Taking advantage of the recess environment allows facilitators to implement strategies to increase participation and social interaction with students diagnosed with ASD. After a systematic review, a study by Lang et al. (2011) stressed the importance of school recess in targeting behaviors and instruction of students with ASD, through games and activities. Lang et al. (2011) concluded that teachers may not wish

to interfere with children with ASD, as recess is activity focused on unstructured “free-play”, however these students lack the social or play skills necessary to benefit from recess without support. For students who lack the skills necessary to meaningfully participate in recess, it is recommended that goals and objectives related to recess be included in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) (Cappadocia & Weiss, 2011).

Additional studies have been conducted to explore how children with Autism Spectrum Disorder can potentially learn to socialize with peers and obtain some of the benefits recess has to offer. Harper, Symon, and Frea (2007) suggest that children with Autism Spectrum Disorder benefit from recess when assigned to a structured play group with typical developing peers. Results from this study confirm that structured play groups lead to improved social interactions between the targeted children diagnosed with ASD and typically developing peers. Baker, Koegel, and Koegel (1998) found children diagnosed with ASD, who initially isolated themselves during outdoor play, began to interact with peers when structured games included the student’s highly preferred activities or obsessions. Peer implemented, naturalistic strategies have been effective at increasing social interactions for children with autism ASD during recess (Harper et al., 2007). Although there is high regard for the benefits of recess toward student learning, due to characteristics of ASD, students may be overstimulated from too much structured learning and interventions. Therefore, it should be noted that students with ASD may later experience problems in classes that follow recess if intervention during recess is too strenuous or demanding (Lang et al., 2011). It would be crucial to ease the intensity of the intervention and learning skills during recess to accommodate students diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Children, regardless of regular and special education categorization, are physical, imaginative beings and recess provides children a diverse learning opportunity. To restrict free play where children socialize with peers, are creative, and learn through their environment is only restricting their natural development. There has been no supportive evidence among the recess literature confirming the time spent in recess having a negative effect on schoolchildren's cognition, attitudes or classroom experience (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011). School boards, superintendents, principals, and teachers can feel confident that providing recess to students on a regular basis may benefit academic behaviors and the "whole body experience" for their students.

Increased Emphasis on Academic "Success" (At expense of other experiences)

As early as 1987, parental pressure for early high academic achievement was a driving force leading educators to accelerate instruction by shortening the time allotted for lunch periods, recess, and free-play activities (Newman et al., 1996). Accurate to his prediction, school districts have continued to increase the emphasis on academic success, at expense of other experiences associated with the school environment. Kohler, Kilgo, and Christensen (2012) discussed a study of school systems in 1989 throughout the United States explained that nearly 90% of schools provided at least one recess, consisting of 15-20 minutes of length, daily for students. Within two decades of that study, the American Association for the Child's Right to Play cited that as many as 40% of school districts in the United States have reduced or eliminated recess due to increased focus on academics (Barros et al., 2009; DeGregory, 2005; Dills, Morgan, & Rotthoff, 2011; Malone, 2009; Millner, 2010).

Academic pressures have risen for students and staff with the implementation of No Child Left Behind in 2001 (Barros et al., 2009; Chaker, 2006; Malone, 2009; Millner, 2010;

Ramstetter et al., 2010). The rationale behind the new policy focuses on raising pupil learning outcomes in core subjects. Schools are required to assess students at selected grade levels to receive academic funding from the federal government (Duckworth, Quinn, & Tsukayama, 2012). The pressures placed on standardized testing have made the way down to first grade classrooms, resulting in Kindergarten classes becoming training grounds for success in first grade and not a place where children can explore, grow, and learn at their own pace (Rushton, 2011). As a result of accountability of school in regards to student success, Strauss (2004) reported that school administrators within a school in Alabama had eliminated Kindergarten naptime in order to not lose precious seconds preparing for standardized testing (as cited in Kohler et al., 2012).

In addition to No Child Left Behind, each state issues their own set of requirements for schools to meet standards regarding specific knowledge students should know and be able to do. forty states among our country have adopted the Common Core Standards (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2012). These academic standards focus on English Language Arts, Math and Literacy achievement and provide an explicit description of depth of understanding to achieve at each grade level. Most districts that increased time for English Language Arts or Math reported substantial cuts in time for other subjects or periods, including social studies, science, art and music, physical education, recess, and/or lunch (McMurrer, 2008). Just 18% of states require elementary schools to provide daily recess (Dills et al., 2011). Since the increased pressure for student achievement, schoolchildren have experienced less time on the playground and an increase in time devoted towards academics.

Increased standardized tests scores have placed teachers under academic pressure. “Academic pressure” refers to the degree to which environmental forces put pressure on student

achievement school-wide (Christophersen, Elstad, & Turno, 2011). As legislators, parents, and educators search for the missing link to increase academic performance, changes within the school curriculum have been made. One of the first changes focuses on reducing and/or eliminating recess to make room for formal education (Schultz, 1998). With high-stakes assessment, No Child Left Behind, and competition for educational funding, children experience less unstructured peer interaction time, through play, at school. (Kohler et al., 2012; Newman et al., 1996). Although teachers may be spending more time on instruction, this action could adversely affect children's other skills as less time is being devoted to children's free play. Rushton (2011) included a quote from a professor, Otto Weininger, at the University of Toronto Institute for Studies in Education that explained how increased academic standards are not beneficial for human development, "You can't make children grow faster by pushing them, just as you can't make flowers grow faster by pulling them" (p. 90), further depicting that young children need to unfold at their own developmental pace. Information from NAEYC explained that a school system that devoted one-third of the day to non-academic activities (i.e. art, music, physical activity) improved attitudes and fitness, and slightly increased test scores, in spite of spending less time on academics (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009).

Theoretical frameworks such as Gesell's (1945) Maturation Theory can be used as the foundation for explanations, such as Professor Weininger's that children are to develop at their own developmental pace. Maturation Theory highlights that a child's growth is influenced by two major forces, his/her environment and from within, by action of the child's genes which varies each child's rate of development and creates individual differences (Crain, 2011). As teachers push children to excel in school, Gesell's theory explains that children develop the urge

to learn from within and through self-regulation children can resist efforts to learn new things (Crain, 2011). This theoretical framework is opposed to teaching a student things above their schedule and explains that teachers need to gear their work to a child's state of readiness, special abilities and focus on developing the individual's full personalities which will guiding the student to optimal growth.

After reviewing the literature on increased emphasis on academic achievement, one cannot help but wonder whether the constant pressure to reach academic standards, increased time for classroom instruction and decreased play experiences are really the key ingredients that will increase academic success for future generations?

Who Better to Answer the Question: Is it really worth it to tip the scale too much toward “academics”?

There has been no empirical evidence that holds the key to overall student success. However, educators may be considered one of the main ingredients in successful student educational experiences and success. Characterized as caring, skillful, committed and knowledgeable; educators play a key role in transforming children's lives as they are concerned for the general well-being and achievement of their students regardless of the circumstances and pressures being placed upon classroom performance (Day, 2012). Whether regular or special education, all teachers are devoted to engaging students and maximizing student potential. Edwards and Pula (2011) identified that teachers are challenged to make school a fun place that gets students involved while pushing them to wrestle with ideas and achieve at a higher level. Acknowledging the impact of recess on young students from the view of American educators may help school officials reevaluate whether changing curriculums due to increased academic pressures are beneficial or detrimental to student development and success.

The current literature on school recess includes few studies that obtained the perceptions of teachers in regards to recess (Newman et al., 1996; Pellegrini, 1995). Several sources have provided reasoning for reduced or eliminated recess (Blatchford, 1998; Simon & Childers, 2006; Sindelar, 2002). Empirical research explains the positive effect recess plays in students' attention and behaviors (Chmelynski, 1998) and encourages classroom teachers to incorporate breaks and recess into the school day. However, there is a lack of literature that includes the perspective of teachers with regards to the relationship between recess breaks and student outcomes. Newman et al. (1996) focused their study on obtaining attitudes towards recess, from first through sixth grade educators among twelve elementary schools in the state of New York. The study found the mean time allotted for recess was 18 minutes and children who were given the most recess time were also given the most freedom to select their own outdoor recess activities. Among rural districts, educators expressed more positive values toward the importance of play for children than teachers from urban districts. Lastly, Patte (2009) gathered reactions from teachers and administrators regarding the various recess policies and reduction of recess period due to increased time for test preparation. The majority of teachers and administrators expressed negative views towards changes, such as decreased play, taking place in their schools and believed it would have negative implications on children's learning.

Although there has been research focusing on the perspective of educators regarding the role of recess, there are contradicting views, between educators, regarding the role of recess. Additionally few, if any of the research studies, highlight perspectives of both regular and special educators with regards to the effect recess has on their students' development, classroom behavior and academic success. Lastly, the existing literature of teacher perspectives of recess is nearly a decade old which fails to highlight the current state of recess within American schools.

To build off of existing literature, research would benefit from the perspectives of veteran educators regarding experienced changes in regards to recess and effects of increased emphasis on student success throughout a career that has witnessed changes in all aspects of the work environment.

The purpose of this study was to collect veteran educator perspectives regarding the recess experience and changes made within the school setting regarding recess and the current push towards academic excellence. Educators shared their insight towards the topic of school recess and how the changes within school systems have been experienced throughout their teaching careers of regular and special education. American educators spend roughly five to six hours a day baring witness to what tools are most beneficial for student development and academic success. Therefore, it is necessary to provide an opportunity for teachers express opinions towards methods that fully develop the student as a whole.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The primary purpose of the methodology was to understand and give a voice to participants regarding their overall perspective of school recess in addition to understanding the role recess has played within the school day throughout their educational careers. The principal investigator chose a qualitative methodology. Creswell (1998) describes qualitative research as an inquiry process of understanding where the researcher builds a complex, holistic, picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts a study in a natural setting. Information was gathered for this study through semi-structured interviews. The qualitative method of semi-structured interviews was selected to best explore the lived experienced of participants on the subject of school recess. The method of semi-structured interviews was selected as questions are open ended thus not limiting the respondents/interviewees choice of answers (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002), as prompts and cues can be used to gather more in-depth data.

An inductive approach led the investigation surrounding the topic of school recess in order to gain a deeper understanding of the veteran educator's experience. The research focused on grounded theory to guide the study. Grounded theory is defined as the development of a theory through an inductive approach, but a systematic process of discovery (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). To lead the investigation, the research was guided by specific research questions that focused on obtaining a broader perspective of the view educators hold towards school recess before focusing on addressing specific questions highlighting changes, observations, and suggestions regarding school recess. Furthermore, the semi-structured interview first examines the mindset educators held regarding school recess before identifying the benefits teachers

associate with recess for both the students and the classroom learning environment. The study invited educators to describe the noticed benefits throughout their lengthy professional career. Viewpoints of experienced educators were selected for this study to shine light on noticeable changes observed during their seasoned experience working in the field of elementary education and the impact of said changes. The semi-structured interview investigated whether educators have ever been asked for their recommendations or input regarding changes in the school setting, before providing an opportunity for participants to share viewpoints and suggestions for the future of educational systems and academic achievement. Overall, this research study pursued veteran educators' viewpoints, experiences, observed changes, and suggestions associated with school recess, with the goal of identifying whether increased classroom instruction and decreased play experiences are really the key ingredients that will increase academic success for future generations.

The researcher. The role of the researcher, in this study, was to be the key instrument in collecting and analyzing the data. In qualitative research, the researcher collects data through examining documents, observing behavior, and interviewing data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The principal investigator in this study was required to identify her personal values, assumptions, and biases prior to the starting the study as the researcher has experience working in rural school districts, especially with children diagnosed with special needs. She is a graduate student at East Carolina University, studying child development and Special Education. The researcher believes that her experiences have enhanced her awareness, knowledge, and sensitivity to the topics addressed in this study, but also assists her in working with the participants. Being aware of her own personal bias allowed the researcher to be aware that that her experience and viewpoints may shape the way she viewed and understood the data. Bias has been defined by Pannucci and

Wilkins (2010) as a tendency which prevents unprejudiced consideration of a question and occurs when error is introduced into sampling or testing by selecting or encouraging one outcome or answer over others. Therefore, every effort was made to maintain objectivity as the researcher understood the importance of understanding and being open to the experiences of each participant, while setting aside her own beliefs, experiences, and opinions.

Recruitment of sample. This study focuses on what is best for all students; therefore, the viewpoints from both regular and special educators were desired as it was assumed that both perspectives would provide an unbiased, well-rounded insight to recess. Participants for this study were selected from a pool of regular and special elementary educators (Pre K - Fifth Grade) who are associated with Marathon County Department of Special Education (MCSE) of Wausau, Wisconsin. Educators who work for school districts associated Marathon County Department of Special Education were purposefully selected due to the unique relationships that the schools have with one another, through their connection with MCSE. Marathon County Department of Special Education provides local school district level coordination with regular education for approximately 500 students with special needs among six different school districts. Each summer, MCSE host a Summer Academy that brings together all staff members (educators, school psychologists, administrators, and principals) of the six school districts as a consortium. During this time, staff from all six districts along with staff of MCSE came together to establish The Modernization and Improvement Plan (M & I Plan), which focuses on increasing collaborative instructional streaming that develops, manages and monitors expectations of students for assessment and differentiated curriculum. Additionally, the focus of the plan seeks to make a difference in learning and behavior of the students, one child at a time. As increased academic pressures for student achievement and implementation of common core standards, the

school districts proposed the M & I Plan to provide differentiated instruction and evidence-based interventions to students, thus establishing what teachers need to do to improve their skills to push students academically. As the consortium works together to increase both regular and special education student outcomes, faculty members within this program bring insight to valued perspectives as these educators demonstrate that they are fully invested in making changes towards improvement in the educational experience and academic achievement of all students.

Following IRB approval (See Appendix A) and notification of the IRB amendment approval (See Appendix B), the first step of the research study, selecting participants, consisted of contacting the Pupil of Administrative Services at MCSE to ask for permission to participate. The Pupil of Administrative Services at MCSE approved with written consent stating their full support and cooperation for the researcher to use MCSE as a data collection site and to participate in the research study. After obtaining approval from MCSE, a convenience sample was drawn up to recruit participants. Recruitment took place with assistance from the Pupil of Administrator Services at Marathon County Special Education in Wausau, Wisconsin. A list of veteran elementary special educators and regular educators who met the inclusion criteria from each of the six school districts was generated by the Pupil of Administrator Services. Inclusion criteria required participants to be educators from any of the six school districts who receive services from MCSE, which include Abbotsford, Athens, Edgar, Marathon, Spencer and Rosholt Elementary. Additionally, to be included in final analysis of the research study, the study required participants to be educators of self-contained special education and/or regular education classrooms and to have at least 13 years of teaching experience. This specific time period, 13 years, was selected as No Child Left Behind was implemented in 2001 and this study seeks educators who have teaching experience prior to the increased academic testing and standards.

The target sample size for the current study was 12 participants: nine regular educators and three self-contained special educators, male and/or female, to provide insight into veteran educators' teaching experiences and perspectives. A desired sample size requires an adequate number of participants, sites, or activities to answer the question posed at the beginning of the study (Merriam, 1998). Therefore, the sample size of 12 was believed to be an adequate population that would supply varied and detailed accounts for the purposes of this study.

After the list of educators with at least 13 years of teaching experience was generated from the Pupil of Administrative Services and obtained by the principal investigator, the researcher sent an electronic announcement via e-mail, to all educators on the initial list, requesting their participation in the research study. The electronic announcement informed individuals that their e-mail address was obtained from the MCSE staff database, the specifics about the study and asked for their participation. Recipients were informed that participation in the study was strictly voluntary. Interested individuals were encouraged to contact the researcher by e-mail or phone to confirm their participation, express interest or ask questions regarding the study. After the e-mail was sent to participants, all individuals received a follow-up phone call to additionally request their participation in the research study.

Sampling. The initial list of eligible educators, generated by the Pupil of Administrative Services at MCSE, and comprised of 84 total educators that met the inclusion criteria (N = 17 Special Education Educators, N= 67 Regular Education Educators). After the electronic announcement and follow-up phone call to all eligible educators, 26 veteran elementary educators agreed to participate in the study. Participants included 21 regular education instructors and 5 special education educators. Interested participants were then placed on a master list, which was divided into two pools of regular educators and special educator. All

educators who appeared on the master list were given a number for identification. Numbers were placed into a hat and random selection was used to select the final participant population of nine regular educators and three special education educators. The final sample consisted of nine regular educators and three special education educators and included one male and 11 female from classroom assignments ranging from first grade to fifth grade. The sample reported an average teaching experience of 23.5 years. (See Table 1).

Data Collection

Meetings for the semi-structured interviews were arranged two weeks in advance and scheduled to meet at convenient times and locations for each participant. All interviews were conducted by the principal investigator and held between the dates December 13th, 2012 and January 3rd, 2013. Nine of the interviews were held at each participant's school, while two interviews were conducted via telephone and one was held at one participant's home.

Upon arrival and prior to data collection, the researcher established rapport with each participant, briefly discussed the study and informed the participant that the interview was going to be recorded. Additionally, participants were informed that participating in the study involved no risks and no identifying information was going to be used in the study. Permission to participate in the study was obtained through written informed consent as the researcher went over the informed consent form with each individual and asked for their approval through signature that authorized their participation in the audio-taped interview. The interviewer then informed the participant that the recorder was being turned on and asked participants to introduce themselves as a way to collect demographic variables of the research population. Participants introduced themselves, shared their education experience such as how many years they have

Table 1

Description of Participants

Participant	Classification	Yrs teaching	Gender	Current level
A	Regular Education	28	Male	2 nd
B	Regular Education	25	Female	4 th
C	Special Education	18	Female	1 st – 5 th
D	Special Education	37	Female	Pre-K - 5 th
E	Regular Education	16	Female	1 st
F	Regular Education	21	Female	2 nd
G	Regular Education	17	Female	2 nd
H	Special Education	35	Female	Pre-K - 5 th
I	Regular Education	20	Female	2 nd /3 rd
J	Regular Education	33	Female	5 th
K	Regular Education	15	Female	4 th /5 th
L	Regular Education	17	Female	4 th

Notes: Average teaching experience = 23.5 years

been teaching, grades taught, the current grade that they teach, and whether they teach regular or special education. Following the description of demographic variables, the semi-structured interviews were conducted. Length of interviews ranged from 20-45 minutes and varied by the amount of rich description and experience shared by each participant. Following the interview, participants were thanked for their time and agreement to participate in the study.

The following prompts were used to guide the research study:

1. Tell me about school recess...
2. Empirical knowledge supports many benefits of school recess; do you believe that the benefits associated recess hold true for students and your classroom learning environment?
3. Please explain the role of recess within your current school district.
4. What changes have you seen over your teaching career in terms of increased time devoted towards high standards and in regards to changes associated with recess?
5. Please explain how you perceive these changes and impact these changes have had.
6. Has anyone every asked you for your input/recommendation based on these changes?
7. Where do you believe school systems should go from here, in terms of increased academics and time for school recess?

After completion of the interviews, the research data was stored at East Carolina University in the Rivers Building, Room 150 (The Graduate Assistant Research Facility). All data and master list of names and participant numbers was securely stored separate from the raw data in the university supervisor's office. The data was also stored on East Carolina University's secure "Piratedrive" server to ensure data was secure and only available to authorized users. The

data folder was password protected. Additional care was taken by the researcher to assure the respondents that they and their voice would not be identifiable in any subsequent report. Data from the audio recordings were linked to subjects via encrypted coding as each participant was identified by a number and no other identifying information. Once the final research report was written, the audio tapes were destroyed.

Data Analysis

To review the findings of the semi-structured interviews; all audiotaped interviews were transcribed manually, by the researcher, into Microsoft Word. The transcripts were checked for accuracy against the audiotape. Data were analyzed using thematic content analysis. Thematic content analysis allows the researcher to collect and sift through data, analyzes transcripts, identify emerging themes and gather examples of themes that emerge from the text (Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). This method additionally allowed the researcher to begin data collection immediately after the data collection.

To begin the data analysis, interviews were labeled A through L and individually sifted through. The researcher then immersed herself within the data to familiarize herself with the detailed insights of veteran educators to explore the topic of school recess. This process, familiarization, is defined by Ritchie and Spencer (1994) as becoming familiar with the transcripts and gaining an overview of the collected data. Following familiarization, the printed transcripts were read and reread before the researcher began taking notes. The researcher proceeded in the analysis to identifying themes by first finding recurring codes and responses from each interview. This was done through highlighting key phrases, words, and circling supplementary quotes. On a separate document, key ideas were documented and tallied when

other participants shared the similar idea. After rereading recurring responses, patterns among the data and common codes, categories were identified. This initial analysis of data was best presented by establishing categories that reflected the prompts and interview questions. (See Appendix C for initial framework analysis). Recurring responses, data, and patterns were grouped under each category on the coding framework that was designed by the researcher using Microsoft Word to best organize and review the data. The 12 initial categories included: what educators think of when they hear recess, personal thoughts regarding school recess, benefits of recess towards students, benefits that educators feel recess provides the classroom learning environment, the current state of recess, changes associated with school recess, changes with academics over the teaching career of participants, impact of changes, input of educators toward changes, suggestions for where to go from here, specific children who experience recess differently and additives to school recess. Categories and patterns that emerged from each category were reflected with original data and were reviewed multiple times to make sure data accurately represented the interview responses to ensure accounts were being accurately depicted to eliminate misinterpretation.

The second stage of analysis involved the creation of an additional framework that displayed the results together under each assigned category with each category's emerging responses and supplementary quotes, from interviews, in their assigned columns. Existing literature was also placed in an additional column on the table next to corresponding responses for easier access and linkage later in the process when writing up the research conclusions (See Appendix D for second framework analysis). After analyzing the data, the researcher was then able to work through the data to examine categories and responses that may be grouped into similar themes to best present the data. Following this process, the researcher was able to further

investigate the data and regroup the 12 initial categories into five themes that emerged from the study (See Appendix E for final framework analysis). Using the thematic content analysis approach, five core themes were developed that appeared to best reflect the educators' accounts regarding school recess and the research study: overall perceptions of school recess, benefits, changes observed within the school throughout their teaching careers, current state of recess, and direction for future educational reforms.

Credibility

Peer debriefing and member checking were used to improve trustworthiness and credibility. Peer debriefing is defined as a four step process. Lincoln and Guba (1985) highlights this process as debriefers encouraging the researcher to probe for bias and deeper understanding, supporting the researcher to test emerging hypotheses in a risk-free environment, offering the researcher an opportunity to develop and test the next steps and finally debriefing provides support and encouragement to the researcher. The researcher's committee chair/university supervisor agreed to provide support and take on the role of debriefer for this research study. Both individuals read the transcripts individually, highlighted text that was relevant to the study, documented key phrases and discussed their results for the first step of analysis with one another, focusing on similarities and differences among their individual findings. The findings were discussed and plans for the next steps were agreed upon which involved analyzing the coded examples which needed to be clustered together into themes and categories. The researcher and the debriefer reviewed their personal coding matrixes and the interview transcript. Additional debriefing was held to review independent clusters and categories. During the peer debriefing meetings, issues were discussed between the two individuals. There was minimal discrepancy between the results of the researchers and the debriefer when reviewing the findings of

individual analysis. However, the two individuals were able to discuss aspects of the research study that may not be relevant towards the overall research document and responses that are to be excluded from the final analysis. For example, responses referring to teacher's observations of student activity during the summer months, the few responses that recess can be a time when sick can finish school work, or can be used as a punishment were discussed and agreed on to be left out of final analysis due to irrelevance or lack of agreement among educators. The debriefer was able to answer questions and offer suggestions to help the researcher better comprehend the data and to rethink ways to analyze the data. The meetings with committee chair were useful in comparing findings, discussing data, and making minor modifications to help the research process.

In addition to debriefing meetings with the committee chair, the researcher requested the assistance of one of her committee members who is experienced in qualitative research. The data analysis was reviewed, as well as the steps taken to present the findings. These meetings helped expand the vision of the researcher. The additional guidance proved useful as the committee member was able to provide alternative approaches, point out flaws in the proposed course of action, and offered suggestions to improve the study. Meeting and discussing the results and proposed course of action with both committee members helped the researcher examine the data in various ways, thus preventing researcher bias.

Member checking also took place to establish credibility of the data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe decreasing the incidence of inaccurate data and interpretation through member checking near the end of the research project where the analyzed data and report are given to the participants to review for authenticity of the work. Further explained, this form of member checking allows research participants to review and see whether a "true" or authentic

representation was made of what they conveyed during the interview. This process took place after data analysis where all participants were provided with an opportunity to look over the analyzed data and common themes that emerged to assure participants that research accurately represented their perceptions.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The primary purpose of the methodology was to explore, understand, and give a voice to participants regarding the overall perception of school recess. Therefore, the goal of the semi-structured interview process was to provide experienced educators an opportunity to discuss the topic of recess, changes with the school system throughout their careers, and to offer suggestion for the future of school recess and elementary education. The semi-structured interviews were guided by seven research questions. To best present the findings, information gathered from the participants will be presented by the five key categories that emerged throughout the thematic content analysis. The first portion of this section will highlight the overall perceptions of recess, which allowed educators to provide their thoughts regarding school recess. The second section focuses on the benefits that educators feel recess provides to both the student and classroom learning environment. Following, participants provide an insight into the overall teaching experience of participants as educators share the changes they witnessed throughout their career, the impact and perception of these changes, and if their input has been pursued when changes were discussed. The fourth section will answer what the current role of recess is within the participants' schools. In the final portion of this chapter, educators are able to let their voice be heard and offer suggestions and opinions for the future of educational systems and school recess. Each category will summarize the main, emerging themes and include supplementary, direct quotes to enhance the data.

Overall Perspectives of School Recess

To gain an overall understanding regarding the thoughts and perspectives of school recess, study participants were asked to share their overall ideas of school recess. The main

themes that emerged from this question include recess as a time where students are “free to be children”, time within the school day that allows children to be outdoors, is associated with a wealth of characteristics and benefits, is referred to as a much needed break for students and staff, and lastly a necessary part of the school day.

Overall, the majority of participants referred to recess as a time for students to release energy and exercise freedom to enjoy time being and acting like children. Eleven out of the 12 educators felt that recess is beneficial for providing students with unstructured time to be free. One example of this thought was shared by a veteran educator:

“It (recess) is a time for kids to interact with each other at an unstructured level, where they can have some release time, where they are able to go off and burn energy that they cannot necessarily burn off in the classroom. It is a good opportunity for kids just to play and do what kids do”

Interviewees largely associated recess as a time period where children are able to go outdoors and received fresh air and sunlight. Eight out of the 12 participants highlighted that recess is viewed as time for children to go outside and engage in the natural environment. Summarizing this aspect associated with recess, one study participant shared:

“It is a great change for the students to blow off steam, especially after being inside all morning. For them to go outside, get fresh air, be out in the sun, and chase around their friends...”

A common theme emerged from all participants that shared their thoughts of recess as a time period that is accompanied with many aspects, characteristics, and benefits. Participants highlighted numerous repetitive responses, describing recess as a time period for children to

socialize with others, run around, relax, and rejuvenate during the recess opportunity. Such aspects were shared by a participant:

“Rejuvenation when they come back into the classroom, just a time of fun, relaxation, spending time with friends, a social experience.”

Educators additionally shared their thoughts regarding school recess. Eleven out of the 12 participants explained that recess is a time period that is important and highly necessary within the school day that. Educators expressed the children “need it”, it is a “great part of the day, a “must” and “highly necessary”. One of participants shared this image:

“I think it is a must because days when kids don’t have recess, it is a rough day. When we have weather below zero, you can tell the kids are antsy and need to get out and get exercise. I think the fresh air is good them and I don’t think they get outside enough when they are home so I think it is important to get that recess time.”

Lastly, veteran educators highlighted that recess acts an outlet from the academic world. Eight out of the 12 participants shared that recess is a time period that gives the students a much needed break from academics. Similarly, four out of the 12 participants stated that recess is a time where educators are able to enjoy a much needed break time for the staff from the rigorous academic day. One educator shared their thoughts:

“I think the teachers need it as much as the students to regroup. Let the kids wear off some energy and the teachers get a handle on what is next. For that purpose, I think the teachers need it too.”

The overall findings from this category focus on the perceptions of school recess, held by veteran educators. Common themes that emerged from this prompt found that collectively most, to all, participants value the recess experience and see that there are many diverse aspects that are beneficial for the children. Recess has been noted as a time period that children are able to be outdoors, moving around, participating in a variety of activities and is desired within the school day. Lastly, educators explained that thoughts of this play experience focus on their opinions that recess is highly necessary within the school day. Additional thoughts surfaced from regarding recess as a time to play on equipment, sports and imaginative play. However, such responses were eliminated from the final analysis as they were not thoughts shared by an overwhelming majority of the participants.

Benefits

Perceived benefits of school recess were congregated under five major themes to highlight participants' reflections on the benefits they believe and have witnessed recess providing to both the student participant and the classroom learning environment. Responses will be presented by the following themes: socialization aspect of recess, physical exercise, ability to provide to the needs of diverse participants, behavior of students, and classroom environment.

Findings of the semi-structured interviews highlighted that 10 out of the 12 educators believe recess provides numerous social benefits to its participants. In addition to just enjoy time with friends, educators provided insight that recess is an opportunity that develops students' skills of common sense, sharing, solving social dilemmas, dealing with real life issues,

responsibility, working together, turn-taking, learning boundaries, and how to lose graciously.

This benefit was reported:

“The social aspect is very important because they play with each other and need to learn how to control themselves, share, and lose graciously when they play games with one another”

Additionally, participants further added that as students learn how to interact and develop relationships with others within the playground, diverse groups of children are brought together and dynamic relationships are created. Recess was noted as responsible for increasing classroom comradery where students are able to further develop and establish new friendships with classmates, which carry over into the classroom setting. Similarly, teachers shared their experiences of witnessing new friendships development as students are provided with a recess opportunity to interact and befriend individuals of different ages and class assignments. One educator highlighted this benefit:

“It is amazing the different things we can see, the different relationships, especially if there are other classes out. It is (still) interesting if it is just your own class, but if there are other classes out you get to see other things you haven't seen. Like if there is a child in my class who seems to not get along with peers, but at recess he is excellent in working with younger kids.”

An opportunity to engage in physical exercise was highlighted as a benefit of the recess experience by eight of the 12 veteran educators. Participants shared that time outside of the classroom walls invites children to freely move around among the play environment, engage in physical activities with other playmates, thus activating both gross and fine motor movements.

A few of the individuals who expressed this benefit explained that they believe this is a crucial benefit and more important for children now, than ever before, in American society as obesity is on the rise. Individuals stated that recess may be one of the only opportunities that children actively engage in physical activity during the day. One of these respondents expanded on this benefit, explaining:

“A lot of these kids you can tell their life is so plugged in, (they are) not getting outside enough at home (therefore), recess is so important to give them the fresh air and to run around.”

An additional benefit of recess, mentioned at various points in the interview process and not specifically during this research prompt, focuses on the role recess plays in providing an array of benefits for diverse children. Eight of the 12 educators shared that students with various needs, personalities, or characteristics are able to receive diverse benefits to meet their array of needs, which are difficult to meet the needs through classroom instruction, through school recess. Such opinions and responses were shared by both special and regular educators. As a whole, the educators explained that recess is very beneficial for students who receive special education services as this time period is capable of blurring walls and labels put up by education classifications. The play allows children to integrate with and make friends of diverse class assignments. The playground is seen by educators as a neutral play environment where children can play with one another based on common interests and not classroom assignment. One regular education teacher noted:

“I feel it is very important for some kids more than others because some kids really need to work on those social skills and I think some of those social

experiences take place at recess. Also, just some special education kids who are needing that time to play with other kids and get acceptance.”

Although educators explained the children who have special needs benefit from school recess, additional students were mentioned as individual who also may benefit in diverse ways from school recess. For example, students with various energy levels were highlighted. Recess was noted as a time to help these children either to expend the energy that builds up during sedentary learning or to renew energy for further classroom learning. Additionally, students who reside in single child families were acknowledged as individuals who benefit from school recess. One educator explained:

“I feel it is very important for some kids more than others because some kids really need to work on those social skills and I think some of those social experiences take place at recess I think of kids that are an only child in the family and wouldn’t necessarily have interaction with other children because of the only child they have no interaction with adults.”

Participants believe that recess is beneficial for increasing behaviors of students that are positive for both the individuals and the classroom environment. Seven out of 12 educators addressed reduction of discipline and behavioral issues as a benefit of school recess within the school day. Educators shared that students unconsciously learn how to deal with issues and solve disputes outdoors, which has led to less arguments and disagreements during academic time. Therefore, many of the participants highlighted that this benefit allows educators to present material and effectively teach with fewer disruptions. Shared by one participant:

“Over the years we have seen less referrals and less discipline problems simply because kids have learned early that is important to for them to be able to work together. If they can’t resolve an issue, they know where to go rather than taking on the issue by themselves. I think that lends itself to being outside, and being with other kids socializing.”

An additional theme that emerged from educators expressing their thoughts regarding benefits associated with school recess focused on recess increasing the classroom learning environment. Ten out of the 12 participants explained that after school recess, there is an increased focus and attention among students. With the mind break and energy release, educators report students thrive from the break in academic instruction and returning to the classroom rejuvenated, ready to work with renewed attention spans and with more control over themselves and their actions. The learning environment therefore has been described as enhanced following school recess, as a renewal of energy allows educators to instruct students who are ready for learning.

“It (recess) increases their focus. When they come back from recess, they are ready to settle down and do that sedentary learning. They are just sitting still and are able to contain themselves. That (recess) brings back their attention again.”

Overall, veteran educators expressed feelings that recess is a very beneficial aspect of the overall educational experience for both children and classroom. Participants have shared that recess benefits those who participate in the experience with a variety of social experiences and skills, an opportunity to engage in physical activity and may meet the needs of diverse types of children. Additionally, educators explained that recess is to be credited for returning students to

the classroom connect with one another and with less discipline issues and ready to learn.

Responses that were not included in the final analysis included the stimulus provided by recess to students' brains, laughter, a time for teachers to use for students to catch up on school work, a chance to see students in different light, and an opportunity to participate in imaginative play.

Such responses were not included as they were not addressed by the majority of participants.

Changes

Participants have been working in the school system for an average of 23.5 years. With such experience, the study wanted to obtain information regarding any changes, in terms of recess and higher academic achievement, witnessed throughout their educational careers.

Therefore, the first theme that emerged from this category highlighted responses regarding changes and the impact that academic requirements have impacted the recess experience, if at all.

After acknowledgement of the changes within the schools, the second theme explores the educators' perspectives of these changes and the impact that the changes had on the school, educators and students. Lastly, the third theme that was identified from the data includes educators experience regarding their role providing input towards changes that have taken place within their school districts.

Changes throughout career. Data collection found that 10 of the participants have experienced a common change throughout their teaching careers which involves the elimination of at least one time period devoted to school recess. Educators shared that recess periods have been one of the primary targets for either elimination or decreased time within the school day, in order to devote more attention to academics. Five of the educators shared that such changes took

place recently when academic programs such as Respond to Intervention (RTI) and Common Core Standards were implemented:

“We have lost one recess, because, at this time, I think because of RTI is a big part of it. And I am hoping that is the end of it. I think we do realize that the importance of getting kids outside as often as we can.”

Additionally, participants explained another change observed over time involves an increased attention towards and changes to academic curricula. To elaborate, seven individuals highlighted that, currently, there is an increased pressure to fit more academic material into the school curriculum and such changes have created an environment that leaves teachers feeling pressured to increase student achievement and redesign curriculum plans. Participants expressed that there is not enough time within the school day to cover the amount of desired academic material. One teacher summed up their thoughts:

“Constantly, the curriculum is being added on to, but time is not. It is very tricky to find time (in the school day) and to use it wisely.”

The demand for more academic instruction stems from another change reported by most of regular education educators. There were six individuals who described feeling the increased pressures from state, federal, and district requirements and academic testing. Teachers explained that they are accountable for student achievement:

“There has been a real heavy pressure for the academic success. I think there has been a real change in how our students come to school prepared. I know there is a bigger push towards academics; there we have to have more time, more time, more time for academics. We are being pushed to meet the test, so to speak.

We used to have Kindergarten through fifth grade in the morning, noon and afternoon recess. The afternoon recess has been eliminated.

In addition, four of the participants, who teach intermediate elementary classes, have found themselves increasing the intensity of instruction to meet standards and to present specific academic material. Educators shared that academic requirements result in education focusing on certain academic areas than others, where teachers feel that there is not enough time for other important subject areas:

“In our building we have a huge focus on literacy and math. I remember when I first started teaching, having Math for like 40 min. Now I have math for one hour and 20 min. Literacy was like 45 min and now I have it 1 hour and 30 min. Because we are putting such a high focus on especially those two subject areas, other subject areas get hurt in the process like the Social Studies and the Sciences. We don’t allow as much time for those. So there has definitely been some changes in the time structure for certain academics compared to other ones.”

An implication of decreased time devoted to recess breaks and increased academic demands explains an additional change noticed by educators: most days consist of large portions of non-activity, academic time. Explained by seven out of the 12 participants, students are attending class for a longer period of time. Educators explained that children are not contained in the classroom longer due to increased academic periods. One teacher furthered the experience of this change by explaining that her students often attend class from lunch until three o’clock without a break. Participants shared that increased time devoted towards instruction creates

challenges such as keeping students intrigued and motivated throughout the day. One teacher shared this experience with a description of her class:

“By the end of the day, they (the students) are winding down. Without getting out and that burst of fresh air, we (the teachers) have to push them hard to keep going.”

Lastly, the interviews revealed how curriculum changes and academic pressures have affected the classroom environment. These changes have referred to by the 4 of veteran educators who were interviewed. One educator discussed the changes noticed among her classroom environment:

“Before they could socialize, get ready, exchange books, sharpen pencils (before school), but now it is straight academic based”

Additionally, an early education teacher described the change to the schedule of her Kindergarten classroom since incorporated more curriculum into the day. Kindergarten, in her school, was described as students no longer experiencing naps, show and tell and having less time for free play. An additional participant shared that breaks, such as milk and snack break, are now engaged in simultaneously with academics. The overall curriculum changes, especially in the lower level classrooms, were described as the following:

“It has changed to children being little adults because there is no time”

Overall, there were many reported changes noticed by veteran educators throughout their teaching experiences. One additional change that was not included in this analysis, due to lack

of similarity with others, included “additional staff duties”. However, most changes were very consistent between all educators who participated in the study.

Perception/Impact of changes. In addition to describing changes noticed throughout their educator experience, study participants were asked to share their thoughts and perceptions regarding the changes that they have observed within their school system. Individuals first weighed in regarding the loss of at least one school recess. According to all 12 participants, at least one recess period has been eliminated from the school. However, the time assigned to recess was replaced with Physical Education. When further guided to elaborate on the change focusing on replacing a recess period with Physical Education, support was seen as the impact for this change by 11 of the 12 educators. Participants explained that physical education is a beneficial piece to the school day as it provides students a time to release energy, run around, and participate in organized activities presented by the physical education teacher. Four out of 12 educators mentioned that the physical education instructors from their schools are individuals who value the outdoor experience and understand the benefits of getting children outside in the fresh air and moving. Research participants described students going outdoors for physical education class for lessons on skiing, kickball, snowshoeing, softball, walking and hiking, whenever weather permits. Educators further reported that current physical education staff members continue to encourage children to be active at recess and outside of school. One educator shared:

“Our Phy. Ed. teacher, she is very veteran....almost ready to retired. She really pushes that you need to get them outside for recess. She even had them document for two months, some type of program that said how much they exercised on a “not Phy. Ed. day”. She was disappointed with some of them, some of those

graphs said the kids just go home and sit. If we could get one (Phy. Ed.) with recess and activity outside during the school day it would benefit them...the more the better.”

As much as educators value their physical education instructors and the course that is devoted towards physical activity, two study participants acknowledge that physical education is a beneficial replacement for recess, they are still aware that this period of play remains a structured course, in a classroom setting and has requirements of its own. While a few teachers mention limitations of physical education towards meeting the benefits of recess, they still feel that physical education in place of recess is better than nothing at all. One of the participants shared their opinions:

“... I am not saying that they are (the changes observed) too detrimental. We are still lucky enough to have some Phy Ed. At least they get to have some physical activity, but that is structured too, because they have their requirements...it is not just games and free play, they sit down, learn, and are still being told what to do. I really think that kids just need some time where they can make their own choices.”

Educators also added to their perceptions regarding the loss of a recess experience. With “Specials” immersed within classroom instruction, four out of the 12 educators felt that the change, the loss of a recess, may not be as detrimental to students. “Specials” were explained as courses such as Physical Education, Music, Art, and Library. Many of the respondents explained that the impact of losing a recess is not as bad as it could be as Physical Education and other “Specials” allow students to engage in an alternative, beneficial activity for the students.

“Those specials, those are the alternative, the opposite of that (academics) so there is at least something. If there weren’t “Specials” and it was just all academics with no break, then I think that (changes with recess) would not be as good. But the fact that they do get an alternate activity that is quite a bit different than academics in the morning and then the recess in the afternoon and vice versa then I think it is ok.”

However, two of the educators voiced their concerns regarding future changes associated with “Specials”. Educators feel such courses may potentially be eliminated from the school curriculum to make additional time for academics. Teachers fear any ideas that include replacing the time devoted to these courses with more structured, academic instruction. Explained by one educator:

“Without Specials and focused all academics and no break, that would not be good at all.”

Academic changes and pressures surrounding the push for higher achievement have left educators feelings that there is an insufficient amount of time within the school day to deliver the amount of academic material within their classrooms. Six out of 12 participants shared that pressures that accompany the increased amount of instruction that is currently being required to be taught have created challenges in presenting the rigorous curriculum, while maintaining focused attention and concentration levels of students throughout the day. Teachers explained feeling unorganized, flustered, rushing students, a need for down time, and increased accountability to teach the increased amount of required material. One educator shared a current experience with the pressure packed day:

“This year we said, “We (the teachers) are accountable for what we do”. We feel that we cannot give up our time for other activities. Every minute counts and time is not taken lightly. It is not like it used to be where you could just, at the drop of a hat, do alternative activities. You really have to figure out, “Ok, am I really going to be able to recapture that time and is there really going to be a more productive time when they come back in?”.... Sometimes I could do those things in the past, but now it is not really an option”

Seven out of 12 participants expressed their views of changes in academics that push children toward higher academic achievement by raising the bar. Educators shared their thoughts regarding the impact and effects that curriculum changes may have towards the children. Five participants shared that curriculum continues to expect more and more from the students and some questioned how developmentally appropriate such demands are for children. One educator shared that these demands have reached a point where they are expecting “too much” from students. One teacher shared feelings that students need time to “just be children” and acquiring those real world skills, in addition to academics.

“I think it (time to make their own choices) is very important. Part of me believes, very strongly, that some of these kids come to school with social problems and never get these problems resolved because they are not given the opportunity to interact with their peers and work (those issues) out at a young age. By the time the kids get to my level (fourth and fifth), they are still having problems getting along with one another, due to the fact that there is not enough value given into that play time at school where they learn how to get along with other kids.”

Perspectives reported by study participants included both positive and negative viewpoints of these changes within the academic setting. Educators reported that the lack of a recess is perceived as “o.k.” due to non-academic activities such as Physical Education and other “Specials”. Conversely, educators report that the changes have not been very positive within in the classroom setting as teachers and students have felt the increased stress and pressure due to increased focus on academics at the expense of school recess.

Input. As changes have been made in every school district, both with recess and attempts to increase academic achievement, the study wanted to investigate what role veteran educators, with an average of 23.5 years of experience in schools, played in the decision making. Seven out of the 12 respondents shared that they have never been asked for their input in regards to changes within the school curriculum. One educator shared that they have had minimal opportunities to provide input regarding decisions within the school, however similar with an additional participant, it was discussed that most decisions are made from “the top down”. Therefore, school officials, within these school districts, generally make major decisions without consulting educators for their suggestions and experience. One educator shared that they usually have no input, but explained the feelings she had when the one time she was asked:

“No one has ever talked about recess. As the common core standards are coming out, I was invited to have some input in the social studies area. I don’t know if they read it, but they pretended to listen (laughs). It made me feel a little better that I at least could have some input.”

Although the majority of respondents reported having no voice in school changes, four of study participants expressed that their school actively encourages teachers to provide input. Their voice

has been encouraged to offer suggestions and feedback regarding academic goals, recommendations, suggestions for change, and additional input. As much as the school systems show the value in teacher input, one teacher explained that their input is always considered, but they always remember that academic requirements tend to overshadow educator input:

“At the end of the year we fill out our goals and recommendations and things we would like to change and things that we have seen to be successful. So we are given the opportunity to request changes or offer input. We have monthly staff meetings and at those staff meetings we discuss all those things at length. It has been kind of a give and take, but really our input is always been given consideration but requirements overshadow them.”

Educators spent the majority of their day with students and observed what processes work towards acquiring information. However, the findings suggest that most educators' viewpoints and experiences are not recognized when school districts are making decisions to alter the structure of the school, discuss standards and eliminate activities such as school recess. Most decisions are made without acknowledging those individuals who have spent the majority of their lives devoted towards bettering students and their development, teachers.

Current Role of Recess

To understand the current state of recess within school systems, the study educators were asked to share the current state of recess within their school districts. This question yielded much variation due to educators representing six representing school districts and teaching various grade levels.

As participating educators teach diverse curriculums, requirements, and children, ranging from Kindergarten through fifth grade, there was no consistency regarding the number of recesses provided and the duration of recess among participants. However, all representing school districts shared one commonality as all 12 educators reported that lunch recess is provided in their school all students, Kindergarten through fifth grade, averaging 32 minutes.

An additional trend highlighted younger classrooms participate in more recess breaks than upper level classes, on a typical day. However, this varies by school as three of the participants explained that recess is at the discretion of the teacher and varies as to when recess is held, how many, and the duration. Most commonly noted among the data, educators expressed that students are provided with at least one 15-20 minute recess break, held either in the morning or in the afternoon, after lunch (see Table 2).

Four of the 12 educators explained that since their teaching career begun, there have never been any strict rules surrounding the frequency and amount of time for school recess. Participants explained that principals have left the distribution of recess at discretion of the teacher. Such flexibility allows educators to release students when time is available and necessary. One teacher shared this experience:

“We are very fortunate, we never had anything dictated to us. We have a thirty minute lunch (recess)... that is the only recess that is built right into their schedule. But, we have never had anyone from administration tell us how long we could have.No one has ever come up to me and said, “That is a little bit too long here”. So it is whatever we can get in. “

Overall, recess is still present in the current school systems where educators teacher.

Table 2

Breakdown of Recess

Participant	Classification	Current grade	AM	Lunch	PM
A	Regular	2 nd	-	20	20
B	Regular	4 th	15 min	40	20
C	Special	1 st – 5 th	20 min (K-2)	30	15
D	Special	Pre-K - 5 th	-	40	20 (3 rd -4th)
E	Regular	1 st	15 min	30-40	-
F	Regular	2 nd	-	30-40	20 (4K-3rd)
G	Regular	2 nd	-	30-35	20 (K-3rd)
H	Special	Pre-K - 5th	Younger/**	30	-
I	Regular	2 nd /3 rd	15 min	30	15*
J	Regular	5 th Grade	Younger/**	30	Younger/**
K	Regular	4 th /5 th	AM or PM	30	AM/PM
L	Regular	4 th	*/**	30	15

Note: *= recess is scheduled on days when Physical Education is not offered; ** = recess is at the discretion of the teachers as to when and for how long it is offered

Students Kindergarten through fifth grade are granted with at least one recess, during lunch. Additionally, depending on the school district and class level, students may experience an additional one to two recesses within the school day. An interesting theme emerging from exploring the current state of recess and that pertains to the frequency of recess being a choice that the teachers make as school officials have left this topic open and a choice for the teachers to make regarding the duration and frequency of school recesses.

Suggestions/Ideas

Following the investigation of participants' views of recess, the benefits associated with recess, changes observed since starting their teaching careers to the current state of recess; the current study wanted to provide educators with an opportunity to share their knowledge and offer suggestions for the future of academics and school recess. Veteran educators were asked to share their thoughts and suggestions for the future of education systems.

The collective opinion, provided by participants, was the need to find a healthy balance between higher academic achievement and doing what is best for the children. In order to achieve academic excellence among students, six out of 12 educators proposed that school systems need to achieve a healthy balance and make decisions while keeping the students in mind. One teacher explained why there is a need to the establishment of a healthy balance within schools:

“I definitely see the long term goal of student achievement, but I sometimes feel that we lost perspective of that student achievement and just look at print scores on paper. Since it is not east to measure the social and emotional growth

sometimes, I feel that it (recess) is not given a fair chunk of time so we need to continue to balance.”

Additional suggestions highlight the desires of eight veteran educators advocating for school systems to keep recess as part of the school day. While shining attention towards the value of school recess, educators believe future plans should no longer involve taking recess out of the school day or continued reduction in time available for this play period.

“I think they should keep recess as part of the school day because I don’t think the academics would improve if the kids didn’t have the recess time, they wouldn’t be focused and that time would not be spent accomplishing more. I think they need to move and play.”

Lastly, three of 12 veteran educators responded with ideas focused on restructuring the delivery of education. Such restructuring focused on more flexibility built into school schedule and alternative curriculum designs such as lengthening the school day, school year, or turning recess into a time period loosely scheduled into the school day. Educators expressed these ideas as possible ideas that may allow more time for academic instruction, while providing recess regularly for students. One suggestion included:

“When we compare our kids worldwide, our kids are not doing as well, so I understand the push for them to do more. However, I am thinking we are going to have to extend our calendar because I don’t think it is healthy to push our kids this much. I think it of the “hurried child” or the kid that is over scheduled and over booked. I think that we are going to have our kids being overly fragile and I think that they are going to become too neurotic. “

The last theme presented in the findings suggests that educators have valid ideas for the future of elementary education. There were numerous suggestions and ideas of where education systems should go from where they are currently at, but were not included in the analysis due to lack of consistency with other responses. Other responses, which were not included, revealed that educators hope Physical Education remains a consistent part of the school day, turn recess into a period that is “go as you need”, cut the length of school recess down, and lastly educators were reported as saying that there is no answer and it is difficult to say, especially with budget cuts and limited staffs. Although these responses were not included in the final analysis, this section is a valuable as it demonstrates that the voice that goes unrecognized when making major education decisions is full of ideas, suggestions and valid opinions regarding the school experiences and creating an environment that is able to meet those academic needs while allowing opportunities, such as school recess, that are so important to the overall development of children.

Overall, the findings of this study revealed five results. First, teachers in rural education systems value school recess and feel that recess is an integral part of the school day for both the student and the classroom learning environment. Secondly, educators feel there are numerous benefits provided by recess for the students: social and life skills, an opportunity to engage in physical activity, meeting the needs of diverse children. Additionally, benefits have been witnessed within the classroom setting as participants reported less discipline issues and an increased classroom environment. A third result indicates that educators from rural school districts have witnessed an elimination of at least on recess period, have experienced pressure to increase academic achievement and instruction, and most have not been involved in providing input or feedback regarding said changes. The fourth result indicates that currently recess is

offered to all students during the lunch period for all schools, but the frequency and duration of school recess varies by class level and school district. Lastly, the final result of the findings displays educators expressing suggestions for the future of elementary education that include: finding a balance between academic pressure and school recess, keeping recess as part of the school system and consider restructuring the school schedule to accommodate increased learning pressures.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Both regular and special educators who participated in this study held similar experiences, opinions and insight regarding school recess. Also, findings show common changes which have been experienced throughout the participants' lengthy elementary education careers. Overall perceptions of school recess found study participants invariably spoke of this time period as a valuable and necessary part of the school day and for the students, regardless of their classroom assignment: regular and special education.

The majority of respondents expressed the important role recess plays in providing various experiences and numerous, empirically supported, benefits that are important for the overall development of children. Similar to other research on school recess, participants acknowledged recess as a time period associated with numerous benefits from “blowing off steam”, releasing pent-up energy, taking others' perspectives, communicating and negotiating with peers, engaging with diverse individuals, freedom from the classroom, rejuvenation, and relaxation to providing a foundation for lifelong wellness and quality of life through physical activity (Barros, Silver, & Stein, 2009; Holmes, Pellegrini, & Schmidt, 2006; Linder, 2002; Newman, Brody, & Beauchamp, 1996; Robinson & Wadsworth, 2010; Trimble, 1979; Walker, 2009). Participants additionally felt that recess plays a large role in the overall classroom atmosphere, which has been supported by existing literature, as participants reported decreased disputes, increased focus and attention, and educators being able to teach to students who return to the classroom feeling rejuvenated and with a renewed sense of energy (Chmelynski, 1998; Newman et al., 1996; Ramsetter, Murraray, & Garner, 2010; Rushton, 2011). Knowledge and

awareness of the specific contribution that recess has towards the overall development of students, held by both regular and special educators, may provide much needed support and act as a tool for opposing any negative perspectives that are held regarding the presence of recess within the school setting.

The research study investigated the current role of recess within elementary education. Findings varied among the presence of recess within the six school districts represented in this study. However, consistency was revealed as all educators reported that all students, Kindergarten through fifth grade, are provided with at least one recess experience, during the lunch period. In addition to the noon hour recess period, the opportunities to participate in a recess experience vary greatly among participants. Most educators reported lower level classrooms have more recess experiences than upper level grades, such as fourth and fifth grade. The data did reveal a common trend, throughout the represented schools, that in addition to lunch, most classrooms are allowed one recess period either in the morning or afternoon, for roughly 20 minutes. These findings demonstrates that elementary students are still receiving a much needed break from the academic work to engage in school recess, but the opportunities are limited compared to the past.

Changes within the school system, in terms of school recess, were additionally discussed in this study. Findings presented a shared experience among participants that at least one recess period has been eliminated since the start of their educational career. Consistent with research on the decreased allowance of recess within school systems, the study found the majority of schools have eliminated at least one recess due to increased focus and pressure towards higher academic achievement (Barros et al., 2009; Chaker, 2006; DeGregory, 2005; Kohler, Kilgo, & Christensen, 2012; Malone, 2009; Newman et al., 1996; Pellegrini, 1995; Ramstetter, et al.,

2010; Simon & Childers, 2006). However, changes towards increased academics and decreased recess time are relatively new as five out of the twelve participants reported that implementation of programs such as Response to Intervention (RTI) and Common Core Standards have taken place over the last year, which has caused these changes with recess and teachers began to feel the pressure towards higher academic achievement increase. Discussing the elimination of school recess and the impact this modification had on the school experience, one key finding of this study showed how appreciative educators are towards alternative, non-academic activities. Educators believe such courses decrease the negative effect and ramifications of the loss. Without non-academic activities such as physical education, art, music, and library, educators reported this elimination would be detrimental. Findings show that participants are thankful for such courses as students are able to participate in alternative, non-academic, activities that provided a break and a chance to freely move around, resting their working minds. Even though these courses are still structured, students are presented with some type of break from their rigorous academic classes. Similar to research, participants strongly believe highlighted that even though the students are not engaged in unstructured play or activities, the novelty of these nonacademic classes helps the students. Novelty-arousal theory helps explain this response as it highlights how individuals function better when they experience a change of pace, highlights that schoolchildren become habituated after being engaged in an activity for a long period of time, causing boredom to set in (Jarrett, Maxwell, Dickerson, Hoge, Davies, & Yetley, 1998). Increased learning, attention, and behaviors can be explained through the theory of novelty-arousal.

Another change that has been noted by participants throughout their careers involves implications from increased academic pressures and decreased recess time. Participants reported

that due to the increase of current academic pressures, they feel that there is not enough time to provide the necessary amount of content to students. This leaves teachers feeling more stressed, presenting an insufficient amount of time for children to play and “be free” and lastly, requiring students to learn more information earlier than prior years, as the academic bar is constantly being raised. Such observations warrant empirical findings that explain increased academic standards are not beneficial for human development and incorporating non-academic activities improve academics, attitudes and fitness of students (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009; Rushton, 2011). Therefore, these findings suggest that schools could consider alternative approaches towards the allowance of regularly scheduled recess breaks after a period of intense, academic instruction. Such a design would help improve the classroom environment, student learning, and eliminate the current pressure felt by teachers to push for increased academic achievement school-wide.

Although one-quarter of participants affirmed that their educator input is valued within their schools, the main finding from the data found the majority of participants have never been asked to be involved in providing input and insight towards changes within the school system. It was reported that most decisions throughout the schools are made from school officials. This finding warrants that educators may be a useful resources that are not well-recognized by school officials when discussing the plans for early education. Educators spend all of their time with the students, therefore their input and suggestions may be the key ingredient towards making decisions as they are able to shine insight and offer opinions as to what works best for students and academic excellence. Better communication is needed within the school district to include the perceptions of educators and obtain the lived experience when creating expectations,

discussing curriculum changes, and creating an environment that is beneficial to all individuals within the school district.

With a lack of educator perspectives and up-to-date studies among the literature (Newman et al., 1996; Patte, 2009; Pellegrini, 1995), this study allowed educators to reveal their thoughts and suggestions towards the future of elementary academics. The majority of study participants emphasized that school districts need to find a healthy balance between the push for higher academics and what is best for the students. Therefore, educators believe that decisions regarding changes to the school day and increased curriculum need to be made with the children's best interest in mind. Additionally, educators expressed strong desires to keep recess as part of the school day as, similar to the literature; educators believe this period is valuable for students and academics (Clements, 2000; Holmes et al., 2006; Malone, 2009; Newman et al., 1996; Skrupskelis, 2000; Trimble, 1979). With the current trend towards higher academic pressure and an increase in time spent in the classroom setting at the expense of other experiences, a small majority of respondents expressed that deliverance of instruction needs to be redesigned. Participants explained that school districts should consider rethinking the design of instruction to include more opportunities for both increased academic time and opportunities for time periods such as school recess. Examples were provided towards the restructuring of schools that included: expanding curriculum by longer school days, spread out throughout the year, or incorporate more flexibility into the schedule to allow educators more freedom and opportunities to teach the desired content. Desires and suggestions of educators, for future academic systems, need to be heard. The voices of these study participants provide a valuable, detailed insight into the journey that elementary education has taken over the last two decades and how the structure

of elementary education needs to be reviewed in order to provide an academic experience that is developmentally appropriate for students.

The overall perspectives of study participants highlight that the future of elementary education should focus on using what is known, regarding the benefits and positive aspects of opportunities such as school recess, to demonstrate that academic excellence is possible when collaboration is made between school recess and a well-planned design and deliverance of academic instruction. Such findings are supported by theoretical frameworks by Elkind (1981) and Piaget (1969). Elkind explains that modern children are “hurried” through an adult agenda to accelerate growth in narrowly defined ways. He further stresses that an over emphasis upon formal education sacrifices outlets for personal expression and diminishes play time (Newman et al., 1996). Additionally, Piaget’s theory of cognitive development adds to this argument that true learning is not something handed down by the teacher, but something that comes from the child. Piaget stresses that there is a great educational value in social interactions where children are encouraged to think logically and consider other perspectives when interacting with others (Crain, 2011).

Limitations

Despite the contribution of this study to show the perspectives of experienced school educators concerning school recess, there are several limitations of this study that deserve to be mentioned. First, the study sample was based on a convenience sample. Results of this study could differ significantly with results from the population of school educators throughout the nation. Additionally, the accounts of participants stem from individuals who are employed at small, rural school districts in Wisconsin. Therefore, findings may not be generalizable to

experiences of all veteran educators, such as those employed in larger school districts or urban areas. Lastly, Respond to Intervention (RTI) has been only in effect for roughly one year which has caused the main change to academics and recess in the specific area studied. The effects of a newly implemented system may have altered the mindset of participants, who may be not be as familiar with the changes from RTI on recess and the design of the curriculum.

Conclusions

The over-riding theme, presented from this research study, is that kids just need time to be kids. Children need freedom throughout the school day to escape the pressures of the classroom and have some autonomy to choose their own activities. Reflecting both on the literature and responses of participants, recess is more important today than ever before. This conclusion manifested from the viewpoints of veteran educators who expressed, in a variety of ways, that recess plays an important role within school systems and for students as it provides a much needed socialization experience for these developing children.

The current study focused on a sample population of veteran educators from a rural school district. Considering that children who attend these school districts may have to travel a great distance to interact with others individuals, recess plays a large role in the social lives of these students. Without recess, students may have minimal opportunities to engage in reciprocal play and social opportunities outside of the school day. Similarly, the home environment and family lifestyle plays a large role in the afterschool experience of students, where children of the past had numerous opportunities to play outdoors. Due to safety concerns of today's society, students may be required to return home from school and remain indoors until an adult figure arrives before children are allowed outdoors to play. This may be especially true for individuals

who reside in urban or un-safe neighborhoods. With increased awareness of childhood safety, children are offered less freedom and opportunities to play outdoors and gain social skills through interacting with others. Therefore, students are in need of the play experiences during the school day as a way of acquiring the numerous benefits and variety of social experiences linked to school recess.

School educators who participated in this study expressed that recess is important for providing students with time away from the classroom environment. Current elementary education systems focus on a rigorous academic day that involves children being busy, pushed to excel and invested in the curriculum, throughout the school day, in order to reach academic standards. However, educators point out in this study, and it remains apparent, that recess is the only time that children have during the school day to interact with classmates. Without recess, students are not able to engage in informal conversations, learn from one another, engage in their hobbies and express their creativity through recess. When recess is not provided, these children are limited in the number of friends they socialize with during the school day, which could create issues for students. For example, students may not be able to establish friendships, relate to others in their assigned classroom, or find school as an unenjoyably experience without school recess.

Lastly, there are numerous after-school and extracurricular activities that students are currently participating in. This busy lifestyle of today's youth includes structured activities during the school day and for numerous hours after school. Coincidentally, an active lifestyle decreases and possibly eliminates any time that children may have to participate in free play and engage in activities that they find enjoyable and relaxing. This is another reason why school recess is a crucial part to childhood. Allowing children to participate in free play, games with

friends, or to relax; recess is an outlet from the busy lifestyle that many American children are currently experiencing.

Acknowledging the complexity of life that children live among today's society, it is apparent that recess is an important aspect. Not only is recess important within the school setting, but also in the life of children. This play experience is a time when children are able to slow down their fast pace lifestyles, socialize with other individuals, relax, and enjoy their time as children. Most children, past and present, would express that recess is their "favorite class" period and further describe this experience with many memories, reflections of laughter and childhood fun. Children need time to enjoy their youth and have freedom to express themselves. Recess is able to provide this. Therefore, school districts need take in consideration the needs of their students, remembering that they are growing children.

Requiring children to work effectively and rigorous for a period of time needs to be rewarded with a developmentally appropriate outlet. A curriculum designed with that in mind may motivate students to work hard for a developmentally appropriate time as they know they will be able to refresh their minds and relax during scheduled breaks. Academic instruction is an important tool that is able to increase the knowledge of students. Recess is an important tool for children's autonomy, cognition, physical needs, social experience, and well-being. Therefore, the elementary education experience should combine the two aspects and focus on developing the student as a whole.

Recommendations

Future research should consider investigating perspectives of educators from urban school districts. Focusing on different geographical locations will allow researchers and legislators to

better understand the relationship between recess and the academic success of students and school districts. An increased understanding of both rural and urban educators opinions towards school recess and the changes within the school throughout their veteran careers could lead to an increased understanding of the impact school recess has in the elementary educational experience and whether this time period is considered a necessary part of the school day.

Another perspective that warrants further investigation is the viewpoints of recess from the standpoint of school officials. A deeper investigation regarding their perspectives, opinions, and understanding of school recess from these individuals would bring insight into the reasoning behind educational changes associated with school recess. The current study found that all schools experienced a change in recess and pressure towards higher education. However, a small majority of educators were involved in these decisions. Therefore, if school officials are studied further, we could understand the reasoning behind school reforms and why educator input is not highly valued in educational changes and decisions such as decreased recess in exchange for increased academics.

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APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) APPROVAL



EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board
Office
4N-70 Brody Medical Sciences Building- Mail Stop 682
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
Office 252-744-2914 · Fax 252-744-2284 · www.ecu.edu/irb

Notification of Initial Approval: Expedited

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
To: [Sunni Massop](#)
CC: [Sandra Triebenbacher](#)
Date: 11/12/2012
Re: [UMCIRB 12-002131](#)
The True Role of Recess

I am pleased to inform you that your Expedited Application was approved. Approval of the study and any consent form(s) is for the period of 11/12/2012 to 11/11/2013. The research study is eligible for review under expedited category #6 and #7. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this study no more than minimal risk.

Changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. The investigator must submit a continuing review/closure application to the UMCIRB prior to the date of study expiration. The Investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

The approval includes the following items:

Name	Description
EmailRecruitment.docx History	Recruitment Documents/Scripts
MassopInformedConsent.doc History	Consent Forms
MassopMCSE1.docx History	Study Protocol or Grant Application
MCSEquestions.docx History	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

APPENDIX B: NOTIFICATION OF AMENDMENT APPROVAL



EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board
Office
4N-70 Brody Medical Sciences Building · Mail Stop 682
600 Moya Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
Office 252-744-2914 · Fax 252-744-2284 · www.ecu.edu/irb

Notification of Amendment Approval

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
To: [Sunni Massop](#)
CC: [Sandra Triebenbacher](#)
Date: 11/26/2012
Re: [Ame1_UMCIRB 12-002131](#)
[UMCIRB 12-002131](#)
The True Role of Recess

Your Amendment has been reviewed and approved using expedited review for the period of 11/26/2012 to 11/11/2013 . It was the determination of the UMCIRB Chairperson (or designee) that this revision does not impact the overall risk/benefit ratio of the study and is appropriate for the population and procedures proposed.

Please note that any further changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. A continuing or final review must be submitted to the UMCIRB prior to the date of study expiration. The investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

The approval includes the following items:

Name	Description	Modified	Version
	Addition of Phone Solicitation as a Recruitment Method		

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

APPENDIX C: INITIAL FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS

Question 1: What do you think of when you hear recess?	
Block of time --> get outside, play, fresh air, socialize, wear off energy, relax, get new energy, exercise, blow off steam, play on the playground, release antsyness, playing sports, playing house, time to be a kid	
Different kids have different needs	
	Ex. Behavior needs
	Ex. Playing basketball or sitting with friends
	Interact with others at an unstructured level
Good Thing/Very Much Needed (Necessary) → Great proponent of the day, an outlet, rejuvenation	
	Quote: “when someone is not telling them what to do”.
	Quote: “Time for a kids to be a kid and not worry so much about focusing”
Weather shouldn't be a factor	
Helps focus when they came in/outlet because they have to attend for so many of their minutes	
Question 2: What are your thoughts about recess	
Great proponent of the day, they need it, brain break into instruction	
	A lot of these kids you can tell their life is all video games, so recess is a chance to get outside, breathe fresh air and move around
Important part of the day, an outlet, very much needed	
	Quote: “We (teachers) need breaks, the kids need breaks also”
	->break from regular instruction – both mentally and physically
	Quote: “They need some time where someone is not telling them what to do”
Necessary, highly necessary, a must	
	“Even 10 minutes into our afternoons would be more helpful than what we have now” (no p.m. recess)
	Quote: “When kids do not have recess, it is a rough day”
	With being so plugged in, not getting outside enough at home, recess is so important to give them the fresh air and to run around
Question 3: Empirical Benefits: <i>Students</i>	
Exercise: movement, playing games, large motor movements such as running, small movements such as playing with cars in dirt	
	->With obesity on the rise, any extra physical activity beside gym class is needed.
Brain “stuff”, oxygen, stimulus to brain	

	“Movement may be good for a brain break”
Fresh air: out in the sun, get outside	
	Quote:” I think it just common sense. Especially when small children are cooped up for a long period of time, they lose their focus, their attention span is pretty short to begin with and that is an opportunity to go out.”
	Quote: “ Being outside is not why your child is sick. They need to get outside. In winter time with the germs, it is so good to get the fresh air, out of germey air and let their lungs get fresh air, to run and exercise”
Rejuvenate: refreshed , “Break from instruction”: less structure, they are “free”, Blow off steam, antsyness, release energy, laughter, much needed time	
	Quote: “one of my students told me that they are wiggly if she does not get a change to do something outside”
	-Some are so tired after recess, they need a cool down time. Ex. We schedule read aloud’s to relax them and get them ready to start up again
Time for teachers to have children catch up on work	
	→when students are gone from school, we use that period to get missed done – I think of children sitting on the wall with their clip boards
	→when children are sick they may not feel up for being outside, so they can stay inside and work with the teacher
	->Recess gets taken away if they do not have their homework done or do not get help at home. Therefore, it turns into a homework help time. Quote: “Get your homework done first, so you can then have recess”
Teachers get some fresh air also: Gives them a different perspective → get outside and a change to see a different environment and the children in a different light, working and playing with their friends outside of the classroom.	
Socialization: be with friends, interaction, form relationships, gain common sense, sharing, friends from different classes, controlling themselves, develop relationships, solves their social issues that always come up	
	Quotes: “it is amazing the different things we can see, the different relationships especially if there are other classes out. It is interesting if it is just your own class, but if there are other classes out you get to see other things you haven’t seen. Like if there is a child in my class who seems to not get along with peers, but is excellent in working with younger kids. And just things you wouldn’t ordinarily see. “
	Quote: “There are just a lot of things that happen on the playground. You will have the bigerg kids, like I have some girls this year that have some small buddies in kindergarten and first grade

	that they look forward to playing with on the playground and that is just a huge role model that I see as for my kids as they get to be a leader and these kids get to look up to them and it just a sense of belonging and need that is fulfilled on the playground that is not filled in my classroom just because of the age differences.”
Acquiring Skills: Work Together, Taking turns, learning boundaries, how to lose graciously, learning how to do things on their own and how to play on their own	
	Quote: “A”
Fights and Swables	
	Quote: We have seen less discipline problems because they have learned early on to play with one another at recess time.
	Need to learn how to get along and have fun together
	“Recess is a growing curve too besides just the play”....”
	Quote: “ You have conflict in the real world so recess allows them to get some skills to work out those issues”
Imaginative Play	
Question 3: Empirical Benefits: <i>Learning Environment</i>	
Less discipline/referrals: learning how to deal with issues, solve their disputes and problems	
Increases focus – brings back attention, ready to go, refreshed	
Overall atmosphere improves : settled down, ready for sedentary learning, energy releaser, cooled down, able to control themselves, increased attention span	
Hard to get them settled down after recess	
One on one time to finish school work	
	Also, with less recess time it is hard to get work done from children who do not get it done at home.
Some do not know how to: interact with others and gravitate towards teachers	
They form new relationships outside that carry into the classroom.	
Question 4: Current state of recess within your school	
Two: one at noon (25 mins), one at 2 o’clock (20 mins) one at lunch (40 min), one in afternoon (20 min) one at mid-morning (15 min), one at lunch (30-35 min) one at lunch (30-35 min), one in afternoon (15-20 min)	
Varies class by class: everyone has a noon recess - K-2: morning, afternoon, lunch 3 rd – 4 th : afternoon and lunch 5 th : no morning or afternoon, just lunch	

On cold days we will bring them in earlier	
	By the time the mittens, hats, etc are on they get 15 minutes, transition time takes away from recess time
Every class does their own: most have one plus lunch (15 – 30 min)	
	It is at the discretion of the teacher and the principal has been really good about that
	Never had anything dictated: younger take two recesses (15 minutes) plus lunch (30 minute)
If there is physical Education, recess is skipped: Lunch plus one recess (30 min and 15 min)	
Question 5: Changes in Recess	
A recess has been dropped: lost a recess	
	Four stated: Due to RTI → morning recess was 8 – 8:15; losing academic time, our afternoon recess got shoved out
No Changes	
Time devoted to recess has decreased for academic time, length and periods of recess have decreased, hard to find time for recess, Less time: squished into school day	
	Quote: “Time for recess is just teacher preferences. I find it very hard to squeeze more into my day, we have a lot we need to cover and a lot that the kids need to be working on so I don’t donate as much to recess as others do. That could be the lack of organization in my room too, but I think it is more so that there is so much to do that we kind of run out of time.”
Teacher’s choice to cut a recess	
	Ex. To spend more time on academics
	->Partly due to lack of staff for recess duty, and cuts to staff
	Quote: Most duties put us over the edge, took away from our time”
Changed Recess:	
	Ex. Restructured recess, laid down parameters for certain areas, certain activities that are allowed in certain parts of the playground
	Very heavily monitored by staff, walkie-talkies (this is not recess anymore!)
	Children seem more pampered. Quote: “If we do not provide just the right stuff, right equipment, their imagination doesn’t come into play as much. The kids don’t seem as if they have anything to do or say “I am bored”.” “Some children just like to come up and talk to the grown up because they just do not know what to do with their time.”

Question 5: Changes with academics over career	
Institution of State Requirements: we stopped doing out morning recess to get the children started with academics right away	
	- RTI may target fine arts areas, RTI is adding more and more to our curriculum
	- Three teachers mentioned the push for Common Core Standards
“Test Driven”: pushed to “meet the test”, raising the bar so kids are achieving more	
Increased emphasis on academics: amount of time devoted to academics increased, more and more packed with academics and what teachers need to teach, New requirements (state, federal, own school district)	
	Recess was something given up in order to fit more academic time
	Quote: “Constantly, the curriculum is being added on to, but time is not – very tricky to find time and use it wisely”
	More specific, increased, and intense instruction (1.5 hours of literacy), decreased time for other important subjects
Try to fit in more instruction time: no time, heavy pressure on academic success: “get more in”, really affected our time, no time to squeeze recess in, not enough time	
	By the end of the day, they are winding down, not getting out and that burst of fresh air we have to push them hard to keep going.
	Lots of brain breaks and energizer to keep that pull going by the end of the day
	Quote: “With all the school cuts and the demands to teach more and more in all the subject areas, we have to go through recess time”
Additional staff duties decrease planning and prep time	
	Kids are in your room right away, rushed to get things done to prepare
The structure of class has changed: no free time	
	Afternoons turned into a big chunk of non-activity (12 – 3 without activity)
	Quote: “In the A.M.s, they use to come in and talk with each other, but now that is gone too. It is right to work”
	Implemented “morning warm up”: academic based for children to get to work ASAP
	Quote: “ Before they could socialize, get ready, exchange books, sharpen pencils, but now it is straight academic work and based”
	Quote: “we have to have milk and snack break while they are working on things because time is that crunched”
	In Kindergarten: no show and tell, no play time, no naps anymore.

	Quote: "It has changed to children being little adults because there is no time"
Question 6: Impact of changes	
Not much of an impact (to students): Due to phy ed in curriculum: provides a release, time to run, time to do something organized in gym class.	
	->Phy Ed teacher pushes them to be active at recess, still "lucky" enough to have phy ed ("...but that is still structured and has requirements, too")
	Quote: "are fortunate that we do have phy ed in the early afternoon. It is the early afternoon. The last two hours of the day we do a lot of brain breaks and energizers to trying and keep that pull going. But I don't think it is the same as the fresh air, obviously."
Feel these changes will be ok. Ex. without morning recess	
Changes have been o.k.: Ex. Due to "specials"	
	Ex. Music, art, phy ed. And library
	-without specials, if it would be all academics, with no break that would not be good at all, provides an alternate activity
We don't give our kids enough time to play, to be imaginative, creative	
	Quote: "Too much of recess is trying to get the kids to participate in organized play instead of letting them create their own games and activities"
	Quote: "started I can just tell that some of the kids need to get outside and be played. I can tell, I wouldn't say obese, but they are getting heavy. Even in 2 nd grade, you can tell they need more exercise and less junk. Less sitting around. So as far as the push toward more recess, I would love it"
Changes are good and positive for the academic picture:	
	-->for what they want and where they need the kids at the end of the grade level, changes are good
Too many requirements in too short of time - Expecting more and more from the kids :	
	Academics have trickled down to lower levels
	Ex. We haven't done fun projects, seasonal types of things in the last couple of years due as we are trying to meet the requirements within general curriculum
	Something has to give
Kids need time where they can make their own choices	
	Quote: "I think it is very important. Part of me believe very strongly that some of these kids come to school with social problems and don't get the problems resolved because they are not given the opportunity to interact with their peers and work

	out at a young age their issues of getting along, following the rules and that sort of thing. By the time the kids get to my level (4 th and 5 th) and they are still having problems getting along with one another is due to the fact that there is not enough value given into that play time at school learning how to get along with other kids.”
	At recess I see they are trying organized play rather than letting them create their own games and activities
More time is spent towards certain subjects	
	Ex. Math/reading
	Shifted our goals and expectations towards these areas
	Quote: “it is hard to compare what they were doing to what we are doing now because we have shifted our goals and expectations to focus more on the reading and math areas”
Teachers are more stressed	
	Concentration and attention levels are waining by 2 o’clock Ex. When children aren’t “feeling it”
	Ex. Pressured to get more into the day
	Quote: “This year we said we are accountable for what we do. We feel that we cannot give up our time for other activities as every minute counts. Time is not taken lightly, it is not like it used to be where you could just, at the drop of a hat, do alternative activities. You really have to figure out, “ok am I really going to be able to recapture that time and is there really going to be a more productive time when they come back in or is it just that I need a break. Sometimes I could do those things in the past, but now it is not really an option”
	Prep time gone without recess. Ex. Children are in room right away in AM, teachers are rushed to get things together
Additional Question: If you haven’t seen any changes, do you predict any changes to come in the future?	
If there is any change coming we might exchange the shorter recess for phy ed time so we have phy ed time everyday	
Quote: “we have talked about possibility eliminating recesses and just have the lunch recess and using that time for more of an intervention time and resource time. So it is definitely on the minds of people that recess may eliminated to try make up some time for other things. I believe we need recess, but not for as length of a time.”	
Question 7: Has anyone ever asked for your input?	
No, not really. No, no one has asked. Nah, Not a part of changes	
Ex. Hasn’t been much discussion because I think all the teachers are on the same page in regard to recess itself and understand there is a need for that release, go outside, exercise, socialize and be with friends	
It is a top down decision , as far as I recall	

	→But, we are asked and things are brought up, because they tend to try and ask and get out input
Minimal discussion at staff meetings when we first made the shift.	
	At that time, there was discussion about how things were going
Some input: With common core, I was invited to have some input	
	Ex. I don't know if they read it, pretended to read it, but I felt better to know I had at least some input
Yes, we fill out goals and recommendations, things we would like to change and things that are successful at the end of the year	
	Ex. Opportunity to request changes and offer input
	Ex. Monthly staff meets
	Ex. Our input is always been given consideration, but requirements overshadow them
	Ex. Principal always wants out input and open to ideas
	Ex. We have an open administration and they take suggestions
We have teachers pushing for new changes: Ex. for morning recess	
	4-5 teachers in a committee to get it going
	Teachers brough it up to principal
	Principal knows importance of recess, but it is "how do we go it?" – "With little time and parameters, you have to do it this way and follow rules."
Question 8: Where should we go from here?	
Hope that schools continue recess, especially for the little ones, concerned if district started to not value recess time	
	Don't take any more time from recess, hate to see less
	Because they are not getting outside enough after school, this is their opportunity to get that exercise.
	Quote: "I don't think we will be further ahead because the kids focus level and attention span times are so short that I don't think we would be ahead."
	Quote: "I don't think the academics would improve if the kids didn't have the recess time. I don't think they would be focused and I don't' think that time would be spent...I don't think you would accomplish more"
Keep Phy Ed as a constant part of the school day	
	-With less phy ed, exercise time has gone down a lot
Extend our Calendar	
	Ex. extended days or increase homework at home to prevent creating a "hurried child, overbooking the kids or we will have

	children becoming overly fragile and going to become too neurotic”
	Advocate for year round schooling: not more days, but spread out Ex. Break during summer is less. See a huge amount of information lost during those months. Year round schooling would keep recesses in the school, phy ed and movement with little more academic time. → It would still be 180-185 days, but small breaks would also let parents be with their children more.
Maybe a “go as you need” - More flexibility	
	Ex. When you see your kids really needing a break
	“Kind of impossible with school schedules”
Keep recesses the way they are	
	They need that social aspect to their day
	I think it is a big component that we really strong continue, need to continue in the districts and schools themselves.
	I think it is such strong component for a well-rounded kid just to give them that opportunity to be outside, be with friends, relax and blow off steam.
	Would be sad if schools took recess away from academics
	Ex. I don’t think decreased recess will further academics because focus and attention levels are so short, we won’t be ahead
Tough with budget cuts and limited staff	
	Ex. scheduling needs to get creative
	Ex. It comes down to money too. If we had money, we could have phy ed. Daily and I wouldn’t feel as bad
	Ex. Push for more minutes
Schools need to make sure kids have an outlet for a break	
Find a balance	
	Some of the days, I can tell they should have some sort of break and they are just not ready to learn. Teaching them the whole 8 hours a day is just not going to work.
	Quote: “Finding that balance, which is never going to be perfect for everybody because it is just not feasible. I guess just making it the best situation for the kids. That is just what we have to think about. You know you think that it is going to be a pain for me, but it is not about me. It is about the kids.

	Quote: “I sometimes feel that we lose perspective of that student achievement and we just look at print scores on paper. Since it is not easy to measure the social and emotional growth sometimes (from recess), sometimes I feel that (recess) is not given a fair chunk of time. So I guess we need to continue to find a balance”
	Quote: “We also have to remember that there are so many types of learning that happens with kids that we need to encourage all types of learning and not just the book study but also the hands on, the perspective play, the creativeness that comes out on the playground that you don’t always see and the integration of big kids/little kids playing together and not just your own classmates.”
Do what is best for the kids. Ex. not healthy to push our kids this much	
Cut Recess time a little	
	Ex. 40 minutes at lunch is a long time, especially for kids who struggle with behavior
	Ex. Long time to make sure they are making good choices
Doesn’t seem to be an answer.	
	Ex. When we compare worldwide, we aren’t doing so well so I understand the push
Question 9: Specific Kids and Recess	
Recess is a great opportunity to connect and see them in different light	
	“I have the two o’clock duty, and so I have twelve or thirteen kids and most of them were girls, oddly enough, and I shouldn’t say oddly enough, but most boys gravitate towards football we now have girls out there throwing a football around and I just think that is wonderful. The most kids you can get involved and doing things like that, rather than just standing around. Just getting them to do something, getting them involved, working with each other, I think is an absolute benefit for them.”
Different Kids have Different Needs:	
	“I think different kids have different needs at recess and we are not always good at meeting those needs. I think of some of my kids who have some behavior needs when out at recess and it is a little hard to make sure they are making good decisions. “
	“I think typically kids with social type issues can go out and just have fun doing whatever they are doing and are fine. Then there are kids who don’t easily make the right choices so they tend to end up getting in trouble out there, running into problems with their peers or arguing. Kids sometimes have a

	<p>little bit more need for structure than what is provided, depending on what is provided by schools. We do have a little bit of a structure type program twice a week. There is a team out there to try and organize games. Our typical recess is the kids go out and do whatever they need to do. There isn't really much organization. The supervision is maybe a hard thing. That is a big area and a lot of kids for two or three playground people to be supervising and making sure the kids are getting along ok."</p>
	<p>"Some kids have more conflicts than others due to their personality and maturity level so it is a good learning experience out there too"</p>
<p>One particular child I am thinking off. He has strong ADHD behaviors and I actually would like to see him having 15 min in morning and afternoon and maybe a half hour in lunch. It would be nice to have that physical outlet for him. But it is harder to calm him down though.</p>	
	<p>"I feel it is very important for some kids more than others because some kids really need to work on those social skills and I think some of those social experiences take place at recess. Such as kids that are an only child in the family and wouldn't necessarily have interaction with other children because of the only child they have no interaction with adults. Also, just some special education kids who are needing that time to play with other kids and get acceptance."</p>
<p>Using recess to help children with special needs</p>	
	<p>"it could be differently if we were using it as an instructional thing to help him interact with peers. We do provide supervision for him to make sure he is headed down the right path. But we aren't at this point real formal to have a structured teaching plan in place for that."</p>
	<p>Quote: "A lot of my kids are ADHD and really need some time to be outside"</p>
<p>Social Aspect with Special Education Children and Regular Educator Children</p>	
	<p>Provides a time for integration and a neutral place on the playground for the kids to interact</p>
	<p>Quote: "A lot of my kids have trouble socially. And I have been able to go out for a recess this year and kind of watch, there are two of them in particular, two kids that I have been watching to see that they socialize and play the games. That has been helpful. When you are doing behavioral goals that is really where you should be doing them is out on the playground when they are with other kids and not isolated in the classroom teaching them rules because they need to use and not just learn it."</p>
<p>More and Less Active Kids</p>	

	Quote: "I think both, because I think if some of the ones that weren't as active got more exercise they would be better off in the classroom and more focused. And the kids that have the extra energy would need to release that too to settle down and work."
Negative Aspect:	
	it does bring out some of the negative behaviors in some of the children who struggle with self control.
	kids I have had this year and previous years have struggled the most with, keeping their hands to themselves, they have so much more freedom and they tend to get much more physical out there
Many diverse learners creates an issue when scheduling recess	
	"I would like to take my kids out whenever I see them fading, but one of the restrictions for me especially is that this year I have so many kids going different places and I refuse to have a recess if the whole class can't participate. I have never had so many kids going other places and that switch so this year it is only 15 minutes but it is not because that is what I think is ideal, but that is all the time I could chisel out of our schedule. With few hours of the day, and very little times do I not have someone going to title one for reading or for math, or special ed or speech, or OT."
Other Opinions:	
One of the things we noticed over the years is that for example, when I started teaching hear, probably 8 out of 10 kids could jump rope. Alright, and I have talked with the AD over the years, we are seeing less and less of that. We are seeing now maybe 5/10 kids or 4/10 kids who can jump rope. Simply because they are not doing the stuff outside anymore. Because again, part of it is our society the way we are today and the technology we have have, the kids seem to be really wired into that.	
Recess is dependent on weather: if tolerable we will let the kids play longer, if not we may take them in earlier than usual	
I do not want to see more encroachment into their time for recess because they want to do more academic study, because I don't really know in the end if we benefit from that or not, simply because I think the kids are already test driven in this district and other districts as well. I think it could get to a point where it won't benefit anybody if you start taking away recess because you want to, you know, add more academics in their agenda.	
I do hear people say that we should keep them in all day and I think noooo. Like I said, they really need that time. They need that release, simply because it is a pressure packed day for these guys. We try to make it as much fun as possible. Especially for the younger ones, I really firmly believe they need the exercise	

	it is funny you ask that kids too “What is your favorite subject?” or favorite thing during the day and 9x out of 10, recess is in top 10 items that kids choose off of the bat because they love it. They love being with their friends, they love seeing others that they can’t see during the day because they are in different classrooms. So, again just being able to connect with their friends out of the classroom is a big part of their lives as well.
III	
	It is just a great opportunity to connect with the kids and do something different with them than always dealing with the academics. It is nice to seeing them in different light. Even some of the girls, I will be like holy cow. Seeing them in with the boys. Again, I am not sexist, but It is just fun to see everybody wanting to compete with each other and seeing those walls blur away, especially with the younger kids.
	When kids go outside, like during winter. They appreciate looking at the snowflakes on their wool mittens. They will investigate the natural environments. They always learn how weather works that will help them in life. They find where the sun is on the pavement and lay there to absorb the heat. Or the kids may move to the east side of the building to block the wind, or learn to hide behind friends or in huddles to stay warm and block the cold wind.
	They love recess. There are times when they come in scawbling and fighting and I think ahh, is it really worth it? But really it is. Because you go out in the hall and do conflict resolution and you talk about the way you want to be treated and the way we treat others. It is all learning. It is important.
	I think it would change a child’s mentality to lose that recess time too because I think the majority of kids would tell you that recess if their favorite time of the day. If you would take that time away I think that would change their outlook on school to some degree. That is their time to spend with friends. Because academics has become to rigorous, teachers have to push push push, there has to be some down time.
	I do think our brains are designed to move, our bodies are designed to move and our brains need that movement regularly and kids need to socialize. If kids are not getting those opportunities to just play with no, with little to no expectations other than you know, no fighting or not getting trouble, just to get out and hang out with their friends a little bit. I think that is important. I think it would be really sad if schools went down the road of needing to take that away to make time for academics
	I keep watching through the years. I remember what I learned in school and then learning it earlier and earlier and earlier. Push for more and more and more. The increase with the standards and what was good last year is this for this year. IT is like oh my goodness that is a lot of pressure for kids.

I would rather have the children go to recess and then eat lunch. I have some students who do not really eat because they really want to go outside and then they are hungry. We do the kids eat first and then go outside.	
Additives to Recess:	
Play Fair:	our guidance counselor organizes it. It is led through her. She teaches a core group of kids. It is on a rotating schedule on Tuesdays and Thursdays. That core group of kids are in charge, they do it at the fourth grade level. They are in charge of organizing the games, making sure everyone plays fair, teaching the kids how to play and involving anyone who wants to play
	Any child can play - They can come play with the Play Fair Group and the kids are leaders of the game that is happening.
Recess Committees	
	Restructured recess, laid down parameters for certain areas, certain activities that are allowed in certain parts of the playground
	Very heavily monitored by staff, walkie-talkies (this is not recess anymore!)
Morning Recess Change	
	Use to be a Breakfast Program – Eat then play, now it is eat and homework help
Added things to the playground	
	We added four square, big map on the concrete and hop scotch. I don't see them using it very much. We introduce them to the activities, but if they are not interested in it, they are not going to share it with their friends.
Implementing Morning Recess	
	They need get some exercise before school to get their brains going for school. I know they are for the before school starts recess
	, they are going to drop off their things in the hallway. They will have special spots. If they are going to eat breakfast, they will have breakfast provided. They can go have breakfast or they can juts go outside. We will have a parent volunteer and then one staff member.
Learning from other schools	
	"I had the opportunity to student-teach in New Zealand. The whole school had a recess and snack break in the morning. So all the kids were outside on the playground and all the teachers were involved in some sort of a meeting, or a development and an IEP or that is when they planned.

APPENDIX D: SECOND FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS

Question 1: What do you think of when you hear school recess?		
Answer: Block of time to...	Quote in thesis/Citations:	
	as a break or discretionary period, typically outdoors that allows children to freely engage with peers or by one's self, in free unstructured play (Beighle, Morgan, Guy & Pangrazi, 2006; Pellegrini & Smith, 1993; Sindelar, 2002).	
Get outside	Trimble, 1979; Beighle, Morgan, Guy & Pangrazi, 2006; Pellegrini & Smith, 1993; Sindelar, 2002	freedom away from the classroom walls and a time to explore the outdoor play environment, seen as their personal "playscape" (Trimble, 1979)
Play	Beighle, Morgan, Guy & Pangrazi, 2006; Pellegrini & Smith, 1993; Sindelar, 2002; Cohen, 1987; Ramsetter, Murraray, & Garner, 2010; Barros, Silver, & Stein, 2009; Trimble, 1979.	
Fresh air		
Socialize	Blatchford, 1998; McArdle, 2001); Nation Association for the Education of Young children, 2009; Pellegrini, 1995; Rodkin, 2012	
Wear off energy	COPEC, 2001; Barros, Silver, & Stein, 2009; Jarrett et al., 1998; Simon & Childers, 2006; Omrod, 2000.	
Relax	children's "down time," that includes a break from instruction, allowing children to process what is going on within the classroom setting and a chance to release pent up frustrations and anxieties caused by educational pressure (Ramsetter, Murraray, & Garner, 2010).	Time dedicated to recess is therapeutic to children as it functions as a respite from stress caused by adult expectations and pressures (Newman & Brody, 1996),
Get new energy	Linder, 2002	
Exercise	Robinson & Wadsworth, 2010; Walker, 2009; Barros, Silver, & Stein, 2009; Millner, 2010;	
	Advocates for childhood physical activity are aware of the potential that recess has towards providing children time to exercise and provide a foundation for lifelong	

	wellness and quality of life (Robinson & Wadsworth, 2010; Walker, 2009; Barros, Silver, & Stein, 2009).	
Blow off steam	Filling the school schedule with breaks with unstructured free play during recess allows children to blow off steam or release pent-up energy (COPEC, 2001; Barros, Silver, & Stein, 2009; Jarrett et al., 1998; Simon & Childers, 2006).	
Play on the playground	Blatchford, 1998;	
Release antsyness		
Play sports	National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009	recess provides children benefits of free unstructured play which fosters skills as imagination, creativity, organization of games, recognition of rules, problem-solving, and leadership (Barros, Silver & Stein, 2009
Playhouse	Participating in this form of play involves transforming objects and actions as children symbolically role play, use script knowledge, and improvisation (Bergen, 2002).	
	Pretend play is defined as a child using an object <i>as if</i> it is another object, <i>or</i> attributes properties to an object which it does not, <i>or</i> refers to absent objects as if they were present (Baron-Cohen, 1987).	
Time to be a kid		
Answer: Different kids have different needs		
Ex. Behavior Needs		
Ex. Playing basketball or sitting with friends		
Interact with others at an unstructured level	Cardon et al. (2007) explains that children are able to participate in recess at a higher level when teachers are not in control of children's choice of physical activities and observe from a distance.	
Answer: Good Think/Very much needed (Necessary)		
Get proponent of the day		
Outlet	children's "down time," that includes a break from instruction, allowing children to process what is going on within the classroom setting and a chance to release pent up frustrations and anxieties	

	caused by educational pressure (Ramsetter, Murrary, & Garner, 2010).	
Rejuvenation	Physical activity provides children with higher brain functioning, increased energy levels, self-esteem and a relief from boredom (Linder, 2002),	Time dedicated to recess is therapeutic to children as it functions as a respite from stress caused by adult expectations and pressures (Newman & Brody, 1996),
Answer: Weather shouldn't be a factor		
Answer: Helps focus when they come back in – outlet because they have to attend to school for so many of their minutes		
Question 2: What are your thoughts towards recess?		
Answer: Great proponent of the day		
They Need it		
Break from instruction	children's "down time," that includes a break from instruction, allowing children to process what is going on within the classroom setting and a chance to release pent up frustrations and anxieties caused by educational pressure (Ramsetter, Murrary, & Garner, 2010). freedom away from the classroom walls and a time to explore the outdoor play environment, seen as their personal "playscape" (Trimble, 1979	
	With breaks among structured learning, the brain is able to refresh itself and make stronger connections between neurons, which results in stronger and faster reactions in recalling information (Gallagher, 2005).	
Answer: Important Part of the day		
Break from regular instruction (both mentally and physically)	COPEC, 2001; Barros, Silver, & Stein, 2009; Jarrett et al., 1998; Simon & Childers, 2006	children's "down time," that includes a break from instruction, allowing children to process what is going on within the classroom setting and a chance to release pent up frustrations and anxieties caused by educational pressure (Ramsetter, Murrary, & Garner, 2010).

Answer: Necessary (highly, must)		
Question 3: Empirical knowledge supports many benefits of school recess, do you believe there are benefits for the students?		
Answer: Exercise...		
Movement	Recess is one of the few inexpensive, readily available opportunities our school system has to offer for getting kids moving (Millner, 2010).	
Playing games		
Large motor benefits (running)		
Small motor (playing with cars)		
Decrease obesity	Advocates for childhood physical activity are aware of the potential that recess has towards providing children time to exercise and provide a foundation for lifelong wellness and quality of life (Robinson & Wadsworth, 2010; Walker, 2009; Barros, Silver, & Stein, 2009).	
Answer: Brain Benefits...		
	Piaget suggested that children's patterns of play evolve as their cognitive-developmental levels change allowing children to utilize and refine their cognitive skills (Newman, Brody, & Beauchamp, 1996)	
Oxygen	Gallagher, 2005	
Stimulus to brain	child's play environment is important as it nourishes, stimulates, and challenges the child and builds a child's cognitive structure (Crain, 2011 Stimulating environments where children are free to select their own form of learning connect millions of neuro-pathways within the child's brain, which aids in stress reduction and allows for greater flexibility and creativity (Rushton, 2011).	
Brain Break		
Answer: Fresh Air		
Get sun		
Get outside		
Answer: Rejuvenation		
COPEC, 2001; Barros, Silver, & Stein, 2009; Jarrett et al., 1998; Simon & Childers, 2006). Newman & Brody, 1996		
Refreshment	When students are given the chance to move around a little, they return to the classroom refreshed and better able to deal with the task at hand and learn more effectively (Chmelynski, 1998).	
"Break from instruction"	children's "down time," that includes a break from instruction, allowing children to process what is going on within the classroom setting and a chance to release	

	pent up frustrations and anxieties caused by educational pressure (Ramsetter, Murrary, & Garner, 2010).	
Less structure		
They are free	freedom away from the classroom walls and a time to explore the outdoor play environment, seen as their personal “playscape” (Trimble, 1979	
	children are more active in spacious, compared with restricted, environments (Pellegrini & Smith, 1993).	
Blow off steam		
Antsy		
Release energy		
Laughing		
Much needed time		
Answer: Time for teachers		
Have children catch up on work		
Sick – stay in and work		
Recess is taken away when work is not finished		
Answer: Benefits teachers...		
Time for fresh air too		
See children in different light		
Answer: Socialization		
	play as important learning opportunity in child development (Crain, 2006; Newman, Brody, & Beauchamp, 1996; Cohen, 1987 educational value in social interactions which allow children to think logically and learn to consider two or more perspectives in their dealings with others (Crain, 2011).	
Be with friends		
Interaction		
Form relationships	opportunity to practice taking others’ perspectives, communicate effectively and follow negotiated rules with peers (Holmes, Pellegrini, Schmidt, 2006	
Gain common sense	Together through co-operative play, children exercise skills such as emotional self-regulation, reflect before reacting, and acknowledge other’s perspectives (McArdle, 2001).	
Sharing		
Friends from different classes	School playgrounds are home to a diverse group of individuals, requiring children to learn how to get along with children of different genders, cultures and racial identities (Blatchford, 1998).	
Controlling themselves		

Develop relationships		
Solve their social issues that come up	recess provides children benefits of free unstructured play which fosters skills as imagination, creativity, organization of games, recognition of rules, problem-solving, and leadership (Barros, Silver & Stein, 2009	
	Children are able to joint plan, problem-solve and take turns (Jarrett, 2002) in order to keep their play experiences alive as they learn on their own how to resolve conflicts and negotiate with one another (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009).	
	Recess's natural play experience advances into an increased complex, sophisticated and symbolic form of play that allow children to practice real life situations (Monighan-Nourot, et al., 1987; Whitebread, Coltman, Jameson, & Lander, 2009	
Answer: Fights and Scwables		
Sindelar (2002) as cited in Malone, 2009		
Answer: Imaginative Play		
	recess provides children benefits of free unstructured play which fosters skills as imagination, creativity, organization of games, recognition of rules, problem-solving, and leadership (Barros, Silver & Stein, 2009	
Opportunities to participate	play experiences further children knowledge of symbols as players learn that one thing can stand for something else as play is a symbolic representation of the child's inner world (Cohen, 1987).	
Question 3: Empirical knowledge supports many benefits of school recess, do you believe there are benefits for your classroom learning environment?		
Answer: Less discipline/referrals		
Learning to deal with issues	Recess's natural play experience advances into an increased complex, sophisticated and symbolic form of play that allow children to practice real life situations (Monighan-Nourot, et al., 1987; Whitebread, Coltman, Jameson, & Lander, 2009	
Solve their disputes		
Solve their problems		
Answer: Increases focus	Chmelynski, 1998	
Brings back attention		
Ready to get back to instruction		
Refreshed	Physical activity provides children with higher brain functioning, increased energy levels, self-esteem and a relief from boredom (Linder, 2002),	
Answer: Overall atmosphere increases		
Chmelynski, 1998; Barros, Silver, & Stein, 2009; Jarrett et al., 1998;Millner, 2010;		

Pellegrini & Davis, 1993; Millner, 2010; Jarrett et al. (1998) and Pellegrini (2009)		
	benefits recess provides to the school children, as well as the class environment (Jarrett et al. 1998; Malone, 2009; Newman, Brody, & Neauchamp, 1996).	
Kids are settled down		
Ready for sedentary learning	, children are able to feel happier and better after playing, which ultimately impact the mood and ability of an individual's desire to learn or simply respond to the external environment (Rushton, 2011).	
Energy releaser	Novelty-Arousal Theory explains that individuals function better when they experience a change of pace, highlights that schoolchildren become habituated after being engaged in an activity for a long period of time, causing boredom to set in.	
Cooled down		
Able to control themselves		
Increased attention span	Strategically scheduled breaks during and between challenging educational tasks increases a child's attention span and possibly increases learning (Pellegrini & Bjorklund, 1996)	
Answer: Hard to get them settled down		
Answer: One on one time		
Finish unfinished school work		
Answer: Interaction		
Some do not know how to interact – interact with teacher	peers and adults may provide assistance to children, but it is these interactions that motivate children to stretch their development through peer support and learn and complete tasks on their own (Crain, 2011).	
Answer: Relationships		
Form new relationships that carry into the classroom		
Question 4: Current state of recess within school		
Answer: Two		
Answer: Varies by Class		
Answer: Every class does their own		
Answer: If Phy Ed, recess is skipped		
Answer: Cold days, less recess		
Question 5: What changes have you observed over your teaching career with recess?		
Answer: Recess has been dropped		
Barros, Silver, Stein, & 2009; Council on Physical Education for Children, 2001; DeGregory, 2005; Dills, Morgan, & Rotthoff, 2011; Malone, 2009; Millner, 2010;		
Lost a recess		
Cause: Common Core/RTI	each state issues their own set of requirements for schools to meet standards regarding specific knowledge	

	students should know and be able to do. forty states among our country have adopted the Common Core Standards (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2012). These academic standards focus on English Language Arts, Math and Literacy achievement and provide an explicit description of depth of understanding to achieve at each grade level. Most districts that increased time for English Language Arts or Math reported substantial cuts in time for other subjects or periods, including social studies, science, art and music, physical education, recess, and/or lunch (Center on Education Policy. 2008).
Answer: Time decreased	
Hills, 1987 as cited in Newman, Brody & Beauchamp, 1996	
For more academic time	
Hard to find time for recess	
Length and amounts decrease	
Answer: Teacher's Decision	
To cut recess	
Answer: Changes to recess	
	Research has shown that increased pressures for student achievement have included more time for school instruction at the expense of school recess. (Barros, Silver, Stein, 2009; Malone, 2009; Chaker, 2006; Pellegrini, 1995).
Restructured recess	Cardon et al. (2007) explains that children are able to participate in recess at a higher level when teachers are not in control of children's choice of physical activities and observe from a distance.
Laid down parameters	
Heavily monitored	
Walkie-talkies	
Question 5: What changes have you observed over your teaching career with academics achievement?	
Answer: Institution of state requirements	
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2012	
Dropped morning recess to get academics going ASAP	
Push common core standards	
RTI	
Answer: Test Driven	
Barros, Silver, & Stein, 2009; Chaker, 2006; Malone, 2009; Millner, 2010; Ramstetter, Murray, & Garner, 2010; Duckworth, Quinn, & Tsukayama, 2012	
Pushed to meet the test	
Raising the achievement bar	academic standards and accountability of both teachers

	and schools to push for all students to meet academic standards (Barros, Silver, & Stein, 2009; Chaker, 2006; Malone, 2009; Millner, 2010).
Answer: Increased Emphasis on Academics	
Barros, Silver, & Stein, 2009; Chaker, 2006; Malone, 2009; Millner, 2010; Ramstetter, Murray, & Garner, 2010	
Time devoted to academics increased	Due to recent statewide and national efforts to hold schools accountable for academic progress to each student, principals have increased their focus toward more time devote to academics as a way to meet new educational standards (Simon & Childers 2006).
More pack with academics	
More that teachers need to teach	
New requirements	
Decreased recess due to this	
More specific, increased and intense instruction	Center on Education Policy, 2008
Answer: Try to fit in more instruction time	
Christophersen, Elstad, Turmo, 2011	
No time	
Heavily pressured for academic success	
Get more in	
Affects teachers time	
No time to squeeze recess in	
No enough time	
Kids are tiring out	With increased time devoted to academics and longer requirements for on task learning, children tend to become fidgety, unengaged, or daydream, which directly affects real learning (Jarrett et al. 1998; Malone, 2009)
Break breakers	
Answer: Additional staff duties	
Decreased planning	
Decreases prep time	
Answer: Class Structure Changed	
No free time	
PM's – non-activity	
Lack of opportunities for younger students	The pressures placed on standardized testing have made the way down to 1 st -grade classrooms, resulting in Kindergarten classes becoming training grounds for success in 1 st grade and not a place where children can explore, grow, and learn at their own pace (Rushton, 2011).

Question 6: How you perceive these changes?		
Answer: Not much of an impact due to Phy Ed		
learning can be achieved on the playground in a way that is not possible in a structured classroom (as cited in Malone, 2009), such as physical education. Physical education, on the other hand, is a structured class that is teacher facilitated (Ramstetter, Murray, & Garner, 2010), where students learn an activity, that is chosen by the teacher and expected to participate in the activity. Garrett & Wrench, 2007		
Provides a release		
Time to run		
Time to do something organized	Ramstetter, Murray, & Garner, 2010	
Pushes them to be active outside		
Answer: Changes are OK due to “Specials”		
Music, Art, Phy Ed, Library		
Answer: Not enough for kids to play...		
Not enough time for imagination	Rushton, 2011	
Not enough time for creativity	recess provides children benefits of free unstructured play which fosters skills as imagination, creativity, organization of games, recognition of rules, problem-solving, and leadership (Barros, Silver & Stein, 2009	
Answer: Changes are good for academic picture		
For what is expected		
Answer: Too many requirements in too short of time		
Expecting too much from our kids		
Younger kids are pushed		
Something has to give		
Answer: Kids need time to make their own choices		
Stop with organized play at recess	Rushton, 2011	
Answer: More time spent toward certain subject		
Math/Reading	Center on Education Policy, 2008	
Shifted our goals		
Answers: Teachers are more stressed		
Student attention/concentration wain by PM	Pellegrini, Huberty, & Davis (1995)	
Pressure to get so much done	“Academic pressure” refers to the degree to which environmental forces put pressure on student achievement school-wide (Christophersen, Elstad, Turmo, 2011).	

Prep time gone		
Rushed		
Additional Question: If you haven't seen any changes, do you predict any changes to come?		
Answer: Exchanging shorter recess for phy ed everyday		
Answer: Eliminate recess, just lunch recess		
Use other time for intervention and resource time		
Question 7: Has anyone asked you for your input?		
Answer: No		
Not a part		
Nah		
No one has ever asked		
No much discussion		
Answer: It is all top down		
Answer: Minimal Discussion		
Staff meetings		
How things are going		
Answer: Some input		
Was invited for input		
Answer: Yes		
Fill our goals, recommendations, things we would like to change, successes		
Monthly meetings		
Principal is always open		
Open administration		
Answer: Teachers are pushing for changes		
Committees		
Bring issues to principal		
Question 8: Where should we go from here?		
Answer: Hope schools continue recess		
Concerned with less value towards recess		
Don't take anymore	Michael Patte (2009)	
Hate to see less		
Not getting outside enough		
Opportunity to exercise	Advocates for childhood physical activity are aware of the potential that recess has towards providing children time to exercise and provide a foundation for lifelong wellness and quality of life (Robinson & Wadsworth, 2010; Walker, 2009; Barros, Silver, & Stein, 2009).	
Answer: Keep phy ed as constant part of school day		

Answer: Extend Calendar		
Extended days	Elkind (1981) characterized modern children as “hurried” through an adult agenda to accelerate growth in narrowly defined ways stressing that an over emphasis upon formal education sacrifices outlets for personal expression by diminishing play time (as cited in Newman & Brody, 1996).	
Increase homework at home		
Year round schooling (days spread out)		
Answer: Recess be “go as you need”		
More flexibility		
Ready for break, just go		
Answer: Keep the way they are		
Need social aspect		
Big component of school		
Makes well-rounded children		
Sad to eliminate for academics		
Answer: tough with budget cuts		
Schools are required to assess students at selected grade levels to receive academic funding from the federal government (Duckworth, Quinn, & Tsukayama, 2012).		
Limited staff		
Scheduling needs to be creative		
Push for more minutes		
Answer: Make sure children have an outlet		
Answer: Find a balance		
Answer: Do what is right for kids		
Not healthy to push this much	Otto WWeininger as cited in Rushton, 2011)	
Answer: Cut the length of recess		
40 min is too long		
Answer: Doesn’t seem to be an answer		
Question 9: Are there specific children who benefit from recess more than others?		
Answer: All		
Can see them all in different light and an opportunity to connect		
Answer: Different kids have different needs		
Hard to meet the needs in the classroom		
Kids with Social type issues		
Maturity levels, personality issues and kids with more conflict		

ADHD – would be nice to have a physical outlet 3x a day	children with ADHD, recess is not a pleasant gesture or pastime; it is a fundamental activity (Banner, 2005). Recess can be seen as fundamental when acknowledging thoughts from Ormrod (2000), that as an accommodation for children with ADHD, “we must certainly make sure that our students have regular opportunities to release pent-up energy, such as during recess and physical education” (p. 184).	
Only children in their family need recess		
Special Education: to integrate		
Answer: Instructional thing		
Help with children to learn how to interact with others	After a systematic review, Lang et al. (2011) stressed the importance of school recess in targeting behaviors and instruction of students with ASD, through games and activities.	
Answer: Neutral place on playground		
Integration	Included” students, defined as students with a disability that are included within the regular education classroom during instruction, are often rejected by classmates and fail to form positive relationships with their peers in the classroom setting (<i>Miller, Cooke, Test, & White, 2003</i>). Therefore, recess provides more than physical integration into the school experience, as students with special needs are able to join peers from regular education classrooms in play, establishing friendships.	
Answer: Depends on activity levels of children		
Gets them going		
Helps settle them down		

APPENDIX E: FINAL FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS

Theme 1: Overall Perceptions of Recess
Release energy and just be children
Go outdoors and received fresh air and sunlight
A time period associated with various aspects
A highly necessary part
Opportunity to receive an outlet from the academic world - necessary for both the student and educator as teachers feel recess provides an essential break from the rigorous academic day
Outlier:
Play on equipment/be creative/imaginative play

Theme 2: Benefits
Socialization - Establish friendships
Physical exercise
An array of benefits for diverse children
Discipline issues
Classroom environment
Outlier:
brain benefits of oxygen and stimulus, laughter, benefits the teachers by seeing students in a different light, a time to make up missed school work, learning rules or games and boundaries, learning how to control themselves, it is there favorite subject

Theme 3: Changes
elimination of one recess (RTI)
Increased attention towards and changes to academic curricula
Increased focus on requirements/tests
More time devoted towards academics
Attending class for a longer period of time
Affect on classroom environment/structure
<i>Additional Theme: Perceptions:-</i>
Physical education

Instructors value outdoors
Recess still structured
Specials
Insufficient amount of time
Pushing students to higher level/raising the bar
More and more
Lost freedom
<i>Additional Theme: Input</i>
Never
Top down/minimal
Yes
Minimal

Theme 4: Current Role of Recess
Lunch Recess
One recess
Younger have more opportunities
Discretion of Teacher
Outlier:

Theme 5: Suggestions
Finding a balance
Keep recess
Restructure the school day (year round)
Outlier:

