**Benefits of Recess Before Lunch**

Students Play and Then Eat!

**How do we get started?**

- Build support within your community and school staff.
- Educate parents
- Educate students
- Obtain teachers’ input and “buy-in” from the start

- Realize that adapting the schedule is a work in progress.
- Develop a hand washing routine.
- Schedule adequate time for students to eat (at least 20 minutes after students receive their trays).
- Take care of lunch money prior to recess.
- Practice this new routine with the students. Spend as much time in the lunchroom as possible during the first few weeks.

**STAT FACTS**

When fed lunch *after recess* compared to lunch before recess, elementary students:

- Eat 24 percent more food by weight.
- Waste 30 percent less food by weight.
- Eat 8 percent more calories.
- Consume 35 percent more calcium.
- Consume 13 percent more vitamin A.

When the lunch period time is 30 minutes versus 20 minutes, elementary students:

- Eat 21 percent more food by weight.
- Waste 40 percent less food by weight.
- Consume 16 percent more calories.
- Consume 56 percent more calcium.
- Consume 46 percent more vitamin A.


Adapted from Recess Before Lunch, Montana Office of Public Instruction School Nutrition Programs, Montana Team Nutrition, June 2003.

**For More Information contact:**

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What are the Benefits of Recess Before Lunch?

- Students are not rushing through lunch to get outside for recess.
- The atmosphere in the lunch room is more conducive to eating and is much more calm and relaxed.
- Students focus on eating and take time to socialize with each other.
- Plate waste studies indicate that children eat more fruits and vegetables, drink more milk, and waste less food.

What is a Recess Before Lunch Policy?

Students go to recess first, and then eat lunch.

Why change our lunch schedule?

- Students who eat lunch first and then have recess often anticipate recess and may not focus on eating.
- Students who anticipate recess rush through lunch and waste more food.
- Not focusing on eating and wasting food may contribute to a lack of energy in the afternoon, resulting in poor attention and an inability to learn.

- Studies indicate that the overall nutrient intake of students increases.
- Studies indicate that students consume more vitamin A and calcium when given a longer time to eat lunch.
- Teachers note that kids are more settled upon returning to the classroom after lunch, and ready to start classes.
- Principals and teachers also note decreased behavioral problems on the playground, in the lunchroom, and in the halls.