

THE RECESS PROJECT

Redesigning recess
for the 21st Century:
A guide to getting
started.

Revised and updated
2026 Edition

Dr. Lauren McNamara



Redesigning recess for the 21st Century: A guide to getting started.

Creating social and physical landscapes that foster compassion, social connectedness, acceptance, and all forms of play.

The World Health Organization defines health as a dynamic between people and their environment; it is shaped by the settings of everyday life where people “learn, work, play and love” (Ottawa Charter, 1986). The goal is not only to prevent disease, but to foster lifestyles that promote feelings of happiness, social connectedness, autonomy, and fulfillment. School, therefore, is an important mediator of children’s overall well-being: healthy students are not only more successful academically, but they embody healthy strategies and behaviors that last a lifetime.

Lauren McNamara, PhD

with contributions from the many researchers, university students, school leaders, grade school students, and school staff that were an essential part of our research collaborations.

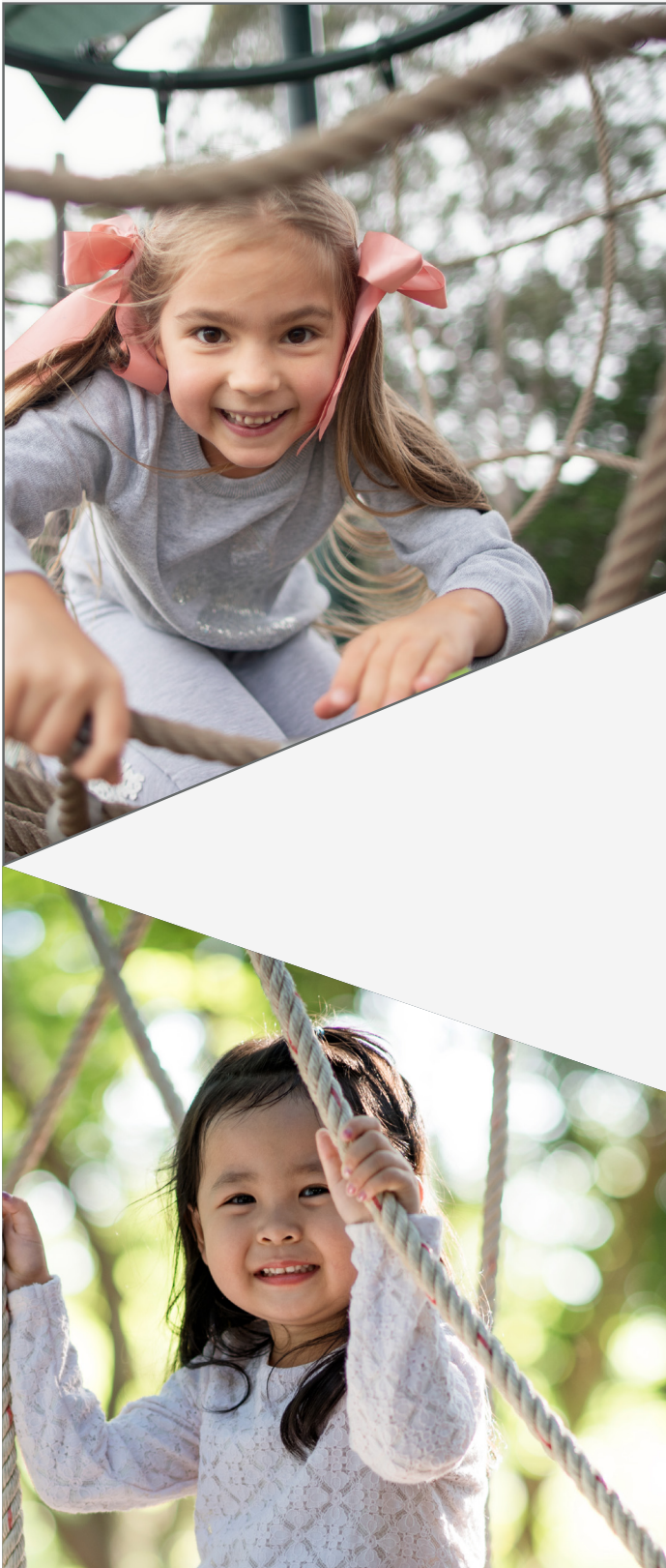
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INTRODUCTION

Healthy Schools Healthy Children Healthy Society



Dr. Lauren McNamara

H EALTHY schools promote and support student overall well-being. Healthy children are more likely to be successful in school and in life, producing a healthy society. Traditionally, schools have prioritized math, science, and literacy instruction. As a consequence, non-instructional parts of the school day – including recess – have been under-resourced and undervalued.

In 1995, the World Health Organization established the Health Promoting Schools initiative as a way to encourage schools to prioritize the overall well-being of students (World Health Organization, 1997). A Health Promoting School is one that goes beyond a sole focus of academic success and instead considers, first and foremost, the healthy development of the whole child – cognitive, emotional, social, and physical.

To do this means reconsidering and redefining the social and physical landscapes to better support the quality of children's play and friendships and pave the way for a healthy lifespan. As an education researcher, I started The Recess Project as part of a program of research on healthy schools. The initial guiding question: What is getting in the way of play?

The research indicates that our average elementary and middle school playgrounds are characterized by barren landscapes, a lack of meaningful engagement among children, minimal support and supervision, and a harsh social climate that marginalizes and excludes many children – particularly many of Canada's most vulnerable students.

It is well-established in the scholarly literature that experiences such as exclusion, alienation, and victimization invite negative feelings of loneliness and isolation that not only undermine school engagement but cumulatively lead to mental and physical illness. Furthermore, social patterns among children, both good and bad, take root in childhood and follow children throughout their lives, shaping not only their individual health outcomes but also the social fabric of the larger community.

The Recess Project is a longstanding collaborative, iterative action research project that started in 2012. What started with a handful of university students and one school has evolved into yearly cohorts of university students working with schools, school boards, school leaders, teachers, researchers, community partners and particularly young students. This document, the Change Guide for Recess, is a result of those collaborations. It is designed based on evidence from the scholarly world as well as thousands of schools lessons learned as they attempt to make change. It is intended to be a living, evolving document that changes as we continue to learn more.

The most fundamental lesson we learned from the research is that recess, from the perspective of the children, is a critically important **social** space that needs to be supported. Meaningful play and connection happen in a *social context*. The second most important lesson we learned is that **if we change the setting, we can change the way the children interact with each other in the setting.**

The purpose of the Recess Project overall is to ensure the context of recess is included in overall school improvement efforts. As such, we have designed the blueprints for a new way to do recess. This new way is focused on creating an overall setting that is conducive to meaningful, inclusive interactions and unstructured play. It includes new routines built into the school, routines that allow for overall planning, thoughtful space design, supportive supervision, well-trained Junior Recess Leaders, and a variety of play options.

This guide has been organized to provide direction to drive this change. Specifically, it is designed to be the first level of change. For this change to be successful and sustainable, it must continue to dynamically grow.

Before we start, however, I would like to share a very personal story with readers, as it provides a blueprint for my research on recess, school violence, and mental health. Do you remember those indoor roller rinks? With the disco ball? The thumping dance Music? For my sixth birthday, I thought it would be a fun place to have a party. And it was. I'd invited my entire class. I remember those friendships, and I remember that night so well, especially the way it felt t: fun, carefree, relaxed, and silly. Halfway through the night's party, the DJ turned on the spotlight and asked me to skate to the center of the ring so that everyone can sing Happy Birthday - and I'd get a ticket for a free hot dog.

Too shy to go alone, I linked arms tightly with my friends and we went together. On the way, we slipped and fell backwards. I landed on the back of my head. But no one else seemed hurt, so I got up and we all carried on. My head was stinging, but I was focused on the spotlight, the cake, the presents, the audience. It took three weeks to learn that I had lost 90 percent of my hearing from the fall. And when I finally returned to school, I had these big, clunky hearing aids that I tried to hide with my hair. I was excited to see my friends again at recess.

But what happened next has never left my soul.

Instead of the expected hugs, I was met with a chorus of girls chanting “Deaf Girl, Deaf Girl” over and over until they just ran away, leaving me on my knees. And everyday thereafter, some version of this scenario played itself out, preventing me from engaging and playing in any meaningful way.

Those relationships mattered so much to me. The enjoyment that once came with those relationships was gone, replaced by fear and despair. There was no place to hide. No one to turn to. In turn, classwork didn’t matter. School didn’t matter. My path was predictable – loneliness, drugs, anxiety. I ‘dropped out’ of school in grade 10 not because of defiance or lack of interest - but for self-preservation.

Today, many children still experience tremendous rejection, bullying, and loneliness during recess on a regular basis – and these kinds of experiences are known triggers of childhood anxiety and depression. When a child is excluded from this important childhood space, they are **denied the privilege of healthy play and friendships** - friendships that are characterized by a dynamic of acceptance, support, and enjoyment.

My broader concern is that this dynamic is disrupted by our deeper institutionalized routines of schooling. If feelings of connection and acceptance are fundamental psychological needs for children, then unmet needs will affect their behaviour. Our typical school practices favour and reinforce individualism and competition which invites a silent undercurrent that undermines children’s capacity to connect with, and be supportive of, each other. In other words, our institutional routines contribute to, and reinforce, feelings of loneliness, isolation, and vulnerability. Feelings of which, needless to say, are consistently associated with school disengagement, poor attendance, lower achievement, and dropout – as well as aggression and violence.

As adults, we often forget that, for children, recess is first and foremost a social space. It is the space where social patterns take root and cascade across generations. As adults, however, it is up to us to break the negative patterns of exclusion and victimization that continue unnecessarily, especially since we now know far better.

My research team has taken the time to be thoughtful and creative about this. We have put together this guide to pave the way for others with the hope that it will make it easier to generate changes. The results, we have found, are powerful.

A New Way To Do Recess



In Canada, there is a vast array of individual differences among our schoolchildren – differences in ages, genders, cultures, languages, developmental stages, abilities, temperaments, preferences, socio-economic status, life experiences, and social skills. While there has been a notable movement towards more inclusive and equitable learning environments, the social setting of recess is often overlooked in school improvement efforts. The social spaces of schools deserve vastly more attention in order to cultivate new attitudes, beliefs, behaviors acceptance, and norms that reinforce a culture of playfulness, acceptance, and belonging among our youngest citizens. The Recess Project intends to reshape these important childhood spaces by thoughtfully considering the important developmental role of unstructured play, friendships, and meaningful interactions among children. Such everyday spaces are needed to catalyze more welcoming and playful learning communities - and in turn, a more welcome and playful Canada.

WHY CHANGE RECESS?

Children are in school for the majority of their formative years. Recess is typically understood as the time in the school day that provides a break from the focus and rigour of instruction. Broadly speaking, it affords a time in the day for children to connect with their peers and engage in active, outdoor play.

Moreover, children have a developmental need to experience the pleasure, challenge, risk, and mastery that are associated with recreational play. And so crucial is this need that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has deemed it a fundamental human right of every child (1989).

When designed and supported well, regularly-scheduled, physically-active breaks contribute to both short- and long-term health. These breaks reduce stress, boost circulation, stimulate neurological activity, increase energy, enhance feelings of connection and well-being, and refresh the students mentally and physically.

Further, for many children, recess is the only time **in their entire day** that they have access to a recreational space that allows them free, unstructured time to play.

Children *need* opportunities to develop and maintain positive peer relationships. Social experiences are crucial to children's development and feelings of acceptance and belonging provide the foundation for school engagement. Positive peer relationships encourage the development of social and emotional competencies such

as empathy, problem-solving, emotional regulation, and coping strategies. These skills promote positive physical and psychological health, which predict both academic success and overall health outcomes.

Yet, research in Canada and abroad consistently indicates that the benefits of recess are unrealized and that cliques, exclusion, teasing, fighting, power struggles, and bullying are routine and normal behaviors. These behaviors undermine children's capacity to connect meaningfully with one another during this time - which ultimately compromises their classroom experiences, overall well-being, school engagement, and academic success.



The Right to Play: RECESS AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The Recess Project design is aligned with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1987). Under the terms of the agreement, States parties commit to ensuring children's basic rights are protected and promoted. In 54 articles, this international treaty describes the civil, political, economic, social, health, and cultural rights of every child, regardless of race, religion, or abilities. Article 31 states that

“Every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.”

In 2013, UNCRC added General Comment 17, which elaborates

“Poor recognition of the significance in the lives of children results in lack of investment in appropriate provisions, weak or non-existent protective legislation and the invisibility of children in national and local-level planning. In general, where investment is made, it is in the provision of structured and organized activities, but equally important is the need to create time and space for children to engage in spontaneous play, recreation and creativity, and to promote societal attitudes that support and encourage such activity...The Committee is particularly concerned about the difficulties faced by particular categories of children in relation to enjoyment and conditions of equality of the rights defined in article 31, especially girls, poor children, children with disabilities, indigenous children, children belonging to minorities, among others.”

General Comment 17 (2013) includes the specific obligation of schools to respect, protect and fulfill the rights of Article 31 through

- **“Availability of rest and leisure time, as well as space that is free from adult control and management;**
- **An environment free from stress, social exclusion, prejudice, discrimination, social harm, and violence;**
- **Investments in universal design consistent with the obligations to promote inclusion and protect children with disabilities from discrimination;**
- **Space to play outdoors in diverse and challenging physical environments, with access to supportive adults, when necessary;**
- **Playgrounds appropriate boundaries, equipment and spaces designed to enable all children, including children with disabilities, to participate equally;**
- **Play areas which afford opportunities for all forms of play;**
- **and Opportunities to experience, interact with, and play in natural environments.”**

BARRIERS

What's getting in the way of play?

A primary research goal of The Recess Project was to investigate the underlying root causes of the problem. Change is most effective when we have a better understanding of both the visible and invisible barriers that need to be addressed in order to make effective and sustainable changes (reported in McNamara et al., 2018; McNamara et al., 2015; McNamara, 2013).

The Value Of Play

In many well-developed nations, play is considered a trivial and disruptive part of the school day, time that is of no academic value. As daily routines are prioritized and decisions about funding and scheduling are made, the fundamental importance of peer relationships and outdoor play is often diminished – so much so that many schools are reducing recess or doing away with it altogether.

Minimal Supervision And Minimal Training

Research consistently indicates that minimal supervision creates a cascading set of challenges that shape the social and physical landscapes of recess. Conventional practice is that teachers take their own breaks at this time. Therefore, recess is often staffed by a rotation of teachers who have a limited number of supervisory hours. Alternatively, many schools hire part time yard duty supervisors to help fill this gap. These supervisors typically have limited educational backgrounds and experience with children (most job ads indicate a requirement of high school diploma and police/vulnerable sector clearance). The information on ratio of supervisor to child is inconsistent as the reports, and our experience, indicates that

guidelines and actual practices range from 1 supervisor to anywhere from 25 to 300 students.

Minimal Equipment

When recess is minimally supervised, an abundance of equipment and play materials trigger concerns about safety, liability, arguing, and theft. As a result, they are reluctant to allow any equipment on the playground, and when they do it is often accompanied by strict rules, which in turn can undermine the ways in which children can use it.

Crowded And Barren Environments

Schools in urban areas typically have limited real estate that can be designated for play. These spaces are typically paved with asphalt and have little to no landscaping. Schools in suburban and rural areas tend to have more space. The design of space is often constrained by the need for children to be within the sightline of supervisors. As a result, spaces tend to be flat and free of trees, hills, or shrubs that children can 'hide' behind. Moreover, Many schools arrange their schedules so that all grades break for recess simultaneously, which lends itself to crowded spaces.

Strict Rules

In the schools that we have worked with, supervisors report that they are concerned about safety and uncertain about the specifics of liability. Children report rules such as "walk and talk only," "tarmac only," "no balls," "no running," "no cartwheels," and so on. According to the students, violations often landed them on "The Wall."

Limited Options

Regardless of how resilient and resourceful children can be, it is challenging to navigate a crowded, unstructured social environment that does not offer an inviting playspace or much equipment. Yet, children are expected to ‘find something to do.’ Not surprisingly, supervisors often complain that students do not know what to play or how to play, students end up “loitering,” and feel anxious about the uncertainty of the space.

Social Conflict

Limited equipment, barren spaces, restrictive conditions, social anxiety, and boredom invariably contribute to frustration and social conflict. While social conflict in any social setting is inevitable and even necessary, students and staff consistently report high levels of aggression, social exclusion, rejection, bullying, and heated arguments. Understandably, many children indicate that recess is their most feared time of day.

Minimal Support

Our research indicates that over 40% of children do not feel comfortable discussing their recess problems with adults. They reported that adults are unavailable or unable to help. Students also indicated that exclusion and victimization are often sophisticatedly covert and go unnoticed by supervisors.

With the growing pressures of accountability and instructional time, our concern is that we are depriving children of their most fundamental needs: rest, play, social connection, and belonging.





THE GUIDE

the recess project: OVERVIEW

The Recess Project is an ongoing collaborative of researchers, university students, school administrators, teachers, students, and many partner organizations.

We imagine a space where all forms of play and socialization can take place; a space that supports meaningful social interactions, empathy, inclusion, acceptance, and all forms of play. To do this, we've ensured that the recommendations are based on the most current research - research from a vast array of areas: child development, social neuroscience, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and more.

Importantly, we are aiming for a systemic change in the way schools approach recess. This calls for constant changes and support at many levels - at the school, at the board, at region, at the ministry. It calls for awareness and appreciation from parents and the general public. Therefore, this guide is designed with and for schools so that we can learn and incorporate best practices. It is designed to be customizable and allows for a pace that is comfortable and acceptable.

To ensure that recess is included in schoolwide improvement efforts, the design incorporates three new roles that are essential for successful and sustainable change: a **Recess Coordinator**, a **Recess Committee**, and a **Junior Recess Leader program**. These roles must be considered a permanent fabric of the school in order to ensure changes in practices that are effective and sustainable.

The Recess Coordinator

Recess Coordinators include Recess Project leadership in their portfolio of responsibilities and lead the change process. They are responsible for introducing and overseeing the planning and integration of new routines and ensuring school-wide awareness. The new role and responsibilities are designed to reduce the uncertainty and ambiguity of change. Broadly, the role of the Recess Coordinator is to

- Convene a Recess Committee
- Act as the liaison between the Recess Committee and all school staff
- Create a physical and/or electronic bulletin board to post announcements, block schedules, and sign-up sheets
- Provide information and updates to students, staff, and parent
- Visit classrooms to inform students of the project
- Purchase equipment
- Recruit, train, and guide Junior Recess Leaders
- Train school personnel and volunteers in the requisite knowledge/skills
- Book space for indoor options well in advance
- Gather and share feedback from students and staff

The Recess Committee

Each school forms its own Recess Committee. The committee must include administration, teachers, staff, students, and the Recess Coordinator. The committee will provide a forum for different perspectives, allow some of the challenging work to be shared, and ensure that all voices are heard. In addition to the initial planning meetings, the committee must have regular meetings throughout the year. The goal of the Recess Committee is to

- Articulate and agree on a Recess Policy
- Articulate the knowledge/skills necessary to support group activities and independent play
- Develop a yearly plan and timetable
- Identify potential Junior Recess Leaders
- Articulate and plan for the needs of vulnerable children
- Plan and agree on equipment and materials; map spaces; ensure spaces are universally accessible
- Use formal and informal feedback for continuous learning and modification



Junior Recess Leaders

Older student involvement is critical for Project success. Older students can model appropriate attitudes and behaviours for younger students. Junior Recess Leaders (JRLs) are students in grades 5-8. Their role is to help support younger children who might need gentle scaffolding (e.g. Vygotsky), model empathy and acceptance, and assist with play materials/loose equipment. The Recess Coordinator trains these student volunteers in key communication skills, including inclusion, leadership, and conflict resolution. Junior Recess Leaders should volunteer recess only two-to-three times a week. Limited shifts keep their engagement high and allow them their own recess time. The role of the JRL is to

- Act as liaison between the Recess Coordinator and student body
- In pairs, are assigned to play areas
- Help manage loose parts and equipment for the area
- Are trained to support vulnerable children
- Articulate and agree on role, in writing and signed
- Receive and wear their JRL hats

A Very Important Note

One of the most important lessons that we have learned is this: consistency.

To ensure successful change and sustainability, we have found that someone has to assume responsibility to oversee the change process and ensure continuity.

This person (or team) needs to be a relatively permanent staff member(s). Exactly who assumes this role will take some thoughtfulness. In many districts, teachers are protected by collective agreements and cannot, nor should not, be expected to take on this role unless, perhaps, it is in conjunction teaching release time. High turnover, as we've experienced with with parent volunteers or rotating staff, can potentially undermine change efforts.

The *consistency* is key to the success and sustainability of the project. To be effective, new routines need consistency and reinforcement.

The Recess Plan: Things to Consider.

.....
“...children reproduce, transform, create and transmit culture through their own imaginative play, songs, dance, animation, stories, painting, games, street theatre, puppetry, festivals, and so on. As they gain understanding of the cultural and artistic life around them from adult and peer relationships, they translate and adapt its meaning through their own generational experience. Through engagement with their peers, children create and transmit their own language, games, secret worlds, fantasies and other cultural knowledge.”

UNCRC 2013
GENERAL COMMENT #17

The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (1987) deems play, rest, and leisure a fundamental right of every child. Schools are obligated to protect and promote this right. The UNCRC General Comment No.17 (2013) details the steps necessary to ensure this right is protected and promoted by schools. The design of The Recess Project is aligned with these steps.

Students differ in ages, skills, needs, personalities, and preferences that are constantly changing as children grow. Therefore, recess should provide a rotating continuum of choices and playspaces: areas offering unstructured, spontaneous play to spaces to allow for the students to negotiate their own organized games and activities. Prioritizing students' preferences/needs is fundamental to the change process.

The Recess Committee should include the following information in their planning meetings:

Initial Evaluation

Gather feedback from students and staff to understand the current challenges and needs. This process should be anonymous.





Re-Inventing Space And Playground Organization

Increasing playground space boosts children's activity levels, engagement, and choices. And introducing natural materials (such as logs, sand, trees, hills, moguls, and water) provides opportunities for imaginative free play. If increasing the size of the playground is not an option, consider alternating times. As well, physical spaces shape the social climate. The setting of recess is different from open parks and playgrounds and calls for thoughtfulness. Create loosely defined areas to scaffold/support different types of free play, active play, nature play, and quiet enjoyment (chalking, for example). We have found that, for many children, these loosely defined areas help alleviate the uncertainty and anxiety of 'what to do' and helps them more effectively initiate new friendships and navigate the space.

Universal Design

Spaces must be thoughtfully considered to allow students to play together, regardless of ability, age, race, gender, ethnicity, culture, or socioeconomic status. Physical and social design go hand in hand, much like a dance. When thoughtfully designed, the physical space can enable a range of possibilities - for interaction, challenge, risk, exploration, creativity, silence. In contrast, poor or barren design can lead to boredom, crowding, frustration, and exclusion. For example, avoid building separate playspaces for children with disabilities as that will only isolate them further. Involve the students in the planning process to help identify what is needed and consult planning guides such as those available from the Rick Hansen Foundation (rickhansen.com).

Weathering Weather/Indoor Recess

When thoughtfully designed, indoor recess can provide active and social recess. breaks during bad weather. The gymnasium and classrooms can accommodate active activities such as Zumba, Dodgeball, and Dance, while the library and classrooms are useful for activities such as weekly Pokémon, Magic, Crafts, and Yoga. Recess should be held outdoors as much as possible. Consider developing a Clothing Library of outerwear and boots for children who don't have appropriate outdoor wear.

Timing And Duration Of Recess

The traditional school day is made up of two recesses and a lunch break – and typically the entire student body follows this schedule. This routine is well over 100 years old and can benefit from an update. Many schools have flexibility as to when they can schedule recess. Elementary schools that span grades K-8 will have different needs and opportunities than those that span grades K-5 and those that span grades 6-8. Consider the

- Size and layout of the playspace
- Size of the student population
- Each duty person's role and responsibilities (descriptors)
- Equipment availability and management
- Adult-to-student ratio

Scheduling Staff

Well in advance, the Recess Committee should determine

- Every recess duty personnel
- Each duty person's role and responsibilities (descriptors)
- Adult-to-student ratio
- Duty personnel who support the Junior Recess Leaders

Training Staff

All school staff that lead or supervise recess must receive systematic and ongoing training. Training ensures the best possible recess for all. They should

- Understand and articulate the physical, cognitive, and social benefits of recess
- Articulate and agree on the recess setting: playground organization, play areas, recess activities, Junior Recess Leader roles, and supporting play
- Understand the role of challenge and risk in play and development
- Consider their own beliefs and mindsets regarding joy and playfulness - for themselves as well as the students

.....
"... the age of the child must be taken into account in determining the amount of time afforded; the nature of spaces and environments available; forms of stimulation and diversity; the degree of necessary adult oversight and engagement to ensure safety and security. As children grow older, their needs and wants evolve from settings that afford play opportunities to places offering opportunities to socialize, be with peers or be alone. They will also explore progressively more opportunities involving risk-taking and challenge."

UNCRC 2013

GENERAL COMMENT #17



As well, we recommend that they are trained and familiar with the following topics:

- Conflict resolution/restorative justice practices
- Social and Emotional Skills
- Inclusive spaces, programs, and practices
- Promoting creativity and imaginative play
- Prevention efforts to reduce discipline concern
- Emergency protocols
- Supporting risk and challenge in play
- Impacts of negative social patterns on human connections and healthy play
- Fostering a climate of inclusion, care, and empathy
- Providing guidance and stimulus without undermining children's efforts to organize and conduct play activities
- Engaging in play with children while minimizing control over the activity
- Recruiting, training, and supervising cohorts of students in a Junior Leader program
- Understand the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (particularly Article 31).

Purchasing And Managing Equipment

Rotating loose parts and loose equipment every few months keeps interest, engagement, and physical activity at higher levels and helps prevent boredom and social conflict. Traditional equipment, structures, and stencils are fine; however, when children have “loose parts” at hand (for example, pots, pans, tires, crates, bins, ropes, tarps, costumes, clothes, chalk and so on) there is more opportunity to boost enjoyment, engagement, creativity, and inclusion.

Introduce gradual amounts of equipment over the school year, and align the equipment with the three-month block schedules (discussed in the next section). Bring each area's loose parts/equipment out in a bin for ease of access and return at the end of the day. If space is tight, store one bin in each classroom and have the students take it out to the area, ensure all equipment finds its way back into the bin and to the classroom for the next day.

Managing Risk

It is now well-established that risk-taking in play and physical activity is necessary for healthy development. Overly stringent rules undermine the benefits of healthy play. As part of their Recess Plan, schools must articulate their change-model approach to safety on school playgrounds. Consider thinking about it the way Dr. Mariana Brussoni recommends: "As Safe As Necessary" rather than "As Safe As Possible."

Stimulating Student Input

Using students' ideas about their recess promotes feelings of ownership. Encouraging their input stimulates both enthusiasm and creativity. And the more students talk about their ideal recess and space, the greater the buy-in.

A variety of strategies can encourage student input and engagement. Enlist the help of Junior Recess Leaders to share information and gather ideas from their peers. Consider the following:

- Distribute class surveys.
- Create a graffiti wall: Place a large sheet of roll paper in a high-traffic school area. "What would you like to do during recess?" Hang a pencil from the bulletin board to encourage responses.
- Use a suggestion box/envelope: Have students write their suggestions for clubs, games, and/or activities on a piece of paper and drop it in the box/envelope.

Children have different needs and preferences at different ages and stages and it is important to provide a continuum of materials and equipment to support options for them. Be sure to provide areas for free and unstructured play. But also don't be afraid to provide more traditional options (dance, yoga, games) as they are helpful for catalyzing new interests and friendships (especially for older children).

- Provide areas for free play and ensure they are equipped with an abundance of loose parts and other equipment.
- Provide areas for children who need quiet and/or alone time.
- Provide areas for creative play such as crayons, chalk, puppets, costumes writing, colouring, etc.
- Field zones may include soccer, soccer-baseball, tag, no-touch football, and games that require more space.
- Playground areas can include games such as grounders, tag, and hide-and-seek.
- Tarmac areas might include materials and equipment for tag, skipping, four square, hopscotch, basketball, circle games, chalk station, and dodge ball.

DID YOU KNOW?

Mastery of social and emotional skills leads to belonging and positive mental health – both of which are associated with school engagement, higher academic achievement scores, and school success.

"I love how involved and engaged our students are and the social skills that they pick up through the wide variety of activities. The project also reaches a wide variety of kids and includes them in a very positive way."

Principal

The No Withholding Recess Rule

In aligning with the UNCRC Article 31, school staff should not withhold recess breaks:

- for academic purposes (e.g., to complete school work or homework)
- as disciplinary action (e.g., withholding recess as a punitive measure)
- to assign physical activity to a student(s) to fulfill Physical Education requirements

Discuss alternatives and ensure teachers and staff are aware of this rule.

The “Wall”

As well, school staff should not place students on the “Wall” as a punitive measure. It reinforces social exclusion, encourages mocking, and fosters feelings of shame. Discuss alternatives and ensure teachers and staff are aware of this rule.

Funding

Discuss potential sources of funds for equipment and play materials, and landscape design. Consider drawing funds from budgets associated with health and wellness, professional development, or facilities. Also consider applying to granting agencies and community organizations.

Creating Community

Reshaping the social landscape of recess is a shared responsibility. Alliances with partners - the public, private, and non-governmental - create the community-supported recess. Potential alliances include local universities, regional health departments, community foundations, corporate foundations, and not-for-profit corporations that focus on health and physical activity. Local high school and university students can prove especially helpful: many require volunteer/placement hours in a school. Volunteers can support occasional options such as yoga, dance, coding, bracelet-making, crafts, martial arts, and hip hop which can catalyze new interests and friendships that cascade back into the school community. Local businesses can offer financial support for equipment, and provide instructors for Yoga, Zumba, and Martial Arts.

WHAT THE STUDENTS SAY...

“It brought us together and more active than usual.”

“Our enemies turned into friends.”

“It brought more excitement to all of the kids at our school.”

“More people are having more fun.”

“Before we would just walk around and talk.”

“This got us more active and is a lot more fun.”

SUMMARY: DESIGN AND RATIONALE

Strategy	Rationale
Recess Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensures someone on staff as recess in their portfolio Integrates recess into whole school improvement efforts Proactively engages the children for the prevention of dysfunctional behaviors, rather than reactively intervene when there is a problem
Recess Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensures continuity of whole school efforts year after year Ensures planning and consensus Ensures a range of voices are considered (especially students') Increases the importance and value of recess, friendships, and play
Junior Leader program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capitalizes on younger students' tendency to mirror and trust their older peers Model healthy behaviors and attitudes (inclusion, empathy) Assist with loose parts/loose equipment management Teach games Provides helpful guidance for younger children when necessary Provides opportunities for leadership
Schoolwide training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlights the developmental importance/well-being/school engagement Ensures all staff are familiar with new routines and guidelines Ensures staff can appreciate developmental impact of play, risk, creativity, rest Ensures staff can assist with a preventive approach to creating a supportive space Ensures staff know when and when not to intervene
Junior Leader training and guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensures JRLs are well trained in empathy, inclusion and problem solving, game rules, and scaffolding play Continuous supervision and guidance prevents attrition
Scaffolding friendships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affords children an 'entry point' to help them connect and become friends Assists with development of compassionate and accepting attitudes and behaviors Helps children learn how to support each other, work through differences Helps make explicit some of the subtle social cues that might go unnoticed (e.g. choice of words, tone of voice, aggression) Children more likely to engage in active play when they have a friend
Continuum of activities, equipment, and materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensures more children are engaged in something that is meaningful, healthy, safe, and consistent with their personal needs and developmental levels Affords options from structured to unstructured; for quiet play, solo time, and rest Catalyzes engaged, creative, and active play and increases physically activity
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows change and novelty to keep interest high Allows for 3 JRL cohorts per year to prevent attrition Allows for teachers and staff to rotate if necessary Helps with ensuring sufficient amount of equipment and materials
Organize space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps reduce the social and psychological uncertainty about 'what to do' Helps disrupt outdated routines and introduces guidance for sustainable change Provides spaces for entry points with others in activity Provides a safe space for vulnerable children
Community Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides assistance with instruction for specific activities Affords a variety of possible activities Allows children to connect via personal interests
Increase the number of adult supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alleviates safety and liability concerns Allows for availability of equipment and materials, reducing boredom Affords more variety, increasing engagement Provides more guidance and supervision for JRLs

PROJECT CHECKLIST

	Introduce the Recess Project at a staff meeting
	Create a school-wide system for talking about recess
	Visit classrooms to discuss the recess with teachers and students
	Convene a Recess Committee
	Arrange for training of all staff
	Send parents information on the importance of play, well-being, and school engagement
	Map the outside playground into areas for different play types
	Gather/purchase equipment
	Book gym times as far ahead as possible, especially during the winter months
	Develop a tracking and management system for equipment
	Locate a space(s) to store equipment and loose parts
	Recruit Junior Recess Leaders
	Schedule training for Junior Recess Leaders
	Schedule Junior Recess Leaders; assign areas
	Schedule weekly meetings with all Junior Recess Leaders
	Provide hats for Junior Recess Leaders
	Schedule the end-of-block party to celebrate the Junior Recess Leaders
	Create certificates for each Junior Leader

MAINTAINING ENGAGEMENT

WE HAVE FOUND THAT STUDENTS ARE MUCH MORE PLAYFUL, ACTIVE, AND ENGAGED WHEN DIFFERENT EQUIPMENT, MATERIALS, AND ACTIVITIES ARE ROTATED THROUGHOUT THE YEAR. DIVIDE THE SCHOOL YEAR INTO THREE MONTH 'BLOCKS' AND PLAN AHEAD FOR EACH OF THEM. THE FIRST CHOICE IS TO GO OUTSIDE IN ALL WEATHER. BUT THIS IS ESPECIALLY HELPFUL FOR THE WINTER MONTHS WHEN INDOOR RECESSES ARE OFTEN FREQUENT – GYM TIMES AND CLASSROOMS CAN BE BOOKED AHEAD FOR INDOOR ACTIVITIES. ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES WE PROVIDE EXAMPLES OF BLOCK SCHEDULES THAT YOU CAN USE OR MODIFY.

BLOCKS

Break the year into three 3-month blocks to align with the school calendar year. Use it loosely. The objective isn't to schedule things but to help you manage equipment and provide some ideas for a range of play areas that support different types of play and options for different ages and stages. We always had ample spaces to ensure students the free space they need. For others, we have provided what has worked for us - based on feedback from the students. We have found it helpful to use each block as a guide post to check in with the recess committee about how things are going... we ask: What is going well? What is needed?

- changes up or replenishes materials/loose parts/loose equipment
- has its own cohort of Junior Recess Leaders
- considers the needs and preferences of different age groups, genders, activity levels, personalities, and abilities
- offers quiet, reflective spaces for yoga, reading, or drawing (some children need to 're-charge' by being alone and/or being creative - and that needs to be acceptable and encouraged)

As you plan, keep in mind that many children love and welcome organized activities and sports as much as they do free, unstructured play. sometimes they need a little help getting connected with new peers. Once they have friends and feel connected, they will more readily engage in different types of play.

“We had far fewer conflicts between students, fewer students claimed to be bored at recess, students acquired new skills socially and physically. They were more engaged.” Principal

QUICK TIP

For each block, be sure to designate spaces for “hanging out”, for well-equipped free play, and for safe/comfortable spaces for children would like to be alone for ‘down-time’.



Example Block Planning

Possible Ideas/Areas	Possible Equipment List
Loose parts play	Pool noodles, crates, tubes, boards, sticks, pots/pans, clothing/costumes, tarps, etc
Creative quiet play (drawing, reading, colouring, writing, tower building, bracelets, cards, chalk art, etc)	Beads, chalk, crayons, string, paints, leaves, Gimp, construction paper, board games, etc
Nature play areas	Logs, tree stumps boulders, hills, leaves, etc)
Stage, role play	Puppets, dolls, clothes, hats, costumes, props
Free and unstructured dance, gymnastics skipping	Skipping Ropes/Double Dutch ropes, gym mats, Hula Hoops
Free and unstructured Active Play areas (large games like manhunt, spud)	
Games: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Pretzel • Alligator Swamp • Ants on a Log • Kangaroo races (hop to finish line, can have partners go together) • Limbo (can use a skipping rope) • Bean Relay (spoon and uncooked bean) 	
Obstacle Courses (Run through hula hoops, jump over pylons, skipping, spinning...)	
Magic	

QUICK TIP

Ask the students. Their voice matters.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS (Example)

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS OFFER VARIETY AND EXPERTISE.

We have had university students volunteer their time to lead a variety of interesting activities such as fencing, dance, cartooning, magic, and so on. They often did this once or twice per week for six weeks. Local businesses, such as martial arts or yoga studios, often did the same. It provides an opportunity children find new interests and connect with like-minded peers.

COMMUNITY PARTNER, BUSINESS, UNIVERSITY	CONTACT NAME AND NUMBER/EMAIL
Ideas based on our experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hip Hop/Street Dance demonstration• Soccer Baseball with firefighters• Hip Hop/Street Dance combo (Skip Hop)• Mural Painting• Magician (Card Tricks)• Artists• Cartoon Illustrators• Women's Basketball Team	

QUICK TIP

Community partners allow for novel activities and are very enjoyable. Students can find new interests and connect with other peers who are also interested in the same activity. For example, we had a community partner visit and teach 'Skip-Hop' (a combination of rope skipping and hip-hop). For several months after the lesson, the students spontaneously created new routines again and again during recess.

BLOCK 1 PLANNING SHEET

PRIMARY/JUNIOR



theme _____

date _____

[illegible]

BLOCK 1 PLANNING SHEET INTERMEDIATE



theme _____

date _____

[illegible]

BLOCK 1 PLANNING SHEET

COMMUNITY PARTNERS



theme _____

date _____

Community partner, business	Name, Contact info

QUICK TIP

Remember to ask the students who they would like to invite for a visit.
Be sure to consider the range of needs, preferences, and abilities.

BLOCK 2 PLANNING SHEET

PRIMARY/JUNIOR



theme _____

date _____

[illegible]

BLOCK 2 PLANNING SHEET INTERMEDIATE



theme _____

date _____

[illegible]

BLOCK TWO PLANNING SHEET

COMMUNITY PARTNERS



theme _____

date _____

Community partner, business	Name, Contact info

BLOCK 3 PLANNING SHEET

PRIMARY/JUNIOR



theme _____

date _____

[illegible]

BLOCK 3 PLANNING SHEET INTERMEDIATE



theme _____

date _____

[illegible]

BLOCK 3 PLANNING SHEET
COMMUNITY PARTNERS



theme _____

date _____

Community partner, business	Name, Contact info

NOTES

Supporting Challenge and Risk in Play

As a result of fear of injury and liability, many schools and schoolboards have traditionally employed schoolyard safety protocols that send the message 'keep our students **as safe as humanly possible**.' It may seem counter-intuitive, but contemporary research shows that these restrictive, protective attitudes - though well-intentioned - undermine children's developmental and psychological growth.

How? It restrict children's biological drive to experience challenge and risk in *incremental, manageable bites*. Developmental and psychological growth relies on exploration and reach - from our first steps as a baby, to rolling down a grassy hill, to riding a bike, to asking someone on a date - we learn by doing and refining - we learn to self-regulate our thoughts and our emotions as we explore what our bodies are capable of. We learn joy, thrill, anxiety management, setbacks, mastery, and resilience.

The literature on challenge and risk during play has highlighted the need for a balanced approach between **risk and hazard**. As a result, The Canadian Pediatric Society (2024) recommends **reframing perceptions of risk** by considering play-related injuries alongside the evidence in favour of challenging play, including the benefits and risks.

- In their position statement on risky play, the Canadian Pediatric Society (2024) recommends exploring the following toolkits to support risk and challenge in play:
- The Child and Nature Alliance of Canada's 'Risk-Benefit Assessment Toolkit.'
- The Consortium for Health, Intervention, Learning and Development (CHILD) '7Cs: An informational guide to young children's outdoor play spaces.'
- Canadian Public Health Association's Position Statement on Children's Unstructured Play.

Emilie Beaulieu, Suzanne Beno, Healthy childhood development through outdoor risky play: Navigating the balance with injury prevention, Paediatrics & Child Health, Volume 29, Issue 4, July 2024, Pages 255–261, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pch/pxae016>

RECRUITING

JUNIOR RECESS LEADERS: BUILDING YOUR COHORTS

TYPICALLY, THE RECESS COORDINATOR ASSUMES RESPONSIBILITY FOR RECRUITING, TRAINING, AND SUPERVISING JUNIOR RECESS LEADERS. IN ADDITION TO HELPING WITH EQUIPMENT, JUNIOR RECESS LEADERS MAY ASSIST WITH DIFFERENT PLAY CLUBS LIKE CRAFTS, DRAMA, OR YOGA.

PLAY CLUBS, WITHOUT EXCEPTION, ARE THE MOST REQUESTED AND MOST POPULAR PART OF THE RECESS PROJECT.

RECRUITING

During the recruitment presentation

- Introduce yourself and the Recess Project
- Introduce the Junior Recess Leader position, responsibilities, and benefits
- Tell interested students about the training days, the program schedule, meeting locations, and the position commitments
- Hand out position descriptions
- Post a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board for those interested

RECRUITMENT SPEECH

Hello. I'm ...(name), Recess Coordinator, here to talk to you about your part in making recess – every recess – more fun. Making recess better is the goal of everybody in this school, and we need your help.

I am looking for interested people, grades 5 to 8, to be Junior Recess Leaders. The job is to help make recesses fun, engaging and inclusive. Junior Recess Leaders can assist younger children and lead 'play clubs'.

Volunteering as a Junior Recess Leader means you earn leadership experience and volunteer hours. You can put these valuable experiences on your resume.

Junior Recess Leaders have their own hats (show them the hat); you also earn a certificate, and an end-of-term celebration.

The Recess Program consists of a three month term. Junior Recess Leaders sign up for one term at a time, two recesses per week. We have training sessions at the beginning of each term.

If you end up loving it (and most do!) you will have the opportunity to renew your position and be promoted to Senior Recess Leaders. You will also have the opportunity to train the next cohort of Junior Recess Leader volunteers.

Please sign up if you are interested. The sign-up sheet is (location).

The training session is during recess on....(date).

QUICK TIP

It is likely that Grade 4 students will ask to be Junior Recess Leaders. We have found that most are not quite developmentally ready yet, so we tell them they can 'apprentice' in the spring of Grade 4. Their job will be to 'shadow' an experienced Junior Leader for Block 3. Then they will be ready-to-go as a full Junior Recess Leader in the fall of Grade 5!

QUICK TIP

Many vulnerable children will volunteer to be Junior Recess Leaders. This position is excellent for them. It is also necessary to explicitly find children who have a dynamic influence and ask if they will volunteer to be a JRL. We've said things similar to, "Hi Tony, we notice that the children really look up to you and we would like to invite you to be a Junior Recess Leader. Your personality is really powerful and we need someone like you to help us make recess better."

YOU CAN BE A **CHANGE** **MAKER!**

WHO?	GRADE 5 - 8
WHAT?	MAKE RECESS FUN, INCLUSIVE AND ACTIVE
WHEN?	TWO RECESSES A WEEK FOR 3 MONTHS
HOW?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CREATE A SAFE AND INCLUSIVE RECESS• TRAIN IN LEADERSHIP SKILLS• HELP RUN PLAY CLUBS• LEARN DIFFERENT GAMES AND TEACH THEM TO YOUNGER STUDENTS• HELP STUDENTS PARTICIPATE AND FEEL INCLUDED• MANAGE EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES• GAIN VOLUNTEER HOURS• EARN A CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT• RECEIVE A HAT

WE WILL TRAIN YOU!
GREAT EXPERIENCE FOR YOUR RESUME
[SIGN UP HERE](#)

JUNIOR RECESS LEADER SIGN UP SHEET

[illegible]

JUNIOR RECESS LEADER SIGN UP SHEET

BLOCK TWO JANUARY TO MARCH

[illegible]

JUNIOR RECESS LEADER SIGN UP SHEET BLOCK THREE APRIL TO JUNE

[illegible]

RESPONSIBILITIES OF A

JR. RECESS LEADER

- Complete the training sessions
- Attend all the recesses you have committed to
- Tell the recess coordinator if you cannot make it to a designated recess
- Know your game/activity, and gently encourage students to participate
- Behave appropriately in your role as a mentor/role model
- Reward good behaviour
- If a conflict occurs, ask for assistance from a teacher

If you would like the opportunity to be a Junior Recess Leader and commit to a 3-month rotation, 2-recesses-per-week, please sign, collect the signatures, and return this page to your teacher.

YOUR NAME:

YOUR SIGNATURE:

GRADE/TEACHER:

TEACHER SIGNATURE:

PARENT SIGNATURE:

PRINCIPAL SIGNATURE:

DAILY SCHEDULING

Date_____



Morning Recess

	LEADER #1 NAME	LEADER #2 NAME	LEADER #3 NAME	LEADER #4 NAME
AREA 1				
AREA 2				
AREA 3				
AREA 4				

Lunch Recess

	LEADER #1 NAME	LEADER #2 NAME	LEADER #3 NAME	LEADER #4 NAME
AREA 1				
AREA 2				
AREA 3				
AREA 4				

Afternoon Recess

	LEADER #1 NAME	LEADER #2 NAME	LEADER #3 NAME	LEADER #4 NAME
AREA 1				
AREA 2				
AREA 3				
AREA 4				

TRAINING

JUNIOR RECESS LEADERS: TRAINING AND GUIDANCE

JUNIOR RECESS LEADER TRAINING SUPPORTS THE GOALS OF THE RECESS PROJECT. TO BUILD THEIR CONFIDENCE AND SKILLS, RECRUITS NEED TRAINING IN

- BASIC SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES
- GOOD COMMUNICATION SKILLS
- INCLUDING VULNERABLE CHILDREN
- EMPATHY AND INCLUSIVE BEHAVIOURS
- TYPES OF PLAY: FREE PLAY, TRADITIONAL GAMES, INCLUSIVE GAMES, UNITY ACTIVITIES, RESTORATIVE PLAY, AND CREATIVE PLAY

INITIAL TRAINING

Use a variety of activities and teaching strategies to help students understand the innovative nature of The Recess Project and their pivotal role. They are pioneering a project that will improve the school experience for everyone, including themselves.

Introduce yourself and your role as Recess Coordinator. Since students are usually very interested in feeling comfortable with their teachers, you may want to share something about yourself, such as your favourite food or movie. Then encourage students to talk about themselves. Having students sit in a circle, and take turns stating their name, their grade, and their favourite food (for example) is a good way to start building relationships. It is also helpful to ask what motivated them to volunteer to be a Junior Recess Leader.

ICEBREAKERS

Icebreaker games help recruits feel more comfortable with each other and with you. During the initial training session, consider starting with a game, like Huckle Buckle (see Games and Activities Library).

To demonstrate how the goals of the Recess Project and reduced bullying are related, try the “Bullying Paper” demonstration. In front of the students, crunch a smooth piece of paper into a ball. Then pass the paper along to a couple of recruits, and ask them to flatten the paper out completely. Explain that no matter how many times we try to flatten out the paper, the lines are still there, and that these lines resemble the permanent scars left in bullied children. Regardless of how often we try to make the paper smooth again, the scars remain.

The goal of the Recess Project, however, is to ensure that every child enjoys a fun, active and inclusive recess, without bullying, so these scars (or lines) don't form. The Junior Recess Leaders contribute to a fun and safe environment for everyone.

QUICK TIP

Hold a new training session prior to each block. It is more effective to have one cohort in training at a time.

QUICK TIP

Remind the JRLs that their role is to help prevent negative incidents from occurring, but that incidents will still happen.

Remind them that they should report any injuries or bullying incidents that may occur, by informing teachers or recess supervisors.

COVERING PLAY AREAS

The number of Junior Recess Leaders in the cohort determines the numbers who assist in each areas. Two Leaders per area works well, and giving JRLs the option of partnering with a friend motivates them both. A two-recesses-per-week commitment allows JRLs their own recess times with their peers. Mornings-only or afternoons-only recess duty helps students remember their commitments.

HATS

We have found that bright white hats are the most effective way to find and identify a Junior Recess Leader. The hats are for the JRLs permanently, and they can decorate them if they like. Leaders should keep their hats at a designated spot at school so they don't forget them for their shift.



JUNIOR RECESS LEADER TRAINING SESSION NOTES

CONGRATULATIONS!

- You have been selected to be a Junior Recess Leader!
- Your role is very important in helping kids have enjoyable recess experiences
- We are very happy to have you on the team

TRAINING MEETINGS

We will have mandatory meetings every week for JRLs.

During these meetings we will:

- Play a new game that we will be incorporating during recess
- Make sure everyone is on the same page
- Answer any questions
- Ask for positive or negative feedback

LUNCH/SNACK TIME

- Assisting during lunch/snack time is an optional part of the program for JRLs.
- Your role during this time period would be to enjoy your lunch or snack time with primary students so that you can help support but also build friendships with the younger students.

GAMES AND ACTIVITIES

Let's brainstorm!!

What are some fun games and activities you enjoy??

LET'S MEET EACH OTHER!

- Tell us about yourself!
- We are all on the same team so it's important we know a little bit about each other
- Tell us: your name, your grade, your favourite pet and your favourite game!
- I will start first...

THE BULLYING PAPER GAME

- Watch me crumple a smooth paper into a ball....
- I'm going to pass the paper to some of you to see if you can get all the wrinkles out.

THE ROLE OF THE JUNIOR RECESS LEADER

- Assisting the Recess Coordinator during recess, lunch and snack times
- Encouraging students to participate in activities and help include ALL students in these activities
- Helping take out and clean up equipment
- Attend training meetings and all of the recess you are scheduled for (2-3 recesses a week)

JUNIOR RECESS LEADER TRAINING SESSION NOTES/SLIDES

RECESS AREAS

- 2 JRLs help at each area.
- You will be responsible for assisting with equipment and play materials for different play areas during recess.
- You will also be trained to help assist younger students should they need it.
- If you are scheduled for a recess and it turns out to be an indoor recess we still need your help. We will have clubs or indoor activities.

CLUBS

- In addition to helping out in different play areas, there also may be some clubs (bracelet making, crafts, drama)
- If there is a club you want to run, let me know and I will try to organize this!

HATS

- In order to make it easier for younger students to find you during recess I will be giving all of you a hat.
- These hats are your uniforms as Junior Recess Leaders and should only be worn when you are scheduled for a recess.
- And yes, you get to keep them!

WHAT DOES A GOOD LEADER DO?

LET'S Brainstorm the qualities of a good leader.

JUNIOR RECESS LEADER TRAINING SESSION NOTES/SLIDES

NOW WE WILL TALK ABOUT GOOD COMMUNICATION SKILLS

A GOOD STRATEGY IS TO ALWAYS Find something nice to say to the person –everyone loves hearing nice things. FOR EXAMPLE:

- I like your braids – how did you do it?
- I like your shirt –such a great style
- I like your smile – it is so pretty
- I like the way you are so kind
- I like the way you are with little kids
- I like your hat –so very cool

GOOD COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Ask about the person and find out more about them:

- Do you have brothers or sisters?
- What do you like to do on the weekend?
- What did you do over the summer?
- Do you have pets?
- What is your favorite food?
- What do you want to do when you grow up?
- What is your favorite thing about school?

GOOD COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Let them know you hear them and understand them...

- You have five sisters? How do you tell them apart?
- You play baseball on the weekend? What position do you play?
- You went to sports camp over the summer? How fun – what did you do there?
- You have a gecko? Very cool! What does it eat?
- You love pizza? Me too! What is your favorite kind?
- You want to be a firefighter when you grow up? What an exciting job – what do you like best about it?
- You like science the best? That is awesome – tell me what you like best about it?

JUNIOR RECESS LEADER TRAINING SESSION NOTES/SLIDES

GOOD COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Play conversation “catch”

After you talk, ask them a question to further the conversation

- What does the shortstop do?
- What else happened at soccer camp?
- Your gecko eats worms? How many worms per day? Where do you get the worms from?
- You like pepperoni pizza? Which pizza place is your favorite?
- The fire trucks are awesome? Have you ever seen the inside of one?
- You like doing science experiments? Tell me one of your favorites?

GOOD COMMUNICATION SKILLS

What not to do when someone is upset:

Don't dismiss feelings. Do not say

- “It's not that big of a deal”
- “Oh, get over it already”
- “There is no reason to be upset”

GOOD COMMUNICATION SKILLS

What not to do when someone is upset:

Don't give advice. Do not say things like:

- “If I were you I would....”
- “Why don't you just do....”
- “I think you should...”



JUNIOR RECESS LEADER TRAINING SESSION NOTES/SLIDES

GOOD COMMUNICATION SKILLS

What not to do when someone is upset:

Don't rush in and try to fix or solve the problem. Do not say things like:

- "I will talk to him and fix his...."
- "We will get you another one...."

GOOD COMMUNICATION SKILLS

What to do when someone is upset:

Quietly listen to what they are saying and consider the mirror technique (ie gently repeat what they said):

"So what you are saying is that you were having lunch and all of the sudden Max came and stole it from you?"

"Yes.

"Just like that?"

"Yes, I was so upset"

"Wow, I see why you are upset." Then what happened?"

"I sat there with no lunch.. And I was hungry. My mom made that sandwich."

"Wow. That was pretty mean of Max. Would you like me to help you get some lunch? We can eat together and then we can talk more?"

A NEW WAY TO DO RECESS

- Recess can be tough for many students. Sometimes it is boring, lonely, mean, or frustrating.
- The goal of The Recess Project is to redesign recess so that all students can enjoy this time, however they choose to spend it. We want to provide a playful and engaging setting.
- ALL children have a right to rest, play, and relaxation - protected from the effects of social exclusion and social harm. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child labels this right Article 31: The Right to Play.
- Not everybody is a social butterfly! Around 1/3 to 1/2 of people are people who need some quiet time to recharge. We want to make sure there are quiet spaces for children who prefer quiet time or alone time. And we want to make sure that they feel safe and accepted.
- ALL children have different play styles, preferences, cultural backgrounds, abilities and so on. They should NEVER be teased or hurt because of the hobbies or things they like to do.
- You are an important role model and the young children will look up to you and copy your behaviors.

PRACTICING: MOCK RECESS TRAINING

Practice increases confidence and skills. Moreover, practices help ambivalent recruits decide whether or not they want to commit.

For one or multiple practices, the Recess Coordinator

- Designates recruits as “Students” or “Leaders.”
- Meets with “Leaders” to assign Zones (two to three per Zone).
- Chooses the designated school “check-in” location for meeting prior to every recess.
- Ensures the JRLs pick up their hats and Zone equipment .
- Holds mock recesses outside or in the gym.

Recruits can also incorporate their own game ideas during practice sessions.

PRACTICING: SCENARIOS

As part of their training, introduce recruits to recess scenarios they may encounter. Have recruits work in pairs or triads to problem-solve; encourage recruits to provide situations from their own recess experiences.

Some examples that we’ve used:

At recess two children in your group are fighting over a piece of equipment. What do you do?

Possible answers:

- a. Ask what the problem is; let each child speak; encourage the children to play together; suggest or brainstorm a game for them.
- b. Encourage them to take turns using the piece of equipment.

You notice that a child in your area is overly aggressive, or making fun of the other children.

What do you do?

Possible answer:

Immediately and calmly identify the behaviour as inappropriate. Point out, calmly, that making fun of others likely hurts their feelings. Throughout the game, keep an eye on the child and reinforce positive behaviours.

PRACTISING: MOCK RECESS TRAINING

SCENARIOS, continued

Malachi fell and scraped his knee playing soccer. He is crying. What do you do?

Possible answer:

Ask “What happened?” Ask if he is feeling well enough to go to the office for a bandage. If he is not, stay with him and ask another child to get a teacher. Remain calm and sympathetic with Malachi. If possible, try to distract him from thinking about the injury by asking positive questions. Encourage any children gathering around to continue playing.

One child is poking another child who obviously does not enjoy it. What do you do?

Possible answer:

Identify the behaviour immediately. Point out that poking is uncomfortable and hurtful. Throughout the game, keep an eye on the child and reinforce positive behaviours.

A child stands against the wall by himself. What do you do?

Possible answer:

Always watch for excluded/shy/alone children. Some children want to be alone for quiet time, and ideally there is a safe Zone for that with a range of options. But if this doesn't look like the case, ask the child if something is wrong, or if anything is bothering the child. Based on the school adopting The Recess Project, the child should not be in a time-out. Then ask the child to join in your game/activity. If the child refuses, ask if he would prefer to stand by your side and watch the game. If not, let him know that is okay. Let him know he is welcome to come and join you at anytime and that you will try again the next day.

QUICK TIP

Make sure to leave time to answer any remaining questions (the students will likely have lots!). For those students who are willing to commit to the program, bring sign-up sheets, determine which Zone each student will run, and organize primary classrooms for the Junior Recess Leaders to have lunch in. For an optimal experience, encourage the JRLs to pick what recesses they want to work and who they would like to pair up with. Further, encourage them to suggest games they would like to run as that will promote motivation and engagement.

RECOGNIZING LEADERS

The Recess Coordinator posts photos of the Junior Recess Leaders on the bulletin board after they have signed on to the project. Before the first recess, the Recess Coordinator and Leaders should visit every primary student classroom; here Leaders introduce themselves and mention their favourite game or activity.

LUNCH AND SNACK PERIODS

Lunch and snack periods also provide opportunities to build relationships with the younger students and discover their favourite activities. If Junior Recess Leaders want to, encourage them to eat their lunch or snack with an assigned group of primary students. Keep in mind that this should be an optional component, as we have learned that some JRLs are uncomfortable with the loud sounds of a full classroom of children.

QUICK TIP

It is important to ensure that JRLs are trained and guided constantly. Do not allow students to assume supervision of a staff job. In order to safely and sustainably ensure a change in the recess climate, the JRLs must be well-attended to.



BUILDING THE TEAM: WEEKLY MEETINGS

Regularly scheduled weekly meetings between the Recess Coordinator(s) and Junior Recess Leaders are essential to success. Mandatory meetings can build group cohesion, encourage formative feedback, and clarify expectations. Recess Coordinators can use these regular meetings to get to know the JRLs, to encourage problem-solving, and to model negotiating techniques.

During the meetings, the Recess Coordinator can ask JRLs to write anonymously about their positive or negative experiences. This feedback can inform the project design and identify concerns/topics for discussion. Recess Coordinators address issues either in one-on-one meets (if specific people are mentioned), or with the group at the next meeting.

The following are some suggestions for these weekly meetings:

- Play a fun game or do an activity.
- Learn a new game from the Game Library.
- Ensure everyone understands their individual responsibilities as well as their role on a team.
- Invite Leaders to ask questions.
- Invite Leaders to share challenges and successes.
- Redefine responsibilities and commitments if necessary.
- Encourage the group to offer ideas for resolving some of the issues others are having.

IMPLEMENTING: DAY ONE

Recess Committee members, administration, teachers, and volunteer personnel know the area locations, and every activity. Trained staff and volunteers are in their respective areas, ready to support the Junior Recess Leaders.

Junior Recess Leaders meet the Recess Coordinator at the designated meeting spot, check in, get their hats, grab their area materials/equipment and head for their area.

After recess or at the last recess, Junior Recess Leaders locate and return their area equipment. They meet with the Recess Coordinator, where people debrief. The Recess Coordinator asks for feedback: What went well? What would they do differently? What resources would help?

QUICK TIP

Sometimes JRLs forget when they are scheduled.
Prior to each recess, consider announcing the upcoming activities and the names of the JRLs that are on duty.

CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENT

Be sure to create an opportunity to celebrate the Junior Recess Leaders at the end of their Block. We've called it a 'Block Party' and because it is a special, infrequent event we've allowed pizza or ice cream for the Leaders. We have found that the JRLs look forward to this moment.

Assuming the JRL has completed their Block, they should receive their certificate, which you will find on the next page. In the past, we typically provide these at the monthly assemblies.

We also send home a letter to parents/caregivers to let them know about the accomplishment. You can find the letter on the following pages.

You will find that the same leaders will sign up again and again. Once they become seasoned, they can act as Senior Recess Leaders and train the younger, newer leaders. As well, be sure to recruit new JRLs.



NOTES

Dear Parent/Caregiver,

Your child received a special award of recognition today for their generous contribution to our efforts to ensure recess is an enjoyable time for each child, each day. They volunteered their time as a Recess Leader, a position that has many benefits for your child, the younger children, and the school as a whole.

The purpose of our efforts is to ensure that we provide all children opportunities for meaningful play and social connections during recess. Play and positive relationships are essential for children's overall well-being and success in school.

Your child completed a training program in leadership, role modeling, and compassion. He/she volunteered, two times per week, to do two things: 1) to eat lunch with the younger children, talk with them, and get to know them better. In doing so, your child was modeling positive conversation skills and encouraging respectful relationships among students. And 2) he/she set help with equipment and loose play materials parts and encouraged the younger children to play respectfully and inclusively.

This position

- Provides your child with leadership skills and opportunities to express empathy for the younger children.
- Builds bridges between the younger and older children, encouraging positive relationships across the school.
- Provides more opportunities for physically active, meaningful playtime at recess, resulting in more positive interactions and healthy physical development.
- It influences the school climate to one that feels safe and supportive and inclusive, which has an impact on children's learning and well-being.
- It influences the larger community, as your child and the children that they connect with will likely take their experiences outside of the school, creating a domino effect of compassion and inclusion.

Please join us in congratulating your child on their commitment and compassion.

OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT

HONOURING YOUR OUTSTANDING
PERFORMANCE AND DEDICATION

WE PRESENT

**WITH THIS CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION
FOR YOUR COMMITMENT AS**

JUNIOR RECESS LEADER

YEAR _____

SCHOOL _____

PRINCIPAL _____

YOU ARE A CHANGEMAKER

NOTES

GAMES AND ACTIVITIES LIBRARY: INJECTING SOME FUN

TRADITIONAL GAMES OFTEN GET PASSED DOWN FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION. HOWEVER, WITH THE DECLINE OF OUTDOOR PLAY WE'VE SEE A DECLINE IN SPONTANEOUS GAME PLAYING - PRESUMABLY BECAUSE CHILDREN HAVE LESS OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN THEM.

WE'VE BUILT THIS LIBRARY TO HELP SCAFFOLD GAMES BACK INTO CHILDREN'S LIVES. THE RECESS PROJECT IS INCLUSIVE.

ALL GAMES AND SPACES SHOULD OFFER ACCOMMODATION FOR PARTICIPATION. ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO PARTICIPATE FULLY IN WHATEVER WAY WORKS BEST FOR THEM.

AND ALWAYS REMEMBER TO ENSURE QUIET AREAS, QUIETER ACTIVITIES, AND SPACES FOR UNSTRUCTURED FREE PLAY.

These games and activities are suggestions only, games that we used and are most popular with the students. Please use your professional judgment with respect to safety, cultural beliefs, and children's preferences. Please select, use, and/or modify any activities.

As well, not all games have a suggestion for a modification. Those that are provided are intended as examples - and the list is not meant to be exhaustive. Please consult further resources as necessary depending on your circumstances and student needs.

Our general rule when offering guided activities is that 'if everyone who wants to play can't play, then let's play some-thing else.' Be creative and involve the students in generating ideas. Where there's a will, there's a way.

CLASSROOM GAMES

These classroom games encourage students to learn about each other, work together, make new friends, communicate effectively, and enjoy themselves within the safe space of the classroom. These games are great for indoor recess.

EMPIRE

Equipment: Paper, pencils, bucket/container.

Directions: Ask all the children to sit in a circle and give them each a piece of paper and a pencil. The person leading the game picks a topic (favourite animal, favourite movie, favourite superhero, for example). The children write their responses on a piece of paper without showing anyone, and put their papers into a hat/bucket. Next, the Leader pulls out a piece of paper from the hat, and reads the response. The first child who raises their hand guesses whose response it is. If the child guesses correctly, the person who wrote the paper must sit behind the child who guessed them. If the child guesses incorrectly, the person guessed gets a turn to guess who might have written the paper. The point of the game is to have all the children in the circle sitting behind someone (the winner), ultimately building an “Empire”.

Modifications/Accommodations: If visually impaired/low vision or non-literate younger children are playing, each child can whisper their response in the Leader’s ear; the Leader writes the responses down, and places in the bucket.

STOP THE BUS

Equipment: Paper, pencils.

Directions: Divide the children into groups of three to four. Give each group a piece of paper and a pencil. The Leader identifies five categories - for example, movies, books, school subjects, superheroes - and the students write these categories down on their paper in columns. The Leader then calls out a letter. The group must find and write down a word that starts with the letter for each category. The first group to have all categories filled stands up and yells, “Stop the bus!” That group reads their answers aloud. Any other group that has written the same words, that group must cross out the words that are the same. The team gets as many points as they have categories filled out. Repeat the game by changing the categories or the letter!

Modifications/Accommodations: Children with mobility challenges may just raise their hands or shout, “Stop the bus!”

HEADS UP SEVEN UP

Equipment: None.

Directions: Select seven children to be “it” for the game. The other children must sit at their desks with their heads down or cover their eyes. When you say GO, the seven who are “it” walk around the class and each tap one child gently on the shoulder. Tapped children raise their hands but keep their heads down. When the seven who are “it” have tapped one student each, they return to the front of the class. Then, all the children can lift up their heads (or open their eyes) and the tapped children guess which of the seven people at the front of the classroom tapped them. Children who guess correctly, become “it.” Children who guess incorrectly continue to sit at their desks.

Modifications/Accommodations: If children use a mobility device, Leaders can offer to help them get around the desks, or offer to tap their child of choice.

TEN

Equipment: None.

Directions: Have the children stand in a straight line. In order, each individual can either say one number or two numbers, when it is their turn (up to the number 10, in order). For example the first person may say “1”, the second person may say “2, 3”, the third person could say “4” and so on. The person who has to say the number “10” is out and must sit down. The next person in line then starts the game again. The last person standing is the winner.

Modifications/Accommodations: If a child is in a wheelchair, the group can sit in a line or a circle.

MUSICAL CHAIRS

Equipment: Chairs (one fewer than the number of children playing), children’s music and speakers.

Directions: Arrange the chairs in a circle, facing outwards, with the players standing outside of the circle. Have one less chair than number of players (10 players = 9 chairs). When the music starts, the players walk around the circle. When the music stops, the players must sit in a chair as quickly as they can. The person who left standing (without a chair) is out of the game. Then another chair is removed and the game continues. The last person sitting is the winner.

Modifications/Accommodations: Children in wheelchairs or with an assistive mobility device put their hand on the chair and to indicate they were there first.

FREEZE DANCE

Equipment: Speakers and children's music.

Directions: Play the music and ask the children to dance. After a few seconds (or a minute), pause the music and yell, "Freeze!" All of the children must freeze when the music stops. If children move, they are out.

Modifications/Accommodations: If a child does not feel comfortable dancing, they can control the music.

CHAIN REACTION

Equipment: None.

Directions: Leaders or a designated child write a category on the chalk/whiteboard, for example, Animals. The first student must name a specific example in the category: Dog. The second child must name another specific example, but the example must start with the last letter of the first person's animal: Dog ends in a "G", so the next student may say Giraffe. The third person must name an animal that begins with the last letter of the second person's animal: Elephant, and so on. One at a time, students are eliminated, as many will have difficulty finding a new animal to say.

TOWER BUILDING

Equipment: Newspaper, masking tape, object.

Directions: Put the students into groups, and allot a time for the task. Together they build a tower using only newspaper and one strip of tape. The goal is to create the tallest tower in a certain amount of time without taping it down. Another challenge is adding weight to each tower to see whose tower can hold the most.

IT

Equipment: None.

Directions: The point of the game is for the child who is "It" to identify the Big Cheese. Have the children sit or stand in a circle. Select one student to be "It" and have them stand in the middle of the circle and cover their eyes while Junior Leader chooses a Big Cheese who stays in their place. The Junior Leader chooses the Big Cheese, and tells the children not to look directly at the Big Cheese, because then "It" might guess who that person is. "It" opens their eyes. Then the Big Cheese starts the game by doing different actions: nodding their head, reaching their arms up, or making circles with their hands. All the children follow along exactly, but without looking directly at the Big Cheese. The "It" child turns slowly around, trying to figure out who the Big Cheese is. (The Big Cheese should try to change actions when "it" is not looking at them.) "It" gets three guesses. If "It" does not guess correctly, the Big Cheese becomes the new "It." If they guess correctly, choose two other children to be "It" and the Big Cheese.

CONCENTRATION

Equipment: None.

Directions: Ask the children to partner up and face each other standing about an arm's length apart. Both children always clap three times after each word or phrase. One of the partners stamps their feet twice and says, "Concentration." (Clap three times) "No hesitations." (Clap three times), "Or repeats" (clap three times), "I'll go first" (Clap three times), "You will follow" (Clap three times), "Category is" (Clap three times), "Types of animals" [or countries, colors, pets, flowers, fruit, cars, etc.] (Clap three times). Then the other child could say, "Cheetah" (Clap three times). The first child could say, "Buffalo" (Clap 3 times) and so on. The game continues until someone is unable to name a different animal. Another category is chosen by the winner and the game begins again.

Modifications/Accommodations: Children with mobility devices can sit for this game.

FRIENDSHIP BRACELETS

Equipment: Beads, string.

Directions: Have students make each other friendship bracelets. The children can share why they chose each bead, and what makes a good friend. Try to ensure each child receives a bracelet so no one feels left out.

WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

Equipment: Human cut-outs, markers/pencil crayons, string, world map.

Directions: Give students a blank person cut-out. They are to make the cut-out into an image of themselves, keeping in mind their cultural heritage. The Leader mounts a world map, and students can tape their person up to it. Children use the piece of string to connect the person with the map, showing the location of their heritage in the world.

CIRCLE GAMES

These circle games encourage students to learn about each other, to learn to work together, make new friends, to communicate effectively, and to have fun. Guided by the support of Junior Recess Leaders, they encourage inclusion, effective communication, cooperation, strategic thinking, and problem solving skills. These games can be played inside or outside and provide a safe space for students to connect with each other.

PULSE

Equipment: None.

Directions: The children hold hands in a circle. Leader selects one person to start the pulse. That person squeezes the hand being held to their left. When the receiver feels the squeeze on their right hand, they must then squeeze their left hand. The pulse then travels around the circle back to the beginning. To add an extra challenge, the Leader can time how long it takes for the pulse to come back to the beginning.

Modifications/Accommodations: Leaders can send a whisper around the circle, with each child whispering a sound in the next person's ear.

TELEPHONE

Equipment: None.

Directions: The children sit in a circle. One person is in charge of whispering a message in the ear of the next person. That child then whispers the message to the person beside them. Each child whispers the message to the next. The last child to receive the whispered message must state the sentence they heard. Leader asks the first child for the original message. The change in the message is astounding!

KEYS

Equipment: Small ball, toy or keys.

Directions: One child sits in the middle of the circle with eyes closed, and the Junior Leader places a small item beside the child. The Junior Leader chooses another child from the group. That child, in turn, picks someone in the circle to reach for the item as quietly as possible, and before the person in the middle realizes. If the person in the middle hears a noise, they must point to the direction that the sound is coming from (without looking), to catch the person. The person who gets caught then goes in the middle.

FLINCH

Equipment: A soft ball.

Directions: All the children stand up in a circle with their arms crossed over their chest. One person is in the middle of the circle with a soft ball and must either (1) throw the ball to someone or (2) pretend to throw the ball to someone. If the person in the middle chooses option (1) and the child does not catch the thrown ball, they must sit down, now out. If the thrower chooses option (2) and the person on the receiving end flinches, they are out and must sit down. Leaders should rotate the children frequently, so they each have a turn being in the middle.

ANIMALS

Equipment: None

Directions: Children sit in a circle, except one child who sits in the middle. Each child in the circle says aloud an animal they want to be. The purpose of the game is to finish a brief sentence about their animal eating another person's animal before being touched by the person in the middle. Leader chooses a child to start. So for example, the starter child says "Pig" (their animal) eats "cow" (another child's animal). The child whose animal was picked (cow) must then quickly say "Cow" (their animal) eats "Donkey" (another person's animal) before getting touched by the person in the middle. If the child gets touched before completing the sentence, they then become the person in the middle.

HOT POTATO

Equipment: Ball (or any other object that the children can easily hold).

Directions: Have the children sit or stand in a circle. Leader or a chosen child begins by passing the object around the circle (as quickly as possible) while singing, "Hot Potato, pass it on, pass it on, pass it on, Hot Potato pass it on...you are out!" The child left holding the ball at "Hot Potato" when the song stops is out.

POISON FROG

Equipment: None.

Directions: All of the children sit in a circle. One person stands outside the circle and closes their eyes, while the Leader chooses a "Poison Frog" from the circle group. Then the child standing outside of the circle enters the middle of the circle. The "Poison Frog" child sticks their tongue out to the children in the circle, one at a time, but without being caught by the child in the middle. The "poisoned" child (the Poison Frog has stuck their tongue out at them) must fall back and lie on the ground. The person in the middle must try to figure out who the Poison Frog is quickly, before all the circle members have been poisoned.

HUMAN PINBALL

Equipment: Soft ball.

Directions: Everyone sits in a circle. Leader selects one child as the pinball; this child stands in the middle of the circle. The circle children roll/toss the ball gently at the child in the middle, trying to gently hit the person from the knees down. If the child is hit, they switch spots with the child who hit them. However, the ball cannot be stopped at any time and must be kept moving.

HUMAN PRETZEL

Equipment: None.

Directions: The children must stand in a circle and grab the hands of two children across from them. The children must then work together to untangle themselves without letting go of their hands.

Modifications/Accommodations: One child can stand out the outside and suggest how the children can untangle themselves.

CLAPPING GAME

Equipment: None.

Directions: The children stand in a circle and place their right hand over their neighbour's left hand. One child begins by clapping the hand of their neighbour, who then claps the hand of their neighbour, and so on around the circle. As they clap, the children sing, "Stella ella ola, clap, clap, clap, says, chigo, chigo, chigo, chigo, chap, says chigo, chigo, blow, blow, blow your nose, say one, two, three, four, five." The child whose hand is clapped on the number five is out, unless they pull their hand away quickly enough without being clapped. Then, the child who missed their neighbour's hand is out and sits away from the circle.

Modifications/Accommodations: If children have trouble with fine motor skills, Junior Leaders can offer to hold their hands and help them move their hands.

DOGGY, DOGGY

Equipment: A small item/ball/stuffed animal, etc.

Directions: The children must sit in a circle with their eyes closed and their hands behind their backs. One person is chosen to sit in the middle of the circle; they also covers their eyes. A Junior Leader or another child then walks around the outside of the circle with the small item while everyone sings, "Doggy, Doggy, who's got your bone? Somebody took it from your home... guess who... it could be you... it could be the monkey from the zoo." During the song, the Leader or child places the item behind any singer's back. After the song is over, the person in the middle opens their eyes, and has three tries to guess who has the item behind their back. The person who has the item then goes into the middle and the game is repeated.

LOW PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GAMES

These low-physical activity games encourage students to learn about each other, to learn to work together, make new friends, to communicate effectively, and to have fun. Guided by the support of Junior Recess Leaders, these games encourage inclusion, effective communication, cooperation, strategic thinking, and problem solving skills. These games can be played inside a gym or outside on the playground. They provide a safe space for students to connect with each other and engage in moderate levels of physical activity.

WAX MUSEUM

Equipment: None.

Directions: One child is the security guard and must walk around the museum. All the other children are the wax statues and can change frozen positions when the security guard is not looking. Any child caught moving is out.

GRAVEYARD

Equipment: None.

Directions: The children lie down motionless on the ground. The goal is for the graveyard security guard (a child the Leader chooses) to walk around and try to make the children laugh without touching them. If the children laugh they also become a graveyard security guard.

Modifications/Accommodations: The children can freeze sitting instead of lying down, so children who use wheelchairs can remain in their chairs.

SIMON SAYS

Equipment: None.

Directions: Choose one child to be “Simon,” whom the rest of the children stand and face.

“Simon” then different actions, prefaced by “Simon says.” “Simon says, touch your chin” or

“Simon says, jump up and down.” When the words “Simon says” precede the action, the children must follow exactly. But if “Simon” gives a direction, like “Stop,” or “Touch your nose,” without the “Simon says,” the children must continue with the previous action. Any child changing action without “Simon says” preceding it, is out.

CHALK

Equipment: Chalk.

Directions: The children can draw pictures and design games using chalk. allow children to color on their own, and/or encourage the children to work together in teams or pairs to draw a complete picture. Drawing an obstacle course can increase physically-active play.

Modifications/Accommodations: Offer any child with a visual impairment to work with you to do “hand over hand” drawing; children put their hands over the Leaders’ and tell leaders what they want to draw.

TAG GAMES

These tag games reduce stress, and encourage students to engage in physically active play, and have fun together. Guided by the support of Junior Recess Leaders, they encourage inclusion, effective communication, cooperation, strategic thinking, and problem solving skills. These games can be played inside a gym or outside on the playground. They provide a safe space for students to learn a range of different types of tag, to connect with each other, and engage in higher levels of physical activity.

EVERYBODY IS 'IT'

Equipment: None.

Directions: Everyone is “it.” All the children run around, and if they get touched by anyone they are out and must sit down.

SHADOW TAG

Equipment: None.

Directions: Select one person to be “It.” “It” run around trying to jump on the other children’s shadows. If their shadow has been touched, the child must freeze. The children can be unfrozen by having another child tap their arm. Make sure to tell the children how important it is to be honest in this game and pay attention for the arm tap.

BLOB TAG

Equipment: None.

Directions: Someone is chosen to be “It.” If a child get touched by the person who is “It,” that child must hold the “It” person’s hand and continue to tag people. The object of the game is for the “blob” (people who are “It”) to keep growing.

TOILET TAG

Equipment: None.

Directions: Someone is chosen to be “It.” A child touched by “It” must freeze and hold out their index finger with the elbow touching their side (to form the toilet handle). When another child pushes the touched child’s finger down, they have been “flushed” and can rejoin the game.

LINE TAG/PACMAN

Equipment: Lines on the courts, field or gym.

Directions: Someone is chosen to be “It.” The rest of the children go run on the lines that are on the ground (and cannot step off the lines). Once a player has been tagged, they also become “It.”

TV TAG

Equipment: None.

Directions: Someone is chosen to be “It.” When the person who is “It” gets close to the child, the children are able to crouch down (in order to avoid being touched) but only if they call out a name of a TV show. If the child has already said the particular TV show or forgets the name of a show, they become “It.”

ZOMBIE TAG

Equipment: None.

Directions: Someone is chosen to be “It”. Everyone walks around slowly like zombies, trying not to get tagged by the person that is “It.” If they are tagged, they must join the head zombie in being “It.” The entire game is played walking.

RUNNING GAMES

Running games boost circulation and reduce stress. Guided by the support of Junior Recess Leaders, these games encourage inclusion, effective communication, cooperation, strategic thinking, and problem solving skills. They can be played inside a gym or outside on the playground. They provide a safe space for students to learn a range of different types of running games, to connect with each other, and engage in higher levels of physical activity.

RED LIGHT, GREEN LIGHT

Equipment: None.

Directions: Choose a leader. When the leader calls out a certain colour, the children are required to complete the action. Red Light: stop; Yellow Light: walk; Green Light: run; Purple Light: jump up and down; Blue Light: sit down; and Black Light: super fast. The children act as instructed.

OCTOPUS

Equipment: None.

Directions: All the children stand on one side of the field, and one child is selected to be the Octopus. Once the Octopus yells, “Octopus” all the children must run to the other side of the “ocean” without getting touched by the Octopus. Children touched by the Octopus must stop where they are, sit down, and become seaweed. The seaweed can spread their arms out and touch people from where they are as the other children run across the ocean. The game is played until only one person is left to cross the ocean.

WHAT TIME IS IT MR. WOLF?

Equipment: None.

Directions: Select one child to be Mr. Wolf, who stands with their back to the rest of the children. The children stand in a line and call out, “What time is it Mr. Wolf?” to Mr Wolf’s back. Mr. Wolf replies, “It is (...) o’clock.” The children step closer to Mr. Wolf, depending on the time (for example, if Mr. Wolf says it’s 4 o’clock, children step four steps closer to Mr. Wolf). However, when Mr. Wolf yells, “Lunchtime!” Mr. Wolf can turn around and try to catch the children, who must run back to their starting point as quickly as they can. The first child touched by Mr. Wolf becomes Mr. Wolf.

CHICKEN, CHEESE, AND HAM

Equipment: Chalk.

Directions: The Junior Leader draws three chalk lines. The left line is called “Chicken,” the middle line is “Cheese,” and the right line is “Ham.” Choose a captain. The children stand on any of the lines and the captain calls out one of these three foods. The children must then run to that specific line. As the children are running to a line, you can yell out another food and they switch and run to that new line. The goal is to not be the last person to reach the line. If you are last, then you are out.

HUCKLE BUCKLE

Equipment: None.

Directions: The children must find partners and stand across from one another (about the width of a basketball court). One child leads the game by yelling out actions, such as “finger to hip.” Immediately, partners must run towards each other and one partner must touch their finger to their partner’s hip. Whenever the calling child says “Huckle-Buckle,” the children must run towards each other, go back-to-back with their partners, and sit down. The last pair to perform the action is out.

STREETS AND ALLEYS

Equipment: None.

Directions: The children stand in three or four straight lines, arms outstretched to touch the arms of the children lined up beside them. Assign one as “the cat” and another as “the mouse.” “The cat” must tag “the mouse” while running through the pathways formed by the children touching arms. If the Caller shouts, “Streets,” the children must create horizontal lines with their arms. If “Alleys” is called, the children must turn their bodies to create vertical lines. As everyone shifts between Alleys and Streets, the pathways keep changing, making it hard for “the cat” to catch “the mouse.”

ACROSS CANADA

Equipment: None.

Directions: Children line up against a wall. One child is “It,” and, back to the children, calls out various colours. Children wearing the called colour may walk across to the other wall without getting touched. When “It” calls, “Across Canada,” the rest of the children must run across without being tagged. Children tagged, must join the child who is “It.”

SKIPPING SONGS AND ACTIVITIES

The skipping songs and activities offer moderate levels of activity, and encourage students to engage in effective communication, cooperation, strategic thinking, and problem solving. These activities can be played inside a gym or outside on the playground. They provide a safe space for students to learn a range of different types of games and new songs, and to connect with each other.

SPORTS CAR

Equipment: Skipping ropes, various sizes.

Directions: The children skip along to the song, “Had a little sports car number 68, ran around the corner (children can jump out, run around to the other side and jump back in), slammed on the breaks, bumped into a lady, bumped into a man, bumped into a police man... man oh man, policeman caught me and put me in jail and all I had was ginger ale...how many bottles did I have? 10, 20, 30, 40, 50.... etc.” (Turn rope faster and faster, as the numbers get higher.) Keep going until the people miss the rope and their turn is over.

STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE

Equipment: Skipping ropes, various sizes.

Directions: The children skip along to the song, “Strawberry shortcake, huckleberry pie...who’s gonna be your lucky guy: A, B, C, D...etc.” The children sing until a child lands on a letter. Then the child picks a name that corresponds to the letter. Children can turn the rope faster when they reach the end of the alphabet or sing the alphabet again.

ALL IN TOGETHER

Equipment: Skipping ropes, various sizes.

Directions: Sing “All in together, birds of a feather: January, February, March, April, May, etc.” (Each child has to jump in during the month they were born).

ICE CREAM

Equipment: Skipping ropes, various sizes.

Directions: The child skips while the rest of the children sing, “Ice cream, soda pop, cherry on top, who’s your good friend, let’s find out; Goes A! B! C! etc.” Keep going until the child stops on a letter and then pick a name.

CINDERELLA

Equipment: Skipping ropes, various sizes.

Directions: While skipping the children sing, “Cinderella dressed in yellow, went upstairs to kiss her fellow, by mistake kissed a snake, how many doctors will it take? 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, etc. (Go to 20 then go down to the next line.)

Cinderella dressed in blue, went upstairs to tie her shoe, made a mistake and tied a knot, how many knots will she make? 1, 2, 3, etc.

Cinderella dressed in green, went downtown to buy a ring, made a mistake and bought a fake, how many days before it breaks? 1, 2, 3, etc.

Cinderella dressed in lace, went upstairs to fix her face, oh no oh no, she found a blemish, how many powder puffs until she’s finished? 1, 2, 3, etc.

Cinderella dressed in silk, went outside to get some milk, made a mistake and fell in the lake, how many more until she gets a break? 1, 2, 3, etc.

BACK TO BACK

Equipment: Skipping ropes, various sizes.

Directions: A pair of students skips together, and tries to complete the appropriate actions: “Back to back, face to face, shake your partner’s hand and switch place.”

SKIPPING ROPE GAMES

Skipping Rope games boost circulation and reduce stress. Guided by the support of Junior Recess Leaders, these games encourage inclusion, effective communication, cooperation, strategic thinking, and problem solving skills. They can be played inside a gym or outside on the playground. They provide a safe space for students to learn a range of different types of skipping activities, to connect with each other, and engage in higher levels of physical activity.

RUN THROUGH

Equipment: Skipping ropes, various sizes.

Directions: While the skipping rope is being turned, have the children run through the rope without stopping.

SNAKE

Equipment: Skipping ropes, various sizes.

Directions: Have the rope on the ground, and wiggle it back and forth. Call out different colours, and the children wearing the particular colour called out try to jump across the rope (snake) without touching it. If they touch it, they're out.

DOUBLE DUTCH

Equipment: Skipping ropes, various sizes.

Directions: Children spin two skipping ropes simultaneously but in opposite directions. The skippers must skip twice as fast to skip over both of them at once.

CONGA LINE

Equipment: Skipping ropes, various sizes.

Directions: Hold the rope up high and have the children limbo underneath it. After every child has completed that level, move the rope down a few inches. The children must try to limbo underneath the rope without touching it. They must bend backwards and not let the rope touch any part of them.

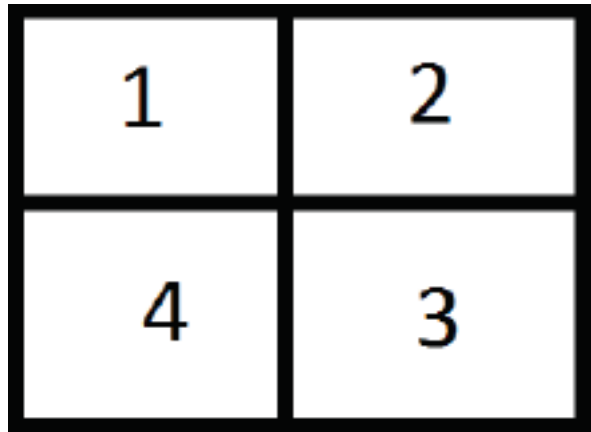
PAVEMENT GAMES

The pavement games boost circulation and reduce stress. These games encourage students to engage in moderate levels of physically active play, and to have fun together. Guided by the support of Junior Recess Leaders, they encourage inclusion, effective communication, cooperation, strategic thinking, and problem solving skills. They are designed to be played outside on the tarmac. They provide a safe space for students to learn a range of different types of games and to connect with each other.

FOUR SQUARE

Equipment: Large, bouncy ball (soccer ball, basketball etc.), chalk to draw the large square (or the square may be permanently painted on the blacktop).

Directions: Each player stands in one of the four squares. The player in square 4 serves the ball, by bouncing it in their square once and then hitting it towards one of the other squares. The player in the receiving square then hits the ball into any of the other squares. The players must continuously hit the ball into another player's square. If a player hits the ball and it misses another player's square, or if the player does not hit the ball before the second bounce, that player is "out." When a player



is out, the other players move up in ranking, and the "out" player moves to the last square (or to the end of the line if there are more than four players). The object of the game is to move up to square number 4 and hold this server's position.

Accommodation/Modification: With eight or more players, two players can play for each square. Each time a player hits the ball into another square, they jump out of the court and the square partner jumps in. The two players keep trading places each time the ball is hit.

WALL BALL

Equipment: Small, bouncy ball/tennis ball.

Directions: player throw the ball against the wall and another player try to catch the ball without dropping it. All the remaining players must form a line behind the two individuals throwing and catching the ball. If the player trying to catch the ball fumbles or drops the ball, this player must run as fast as they can and touch the wall before the next player (waiting in the line) throws the ball against the wall. If the player does not run fast enough to touch the wall, they receive a letter from the word, “wall-ball” (or another other word of choice). Once a player has received all the letters of the chosen word, that player is out.

BASKETBALL OR COURT GAMES

Basketball and court games listed encourage students to engage in higher levels of physically active play. These games boost circulation and reduce stress. Guided by the support of Junior Recess Leaders, these games encourage inclusion, effective communication, cooperation, strategic thinking, and problem solving skills. They can be played inside a gym or outside on the playground. They provide a safe space for students to learn a range of different types of basketball and court games, and to connect with each other.

BASKETBALL

Equipment: Basketball nets, pinnies, basketball.

Directions: The game includes two teams, a basketball court, and two nets. Because the players are in teams, use pinnies to help keep the game organized. The goal of the game is to shoot on the opposing team's net while protecting one's own net. The players are required to dribble the ball and pass to their classmates. The team with the most points (scored by getting a ball in the basket) wins the game. It is important that the Junior Recess Leaders make equal teams, and discuss fair play.

DRILLS

Equipment: Pylons, basketballs.

Directions: Include the following drills:

- Chest pass
- Bounce pass
- Around pylons
- Shooting
- One handed
- Both hands

CLAP PASS

Equipment: Basketball.

Directions: The children stand in a circle and pass the ball. Each receiving child must clap their hands together before catching the ball. To make it more difficult, children can try to clap twice in between passes.

OVER UNDER

Equipment: Two balls.

Directions: The children stand in two lines, facing forward. Starting at the front of the lines, the children pass the ball over one person and under the next person until the ball reaches the end of the lines. The team that gets the ball to the end of the line first, wins.

AROUND THE WORLD

Equipment: Basketball.

Direction #1: Two teams are stationed at two basketball nets. Each team must keep track of the number of times the ball goes into its basket. Everyone lines up in front of each basketball net and the first person from each line must attempt to shoot. If the players get the ball in the net, they receive one point. If the players miss the shot, they do not receive a point. After every shot, the ball is passed to the next person in line. After everyone has two teams compare the number of points they have earned.

Direction #2 (variation): The game requires two or more players. The players must determine shooting positions (for example: centre/straight shot in front of the net, shot from the right side of the net, shot from the left side of the net, etc.). The players must attempt to shoot from each different position. When a player makes a shot from a particular position (for example: centre/straight), they may advance to the next position (right side). The players keep advancing to the next shooting position, until they miss a shot. Players who miss a shot, must start over at the initial position. The first person to make a successful shot from the last, most advanced position, wins the game.

SHOOT-OUT

Equipment: Basketballs.

Directions: The players keep track of how many times in a row they can get the ball into the net without missing.

SOCCKER OR FIELD GAMES

Soccer and fi ld games encourage students to engage in higher levels of physically active play, boost circulation and reduce stress. Guided by the support of Junior Recess Leaders, they encourage inclusion, effective communication, cooperation, strategic thinking, and problem solving skills. They can be played outside on a fi ld. They provide a safe space for students to learn a range of different types of soccer and fi ld games, and to connect with each other.

SOCCKER

Equipment: Pylons, pinnies, soccer ball.

Directions: Soccer includes two teams, a large fi ld and two goal posts. The goal of the game is to score on the opposing team's net.

DRILLS

Equipment: Pylons, basketballs.

Directions: Include the following drills:

- Passing the Ball
- Stopping the Ball
- Shooting
- Running with the Ball
- Kicking
- Corner Kicks
- Throw-ins

SHOOT-OUT

Equipment: Soccer balls, two nets, pylons

Directions: Split the children up into two teams. Each team lines up, facing its opponent's net. When Junior Leader says, "Go," the fi st person from each line/team tries to score on the opponent's net. After the fi st person shoots on the opponent's net, they then retrieve the ball and hand it to the next person in line. Th s game is a race; thus, the fi st team to score 10 goals against the opponent's net/goalie wins.

WORLD CUP

Equipment: One net, soccer ball, pylons.

Directions: Create teams (or have the students choose groups) of three to four people. Each team selects a country as the team name. Teams can make flags, too, if players have extra time. One goalie guards the net, and all of the teams play against one another, attempting to score on the net. During each round, the last team to score on the net is out of the game. Teams keep playing until only one team is left

CRAB SOCCER

Equipment: Soccer ball, two nets.

Directions: This game is played similarly to soccer, except players must walk like a crab: face up, on their hands and knees.

ONE GOAL

Equipment: Two pylons, soccer ball.

Directions: Set up two pylons to be a net in the middle of the field. Create two teams. One team tries to score on one side of the net (pylons), and the other team must score on the opposite side of the net (pylons).

MONKEY SOCCER

Equipment: Two nets, one soccer ball.

Directions: This game is played the same way as soccer, but the players can use only their arms, not their feet.

SPEED BALL

Equipment: Two nets, one soccer ball.

Directions: The goal of the game is to score on the opposing team's net. Split the children up into two teams. When the soccer ball is on the ground, the players must use their feet to pass the ball. When the ball gets hit up into the air, the game becomes a handball game. When it becomes a handball game, the players can only take three steps with the ball, and then they must pass the ball.

4-NET SOCCER

Equipment: Four soccer balls, four nets.

Directions: Split the children up into four teams, each team with a net. The goal of the game is to score on any of the other three nets, while protecting one's own net. The first team to score 10 goals wins.

SOCCER BASEBALL

Equipment: Field or baseball diamond, four bases, one Nerf ball.

Directions: The game is played like baseball. Split the children up into two teams, and set up the field like a baseball diamond. Use a soft ball. The pitcher must (underhand) roll the ball to the "batter" and the "batter" must kick the ball (instead of hitting the ball with a bat). The remainder of the game is played exactly like baseball, with "three strikes and you're out."

LARGE SCALE GAMES

The large scale team games encourage larger groups of students to engage in higher levels of physically active play, boost circulation and reduce stress. Guided by the support of Junior Recess Leaders, these games encourage inclusion, effective communication, cooperation, strategic thinking, and problem solving skills. They can be played outside on a field or on the tarmac. They provide a safe space for students to learn a range of different types soccer and field games, and to connect with each other.

ULTIMATE FRISBEE

Equipment: Pinnies, Frisbee, 2 nets.

Directions: Split the group into two teams. This game is played like soccer, except players are throwing a Frisbee not kicking a ball. Players may not run with the Frisbee, and are required to pass/throw it. The players are also able to intercept passes. If a player drops the Frisbee anyone can grab it. The goal of the game is to throw the Frisbee in the opposing team's net.

HANDBALL

Equipment: Two nets, Soccer ball/Nerf ball.

Directions: This game is played like soccer, except the children must use their hands rather than feet to pass and shoot the ball. The players must take three steps before passing the ball. The goal of the game is to get the ball in the net.

CAPTURE THE FLAG

Equipment: Two nets, field, and two items to be a flag.

Directions: Form two teams, and position the teams on opposite sides of the field. Create a middle line as the dividing zone between the two teams. Each team hides its flag on its own side of the field. The goal of the game is to get the other team's flag, and bring it back to the other side of the field without being tagged. If players get tagged, they must go into the other team's "prison" (an area located on the opposing team's side). To get out of prison, one of the prisoner's team members must come and touch the prisoner. A touched prisoner gets a free walk back to their own side. If the leader of the game yells "jailbreak," everyone is free from jail and can re-join the game.

JACKPOT

Equipment: Field, footballs.

Directions: One child stands facing the group a bit of a distance away. This child must kick or throw the ball up into the air towards the group, while yelling out a number (10, 9, 90, etc.). The player who catches the football receives the allotted number of points. The player who reaches exactly 100 points is the winner. Players cannot accumulate over 100 points or they go bankrupt and must start again. The thrower can also call out, "Bankrupt," and anyone who catches the ball loses all their points.

STONES

Equipment: Four hula hoops, with an equal amount of equipment in each (bean bags, etc.).

Directions: Create four teams, in four quadrants of the field/pavement. Each team must protect its own equipment and gather equipment from the other teams without being touched. Players who get touched must go to a central prison and cannot get back into the game until a leader yells, "Jailbreak." If a team loses all of its equipment, it must join the team that gathered the majority of its equipment. This combined team's space becomes larger and they have more players. The point of the game is to be the last team standing.

MANHUNT

Equipment: Pinnies/bandanas.

Directions: Large game of tag played on the field. One student is assigned to be "It," while the rest hide. Set boundaries to ensure they stay on property. Children tagged also become "It." The pinnies can be used as markers of who is "It." The goal is to be the last person on the field.

RAPID FIRE

Equipment: Hula hoops, bean bags, pylons.

Directions: Divide students into two teams and have them stand in a line about an arm's length apart, all facing forward. Place a hula hoop at the front of the line with bean bags inside it, and another at the back of the line without bean bags. Students at the front grab a bean bag pass it down the line. The team with all the bean bags in one hoop first wins.

ALIEN INVASION

Equipment: Pylons, pinnies, hula hoops.

Directions: Set up pylons and hula hoops randomly on the field. One team is called 'Aliens' and one team 'Humans'. The Aliens knock down as many pylons as possible, while the Humans keep putting them up. The Aliens go into the hula hoops as a safety zone to avoid getting caught by the Humans. If Aliens get touched by the Humans, they get frozen. They get unfrozen when a team member taps their arms.

SKIRMISH

Equipment: Buckets, plastic chips, Nerf balls.

Directions: Divide students into two teams, each team with its own side of the gym. Each team gets a bucket containing equal number of plastic chips, and three Nerf balls. Have a few students on each team stay on their side while the rest spread out. The students in the end zones toss balls to their teammates on the court. When a teammate successfully catches the ball, they remove a chip from the opposing team's bucket, places it in their team's bucket, and trade places with the student who threw the ball. The team that loses all of its chips first, loses the game.

VARIATIONS OF DODGEBALL

Dodgeball games are the most requested and most beloved of games among all ages. Dodgeball games boost circulation and reduce stress, and encourage students to engage in higher levels of physically active play. They can be played outside on a field or tarmac, or inside in a gym. These games provide a safe space for students to learn different types of Dodgeball games, and to connect with each other.

DODGEBALL

Equipment: Many Dodgeballs.

Directions: To begin the game, divide the children into two teams, and have the two teams line up against opposite walls. Place all of the balls in the middle of the room. When the leader yells, “Go,” each team must race to the middle of the room and grab the Dodgeballs. The team members must throw the balls at the opposing team to get them “out.” Simultaneously, players must attempt to avoid being hit by the Dodgeballs, because if hit, the player is out. The last person/team standing is the winner. Instruct the children to aim only for below the waist. If players hit someone above the waist, they are out (to avoid injury).

FIREBALL

Equipment: Many Dodgeballs.

Directions: A few players stand along the side of the field with the Dodgeballs. Their job is to hit the running players with Dodgeballs, again from the waist/knees down. When the leader says “Go” the players must run across the field without being hit by a ball. If players get hit, they must join the people on the side of the field and throw balls at the players. The goal of the game is to be the last person standing.

BACKBOARD DODGEBALL

Equipment: Played in the gym or on a basketball court, Dodgeballs.

Directions: Form two teams, and follow the same rules as a regular game of Dodgeball. However, when the opposing team hits the backboard of the basketball net on the other team’s side, one of the opposing team’s players, who is out, can come back into the game. When someone scores in the net, the entire team can come back into the game. The goal of the game is to get the entire team out.

DOCTOR DODGEBALL

Equipment: Many Dodgeballs.

Directions: Form two teams and follow the same rules as a regular game of Dodgeball. Give each team time to choose a person secretly to be the “doctor.” When a player gets hit with the ball by the opposing team, they must sit on the ground. The secret “doctor” can touch their hit player, and that person can stand up and re-join the game. The point of the game is to find out who the opposing team doctor is, and get the doctor “out.” When the doctor is “out,” the players cannot rejoin the game.

PINBALL

Equipment: Pylons or pins, Dodgeballs.

Directions: This game is played like Dodgeball. To set up the game, divide the children into two teams and place each team on either side of the field/gym. Then scatter the pylons/pins on each team’s side. The object of the game is to knock down the opposing team’s pylons/pins. Once all the pylons/pins are down on one team’s side, the opposing team becomes the winner. *This game may be preferable to Dodgeball at some schools because it doesn’t involve the students hitting one another with balls.

EXPLORATORY AND FUN SCIENCE EXPERIMENTS

These experiments are very popular and can draw crowds of children, making it difficult for children to see and engage. To avoid this frustration, consider having a sign-up sheet, and/or holding several sessions of the same experiment.

INVISIBLE INK

Equipment: Two tablespoons of pure lemon juice and cotton swabs.

Directions: Pour the lemon juice into a small dish. Soak the end of a cotton swab in the lemon juice and use it to write a secret message or a picture on a piece of paper. To read or see your secret message, hold the paper near a warm light bulb. The heat will turn the invisible writing brown and you can see it.

DIET COKE AND MENTOS ERUPTION

Equipment: Diet Coke, Mentos.

Directions: Do this outside: This is a reaction between Mentos candy and Diet Coke. The experiment involves dropping several Mentos candies (usually 5–8) into a bottle of Diet Coke resulting in an eruption occurring because of rapidly expanding carbon dioxide bubbles on the surface of the Mentos. When Mentos are dropped into pop, the gellan gum and gum arabic of the Mentos dissolve. This disturbs the water connection, so that it takes less work to expand and form new bubbles. Each Mentos candy has thousands of tiny pores over its surface. These tiny pores function as nucleation sites, perfect places for carbon dioxide bubbles to form. As soon as the Mentos enter the Diet Coke, bubbles form all over their surface. They sink to the bottom, causing carbon dioxide to be released by the carbonated liquid with which they come into contact along the way. The sudden increase in pressure pushes all of the liquid up and out of the bottle. It looks like a mini explosion.

LAVA IN A CUP

Equipment: A clear plastic cup, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vegetable oil, 1 teaspoon salt, water, food colouring.

Directions: Fill the cup about $\frac{3}{4}$ full of water and add about 5 drops of food colouring (orange or red). Slowly pour the vegetable oil into the cup. Now sprinkle the salt on top of the oil. Watch blobs of lava move up and down in the cup (you can keep adding teaspoons of salt to keep the effect going so all kids can see it happening).

PAPER MACHE ERUPTING VOLCANO

Equipment: Cardboard, empty water or pop bottle, masking tape, paper mache paste, strips of newspaper, vinegar, dishwasher detergent (Dawn or Palmolive), baking soda, red food colouring.

Directions: Start by placing the bottle in the centre of a piece of square cardboard. Secure it in place using the masking tape. Use strips of cardboard to form your mountain shape by taping one end to the top of the bottle and the other end onto the square piece of cardboard so it descends out at an angle. Dip one newspaper strip at a time into the paper mache paste. (Mix one part water to two parts flour in a large bowl and stir well). Stick the strip over the volcano form and smooth it down with your fingers. Repeat until the form is completely covered. They should all be over-lapping and running in different directions. Let dry for a day. The kids can paint the next day, and the day after do the volcano.

For the Eruption: Fill volcano with warm water and 4-5 drops of red food colouring. Add 6 drops of detergent (helps trap the bubbles for better lava). Add 2 tablespoons of baking soda. Slowly pour vinegar in and watch it erupt!

APPENDICES

Date

Dear Parents,

This year we are introducing the concepts of The Recess Project, a new way to do recess that helps schools better support recess time for children. Recess is more than just a break from the school day. It is a time for children to connect with their peers, to socialize, to play, and burn off pent-up energy. Healthy recesses really matter to children's well being, to their motivation for school, and to their overall, long-term development.

The objective of the Recess Project is to ensure that recess is well supported and meaningful for all children. We want to ensure recess includes plenty of equipment and play materials, supportive supervision, and playful role models. Children can choose from a continuum of options and spaces.

The important thing is that children can choose what suits them and their needs in every recess - whether that is quiet creative play, unstructured fun, or an organized game. On days when weather prohibits us from going outside, we offer playspaces and indoor games and activities in the gym - craft clubs, play clubs, Dodgeball, floor hockey, and Zumba, for example - that encourage activity and inclusion. The concepts of The Recess Project is the outcome of a well researched university project and has enjoyed great success at other schools. There is considerable evidence that children are more active, playful, inclusive, compassionate, and cooperative. They are happier. And happier children are healthy. And healthy children do better in school and in life.

For more information, please see www.recessprojectcanada.com, or contact the school.

Warm regards,

LOOSE PARTS PLAY

Consider introducing, when you are ready, Loose Parts. Start with a few materials in a smaller, contained, well supervised area. Allow the students freedom to create and co-create. Jointly (with students) create rules ahead of time and ensure all students are aware of the rules. Search information on Loose Parts Play for more extensive guidelines and suggestions. Consider visiting other schools that have integrated Loose Parts into their play repertoire.

NATURAL MATERIALS

- Branches or bushes
- Large stones
- Bamboo
- Sticks
- Logs of all sizes
- Barrels
- Rocks of all sizes
- Leaves
- Pinecones

RANDOM MATERIALS

- Suitcases
- Shovels
- Clothespins
- Wooden spoons
- Mixing bowls
- Saucepans or cooking pots

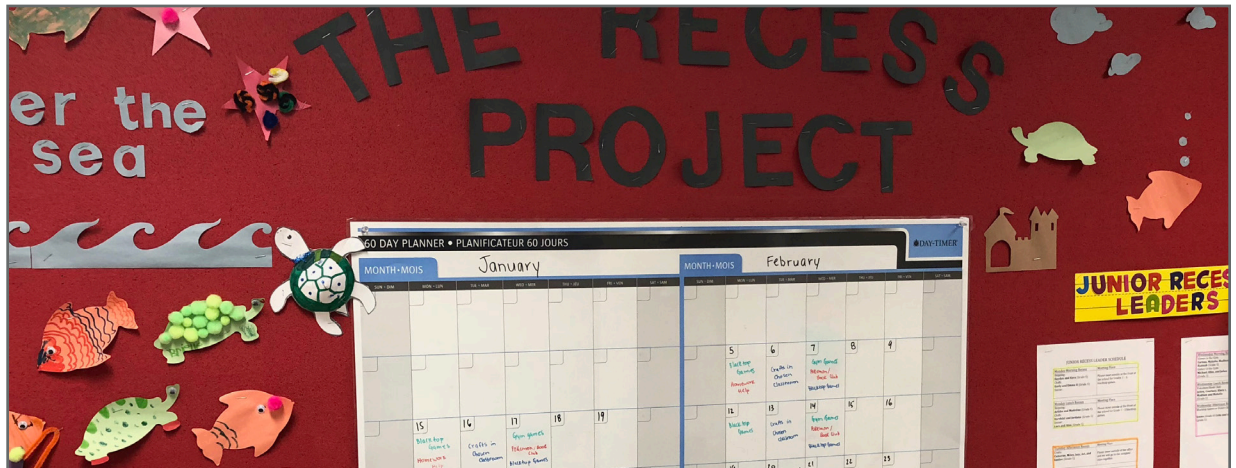
RANDOM MATERIALS

- Milk crates
- Plastic bottles and caps
- Cardboard tubes
- Vacuum hoses
- Pieces of string, rope
- Fabric
- Cable reels/spools
- Tupperware
- Rope
- Bricks, paving stones
- Buckets
- Hoses
- Boards
- Boxes
- Tires
- Fabrics



BULLETIN BOARD EXAMPLES

Use bulletin boards to represent The Recess Project visually. Keep the board up-to-date and well-decorated with the variety of games and activities. Post pictures of the Recess Coordinator and Junior Recess Leaders on your bulletin board.



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