

The Importance Of Play

(NAPSA)—For children, playing can amount to more than just fun and games. Child development experts say that playtime and recess can help teach children important social skills, teamwork and the value of physical fitness.

Despite its documented importance, however, as many as 40 percent of U.S. schools have either cut traditional elementary school recess from the school day or are considering doing so—a trend Dr. Rhonda Clements, president of the American Association For The Child's Right to Play, says is no laughing matter.

Clements says many of the schools that are cutting recess do not realize that "child-initiated and unstructured play has educational value."

Clements's organization, in cooperation with Nabisco Fun Fruits, sponsored a study to measure child and parental responses to the elimination of recess and to examine the difference between how children play today versus previous generations.

The study showed 94 percent of parents and 89 percent of children do not want recess banned and more than half of the parents asked said they believe recess provides children with much needed exercise and practical training.

Parents in favor of recess said it gives children time to play and socialize with other children, offers necessary physical activity and provides kids with a much-needed break from school work. When asked, over 90 percent of children said recess is where they develop necessary social skills, including how to treat people (24 percent), how to share (18 percent) and how to get along with others (10 percent).

When disagreements occur on the playground, 43 percent of children asked said they were likely to try to talk out the problem with the other student. Thirty-seven percent said they would most likely tell a teacher or supervisor.

When asked about their



Experts say school recess has a number of academic and social benefits.

childhood recess days, parents also recall discussing the problem with the other party involved (31 percent), or telling a teacher or supervisor (32 percent). However, parents reported being nearly twice as likely (30 percent versus 16 percent) as their children to stay away from the other child. Yet only one percent of today's children said the disagreement would lead to a fight, in comparison to seven percent of parents.

The survey further revealed that parents spent on average three and a half more hours each week engaged in unstructured play than their children and more than half of parents believe their childhood was more fun because it was less structured and scheduled (56 percent). In addition, 71 percent of parents are concerned that the technology available to children doesn't let them fully develop creative skills.

Favorite recess activities for parents were slightly different from their children's. Parents preferred jump rope (40 percent), kickball (32 percent) and tag (25 percent). Today's children said they prefer tag (36 percent), soccer (21 percent) and kickball (20 percent).

To help promote the importance of play, Nabisco Fun Fruits offers a booklet with highlights of the survey, information on the importance of recess and "official" game rules and diagrams for a number of popular recess games.

To request a free *Made to Play Book*, visit www.nabiscoworld.com.