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A Comparative Study of the Perceptions of Elementary School Administrators, Teachers, and  
Students Regarding Recess and Free Play in the Public School

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A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

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by

Amy Carol Bennett Banner

May 2005

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Keywords: Cognitive Maturity Theory, Free Play, Novelty Theory, Physical Education, Play  
Time, Practice Theory, Punishment, Recess, Reward, Surplus Energy Theory

## ABSTRACT

### A Comparative Study of the Perceptions of Elementary School Administrators, Teachers, and Students Regarding Recess and Free Play in the Public School

by

Amy Carol Bennett Banner

According to recent studies, the number of schools that have severely limited or eliminated recess and free-play opportunities is on the rise across the nation. School officials cite the increasing levels of state and federal pressure to perform on standardized tests as the primary reason for this shift away from the playground. The threat of lawsuits and safety concerns are also listed as factors in this change of policy.

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to examine the perceptions of directors of schools, supervisors, principals, assistant principals, teachers, and students regarding recess and free play in three East Tennessee school systems. Representative schools were chosen from each system and examined. In addition, results from standardized test scores as provided by the state of Tennessee were examined for the selected schools.

The findings of this study revealed that directors, supervisors, principals, teachers, and students were in favor of recess and stated that offering recess and free-play opportunities provided some benefit to students. Even so, two schools in the study had chosen to limit recess and free-play opportunities by varying degrees whereas the third school maintained a policy of recess breaks. In examining the test data, the two schools that had limited recess were found to have lower test scores than the school that had maintained the integrity of recess. Other factors could contribute

to the lower scores. The findings did reveal that limiting recess appeared to offer no significant gain in scores just as providing recess did not appear to cause any decrease in test scores. Stakeholders interviewed expressed the perception that the benefits of having recess outweighed any potential threat of time lost in the classroom. Recommendations for further research include replicating this study in other school settings on a larger scale to see if the same results are realized.

## DEDICATION

This study is dedicated first to my family who always told me that I could do anything that I set my mind to do. I would like to thank my parents who taught me by example that nothing worthwhile ever comes easily. I would like to thank the rest of my huge extended family for always supporting me in every endeavor of my life. I would especially like to thank my cousin Bea Owens who I watched go through this process and who gave me the encouragement that I needed to continue. I would also like to thank my husband Terry for his patience with the long nights of work and my frustration. I would like to thank him for always telling me that I could do this and being patient with me.

I would also like to dedicate this study to the memory of Dr. Russell West. His great ability to teach, mentor, befriend, and comfort meant a great deal to me in the short time that I was blessed to work with him. I know that he was an inspiration to us all and will forever change the world because of his influence on educators.

I would like to thank my church family at Union Baptist Church who kept me in their prayers. Most of all, I would like to thank God for all His great gifts and blessings and for the greatest gift of His Son. Without His love and guidance, we would all be nothing.

Finally, I dedicate this study to the little girl I interviewed who asked the question, “Will this talk change anything?” Indeed, I hope so.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to acknowledge the faculty and staff of East Tennessee State University's Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis. I was well prepared to begin this endeavor thanks to the preparation provided by all of you. Dr. Nancy Dishner, your gentle guidance and wonderful spirit kept me going when I wanted to just quit. You never let me doubt myself and I appreciate that. Dr. Louise MacKay, you always challenged me to think about things from a different perspective, which added much to my study. Dr. Elizabeth Ralston, I appreciate your down-to-earth look at things and the helpful suggestions you made. Dr. Eric Glover, even though we only worked together for a short time, your suggestions were valuable to me and you made me feel at ease.

I would also like to acknowledge the administrators and teachers who were open to participating in my study and for the truthful and open way they responded to my questions. Also, thanks to the students for participating in what may have been a new and unusual process for them. Thanks to the parents for granting permission for their children to participate in my interviews. I appreciate the time sacrificed by all participants in order to help us better understand recess and free play and its role in the development of the child.

# CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT .....	2
DEDICATION .....	4
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	5
LIST OF TABLES .....	10
LIST OF FIGURES.....	11
 Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	12
Statement of the Problem.....	14
Research Questions.....	15
Significance of the Study .....	15
Definitions of Terms.....	15
Limitations of the Study.....	17
Overview of the Study .....	18
2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE .....	19
The History of Recess and Play .....	19
The Value of Recess .....	20
Physical Benefits of Recess and Free Play.....	23
The Importance of Play in Academic Success .....	24
The Creative Benefits of Play .....	26
Play and Social Development .....	27
Knowledge and Abilities Gained Through Play .....	28

Chapter	Page
Brain-Based Learning and Play.....	31
The Changing Attitude Toward Recess and Free Play .....	33
The Direct Effect of Standards Implementation on Recess in Schools .....	38
Other Factors in the Limitation of Recess Time .....	43
Impending Threats to Recess and Free Play .....	47
Effects of Eliminating Recess on the Climate of School.....	48
Summary .....	48
<b>3. METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>50</b>
Overview.....	50
Research Design.....	50
Participants.....	52
Data Collection Procedures.....	54
Instrumentation .....	55
Data Analysis .....	56
<b>4. ANALYSIS OF DATA.....</b>	<b>58</b>
Overview.....	58
Introduction to Participants.....	58
Systems .....	58
Schools.....	61
Students.....	62
Teachers .....	62
Assistant Principals and Principals .....	63
Central Office Personnel.....	63



Chapter	Page
Participant Information .....	63
Qualitative Analysis of Perceptions .....	65
Discipline .....	68
Test Scores .....	73
Policies .....	77
Research .....	81
Physical Benefits .....	82
Social Benefits of Play .....	84
Feedback .....	85
Time on Task .....	87
Quantitative Analysis of Standardized Test Scores .....	88
Summary .....	91
<b>5. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>93</b>
Findings Related to Central Office Administrators .....	94
System A .....	94
System B .....	95
System C .....	95
Findings Related to Building Level Administrators .....	96
System A .....	96
System B .....	97
System C .....	97
Findings Related to Teachers .....	98
System A .....	98
System B .....	99

Chapter	Page
System C .....	100
Findings Related to Students .....	101
Conclusions for Qualitative Data.....	102
Findings Related to Standardized Test Scores.....	104
Conclusions for Quantitative Data.....	106
Overall Conclusions.....	106
Recommendations.....	107
Recommendations for Further Research.....	108
Recommendations for Practice .....	109
Personal Reflections.....	110
REFERENCES .....	111
APPENDICES .....	115
APPENDIX A: Childhood Obesity Reduction Act .....	115
APPENDIX B: Interview Guides.....	128
APPENDIX C: Letter to Parents.....	132
APPENDIX D: Child Assent Document .....	133
APPENDIX E: Informed Consent Document.....	134
APPENDIX F: External Auditor's Letter.....	137
VITA.....	138

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Piaget's Model of Cognitive Development .....	29
2. Table of Traditional and Alternative Criteria for Judging Research.....	51
3. Demographic Information for System A.....	59
4. Demographic Information for System B.....	60
5. Demographic Information for System C.....	60
6. Demographic Information Concerning Students .....	64
7. Demographic Information Concerning School and System Personnel.....	64
8. Results of Physical Education and Play Survey Conducted by System A.....	82
9. A Three-Year Average of the Academic Achievement Scores for Green Glover Elementary School .....	89
10. A Three-Year Average of the Academic Achievement Scores for Yellow Moon Elementary School .....	90
11. A Three-Year Average of the Academic Achievement Scores for Blue Diamond Elementary School .....	90
12. A Three-Year Average of Writing Scores for Grades Four and Five .....	91

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Tennessee Accountability Chart .....	37
2. The Carroll Model of Time on Task.....	40

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

If you were asked to picture a typical elementary school in the United States, what would you see? Would you see a building surrounded by things that remind you of children? Would you see slides and swing sets? Would there be jungle gyms and seesaws? Would there be a baseball or soccer field and a basketball court? Many people would see exactly those things. They are as familiar in the memories of many adults as the textbooks and pencil sharpeners. In years past, all you needed to do was pass a school and you would see children enjoying recess. However, in a few short years this picture may not be a typical one. Schools across the country are eliminating recess and free-play time. Soon, the picture of school may not include what up until now has seemed to be a necessary part of school life. In fact, in the Atlanta school system where recess breaks have been eliminated, new schools are being built without playgrounds ("Schools Becoming All Work and No Play," 2001).

Imagine if the following memo came across your desk or was posted on the bulletin board at your place of employment:

Memo to all employees: Beginning today, all morning and afternoon coffee breaks will be eliminated and the lunch break will be shortened to 10 minutes. This action has been taken to increase time-on-task and boost achievement, allowing us to better meet newly implemented productivity standards. The no-break policy also will avoid hot-coffee accidents and related lawsuits and save personnel time formerly devoted to coffee making and cleanup (Starr, 2001).

If the above memo changed the words coffee break to recess and hot-coffee accidents to playground accidents, then you would have the changes that are being made in many school districts across the country. So far, the resulting protests have been largely ignored (Starr).

Various theories support the idea that a recess break is a necessary part of the school day. The surplus energy theory suggests that surplus energy accumulates when one is engaged in

sedentary activities and that an opportunity for physical activity is needed to blow off steam (Pellegrini, 1995). The novelty theory suggests that people function better when they have a change of pace. When persons are engaged in an activity long enough to become habituated, they become bored and seek novelty (Yawkey & Pellegrini, 1984). Research on spacing the presentation of information indicates that children and adults remember more when the material presented is distributed over time (Toppino, Kasserman, & Mracek, 1991). Recess could be considered as the spacing between various learning tasks (Jarrett et al., 1998).

Many benefits are highlighted in the literature surrounding recess and free play. Play is reported to have physical, cognitive, and social benefits. According to Klugman and Smilansky (1990), play is children's primary means of engaging in the world and precisely because play is not in its initial stages bounded by socially defined rules, it provides children with an open-ended situation through which they can explore the real world or the world they imagine. Play offers children the opportunity to make sense out of the world. Understanding is created by doing--by doing with others and by being completely involved in that doing (Chaille & Silvern, 1996). During play, children may expand their expressive language proficiency; develop number sense as they build with blocks and other constructive materials; develop creativity through art activities and problem solving; and develop important social skills such as taking turns and cooperating (Hurwitz, 2002).

The creative and imaginative aspects of play also allow children to relax and get away from their normal environment. As reported in Isenberg and Quisenberry (2002), the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) recognizes the need for children of all ages to play and affirms the essential role of play in children's lives. The ACEI asserts that as today's children continue to experience pressure to succeed in all areas, the necessity for play becomes even more critical (Isenberg & Quisenberry).

This study also addressed the reasons that schools and school districts are greatly reducing recess and free-play opportunities or eliminating them altogether. Most of the research

revolves around a few themes. First, many school administrators react to pressure to perform on standardized tests by trying to increase time on task. In order to do this, something has to be eliminated from the regular school day. In light of this push to perform, recess seems to be considered a waste of precious time in many schools and school districts.

Many administrators also cite safety factors as reasons for keeping children from having a recess break. They refer to everything from a fear of lawsuits if children are injured to strangers lurking around the school campus as reasons that outdoor recess has been reduced or eliminated (Johnson, 1998).

This study focused on a comparison of various schools' policies regarding recess and free play. I focused on schools that have eliminated or seriously limited recess and free-play opportunities and a school that maintained a policy allowing recess and free play. In other areas, these schools were quite similar. They were located within school systems in the upper East Tennessee area and were similar in size and socioeconomic status. In this study, the results from standardized achievement test scores were examined and compared as well as the perceptions of the participants in the schools regarding recess and free play.

### *Statement of the Problem*

With many school districts facing the question of increased time on task and performance on standardized achievement tests, recess breaks and free-play opportunities are being limited or eliminated from the school day in schools across the country. In addition, the ability and opportunity that children previously had to play freely at home has begun to fall away in response to increasing safety concerns from parents and neighborhoods (Johnson, 1998). The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to obtain quantitative results from a sample of schools and then follow up with interviews with stakeholders in these schools to explore the results in more depth. In the first phase, quantitative research questions addressed the relationship of the elimination of recess breaks and/or free play and standardized test scores among elementary

school students in Tennessee. In the second phase, qualitative interviews were used to further explore perceptions about recess among educators and students in the participating schools.

### *Research Questions*

The following research questions were addressed in this study. The first three questions encompassed the qualitative portion of the study while the final question addressed the quantitative aspect.

1. What are the perceptions of directors of schools, principals, assistant principals, and teachers regarding recess and free play?
2. What was the rationale of the directors of schools, principals, teachers, and school counselors in deciding to limit or keep recess or free play?
3. What are the perceptions of students regarding recess or free play?
4. Has there been a difference in test scores in individual schools or school systems in which recess breaks or free-play opportunities have been severely reduced?

### *Significance of the Study*

Although recess still exists in some form in most primary schools, its role in the school curriculum is currently being questioned. Thus, research in this area, besides being very interesting, also has real policy implications (Pellegrini, 1995). Some schools are eliminating recess and free play; further study of this trend could either reinforce the current policy or encourage schools and school systems to reconsider the restriction of recess and free play.

### *Definitions of Terms*

1. *Cognitive maturity hypothesis*--This theory suggests that both children and adults learn more by engaging in tasks spaced over time rather than those that are concentrated (Evans & Pelligrini, 1997).



2. *Free play*--Free play is defined as play characterized by pleasurable activity with no immediate purpose (Smith, 1984). Characteristics of free play necessitate that the play be unstructured and open.
3. *Novelty theory*--This theory proposes that as their classroom work becomes less interesting, children become less attentive and need playtime to re-introduce novelty (Evans & Pellegrini). According to this theory, recess breaks allow children the opportunity to engage in activities different from academic lessons. Once the children return to class, students perceive schoolwork as new and novel again (Sindelar, 2002).
4. *Physical education classes*--Structured classes that require students to participate in physical activity. Generally, this physical activity is structured and guided by school curriculum.
5. *Playtime*--Playtime is defined by Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2005) as a time set aside for play or diversion. In this study, playtime is a word used interchangeably with recess.
6. *Practice theory*--This theory states that children in play through social interaction with peers are learning skills that are then transferred to the classroom (Jambor, 1994).
7. *Punishment*--Merriam Webster Online Dictionary defined punishment as suffering, pain, or loss that serves as retribution.
8. *Recess*--Pellegrini and Davis (1993) defined school recess or recess break as a break period, typically outdoors, for children. In addition, the authors defined recess as a break in the activity in which one is engaged. It is a period of time away from the task at hand: an interlude, a change of pace. Jarrett et al. (1998) pointed out that the term recess was also used in reference to a formal break built into the normal workday.

9. *Reward*—Reward, as used in this study, is most closely paralleled to the definition provided by Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary as a stimulus administered to an organism following a correct or desired response that increases the probability of occurrence of the response.
10. *Surplus Energy Theory*--This theory suggests that when children are sedentary for long periods of time, they build up surplus energy. Fidgeting, restlessness, waning concentration, and general off-task behaviors are indications that children need a break (Sindelar). According to this theory, only after this pent-up energy is released can children return to the classroom refreshed and ready for more work (Evans & Pellegrini).

For the purpose of this study, the terms recess and free play were used interchangeably. In addition, physical education classes were not considered as recess or free play because of the structured nature of the course.

#### *Limitations of the Study*

This study was limited to similar schools in the East Tennessee area. I was also bound by the limitation that some of the teaching faculty have changed since recess and free-play opportunities were limited or eliminated in one of the participating schools in the study and, therefore, they could not give a thorough opinion regarding the role of recess because they might not have used daily recess in their careers as educators. In addition, I was bound by the limitation that some of the participants in the study have never taught in a school that had full recess and free-play opportunities and were limited in their scope of reference.

### *Overview of the Study*

Chapter 1 served not only as an introduction to the study, but also contained the statement of the problem, research questions, the significance of the study, definitions of terms, the limitations of the study and an overview. Chapter 2 includes a review of the related literature regarding the topics of recess and free play. The methodology for the study is contained in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 contains an analysis of the data and a summary of the study. Chapter 5 presents the findings and recommendations for further study and practice.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### *The History of Recess and Play*

Play is truly a universal phenomenon; it exists in some form in every society and dates back to prehistoric times (Dasen, 1984). Recess has long been a schoolyard staple. In fact, it was deemed so important that during the Revolutionary War, the right to play superseded even the right to bear arms. When training for soldiers interfered with the games of schoolchildren on Boston Common, the students protested to the governor--who promptly ordered the soldiers to back off (Mulrine, 2000). Recess was considered vital for emotional and intellectual growth. Freud considered play to be the perfect time to act out dreams and fears (as cited in Mulrine). By the 1950s, three short recesses a day were the norm (Mulrine). Brownlee (1997) noted that play is vital to our development because it lays the groundwork for creative thinking in adulthood. In early animal development, play serves as a practice for adulthood (Brownlee).

The recent push to eliminate recess from the school day is not the first time that recess has been threatened. The Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony banned the recess that had formerly been enjoyed by children because playfulness was not next to godliness (Schudel, 2001). For most of our nation's history, however, recess was a simple and valuable fact of every child's life. Recess was a time when children played all sorts of games unguided and unfettered by adults. However, modern social puritans once again see recess as a frivolous luxury and the trend has caught on with alarming speed (Schudel).

### *The Value of Recess*

Recess is not an alien word in an adult's vocabulary or an abnormal response to physical and mental needs. Adults in almost all professions get breaks during their workdays. A break helps one's sanity, nerves, the need to move, converse, and to change pace. It helps one to get through the workday, to reduce fatigue and burnout, to enhance on-task behavior, enthusiasm, and energy and to develop a more positive outlook on work (Jambor, 1994). Even with the proven benefits of a break for adults, many of the same adults who enjoy the benefits of breaks tend to devalue the same benefits for children. Children in society are not often thought of as strategically important because they have little power in decision-making (Balke, 1997).

If adults have a need to take a break from a prolonged confinement, then it is not difficult to understand children having, at the very least, similar needs. Whereas adults can better inhibit their needs to move and socialize during work hours, it is difficult for children to do so (Jambor, 1994). Psychologists have deemed the surplus energy theory as a means for justifying the need for children to release excess energy or “blow off steam” after a long time in the classroom (Pellegrini & Davis, 1993). Adults and children can benefit from opportunities for diversion from the normal day. This is the basis for the novelty theory as explained by Pellegrini and Davis:

Children need recess because they are temporarily bored with their immediate classroom environment. When they go outdoors for recess, they seek novelty by interacting with different peers in different situations. But when the novelty of the recess environment begins to wane, they again need to change. At this point, the classroom becomes a novelty and children actually pay closer attention. (p. 40)

Following this theory, Pellegrini and Davis found that nonsocial sedentary behavior decreased as a function of recess time but social sedentary behavior increased across time. The child is a natural mover, doer, and shaker. It is natural that a child who must tolerate repeated periods of “seat work” would feel mental fatigue and restlessness (Jambor, 1994, p. 17). The typical school day pushes children through stretches of time that would test the patience of many adults and, in fact, may be contrary to labor laws or union contracts in many professions. The need for school

children to be physically active, to talk with their peers, and to play freely has been recognized in the scheduling of recess periods in many countries (Jarrett et al., 1998). Jarrett, a professor of child development at Georgia State University, conducted a study along with his colleagues on how recess affected academic performance. This study was conducted in a school that had a policy of providing uninterrupted instructional time; this meant that schoolchildren did not normally have recess or free-play opportunities. Permission was given by the school's administrators to allow two classes to have 15 to 20 minute recess periods once a week so that children's behavior on days with and without recess could be compared (Jarrett et al.). Jarrett et al. found that children who did not have recess were much more fidgety in the classroom. In their study, Jarrett et al. found that in schools without recess, the amount of instructional time lost to fidgeting added up to the amount of time it took to have recess in the first place. In a similar study, Pellegrini and Davis (1993) found that children exhibited more fidgetiness and less concentration when their normal recess period was delayed.

Recess is not the only casualty of a new and tightly organized world for children. In most neighborhoods, one would not find the large number of children playing freely that could be found as few as 10 years ago. Children's time has now been taken up by piano and dance lessons or organized sports that may begin as early as the age of three (Johnson, 1998). A 1998 University of Michigan study on children's time revealed that 75% of the average American child's weekday is programmed by adults as compared to 60% 20 years prior (McDonald 2000). This, too, adds to the need for children to have some unstructured time in their day. In addition, many children come home to an empty house and for safety reasons must stay inside until one of their parents return from work. Oftentimes, the child is left with only the television or video games for enjoyment. Active play is not a part of this picture. In addition, over the last several years, a growing urbanization has slowly squeezed out the natural play spaces used by children (Jambor, 1994).

It is a widely held view that unstructured physical play is a developmentally appropriate outlet for reducing stress in children's lives and research shows that physical activity improves children's attentiveness and decreases restlessness. The saying "Play is the work of childhood" reflects the importance free play holds in the healthy development of the child (Dancy, 2000, p. 8). The National Association for the Education of Young Children (1997) gave the following reasons why school administrators should carefully consider the benefits of outdoor and free play before eliminating recess from their curriculum:

1. Play is an active form of learning that unites the mind, body, and spirit. Until at least the age of nine, children's learning occurs best when the whole self is involved.
2. Play reduces the tension that often comes with having to achieve or needing to learn. In play, adults do not interfere and children relax.
3. Children express and work out emotional aspects of everyday experience through unstructured play.
4. Children who are permitted to play freely with peers develop skills for seeing things through another person's point of view--cooperating, helping, sharing, and solving problems.
5. The development of children's perceptual abilities may suffer when so much of their experience is through television, computers, books, worksheets, and media that require only two senses. The senses of smell, touch, taste, and the sense of motion through space are powerful modes of learning.
6. Children who are less restricted in their access to the outdoors gain competence in moving through the larger world. Developmentally, they should gain the ability to navigate their immediate environments (in safety) and lay the foundation for the courage that will enable them eventually to lead their own lives. (n. p.)

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) (2004) released its physical activity guidelines for pre-adolescent children in May 1998 and again in the second edition released in 2004 of *Physical Activity for Children: A Statement of Guidelines for Children Ages 5-12*. According to NASPE guidelines:

1. Children need at least 60 minutes of developmentally appropriate physical activity.
2. Children should experience a variety of activities of various levels of intensity. These activities should be intermittent, alternating moderate to vigorous activity with brief periods of rest and recovery.

3. Extended periods of inactivity are not developmentally appropriate for children.

(n. p.)

These guidelines are based on the concept that children have unique characteristics that differ from those of adults including shorter attention spans and a need for a wide variety of experiences for learning (National Association for Sport and Physical Education).

Recess and leisure time have been deemed so important in the past that it was mentioned specifically in the United Nation's *Declaration of the Rights of the Child* (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1959). Principle 7 paragraph 3 stated, "The child shall have full opportunity for play and recreation, which should be directed to the same purposes as education; society and the public authorities shall endeavor to promote the enjoyment of this right" (n. p.). Article 31 of the United Nation's Convention on Children's Rights also specified, "Parties recognize the right of the child 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" (UNICEF, 1990, n. p.). Taking away recess whether as a disciplinary measure or abolishing it in the name of work infringes on that right (National Association of Early Childhood Specialists, 2001).

For children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), recess is not an extra activity; it is an essential one. Physical activity is healthy and relaxing and provides focus and clarity of mind. Sitting quietly in a seat, staying focused on work, and remembering to raise a hand before speaking takes effort--more effort than for students without ADHD. If union workers were told that they had to work from 8 a.m. until 2 p.m. without a break, they would likely go on strike (Silver, 2004)

#### *Physical Benefits of Recess and Free Play*

As a society that is concerned about the health risks of obesity, it is also important to note that children will likely become inactive as adults if they are not provided with opportunities to



be active when they are young. The “no-recess” policies being implemented in various parts of the country seem to be contrary to the physical as well as the learning needs of elementary school children (Ramsburg, 1998). According to *The Journal of Physical Education, Recreation, & Dance* (“Schools Becoming All Work and No Play,” 2001), the elimination of recess and other play activity may reinforce an overall tendency toward sedentary habits that once formed prove a strong obstacle to lifelong physical activity and may worsen the childhood obesity epidemic. Pete Egoscue, (as cited in Brody, 1998) author of *Pain Free*, a book on health and fitness complained in the *Knight Ridder* that children were living a wildly premature adult lifestyle. He asserted, “If they don’t get outside more to develop their muscles and joints, they will turn into grown-ups plagued by chronic pain, obesity, and heart problems” (n. p.). Brody has also written that brain stem development is linked to physical movement in the first 10 years of life. He pointed out, “Children whose movements are limited because they are spending their time in front of computers or televisions, or being chauffeured to the next appointment, are at risk of never achieving their potential” (n. p.).

### *The Importance of Play in Academic Success*

Pellegrini and Davis’ (1993) research suggested that there is a significant relationship between classroom behavior and recess. For example, children engaged in recess may be practicing cognitive skills they already possess and are using when doing seatwork. Their research also offered a more liberal interpretation of practice theory: Children on the playground through social interaction with peers are learning skills that are transferred to the classroom. A major way that children take ownership of new information is by playing with it. Learning requires an interactive balance of gaining the facts and skills required and making information one’s own (Isenberg & Quisenberry, 2002). Children must function in both the social and the cognitive domains if they are to successfully adapt to school and societal norms. These domains are related. Social interaction facilitates cognition; recess offers the opportunity for this growth

(Jambor, 1994). Research has indicated that there might be a correlation between engaging in unstructured play activities with peers and higher scores on intelligence tests (Sindelar, 2002). When play is valued as the work and the natural inclination of children, it provides opportunities for them to practice, interpret, and internalize language and other behaviors (Brown & Marchant, 2002).

Children develop a deeper understanding of their world through play. Play is a significant contributor to the child's cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development (Hurwitz, 2002). Children arrive at understanding by creating hypotheses about items and events that they find interesting. They test hypotheses as they actively interact with the materials and events in their environment (Chaille & Silvern, 1996). When young children are using their imagination in play, their brains are working in a much healthier way than when they are being made to sit and complete pages from workbooks (Dancy, 2000).

For children, play is at the very heart of their learning and development. According to Hurwitz (2002), five qualities distinguish play for young children from other activities:

1. It is a process. The outcome is not as important as the process itself.
  2. Play is child-initiated. The activity is done for no other reason than the child wants to do it.
  3. In play, everything and anything can happen. There is no question that the functions of objects are transformed during play.
  4. Play becomes the arena for testing rules, both logical and illogical. Rules freely appear and disappear in children's play; they may be simple or complex, and they are created from children's previous knowledge.
  5. Play is very much an activity of the mind. Children may become deeply engrossed in their play and find it difficult to stop when asked. Engagement in play involves the mind in an active process as a child investigates, explores, and inquires during play.
- (p. 101)

Findings from the recent explosion of research on the brain and learning also delineate the importance of play (Hurwitz, 2002). From this research, it has been learned that active brains make permanent neurological connections critical to learning; inactive brains do not make the necessary permanent neurological connections. Research on the brain demonstrates that play is

essential for this development. Play is a vehicle for increasing neural structures and a means by which all children practice skills they will need in later life (Isenberg & Quisenberry, 2002).

Isenberg and Quisenberry explained this concept:

Play-based learning activities provide multiple ways for children to learn a variety of different skills and concepts. They allow children the opportunities to learn relevant skills and feel competent about their ability to learn. When children are concerned about their competence or adequacy, they cannot make sense of their learning because emotions drive attention, create meaning, and forge their own memory pathways (Goleman, 1995 as cited in Isenberg and Quisenberry). Children are more likely to feel successful when they can experience active, meaningful learning; use complex, challenging, and varied materials; and learn in a safe, nonthreatening environment. Moreover, play and play contexts support intrinsic motivation that is driven by positive emotions that generally improve motivation and facilitate learning and performance by focusing a learner's attention on the task (p. 35)

Another body of research (Jarrett et al., 1998) that indicated the value of play in the cognitive development of children addressed the spacing and repetition of items to be learned. The principle of massed versus distributed practice asserts that memory recall is improved when learning is spaced rather than massed. Toppino et al. (1991) found that children and adults remember more when the material presented is distributed over time. Recess could be seen as the spacing between various learning tasks for children.

### *The Creative Benefits of Play*

Play is also essential in the creative and expressive areas of childhood development. As a mode of development, play contributes to the child's creativity and to cognitive, social, and emotional growth (Dasen, 1984). The imaginary situation a child often creates in play is a necessary transition or zone of proximal development that assists the child in understanding the link between symbols and the objects and actions they represent (Cole, John-Steiner, Scribner, & Souberman, 1978). As pointed out by Balke (1997), children clearly express their feelings and thoughts about life when given free rein and they often take the material for play from the world in which they live. Play allows children to create their own understanding without adults' intervention or guidance. Imaginative free play is especially important because it nurtures the

kind of creativity that will later be transformed into creative thinking (Dancy, 2000). The beauty of play is that children can make their own decisions without worry about what will happen. Play gives them the chance to use their creative energy and no matter what the outcome, children will learn something beneficial from the experience (McDonald, 2000).

### *Play and Social Development*

As social organisms, humans have a basic need to belong and feel part of a group along with the need to learn how to live and work in groups with different compositions and for different purposes. Children of all ages need to be socialized as contributing members of their respective cultures (Isenberg & Quisenberry 2002). Much of the social learning that takes place in childhood involves a balance between the individual's needs to develop the qualities of independence and initiative and the demands of society for compliance with certain prescribed norms of behavior (Yawkey & Pellegrini, 1984). Recess may be one of the only times during the school day when children can interact without adult intervention in their interactions and choice of activities; this makes school recess vital to social development (Jambor, 1994). Playing with others gives children the opportunity to match their behavior with others' and to take into account viewpoints that differ from their own (Isenberg & Quisenberry). It is a chance to practice social skills such as how to gracefully join a kickball game, comfort a sad friend, or tell a hurtful schoolmate to knock it off (Mulrine, 2000). As explained by Isenberg and Quisenberry:

Play provides the rich experience children need to learn social skills, become sensitive to others' needs and values, handle exclusion and dominance, manage their emotions, learn self-control, and share power, space, and ideas with others. At all levels of development, play enables children to feel comfortable and in control of their feelings by: (a) allowing the expression of unacceptable feelings in acceptable ways and (b) providing the opportunity to work through conflicting feelings. (p. 34)

Play is a mirror of society; it reflects its basic values and transmits these to the child.

Play is one of the major educational influences helping the child to acquire the technical knowledge, the roles, and the values that will be required in adult life (Dasen, 1984).

As children interact freely, they use language and nonverbal communications; they make decisions and solve problems and they deal with the emotional trials and tribulations of their interactions (Jambor, 1994). Career expert Barbara Moses was reported in *The Futurist* ("Career Advice for Kids," 1999) as noting that children learn about how the world operates--its rules, roles, and expectations--and about their emotions and sense of self through free play. The current obsession with accelerating children's learning robs them of these vital opportunities. According to Jambor, the playground during recess is one of the few places where today's children can actively confront, interpret, and learn from meaningful social experiences that can be quite educational. Such activities are powerful predictors of the ability to cooperate and view events from the perspective of others. This valuable educational experience is lost for those who do not have recess opportunities (Jambor).

When children are accustomed to playing together, they figure out a way to handle differences. Unfortunately, today's children are increasingly looking for an adult to settle their disputes or to make the rules for them. Their sense of independence is being lost in the heavily structured world of childhood (Johnson, 1998).

Recess also allows children to make choices about with whom to interact and who to avoid. Teachers can learn much about their students by watching them at play. It is important for teachers to know which students are being isolated and teased as well as who may be doing the bullying or teasing (Svensen, 2001).

### *Knowledge and Abilities Gained Through Play*

It is no coincidence that humans are both the most playful and the most intelligent of animals (Smith, 1984). Smith presented information as shown in Table 1 outlining Piaget's model of cognitive development:

Table 1

*Piaget's Model of Cognitive Development*

	Domains of Cognition			
	<i>Types of Logic</i>	<i>Physical</i>	<i>Interpersonal</i>	<i>Intrapersonal</i>
Sensorimotor period (Birth to 2 yrs)	Sensorimotor trial and error; experimentation; discovery of new means; circular reactions	Object permanence; externalize time, space, and causality	Deferred imitation of novel schemes; sensorimotor contingency games	First evoked images
Preoperations period Symbolic sub period (2-4 yrs) Intuitive sub period (4-7 years)	Nonreversible interiorized action schemes, i.e. precepts with transductive reasoning	Object identity; topological space; graphic collections	Make-believe games; unilateral respect for authority	Static evoked images
Concrete Operations period (7-12 yrs)	Reversible interiorized action schemes, i.e. true concepts with deductive reasoning about concrete phenomena	Object quantity; true classification with inclusion	Games with rules; concept of winning and losing	Dynamic images
Formal operations period (12 yr on)	Abstract reasoning, systematic hypotheses formation and testing, inference concerning hidden variables	True measurement	Universal rules based on abstract concepts of justice	Anticipatory imagery of events never witnessed.

The relationship between intelligence and play is both systematic and structural. The games of infants are a manifestation of sensor motor intelligence; the make-believe games of young children are a manifestation of preoperational intelligence; the rule bound games of older children are a manifestation of operational intelligence (Smith, 1984).

Chaille and Silvern (1996) outlined the following areas of knowledge that were enhanced by play and gave assorted examples of each area:

1. Play and physical knowledge. Numerous interesting problems arise in the context of play that lead to experimentation, creative problem solving, and cooperation; all these behaviors contribute to the construction of understanding. Second graders constructing marble rollways will encounter numerous situational tasks, or problem-solving situations, that will lead to active experimentation and, ultimately, the construction of understanding. The idea that the steeper the ramp, the faster the marble will roll, becomes concrete as children try to get the marble to roll up a hill at the other end.
2. Play and logico-mathematical knowledge. Play also helps children construct understanding of relationships, which is the heart of logico-mathematical knowledge. Think of children constructing a tower from unit blocks. If they run out of big blocks, they must eventually figure out that two or the smaller blocks together will match one of the larger ones. Or, think of older children trying to figure out how many weights to put on top of a pendulum to make it swing far enough to knock down a target. After each weight is placed on the pendulum bob, they swing it to see how it moves. They then add one weight at a time until the target is reached. Here, children are demonstrating their interest and cooperation in play.
3. Play and language. Some of the most interesting developments in relation to both oral and written language happen in the context of play. In the arena of oral language, children have an opportunity to explore language without the fear of correction or constraint.
4. Play and curricular integration. Segmenting the curriculum according to what children are learning, and monitoring that learning in the classroom, leads us to analyze play and understanding in terms of separable content areas: language, mathematics, and science. One of the most salient characteristics of the play environment, however, is that it facilitates the cross-fertilization of ideas and connections across content areas. Literacy and spatial relations come together in play when a child builds a set of gears and labels each part to keep track of where they belong. Mathematics and oral communication occur simultaneously as children play an exciting card game and debate the ways to keep score.
5. Play and the sociomoral environment. The elements of interest, experimentation, and cooperation must be present in order for active learning or understanding, to occur through play. An appropriate sociomoral environment is essential if these elements

are to come together. The classroom's culture needs to be one in which children feel ownership and responsibility for their own actions. They must feel a sense of community and safety in having their own ideas and trying them out, and they must feel good and caring about each other and share ideas in collaborative activity. Without such a classroom culture, the children will not manifest experimentation, engagement, and interest. (pp. 274-278)

Although Chaille and Silvern (1996) are advocating practices for classroom instruction that incorporate play, many of the activities they describe can be extended to the playground. As mentioned above, movement and practice are vital to classroom learning. However, natural play that occurs outside the classroom and away from the guidelines provided by adults gives children an opportunity to apply what they have learned to situations that are important to them. This opportunity for application is critical for transferring knowledge gained in the classroom into the world of the child.

### *Brain-Based Learning and Play*

In recent years, a large body of research has focused on the way the brain learns. Caine and Caine (1994) outlined the 12 basic principles of brain-based learning in their book, *Making Connections and the Human Brain*:

1. The brain is a parallel processor. No one method or technique can adequately encompass the variations of the human brain.
2. Learning engages the entire physiology. Everything that affects our physiological functioning affects our capacity to learn. Stress management, nutrition, exercise, and relaxation, as well as other facets of health management, must be fully incorporated into the learning process.
3. The search for meaning is innate. The learning environment needs to provide stability and familiarity. At the same time, provision must be made to satisfy our curiosity and hunger for novelty, discovery, and challenge.
4. The search for meaning occurs through patterning. Learners are patterning or perceiving and creating meanings, all the time in one way or another. Time on task does not ensure appropriate patterning because the student may actually be engaged in busy work while the mind is somewhere else.
5. Emotions are critical to patterning. Teachers need to understand that students' feelings and attitudes will be involved and will determine future learning.



6. The brain processes parts and wholes simultaneously. People have enormous difficulty in learning when either parts or wholes are overlooked.
7. Learning involves both focused attention and peripheral perception. The teacher can and should organize materials that will be outside the focus of the learner's attention.
8. Learning always involves conscious and unconscious process. Active processing allows students to review how and what they learned so that they begin to take charge of learning and the development of personal meanings.
9. We have at least two different types of memory: A spatial memory system and a set of systems for rote learning. Educators are adept at the type of teaching that focuses on memorization. By ignoring the personal world of the learner, educators actually inhibit the effective functioning of the brain.
10. We understand and remember best when facts and skills are embedded in natural, spatial memory: The embedding process is complex because it depends on all the other principles discussed here. Spatial memory is best invoked through experiential learning. Teachers need to use a great deal of real life activity. Success depends on the use of all the senses.
11. Learning is enhanced by challenge and inhibited by threat: Teachers and administrators need to create a state of relaxed alertness in students.
12. Each brain is unique: Teaching should be multifaceted to allow all students to express visual, tactile, emotional, and auditory preferences. (pp. 88-95)

One key element of this research is a new focus on movement and the brain. The cerebellum is the area of the brain that is most commonly linked to movement. A few decades ago, it was discovered that the cerebellum takes up one tenth of the brain by volume, but it contains over one half of its neurons (Jensen, 1998). The cerebellum has some 40 million nerve fibers, 40 times more than even the highly complex optical tract. Those fibers not only transport information from the cortex to the cerebellum, but they feed it back to the cortex (Jensen). This subsection of the brain may be its sleeping giant. Studies have shown that novel movements like dance steps, throwing a ball, or quickly changing directions shift focus in the brain because it has no memories to rely on for execution (Jensen, 1998). Suddenly, the prefrontal cortex and the rear two thirds of the frontal lobes are engaged, chiefly, the dorso-lateral frontal lobes. This is an area of the brain often used for problem solving, planning, and sequencing new things to learn

and do. These findings strongly implicate the value of physical education, movement, and games in boosting cognition (Jensen).

Neuroscientists at the University of California at Irvine discovered that exercise triggers the release of BDNF: a brain-derived neurotrophic factor (Jensen, 1998). This natural substance enhances cognition by boosting the ability of neurons to communicate with one another (Jensen).

David Clarke (as cited in Jensen, 1998) at Ohio State University's College of Medicine has confirmed the positive results of a particular type of spinning activity. With merry-go-rounds and swings disappearing from parks and playgrounds as fast as liability costs go up, there is a new worry: more learning disabilities. Clarke's (as cited in Jensen) studies suggested that certain spinning activities led to alertness, attention, and relaxation in the classroom.

### *The Changing Attitude Toward Recess and Free Play*

Embedded in the larger context of the "effective education" debate, teachers and parents have been questioning the role of recess in the school day. Pellegrini (1995) identified three major arguments that school systems have used to justify the abolition of recess:

1. There is not time for recess because more instructional time is needed to raise test scores;
2. recess disrupts the work patterns of the children, causing high levels of excitement and subsequent inattentiveness; and
3. recess encourages aggressions and antisocial behavior. (p. 52)

Primarily, the push to eliminate recess stems from the apparent increased pressure to meet the educational standards and benchmarks set forth by the federal government. This push to meet adequate yearly progress seems to most to be a new phenomenon in education.

Adequate yearly progress is a measure of a school's or school system's ability to meet required federal benchmarks with specific performance standards from year to year (Tennessee State Department of Education, 2005). However, the need to meet educational standards and reach grade level has been a factor for many years. This is exemplified by the many educational

reforms that our nation has implemented. Before discussing standards in education, one must first define the meaning of standards. The dictionary definition of a standard suggests its dual meaning. In the first sense, a standard is something established by authority, custom, or general consent as a model or example; it is a criterion by which judgments or decisions may be made (Ravitch, 1995). At the same time, a standard is also something set up and established by authority as a rule for the measure of quantity, weight, extent, value, or quality. Thus, the word standard refers simultaneously to both the model or example and the gauge or yardstick for determining how well one's performance approximates the model or example. A standard is both a goal and a measure of progress toward that goal (Ravitch).

The use of the word "standards" in educational circles can further be divided into three categories each with a distinctive meaning. According to Ravitch (1995), these are:

1. Content standards: Content standards (or curriculum standards) describe what teachers are supposed to teach and students are supposed to learn. They provide clear, specific descriptions of the skills and knowledge that should be taught to students.
2. Performance standards: Performance standards define degrees of mastery or levels of attainment. Performance standards describe what kind of performance represents inadequate, acceptable, or outstanding accomplishment.
3. Opportunity-to-learn, or school delivery standards: Opportunity-to-learn standards define the availability of programs, staff, and other resources that schools, districts, and states provide so that students are able to meet challenging content and performance standards. (p. 12)

In 1965, President Johnson introduced the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) legislation to address the needs of students who come to schools from poverty. In the early 1980s, President Ronald Reagan advocated sharply cutting back on any national assistance for education because he was a strong proponent of local control of government (Jennings, 1998). By contrast, approximately 20 years later, President George H. W. Bush called for a "national crusade" to transform the country's educational system (Jennings). The movement for national standards and assessments began after an agreement in 1989 between President Bush and the nation's governors to set national education goals (Ravitch, 1995). Two of the goals

focused on increasing academic achievement. The third goal specified that by the year 2000, American students would leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency in challenging subjects such as English, math, science, history, and geography and every school in America would ensure that all students learned to use their minds well so they would be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy (Ravitch). The fourth goal specified that by the year 2000, U.S. students would be first in the world in science and math achievement. The other goals focused on helping preschool children with a promise that all children in America will start school ready to learn, raising the high school graduation rate to 90%, increasing adult literacy, and pledging that all schools would offer a disciplined environment, free of drugs and violence (Ravitch). Bush's administration foresaw this new federal role as limited but also as one that could help by setting standards, highlighting examples, contributing some funds, and providing some flexibility in exchange for accountability (Jennings).

President Clinton continued this trend with his education reform. In 1993, Clinton presented his *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* to the House and Senate. This act called for the development of national standards for education, tests to measure the achievement of those standards by students, and for aid to states and local school districts to raise their standards (Jennings, 1998). In 1994, President Clinton signed into law the *Improving America's Schools Act* of 1994. This statute amended the ESEA and included the reauthorization of Chapter I as the new Title I. This Act loosened some of the statutory and regulatory program requirements, discouraged pull-out programs, and demanded that all children, regardless of economic or academic ability, develop the same knowledge, skills, and level of achievement once expected from only the top students. Both of the aforementioned administrations pledged that any national standards would be voluntary (Ravitch, 1995).

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001. This new law represents his education reform plan and contains the most sweeping

changes to the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* since it was enacted in 1965. The *No Child Left Behind Act* has new requirements for accountability, highly qualified staff, parental choice, student support, and staff development. It is the most demanding and comprehensive legislation enacted to this date (Tennessee State Department of Education, 2003).

So, why do many educators have a fear of these educational standards? Many states have developed accountability systems for education that contain a direct threat: Prove your worth or the state will take over your schools (Henry, 1996). Such punitive forms of accountability rely on externally induced motives--avoiding sanctions--to improve educational performance (Henry). The state of Tennessee is no exception to this trend. Figure 1 outlines the response set forth by the state in accordance with the Tennessee Code Annotated and the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

## Tennessee Accountability Chart

Heads Up	School Improvement & School Improvement-Improving SI-1	Notice & Notice-Improving SI-2	Probation & Probation-Improving Corrective Action-1	Corrective Action & Corrective Action-Improving Restructuring	Alternative Governance Alternative Governance
After First Year of Not Making Adequate Progress (Beginning of Year 2)	After Second Year of Not Making Adequate Progress (Beginning of Year 3)	After Third Year of Not Making Adequate Progress (Beginning of Year 4)	After Fourth Year of Not Making Adequate Progress (Beginning of Year 5)	After Fifth Year of Not Making Adequate Progress (Beginning of Year 6)	After Sixth Year of Not Making Adequate Progress (Beginning of Year 7)
<p><b>Note:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>Title I and non-Title I schools implement sanctions under TCA 49-1-602</b></li> <li>◆ <b>Only Title I schools implement sanctions under NCLB</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>TCA-49-1-602</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ (State will publicly identify all schools in need of improvement, Title I and non-Title I, that are at risk of being placed on notice. State sanctions do not apply until a school is placed on notice)</li> </ul> <p><b>NCLB</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Public Notification and Dissemination</li> <li>◆ Public School Choice</li> <li>◆ Revise SIP (including 10% of funding used for professional development each year school identified)</li> <li>◆ Plan with Outside Expert</li> <li>◆ Technical Assistance</li> <li>◆ Peer Review of SIP</li> </ul>	<p><b>TCA-49-1-602</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Joint Study of School System (SDE &amp; Comptroller)</li> <li>◆ SDE Approval of state discretionary grants to schools</li> <li>◆ SDE provides technical assistance through outside expert</li> <li>◆ Parent Notification</li> <li>◆ Revision of SIP</li> </ul> <p><b>NCLB</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Public Notification and Dissemination</li> <li>◆ Public School Choice</li> <li>◆ Supplemental Services</li> <li>◆ Technical Assistance</li> </ul>	<p><b>TCA-49-1-602</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ SDE Approve School System's Allocation of Resources to School</li> <li>◆ SDE Appoint Local Review Committee to Approve &amp; Monitor SIP</li> <li>◆ Parent Notification</li> <li>◆ Performance Contract for Principal</li> <li>◆ Provision of Remediation/Supplemental Services</li> <li>◆ Public School Choice</li> <li>◆ Incorporate Joint Study Findings in SIP</li> </ul> <p><b>NCLB</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Public Notification and Dissemination</li> <li>◆ Public School Choice</li> <li>◆ Supplemental Services</li> <li>◆ Technical Assistance</li> <li>◆ Implement Corrective Action (at least 1)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Replace staff</li> <li>◆ New curriculum</li> <li>◆ Significantly decrease management authority at the school</li> <li>◆ Appoint outside expert</li> <li>◆ Reorganize internal organization</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>TCA-49-1-602</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ SDE Approves School System's Allocation of Financial Resources to School</li> <li>◆ SDE Approves Allocation of Personnel Resources of School</li> <li>◆ SDE Presents Options for School to Plan for Alternative Governance/LEA Develops Plan for Alternative Governance (Contract with IHE, State Takeover, Charter School)</li> <li>◆ Parent Notification</li> <li>◆ Performance Contract for Principals</li> <li>◆ Remediation/Supplemental Services</li> <li>◆ Public School Choice</li> </ul> <p><b>NCLB</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Public Notification and Dissemination</li> <li>◆ Public School Choice</li> <li>◆ Supplemental Services</li> <li>◆ Technical Assistance</li> <li>◆ Continue to Implement Corrective Action</li> <li>◆ Prepare a Plan and Make Necessary Arrangements for Alternative Governance (Charter School, Replace Staff, Contract for Private Management, Other Major Restructure)</li> </ul>	<p><b>TCA-49-1-602</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ The Commissioner assumes any and all powers of governance of the school</li> </ul> <p><b>NCLB</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Prompt Notification of Affected Teachers &amp; Parents</li> <li>◆ Technical Assistance</li> <li>◆ Implement Alternative Governance                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Reopen as public charter school</li> <li>◆ Replace all or most of relevant school staff</li> <li>◆ Contract with a private management company</li> <li>◆ State takeover</li> <li>◆ Any other major restructuring</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Figure 1. Tennessee Accountability Chart, July 30, 2003 (Tennessee State Department of Education, 2003).

The public is also demanding public institutions to prove themselves. The growing demand for accountability is being fed by a number of sources. Elected officials--seeking to demonstrate their ability to make public institutions more responsive to citizens and to show that taxpayers get their money's worth--endorse accountability. Journalists use information on school performance to promote the impression of a gap between societal expectations of educational progress and actual student performance (Henry, 1996). Proponents of these national standards have said they believe they can improve academic achievement and equip the nation's youngsters to deal with the challenges that face them in this new century (Ravitch, 1995).

The motive behind this push toward standards-based educational objectives is to bring up the bottom. This method says that good teachers will not be affected by these minimum standards (McNeil, 2000). The "good teachers" are not the target, or so the logic goes; it is the "illiterate" and "bad" teachers who are supposed to improve (McNeil, p. 192). The clear picture that emerges, however, after classroom observations, extensive interviews with teachers, and conferences with teachers' groups paints a different story (McNeil). Standardized reforms appear to hurt the best teachers, forcing them to teach watered-down content required because it is gradable by computers. According to McNeil, the standardization brought about by the policies force teachers to teach artificially simplified curricula that have been designed by bureaucrats seeking expedient curricular formats.

#### *The Direct Effect of Standards Implementation on Recess in Schools*

As a direct result of the pressure to perform being placed on schools, Atlanta school officials, like in many districts across the country, have eliminated recess in elementary schools stating that it is a waste of time that would be better spent on academics (Johnson, 1998). This trend alarms many child-development experts who argue that free play is crucial for helping children learn to make friends, resolve conflicts, be creative, and gain independence (Brody,

1998). However, there are those who would say that recess is truly a waste of precious educational time. Administrators cited many reasons why recess was eliminated. The most prevalent of these, in agreement with the reasons stated by Pellegrini (2002), was academic performance. With widespread emphasis being placed on standardized tests, administrators reported that students should prepare by spending more time on academics (Cromwell, 1998). Many researchers make the point that learning is based on time to learn, not rate of learning (Kellison, 2001). Other researchers have demonstrated over and over that more time put into learning gets better results (Kellison). The extra time has to come from somewhere and according to Cromwell (1998), recess seems like an easy place to gain this time. Educators and some parents have argued that recess detracts from instructional time in an already crowded and long school day (Pellegrini & Smith, 1993). Johnson cited Benjamin O. Canada, the superintendent of schools in Atlanta as saying, “We are intent on improving academic performance.” He then added, “You don’t do that by having kids hanging on the monkey bars” (p. A18).

One of the most enduring factors in the research of effective schools is the use of time. Time on task is an appealing concept to school administrators and teachers concerned with maximizing students’ learning time and improving academic achievement (American Association of School Administrators, 1982).

Even though many factors contribute to students’ ability to perform in the classroom, time dedicated to the task of learning may be one of the few factors that schools can control. Time allocated to teaching and learning is a function of the school’s schedule and classroom management and can be determined by policy (American Association of School Administrators, 1982).

The possible relationship between time and learning has increasingly interested educators. According to the American Association of School Administrators (1982), John B. Carroll published a model of school learning in 1963 that proved to be a catalyst for subsequent



research in the area of time and achievement. In his model, Carroll showed the link between time and achievement through a mathematical formula that could be empirically tested by others. Carroll's formula illustrates that the degree of learning equals the time actually spent learning divided by the amount of time needed to learn. The parts of the equation are:

1. The amount of time needed to learn depends on
  - a. aptitude, which Carroll defined not as what the student is capable of learning, but the amount of time it takes the student to learn a particular fact or concept.
  - b. ability, or the student's capacity to understand and incorporate the material based on prior learning, and
  - c. quality of instruction, or the effectiveness with which the instruction is presented.
2. The amount of time actually spent learning depends on
  - a. perseverance, or the steadfastness with which students devote themselves to learning the material; and
  - b. opportunity, or the time the teacher allows for learning and the number of chances a student is given. (p. 11)

The Carroll Model of time on task is shown in Figure 2.

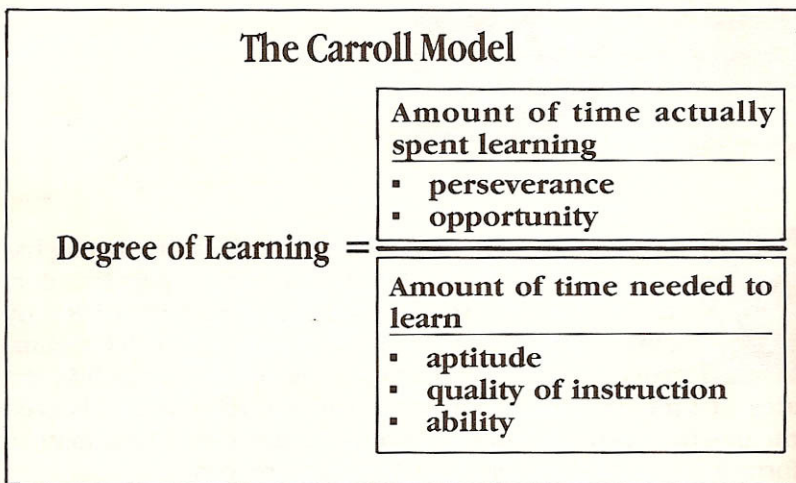


Figure 2. The Carroll Model of Time on Task

Concerned with raising students' achievement, some educators have seized the notion of time on task as a solution. Researchers have also examined the amount of time that is lost to outside interruptions (American Association of School Administrators, 1982). According to Cotton (2002), In a study published by the North West Regional Educational Laboratory as part of a series entitled the School Improvement Research Series 57, research studies concerned with the relationship between various educational time factors and student outcomes of achievement were analyzed. These research projects included a wide range of socioeconomic and ability levels and racial and ethnic groups. Most of the research was conducted in the United States, although German, British, Australian, Canadian, and Israeli studies were also represented in the research base. Cotton found that most studies reflected a positive relationship between increased time on task and students' achievement. Some of them were weak relationships but positive ones nonetheless. The researcher also stated that many studies indicated that increased time on task had a more positive affect on lower performing students and their achievement scores (Cotton). These studies have prompted schools to completely revamp schedules to minimize classroom interruptions and maximize class time. For schools that are on the borderline regarding test scores, any positive effect, no matter how small, is something toward which to strive. Some suggestions given by Cotton to increase instructional time are:

1. begin and end lessons on time;
2. reduce transition time between breaks;
3. closely monitor students' learning and behavior, including placing students in desk arrangements that allow teacher and students to see one another well from different points in the classroom;
4. establish and follow simple, consistent rules regarding student behavior in the classroom;
5. make certain that students understand what is expected of them and how to measure its accomplishment;
6. select learning tasks resulting in high levels of success;
7. employ objective feedback about the correctness of responses and assignments and provide suggestions for revision of work products or thought processes;

8. require frequent responses and samples of work, including assigning, collecting and grading homework regularly;
9. cover content as fully as possible;
10. pay attention to the degree of match between curriculum and testing; and
11. reduce non-instructional activities whenever possible. (n. p.)

The final suggestion on this list has laid waste to many programs previously incorporated into the school day, one of which is recess. Educators seem to be falling to the pressure to improve performance. Many educators and school systems have adopted a factory approach-- meaning the longer you work the more you produce (Johnson, 1998). In line with this theory, many schools are trying to increase productivity by simply increasing the number of minutes that children are exposed to information even though there are numerous studies that show children are more attentive after recess (Johnson). Although various studies have shown that recess and play breaks actually increased the quality of time on task, many schools have seemingly ignored this information. As the number of schools eliminating or at the very least limiting recess and free-play time is increasing, the pressures on educators to increase children's time on task are fueling these decisions (Klugman & Smilansky, 1990). According to one estimate, 40% of U.S. schools have eliminated recess or have taken the idea under consideration ("Schools Becoming All Work and No Play," 2001).

One cannot place a blanket of blame on these schools. They are trying to get by with "shrinking budgets, underpaid teachers, unmotivated students, apathetic parents, and a Darwinian survival of the fittest climate that makes the existence of schools depend on their rankings on standardized tests" (Schudel, 2001, p. 23). It seems the policy makers acknowledge that these tests are the ultimate answer to the question of how educators are preparing students to go out into the world. If children spend their days with no variety in their day and no hope of freedom, one could argue that the only adult institution we are preparing them for is prison (Schudel).

Administrators who face growing pressures to increase academic performance are left with few options. Not only are they required to make sure children are taught reading, writing,

and arithmetic but they are also expected to prepare children for a whole set of worldly issues from drugs and sex to safety (Johnson, 1998). Schools are experiencing a real time crunch. From bike safety and character education to reading, writing, and arithmetic, educators are being asked to pack more and more into each day. School administrators report that something has to go (Svensen, 2001).

#### *Other Factors in the Limitation of Recess Time*

Educators also referred to a fear of lawsuits if children become injured, a concern about the possibility of adults with criminal intents lurking at the edges of playgrounds, and a shortage of teachers and volunteers willing to supervise the children as reasons for eliminating recess (Johnson, 1998). In the early 1970s, the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission first alerted the public to the growing problems of injuries related to children playing on the nation's playgrounds (Hudson, Thompson, & Mack, 1997). These authors reported that in 1974, approximately 118,000 persons in the United States received hospital emergency room treatment for injuries related to playground equipment and more than three fourths of those injured were children less than 10 years of age. According to Hudson et al., the Consumer Product Safety Commission estimated that over 200,000 children are injured annually on the nation's playgrounds, all of them seriously enough to require emergency room care. Even more startling, according to Hudson and Thompson (2000), the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons claimed that this figure was really over 500,000. In the litigious society in which we live, these figures can strike fear in many school administrators, and not without reason.

Maintaining safety standards on playgrounds has also become an expensive endeavor. Concerns about safe playgrounds are not new; the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission first published guidelines in 1981 ("Where Have All the Swing Sets Gone?," 2001). However, the rules have gradually become stricter and in recent years, courts, insurance companies, and state governments have given these rules the force of law. With federal regulations passed last

year requiring wheelchair access to climbing structures, some playground operators cannot afford to replace what they have removed. Therein lies one of the biggest problems for many parks, schools, and churches. A medium-size structure that fully complies with federal guidelines can cost around \$100,000. Adding to the price are new regulations, issued in October 2000 under the *Americans with Disabilities Act* requiring that at least half of every playground be accessible to children in wheelchairs ("Where Have All the Swing Sets Gone?"). Furthermore, recess periods often arbitrarily placed in the school's schedule could disrupt children's sustained work patterns.

Those opposed to recess also contend that recess encourages aggression and antisocial behavior on the playground (Pellegrini & Smith, 1993). Unfortunately, informal and unstructured break time often is eliminated simply because many teachers, parents, and policymakers underestimate both the immediate benefits of recess and the cumulative and deferred benefits of play for children's learning and development (Kieff, 2001). Among some educators, "play" has almost become a dirty word (Mindess, 2001).

Some people think of play as the opposite of work. Pressure from parents to get their children on the path to academic success has also fueled the controversy concerning the value of recess and play. Earlier is better has become an entrenched conviction among many contemporary parents and educators (Klugman & Smilansky, 1990). To the parents who feel this way, it is never too early to start children on reading or mathematics, music lessons, karate, and many other endeavors (Klugman & Smilansky). Some parents have determined that play should be academic, or computers, or organized activities (Brody, 1998). Parents often have good reasons and intentions in enrolling children in extracurricular activities. They want them to have fun, learn something new, or to just stay out of trouble (Pellegrini, 2002). However, the push to structured activities over traditional, unstructured free time is rooting out this type of play that children need and enjoy (Mindess, 2001). This extracurricular craze also reflects a fading sense

of community. Transient families or working parents do not know each other well enough to feel comfortable letting their children circulate freely among their houses (Brody).

Schools experience the pressure from this movement. School officials may consider that pushing academics down to the kindergarten and prekindergarten levels is the only way to get the funding they need (Klugman & Smilansky, 1990). Most parents have high expectations and hopes for their children and want them to become successful and independent adults (Brewer & Kieff, 1996). To achieve this goal, many parents reported their children must quickly master academic skills. In addition, some parents could become impatient with schools when children report they played at school (Brewer & Kieff). To some adults, play is just for fun and they may perceive child's play as just play (Hurwitz, 2002). Many adults may consider that there is no learning value in their children's play.

Another element could also be adding to parents' apprehension concerning recess. If the parents struggled in school, then their expectations might be that learning is supposed to be hard and that children need to be serious or they will not learn what they need to know (Brewer & Kieff, 1996). This may stem from the fact that parents most likely relate play at school with play at home. However, according to Brewer and Kieff in *Fostering Mutual Respect for Play at Home and School*, play in a school setting differs from play at home along the following dimensions:

1. Interaction with peers: One difference between home and school play is the opportunity for peer interaction. Children often play in mixed-age groups within their families or neighborhoods. Often, a child will be the only one of a given age in a playgroup in the home setting. School also provides children with opportunities to play with children whom they might not initially choose as friends. Therefore, they have to earn respect by learning to negotiate and share both ideas and objects.
2. Group size: At home, a child often plays alone or with one or two other children. Children must learn to play with much larger groups at school. Group size influences the need for sharing, the amount of adult attention and the range of possible responses in play. A larger group size also provides children with opportunities to play more organized games. Children cannot play the typical circle games of early childhood in small playgroups.

3. **Materials and equipment:** Materials at school are usually significantly different than those at home. Very few families have the space or resources to make easels, sand tables, water tables, woodworking tools, or a selection of musical instruments available to children. Other materials that schools provide are often deemed too messy for home use.
4. **Guidance and supervision:** Teachers may help children learn a concept by allowing them to play with certain materials.
5. **Adult-child interactions:** Teachers view themselves as facilitators and expanders of children's play. If a child in a school setting is reconstructing his understanding of a grocery store in a dramatic play area, the teacher will often help the child find the necessary materials to complete his ideas or enrich them.
6. **Time commitments:** Often children play at home when the parent is busy doing something else; their play may consist of watching television or idly roaming around the house or yard. In school, time for play should be a regular part of the schedule. In that way, children can depend on having a set time for play.
7. **Organized planning:** Planning is rarely required when children play at home. At school, however, children may be asked to choose among materials, pieces of equipment, or groups of children.
8. **Space availability:** At home, space is often limited. Children at school generally have more space for engaging in play. (pp. 93-96)

There seems to be a decline in children's play at home as well. Several factors are at the root of the trend away from play. One concern for adults when considering free play for children is security and safety. With reports of kidnappings and assaults on children, parents are reluctant to let children play by themselves (McDonald, 2000). In addition, the rise in violence and antisocial behavior among children--or at least the focus on it in the media--has also contributed to heightened supervision of children at play (McDonald).

Another obstacle to free play outdoors is the recent explosion in electronic entertainment. For many children, it is more appealing to sit in front of the cable television, play video games, or tap into the Internet than to get sweaty in the sun (Brody, 1998). On average, American children watch 28 hours of television each week; this is time stolen from social interactions, abstract thinking, creativity, and play (Perry, 2001). Kissack (1998) stated in her article, *My Experiment with Real Play*, "When children are kept away from the over-stimulating and imagination-robbing television sets, video games, and toys that come with batteries, the beauty

of real play can genuinely shine” (p. 8). In addition, the increased technology of toys has taken away from the imaginative aspects of play. With the endless attacks of the media pushing new, improved, do-it-all products at them, it is no wonder that children do not seem to know how to play (Kissack).

Each new encroachment on play shortens the length of childhood. Maxwell (1998) cited noted psychiatrist Bruno Bettelheim as admitting, “A hundred years ago the span of childhood was more than 10 or 11 years; now the years from about 5 or 6 to 13 years constitute childhood; at best some 8 years” (n. p.). Childhood has not totally disappeared but even those years are filled with adult concerns. Today’s children are often cheated out of a carefree childhood because parents and the media worry them with adult problems (Maxwell).

#### *Impending Threats to Recess and Free Play*

In response to the ever-increasing level of childhood and adult obesity in our nation that is highly attributed to the prevailing sedentary lifestyle of our citizens, Senator Bill Frist has proposed legislation before Congress that would require all schools, kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade, to provide 30 minutes of physical education time daily for all students. The bill in its entirety is presented in Appendix A.

Although Senate Bill 2551 is to be applauded for its goal of improving the health of all school children in America, its implementation would be a definite threat to free-play time. Schools are currently struggling to include all the extras into the day. With this addition, free-playtime would be seen as a waste of time because children are meeting their physical need for play. Even though this would be true, their need for freedom of expression, development of social skills, and the freedom to choose would be all but eliminated.



### *Effects of Eliminating Recess on the Climate of School*

In the Jarrett et al. (1998) study, various effects on the climate of the school day for students are shown to be affected in a positive way by recess. Of the children studied, 60% benefited significantly from the addition of recess into the school day, with many of them showing an overlap of improvement in both variables of becoming less fidgety and more on task. All of the students with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) benefited from recess and 7 of the 12 gifted children benefited significantly in one or both of the variables (Jarrett et al.). The results of this research suggested that for most children, uninterrupted instructional time might be a paradoxically inefficient use of instructional time (Jarrett et al.). By losing opportunities for communicating, socializing, and free play during recess, students simultaneously miss opportunities for healthy development; consequently, problem behavior and classroom disturbance are likely to occur (Geiger, 1996).

Our society has two coercive institutions. These are considered coercive institutions because the participants have no choice about being there. One of these institutions is the public school system and the other is prison. The elimination of all unstructured time only increases the coercive nature of the institution. Adults need breaks from the monotony of a typical workday. Children have at least the same need for a change of pace, if not a more pressing need. Educators hope to create a generation of life-long learners, yet they may actually be creating a generation of people who have not developed the cognitive and social skills needed to fully participate in society and who have a negative view of education and learning.

### *Summary*

Studies show that recess and free play are valuable learning opportunities for children. This time in the school day allows students to play and learn in a social situation. Studies also indicate that even though having recess does decrease the amount of time that students are actually present in the classroom, this time to play may increase the level of active engagement

when students are learning in a classroom setting. However, the attitude concerning recess has changed in many schools over the last few years. Rising pressure to perform on standardized achievement tests has pushed many schools to greatly reduce recess and free-play opportunities in the public schools and increase the time on the task of learning. Safety and economic factors also play a role in the elimination or reduction of recess in the school day. In fact, many schools have eliminated this portion of the school day entirely.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### *Overview*

This chapter presents the methodology of the study. The purpose of this mixed methods comparative study was to explore the perceptions of educators regarding recess and free play for elementary school students as well as the actual test scores in schools that have eliminated or greatly limited recess during the regular school day in comparison with schools that have not eliminated or drastically limited recess and free play during the school day.

#### *Research Design*

This mixed-methods study was designed to investigate the perceptions of educators regarding recess and free play in the public school. The study primarily used the interview method of data collection. In addition, this study examined the results on standardized achievement test scores in schools that do not currently provide an opportunity for recess and free play or have greatly limited this opportunity for their students in comparison to schools that do provide recess and free-play opportunities for the students enrolled. The quantitative portion of the study was a straightforward comparison of the numbers and, therefore, did not need any statistical analysis to determine significance of the numbers.

Guba and Lincoln (as cited in Trochim 2004), proposed four criteria for judging the soundness of qualitative research and explicitly offered these as an alternative to more traditional quantitatively oriented criteria. According to Trochim, of Cornell University, their four criteria better reflected the position of qualitative research. He outlined their proposed criteria for quantitative research as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

*Table of Traditional and Alternative Criteria for Judging Research*

Traditional Criteria for Judging Quantitative Research	Alternative Criteria for Judging Qualitative Research
Internal Validity	Credibility
External Validity	Transferability
Reliability	Dependability
Objectivity	Confirmability

In order to assure the credibility of the study, I used member checking. This process allows the participants in the study a chance to review what I as the researcher have understood them to say about a particular topic. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. Then, a copy of his or her transcript was provided to each participant. The subject was given the opportunity to examine the transcript for accuracy and clarity. Each participant was also given an opportunity to elaborate on any of the comments made during the interview process. Credibility criteria involve establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participant in the research. From this perspective, the purpose of qualitative research is to describe or understand the phenomena of interest from the participants' eyes; therefore, the participants are the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results (Trochim, 2004).

Transferability refers to the degree of which the results of qualitative research can be generalized to other contexts or setting (Trochim, 2004). Transferability was enhanced by doing a thorough job of describing how I conducted my research, the research context, and the assumptions that were central to my research.

Dependability emphasizes the need for the researcher to account for the changing context within which research occurs. To better assure the dependability of the research any changes or events that occurred were recorded in a journal. Any changes that could affect the study were also noted. This allows future researchers to better replicate my study or account for any variables that may alter the dependability of the study.

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results can be confirmed or corroborated by others (Trochim, 2004). In order to achieve confirmability in my study, I enlisted the help of a peer debriefer. This person was someone who was not involved in the study, but had knowledge of the basis for my research. For this person, I selected Becky Raulston. Becky is a kindergarten teacher at Hampton Elementary School and is also a graduate of the ELPA program, obtaining her master's with an emphasis in Administration and Supervision in 2002. Not only is she experienced in working with young children but she is familiar with the research process as a whole. I also used Dr. Jerri Beth Lyons to better assure the confirmability of my study (see Appendix F). She completed her doctoral work at East Tennessee State University in 2003 and agreed to act as an auditor for my study. Both Becky Raulston and Dr. Lyons were provided a copy of my dissertation and my research notes in order to better evaluate my research as a whole.

### *Participants*

Participants in this study were from similar schools in the Northeast Tennessee region. I focused on systems and schools that provided varying levels of recess and free-play opportunities. These schools vary in the number of students in the population in attendance. In addition, because the schools are all located in the Northeast Tennessee region, they were comprised of similar students with similar life experiences. For that reason, the schools I examined fell in varying levels of socioeconomic status as a whole. I desired to interview a variety of participants and interviewing persons from varying levels of socioeconomic status

served to enrich my study. All participants volunteered to participate in the study. The students who were interviewed were chosen based on the willingness of the parents and the students themselves to participate. In addition, the teacher had to allow each student to leave the class to speak with me. For this reason, I perceived that the students interviewed were of average to above-average students in the area of academic performance.

I interviewed the directors of schools, assistant directors, principals, assistant principals, teachers, and students from these schools to gain a better understanding of the perceptions regarding recess from these varying groups. I interviewed the principals in all but one school. The assistant principal volunteered for my survey in the remaining school. I interviewed two to five teachers from each school and two to seven students. The number interviewed varied with the size of the school and the willingness of principals, teachers, students, and parents to participate. I also interviewed the director and assistant director of schools as well as other central office personnel to get a feel for the overall policy. I was able to secure an interview with the director and assistant director of schools in all but one system studied. In that system, the director of schools had only been in the position for the current school year and responded that he did not feel that he would be as qualified as others would to answer my questions. He referred me to the curriculum director who served as my central office administrator interview for that system.

In order to assure anonymity for the systems, schools, and participants involved, I selected pseudonyms for each subgroup and for each individual person interviewed. I referred to the systems studied as Systems A, B, and C. Schools within the systems were also given pseudonyms.

At the administration level for System A, I interviewed the director of schools, the assistant director of schools, and the elementary supervisor. The representative school for System A was given the name Green Clover Elementary. One principal, two teachers, and two students were interviewed from this site.

In System B, only one central office administrator was interviewed. Because of the small office staff of this system and the relatively short period of time that the current director of schools had been in place, I was referred to someone who had formerly served as the curriculum director for the system and who was currently serving as the federal programs coordinator. The representative school for System B was given the name Yellow Moon Elementary. In Yellow Moon Elementary, I was able to interview one principal, four teachers, and seven students.

Administrators at System C allowed me to speak with the director and assistant director of schools at the central office level. The representative school for System C was given the name Blue Diamond Elementary. In Blue Diamond Elementary, I was able to interview the assistant principal, five teachers, and three students.

Material outlining the pseudonyms of the participants, systems, and schools are provided in Chapter 4 of this study. This information pertains to the participants and their school and systems as well as their grade level, level taught, and/or years of experience.

#### *Data Collection Procedures*

Permission was requested in writing from all participants in the study. Subjects were asked to sign an informed consent document (see Appendix E) explaining the interview's purpose prior to the interviews. In order to study individual schools, I requested permission from the directors of schools of the institutions under study. In addition, I gained permission from individual principals to study classes and groups within the school. In order to assure that the permission was granted, I ensured confidentiality concerning the persons involved as well as the school systems being examined. For this reason, copies of these letters are not included in the appendices of the study, but are on file with all research material.

I anticipated that there would be some uneasiness from teachers who were interviewed. They might not have felt free to discuss their opinions and perceptions if confidentiality were not

guaranteed. I assured confidentiality for this reason as well to better allow the teachers to talk freely about their opinions concerning recess.

After an initial face-to-face to face interview with the participants who were educators, I conducted a few follow up interviews and clarification through phone conversations, as well as e-mail correspondence.

In order to interview students, parents granted permission by signing the Informed Consent form. In addition, the process was explained to parents in a letter (see Appendix C). To better guarantee that the students were comfortable during the situation, I assured the students that they could leave the interview situation at any time if they felt uncomfortable. I told them they could also refuse to answer any question if they felt uncomfortable with the question or the answer they would give. These factors were explained to students in the Child Assent Document (see Appendix D).

### *Instrumentation*

I developed my own interview questions to be used with each group of individuals. In these open-ended interview questions, I sought to understand the perceptions of the directors, principals, teachers, and students regarding recess and free play. In order to do so, a different interview protocol was developed for each group of participants. I also considered whether the participants were coming from a school or school system that was currently providing an opportunity for students to participate in recess and free play or if the participants were coming from a school or school system that had severely limited recess and free play. An initial listing of interview questions for each of the potential interview groups is included as Appendix B. These interview guides provided some open-ended questions that lead to other discussions. The questions varied depending on who made the policy in the school concerning recess and whether the schools had recess and free play or not.



I also conducted a pilot test of the interview questions with educators from a local city school system. I presented the questions at a setting in which the principal allowed the teachers to provide recess opportunities for their students and another school in which the principal did not. This process better allowed me to ensure that the interview questions I used were valid and reliable. From this process, I realized that I needed to clarify that I was talking about recess and free-play opportunities and not physical education classes. I determined from my study that in this area of the state, the terms recess and PE are often used interchangeably and the term "recess" required clarification before, and often, during the interviews.

### *Data Analysis*

Responses gathered during the interviews were analyzed to determine if there were any patterns of perceptions among the educational professionals who had been selected for this study. Each interview was typed verbatim and a copy of the interview transcript was given to each participant. The participants were asked to review the interviews for accuracy of content. This process assured the interviewee that his or her comments were accurately represented in my research. Two of the participants had minor corrections, such as the number of years of experience. No major changes were reported by the participants in the study. Each interview was read several times and several common themes emerged across the interviews. Participants' responses were grouped either positively or negatively according to these themes and patterns. These included the overall perception of the participants regarding recess and free play, recess and academic development, recess and discipline, the possible effect of recess on standardized test scores, policies in regards to recess, research, social benefits of play, feedback received, and time on task. Direct quotes and comments from the participants are included in Chapter 4 in relation to these emergent themes. These patterns and perceptions were also examined according to the results of the examination of the test scores between the schools or school systems.

Each question used in the interview process was first read by my peer debriefer, Becky Raulston. Becky is a graduate of East Tennessee State University with her masters in Education. She is also a very experienced teacher in the elementary school setting. As I am involved in secondary education, her advice was invaluable to me in developing the questions that I asked teachers and students. Becky helped me develop questions that would be easily understood by various levels of students and that were more likely to elicit accurate and truthful responses.

Dr. Jerri Beth Lyons was my external auditor (see Appendix F). Dr. Lyons is a long-time friend and is a 2003 graduate of the Ed.D program. Her recent experience in the research process allowed her to give timely advice in my own research study. She read my findings and cross-referenced them with my own interview notes. She also examined the accuracy of my statements and ensured that I had best used the information that I had gathered.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

#### *Overview*

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to examine the perceptions of elementary school students, teachers, assistant principals, principals, and central office personnel regarding recess and free-play time. Most of the participants in this study were open to sharing their perceptions regarding free play. The only group that seemed to have a bit of difficulty was the teacher group. This group oftentimes was working under a set of restrictions or suggestions that did not always align with their own ideas about what is best for children. For this reason, even though they answered my questions truthfully, many of them did not go into details about the depth of their perceptions until the tape recording of the interview had been stopped. All of the insights shared have been both helpful and enlightening in evaluating perceptions regarding recess and free play.

Additionally, this study examined the standardized test scores of students at the schools that participated in the study. These scores were examined to determine if the schools that had chosen to limit or restrict recess and free-play time in order to provide more time on task were realizing the gain expected from eliminating this time. In addition, because many schools have only begun this restriction on recess breaks and free-play time in recent years, these scores were examined across time.

#### *Introduction to the Participants*

##### *Systems*

All of the systems studied are located in the East Tennessee region. Demographic information used in this study to analyze school systems and schools was gained both from self-

reporting and from the official school report card for the 2003-2004 school year. This information can be found on the education website for the state of Tennessee (Tennessee State Department of Education, 2005).

System A was a county system comprised of 17 schools serving 6,215 students ranging from kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The demographic information for the school system is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

*Demographic Information for System A*

	Student Body (Based on Net Enrollment)	
	Number	%
White	6,107	98.3
African American	30	0.05
Hispanic	60	1.0
Asian	10	0.02
Native American	8	0.01
Pacific Islander	0	0.0
Limited English Proficient	16	0.3
Students with Disabilities	1,000	17.0
Economically Disadvantaged	3,721	69.5
Title I	4,540	77.5

System B was a city system comprised of five schools serving 2,087 students in grades kindergarten through 12. Demographic information for System B is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

*Demographic Information for System B*

	Student Body (Based on Net Enrollment)	
	Number	%
White	1,960	93.9
African American	81	3.9
Hispanic	18	0.9
Asian	23	1.1
Native American	4	0.2
Pacific Islander	1	0.0
Limited English Proficient	5	0.2
Students with Disabilities	311	15.0
Economically Disadvantaged	858	42.7
Title I	591	28.5

System C was a county system comprised of 15 schools serving 7,249 students in grades kindergarten through 12. Demographic information is shown in Table 5 for System C.

Table 5

*Demographic Information for System C*

	Student Body (Based on Net Enrollment)	
	Number	%
White	7,093	97.8
African American	63	0.9
Hispanic	58	0.8
Asian	24	0.3
Native American	11	0.2
Pacific Islander	0	0.0
Limited English Proficient	23	0.3
Students with Disabilities	1,423	20.4
Economically Disadvantaged	3,976	56.4
Title I	4,790	68.7

## *Schools*

The population of the schools in this study ranged from 240 to 600. Two of the schools were Title I schools. The purpose of Title I is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments (Tennessee State Department of Education, 2003). In order to meet the qualifications for Title I funds schoolwide, the school must be named a High Poverty School. In order to be declared a High Poverty School, the school must have 40% or more students from low-income families (Tennessee State Department of Education, 2003). The schools under study ranged from 34.1% to 84.5% economically disadvantaged.

A representative school from each system was examined. The representative school from System A that for the purposes of this study will be known as Green Clover Elementary, was a kindergarten through grade five school serving 293 students--84.5% of whom fell into the category of economically disadvantaged. It was in good academic standing as reported by the State of Tennessee (Tennessee State Department of Education, 2005). This school was also a Title I school. Recess and free play in this school was allowed but was not encouraged after the second grade. Students in this school participated in organized physical education classes two times every week with an additional session every two weeks. Recess breaks in the classroom were not encouraged.

The representative school from System B that for the purposes of this study will be known as Yellow Moon Elementary, was a kindergarten through grade five school serving 237 students with 34.1% being economically disadvantaged. It was also in good academic standing as reported by the State of Tennessee (Tennessee State Department of Education, 2005). Recess and free play in this school was allowed and even encouraged. Classes had some sort of recess break every day, even if it was abbreviated. Even so, such breaks were limited in the fifth grade

by the teachers themselves. Students in this school participated in structured physical education classes for 45 minutes two to three times a week.

The representative school from System C that for the purposes of this study will be known as Blue Diamond Elementary, was a kindergarten through grade five school serving 587 students--51% of whom were economically disadvantaged. It was in good academic standing as reported by the State of Tennessee (Tennessee State Department of Education, 2005). It was also a Title I school. Recess and free play in this school was allowed but was limited in the fourth grade and was all but eliminated in the fifth grade. Students in this school received varying amounts of structured physical education time by grade; however, it averaged out to be 10 sessions every five weeks.

### *Students*

Twelve students were interviewed for this study. The students ranged from grade one to grade five. Students participating in the study appeared to range from average academic performance students to gifted students. They were asked a series of questions regarding recess and free-play time and their thoughts about including it in the school day. They were also asked questions about how they spent their free time at home.

### *Teachers*

Fourteen teachers participated in this study. The teacher participants for this study were all certified teachers ranging from fewer than 1 to 27 years of experience. Representatives from the first, fourth, and fifth grades were interviewed. This grouping of teachers allowed me to see the difference in free-play opportunities across the school. In every school studied, recess and free play was more prevalent in kindergarten to third grade and began to be limited in the fourth and fifth grades. This sampling of teachers gave me a picture of the opportunities for recess and free play in an elementary school in Upper East Tennessee.

### *Assistant Principals and Principals*

Three assistant principals or principals were interviewed with one representing each school. They ranged in experience from 5 to 6 years of administrative experience and 10 to 24 years of educational experience. The administrators interviewed were all females.

### *Central Office Personnel*

Six central office personnel were interviewed. These included two directors of schools, two assistant directors of schools, one elementary supervisor, and one curriculum director. Their years of educational experience ranged from 18 to 43 years. There were four males and two females in this group.

### *Participant Information*

Each of the participants was given a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. The participants in this study were all actively involved in some way in the public school system of East Tennessee. Table 6 shows a summary of information regarding students. Table 7 presents a summary of information regarding school personnel.



Table 6

*Demographic Information Concerning Students*

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>System/School</i>
Gina	Female	3	A/ Green Clover
Mindy	Female	1	A/Green Clover
Kendra	Female	2	B/Yellow Moon
Tiffany	Female	4	B/Yellow Moon
Tyler	Male	2	B/Yellow Moon
Mr. Mark	Male	5	B/Yellow Moon
David	Male	5	B/Yellow Moon
Ann	Female	5	B/Yellow Moon
Tina	Female	3	B/Yellow Moon
Lauren	Female	5	C/Blue Diamond
Tammy	Female	5	C/Blue Diamond
Paula	Female	5	C/Blue Diamond

Table 7

*Demographic Information Concerning School and System Personnel*

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Area of Concentration</i>	<i>Years of Experience</i>	<i>System/School</i>
Mr. John	Male	Administration	16 adm/33 total	System A
Mr. Phillip	Male	Administration	24 adm/32 total	System C
Mr. Paul	Male	Administration	13 adm /33 total	System A
Mr. Mark	Male	Administration	18 total	System B
Ms. Eve	Female	Administration	43 total	System C
Ms. Cindy	Female	Administration	17 adm/29 total	System A

Table 7 (continued)

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Area of Concentration</i>	<i>Years of Experience</i>	<i>System/School</i>
Ms. Teresa	Female	Administration/Principal	6 adm/24 total	System C/Yellow Moon
Ms. Barbara	Female	Administration/Principal	5 adm/10 total	System A/Green Clover
Ms. Jean	Female	Administration/Asst. Principal	6 adm/20 total	System B/Blue Diamond
Ms. Maxine	Female	Teacher/Grade 1	18	Green Clover
Ms. Samantha	Female	Teacher/Grade 1	3	Green Clover
Ms. Stephanie	Female	Teacher/Grade 4	8	Yellow Moon
Ms. Jill	Female	Teacher/Grade 1	11	Yellow Moon
Ms. Lana	Female	Teacher/Grade 2	6	Yellow Moon
Ms. Emma	Female	Teacher/Grade 4	19	Yellow Moon
Ms. Kathy	Female	Teacher/Grade 5	3	Blue Diamond
Mr. Dennis	Male	Teacher/Grade 4	<1	Blue Diamond
Ms. Betty	Female	Teacher/Grade 4	<1	Blue Diamond
Ms. Yolanda	Female	Teacher/Grade 4	6	Blue Diamond
Ms. Pat	Female	Teacher/Grade 5	27	Blue Diamond

### *Qualitative Analysis of Perceptions*

In interviewing the administrative personnel involved in my study, varying perceptions regarding recess and free play were discovered. When asked about their personal perceptions regarding recess or free-play opportunities in the public school system, all central office personnel spoke favorably about this time. Invariably, the directors of schools interviewed stated that recess and free-play opportunities were important to the development of the child and were not discouraged by the system. Mr. John, who was the director of schools for System A, described his own recollections of recess as a child, saying:

I remember when I was in school that I as a child looked forward to playtime as a very positive part of our school day. I don't know how it would have affected me if that had not been part of my schooling. I do feel like it was a very positive part of my schooling and I think it would be detrimental to take that away from the students today.

Mr. Phillip, who was the director of schools for System C shared similar sentiments. He stated, "I think it has a really positive benefit on kids, if nothing more than their psyche. And I think everybody looks forward to it."

Principals and assistant principals expressed varying thoughts about recess and free-play opportunities. As a whole, principals had very positive comments about recess and free play when they examined the time from the perspective of a child. Ms. Barbara, the principal of Green Clover Elementary, related memories about recess when she was a child herself, saying, "I remember at school we would go outside and play and enjoy it and have fun and we could stay out there all day long." Ms. Teresa, the principal of Yellow Moon Elementary, stated that as a child, "Recess was one of the most enjoyable parts of our day." Ms. Jean, the principal of Blue Diamond Elementary, talked about the learning opportunity that occurs with recess and free play:

I think it is absolutely, positively necessary that we give kids time to socialize. They have to socialize because we don't give them that time to socialize; it seems, in other places. We have to keep it so quiet in the classroom that they need it. It is crucial.

Ms. Teresa, the principal of Yellow Moon Elementary, also echoed her sentiments in examining the overall value of free-play time in the elementary school setting. She related:

I think that free play at [school name] is constructive in that . . . or in any elementary school . . . in that it allows kids to let off some steam and it is a break from the academic routine of total concentration and focus and accomplishing objectives. I think it is an integral part of their development. Not just the social part, but playing games if they are not outside on a cold, windy day, they are using their thinking skills and problem solving for the checkers and chess and the board games. I think it allows them creativity and some time for expression that is not in a chair and very focused. And, with some kids, when you give them that option, they just like to walk around. They don't have to do anything as far as physical exercise; run, scream and jump. They just want some time alone.

Teachers as a whole expressed strong sentiments that recess and free-play time was important to the development of the child. Only one teacher expressed a twinge of doubt

regarding recess. Ms. Pat, a teacher in Blue Diamond Elementary with 27 years of experience wearily stated, "Right now, I think that we need to be in the classroom because that's where I'm supposed to be and that's my job. As a teacher, I think we should be in the classroom." Nevertheless, she continued, "If I were speaking as a parent, I would want the kids to get to go out some. And, I'm sure the kids would like to go out more. It just can't be."

Ms. Pat was definitely in the minority in her sentiments regarding the overall value of recess and free-play time. Teachers overwhelmingly stated that recess and free play was of great value to students and teachers alike. Teachers from Blue Diamond Elementary shared the following comments: Ms. Betty stated:

They need it. They need it. They definitely need it. If they are locked up inside the classroom all day long and they don't have some kind of an outlet, then you can tell it in their behavior, you can tell it in their work. . . . If they can just get 15 minutes a day of doing what they want to do, then they get back on track.

Ms. Lana added:

It is absolutely necessary. I think physically, emotionally, for them. They need that time to unwind or let loose. I think that recess and free time has an effect on the person as a whole. Everybody needs exercise and on the playground, that is what he or she is doing. They are running, jumping, playing, and socializing. I think it affects every part of their lives. Not just school, but for some kids, that is the only physical activity that they get in their day.

Teachers from Green Clover Elementary where having recess every day was discouraged and teachers were encouraged to virtually eliminate recess from the third to fifth grades added the following insights: Ms. Maxine stated:

I think students need recess because they sit, what, six and a half hours a day working. It's not total seatwork, but it is work. I just think they need time to scream and run around. I just think they need it for a release.

Ms. Samantha spoke of the necessity of recess, saying, "I feel recess and free play are essential to an early childhood classroom as well as older children. As children of today experience pressure to succeed in all areas of life, the necessity for play becomes even more critical."

Ms. Maxine, who taught at Green Clover Elementary where recess was almost eliminated after the third grade, also mentioned a benefit of recess that was not mentioned by any other

teacher or administrator. She discussed the things that teachers could learn from watching children, especially young children, on the playground:

You can see which children have trouble maybe fitting in a group and you can kind of see...sometimes you can see what they do at home. Some of them don't want to get out and move around, even though they need it. They just kind of sit down and hang around the teacher, or just sit in a chair or sit on the pavement. You kind of have to make them get up and go do something. You can see which ones are loners and which are social. You can see which ones are more aggressive, also, when it is not structured. These behaviors present themselves much faster on the playground than they would in the classroom.

### *Discipline*

When asked about their perceptions concerning the effect that having recess and free-play time or eliminating recess and free time from the school day might have upon discipline in the schools, central office personnel expressed for the most part that recess would have a positive effect. Many of their comments aligned with the surplus energy theory. The surplus energy theory suggests that surplus energy accumulates when one is engaged in sedentary activities and that an opportunity for physical activity is needed to “blow off steam” (Pellegrini, 1995). The assistant director of schools for System A, Mr. Paul, stated:

I think kids need a playtime. They need recess. They need an outlet for all that energy that they store up. Plus, you know we all feel better when we get out and get a little exercise and get those endorphins going.

The director for System A, Mr. John, agreed, stating:

It is my opinion that letting children have some time for free play will reduce a lot of problems in the school and also give them a means to vent some of the stress and things and frustrations that they have from having to be under the testing gun, so to speak.

The assistant director for System C, Ms. Eve, stated the following:

I think that basically children do need to have some time where they can go outside and run and play for a few minutes. It may not have to be more than 10 minutes or so, and I think in most cases that they will settle down and work a little better.

Principals related their perceptions on the possible effect that recess and free play breaks might have on discipline in the school and classroom. Most of them saw free-play opportunities

as having the potential to have a positive effect. Ms. Teresa, the principal of Yellow Moon Elementary, stated, "It is a good possibility, maybe because of the lack of time to do something besides the academic day." Other principals also had positive comments about the potential effect on discipline. Ms. Jean, the assistant principal of Blue Diamond Elementary, commented:

I think for sure it affects discipline. I think if kids are given that time to let go and run a little bit of energy off, I think they always come back in a better mood, in a better frame of mind, and they are ready to work.

Ms. Barbara, the principal of Green Clover Elementary, expressed her perceptions regarding younger children:

I think in the younger grades, I think it would help them. Their mindset is not so that they can sit in a desk all day and do work. And, I know sometimes I may see a second-grade class go out for maybe 10 minutes. They are not out there hardly any time at all, but when they come back, they get a drink, they get settled in, their minds are clear, and they are fresh and ready to go.

At the same time, Ms. Barbara had a different perception about the effect on discipline when referring to the upper grades. She explained:

But, kids anymore, they just can't handle it. Older kids--we end up with a lot of fights and a lot of problems. Kids can't go out and start a little activity on their own and finish it without somebody getting hit or kicked or something.

Principals also talked of another way that recess and free-play opportunities had a direct effect on discipline. They referred to the use of free play by teachers as a reward for proper behavior and completing work and objectives. Ms. Teresa, principal of Yellow Moon Elementary, referred to her own child in her response, observing, "And I know that my daughter is a much happier person, even a fourth grader, having a little recess time, because it is looked at as a favorable thing, or a reward for doing something right."

Ms. Jean, assistant principal of Blue Diamond Elementary, referred to feedback from her teachers regarding their desire to use playtime as a reward and their inability to do so because of the strenuous time constraints from their system. She admitted, "They [teachers] have nothing to reward those students with and playtime sometimes is definitely a reward."

Ms. Cindy, a central office administrator from System A, also referred to the use of recess and free-play time as a reward when she was a principal and teacher. She acknowledged:

Well, I'll just be honest; you can hold that over little people's heads. If they get a certain number of Mr. Markers or whatever, they lose 5 or 10 minutes of recess. I think that helps with discipline. A lot of times, it is just the time outside they will miss. If you totally did away with it [recess], it could hurt the discipline of the school. That is a real nonthreatening thing that you can do to children. If they have to sit there and watch for five minutes, next time they might think, "Oh, I don't want to get in trouble because I want to play."

Teachers had definite perceptions about the effect that including recess breaks and free-play opportunities had on discipline in their classrooms. The majority of them commented that it had a positive effect overall. Only a few mentioned that it was difficult to settle students down after a break. Ms. Pat stated, "It takes a while to get them settled back down, so you are not just losing the time outside, you are losing the time going outside, coming back in, and then settling down."

Mr. Dennis agreed with Ms. Pat, admitting:

Sometimes you just can't get them back. They get to having too much fun. They get excited about this and that and what they talked about. Their minds are stuck on that if you do it, so yeah, sometimes it does become a behavioral issue.

Other teachers referred to this same phenomenon but did not see it as much of a problem. The remainder of the teachers interviewed stated that the effect on classroom discipline overall was much more positive than negative. Ms. Kathy, who was not allowed to have daily recess in her fifth-grade classroom at Blue Diamond Elementary, stated, "I think it [discipline] would be less of a problem. Right now it is much more of a problem than what it really needs to be." Most of the teachers' comments fell along the same line as Ms. Samantha's, who said, "The children can get rid of excess 'wiggles' and pent up energy." Teachers also spoke of the benefit of having recess to offer as a reward for good behavior and accomplishing classroom tasks. Teachers from all systems spoke about this benefit. Ms. Yolanda spoke of the advantages from a teacher's perspective, saying:

I think it (free play) runs off some of that energy. I think it gives the children something to look forward to. It gives the teacher something, I hate to say it, to hang over their heads. The children need rewards and they need punishment.

Ms. Betty spoke of the cumulative effects of not having free-play time by stating:

If they don't get to play, they feel like they are cooped up and the discipline gets worse, especially with your ADHD kids. Not so much if it is the first or second day they don't get to go out, but after three or four days, you can really tell it.

Ms. Lana observed, "We usually do free time at the end of the day. So, they have something to look forward to. It motivates them to get all their work finished." Ms. Stephanie agreed, adding, "The days you don't get to have it are the days that they are 'talkier' and the days that they are more wiggly and restless." Ms. Emma pointed out, "It is a good carrot to hold over their heads. They will work faster and be more concentrated if they know it will be taken away." Ms. Jill enthusiastically agreed with the benefits of free-play time, saying, "Oh yes, I do! I think that it affects behavior in a positive manner because they get rid of the stress, the tension. They have growing pains. They yearn to run and play." Ms. Maxine described students who benefited from playtime:

Some children you notice it more than others. I have two that their attention is minus 10. If they don't get a recess break, they get in trouble more. They are in trouble in the lunchroom; they usually get in trouble on bus duty. They just get in trouble more. When they get a break, they do better.

When asked what they thought if and when they did not get to have recess, the comments of students also reflected the premise presented in the surplus energy theory. Tina admitted, "I feel all energized. I'm all spiked up and I just want to run around the classroom." Ann spoke of excess energy, describing:

We usually are very disappointed. We are tired; we get grumpy. One day we did not get this and there were spit balls on a teacher, so . . . because that is when we get to let all of the energy out. If you have it all cooped up inside you, you go crazy.

Gina gave an answer that was almost suggestive of a work by Dr. Seuss, saying, "We just sit. We sit all day. Sit, sit, sit. I don't like it." Mindy added, "I am just bored. I don't like it when we sit in class all day. I have to move around."



Students in the fifth grade at Blue Diamond Elementary have had recess taken away except on Fridays. The children interviewed stated that if the students misbehave, then they might run the risk of losing even this time. When asked to share their thoughts about not having recess, the students eagerly complied. Lauren speculated, "It feels like it has been 24 hours and you are still sitting in the classroom." Tammy observed, "We usually have more work on the days we don't have recess." Paula admitted, "On the days we are going to have recess I feel very excited. On the days we don't have it, I don't feel very excited. You know it is just going to be a dull day."

When asked if they had been told why they did not have recess anymore, these students from Blue Diamond elementary invariably stated that it was because the students in their classes had been bad. The teachers had already told me that they did not have time for recess in the fifth grade with the stringent time requirements to teach the various classes that had been given to them by the central office. If the students who were interviewed are typical, perhaps many others do not have any idea that a time schedule is the reason for their loss of recess. The students gave reasons as to why they believed they lost recess privileges. Lauren sadly admitted:

Well, at the first of the year, we had it every day, but then we started acting up, so we had to get it every Friday. We got it taken off for a little while, but now we get it every Friday for about 30 minutes.

Tammy added, "I guess it is because we were being too rough outside, I think. We were getting in trouble in the hallways going back and forth too." Paula concurred, "Somehow we done something bad and we did not get to have it anymore."

All of the students stated that they enjoyed recess; the ones who had limited recess and free-play opportunities in their schools stated that if they had the choice, they would want to have recess every day. Paula, a student from Blue Diamond Elementary where recess opportunities were limited, stated the following when asked why she would like to have recess every day:

Because it gives you something to look forward to. That is what helps me is having something to look forward to. It helps me concentrate on what I am doing and get it

done. It [recess] gives you time to just get outside of the school building and get outside and play.

### *Test Scores*

Central office level administrators were also asked to give their perceptions regarding how the inclusion into the school day or the elimination of recess might affect standardized test scores; again, the majority of the administrators interviewed were in favor of having recess breaks in the school. Mr. Paul seemed very much in favor of having recess and gave the following reasons:

I don't think that you would see much positive gain in test scores by eliminating recess. I can see where possibly taking time for recess and free play could possibly improve test scores . . . well, just the obvious, having an opportunity to be up and be mobile breaks the boredom and tedium and routine. I also think when they are involved in activities that center around games in which they discover they can do certain things with their body, that contributes to their positive self-esteem, which is something I think carries over into the classroom.

Mr. Phillip agreed, stating:

I think if you have intense instruction for a period of time and then you have a recess and it is more structured...the teacher requires them to do some type of physical activity, even if it is just walk around, I think it would have a positive...on the flip side of that, if they were doing that and they took it away, it may have some negative effect.

Mr. John answered from the "whole-child" aspect, saying:

When you look at the whole child . . . you have got the mental, the physical, and the social, you have to address all of those for children to be complete. I think that if you do not allow the physical activity, the free play, and the free expression, it is going to have a negative impact on the mental aspect of education.

Ms. Cindy's answer focused on a reminder that children are not adults. She pointed out:

I don't think it is going to hurt. If you use the rest of your time wisely—they are *children*. We have got to remember they are not little adults. Even adults need physical activity. So I do not think it [having recess] is going to hurt one bit. Getting the brain going and waking them up is going to help, probably.

Ms. Eve echoed Ms. Cindy's sentiments about using time wisely. She stated:

I think time on task is very important and basically, research will tell you that about the only thing to improve test scores is increased time on task. By the same token, I think

that young children especially need time to express themselves and have some relaxation. I think when you have a nice combination, you are going to have a positive effect on test scores.

The principals interviewed had differing opinions about the effect on standardized test scores of including recess or eliminating recess. In the schools that had limited recess and free-play opportunities, the principals' sentiments were less optimistic about the effect that recess and free-play time had on test scores. For the most part, they talked about potential positive outcomes of limiting recess and free play. Ms. Barbara, from Green Clover Elementary, had an interesting theory about the effect on test scores by eliminating recess as well as other activities. She explained:

If children could be retrained, and parents and teachers--it would take everybody--if children could be retrained to do without any related arts class, whether it is PE, art, or anything else, and they spent all their time in the classroom, test scores would go up. Absolutely. Because, it is just logical to think that the more time they are exposed to something, the better they are going to be at it. But, to just take away all of those things would be just detrimental to kids, teachers, everybody.

Another principal, Ms. Teresa, held a different viewpoint about recess and free-play time and the perceived effect this time might have upon standardized test scores for a school. In her school, Yellow Moon Elementary, even though recess was limited for the fifth grade, students were given some sort of break every day, even if it was just for a few minutes after lunch or in the classroom playing board games and the like with other students. Ms. Teresa acknowledged:

I don't think it has a negative effect at all. I think I would like to believe that it is more positive than negative. And I think that teachers . . . even when we are having tests, we follow the specials schedule--which is the art, music, PE, and library classes--because we believe that firmly in a break.

Ten of the 11 teachers in the study looked more positively on recess and free-play breaks in regards to their potential effect on classroom performance, and in turn, on standardized test scores. Teachers from Green Clover Elementary were asked to give their perspective on the issue. Ms. Samantha stated the positive benefits of relaxation:

I feel it makes the student feel more relaxed because their energy is not pent up inside them; therefore, they retain information better resulting in better performance in the

classroom. I feel they are more relaxed after using their energy in a constructive way and are more able to sit still and listen for tests.

Ms. Maxine agreed on the need for breaks, saying:

I just think that they have to have those breaks, even if it is just to walk, not really PE or recess even, but just to get up and walk to the bathroom, get a drink, come back; it is like they are more alert.

Yellow Moon Elementary teachers had the following comments about the effect of having recess on standardized test scores. Ms. Emma spoke of attention spans of children:

I think...they need some kind of activity. I really do because of the TV that they watch and the games that they play, they just cannot function if they have to sit down all day and work. They can't do it. I mean, they'll turn you off. There is nothing you can do to keep their attention. And that is one reason why I feel it is necessary to give them some kind of activity.

Ms. Jill shared her observations, saying:

I can tell all the difference in the world. I think they perform better when they have gotten out and stretched and run. Frankly, the second they hit the door, they scream. They start screaming, letting out yells as they get out the door. They have just got to get that tension out from where they have been working so hard. And when they come back in—now at first they are still a little keyed up—but they get a drink of water and I read to them and get them settled down and they do a much better job. When they don't have recess, I have a difficult day, all day long.

Ms. Stephanie agreed:

I think that they need a break. You can only beat a dead horse so much. And, you can only grill them so much and you reach the point that even though you are still doing it, they are not retaining it. They are not learning. And, I think if you know when to go and you take that break and pick it up again, they are going to be better.

Ms. Lana noted that she could tell a difference in students' performance in the classroom when they were not given a chance to release tension. She described:

I can tell a difference when we don't have physical outside free time in my children—in their performance. They don't perform as well. They are off task a lot more. They are fidgety a lot more overall. Tension seems to be higher as a whole.

Blue Diamond Elementary teachers were quick to share their experiences when asked about the perceived effect of recess on standardized test scores. Ms. Betty shared her position on the need for taking breaks, saying:

I think it [breaks] makes it better. It does. Sometimes, even when I am in the middle of doing my lessons, if I notice that I am losing them, they will get up. They will jump. I have had them run up and down the stairs. Just something to get the oxygen going back to the brain and then . . . get them up for even two or three minutes; that makes a difference.

Ms. Yolanda shared her observations about the need for regularly scheduled exercise:

I have seen times when you come in and you can't get them calmed down. But, if you don't have it, they are not awake. You can go for so long in the day and then you are asleep or you are just, blah. And, I feel like playtime should be, like, after lunch and be a scheduled part of the day. I think it wakes them back up. I think it builds back their energy. They say if you don't have regular exercise, you don't have energy to do anything with. Well, I think that goes for thinking and that sort of energy too.

Mr. Dennis stated, "I definitely think it is important and if you integrate it with your schoolwork and your class work, then if you can give them five or ten minutes of free time, I think it benefits the other things."

Ms. Kathy, who taught at Blue Diamond Elementary where recess breaks have been restricted to one time a week by time requirements provided by her system, looked at the possible effects of having recess and free-play time from a different angle. She admitted:

I think kids would be less 'ADD-ish'. You know, they have some time to go and run off. And, it gives them some time to regroup and come back and then be focused again. By the end of the day right now, they are just crazy. They can't concentrate, they can't focus. They have got all this built up energy and nothing to do with it.

Ms. Pat taught in the same grade level as Ms. Kathy at Blue Diamond Elementary. She stated that she had mixed feelings about the effects of recess. I asked her if she had ever taught in a school or school setting where recess was included every day. Ms. Pat answered, "Oh yeah. I have taught 27 years and for the first 20 years that I taught, we had recess every day. And I thought it was a good thing. But we did not have all this pressure." I then asked her, "Did you see those children doing just as well in the classroom, or were they behind where children are today?" Ms. Pat replied, "I thought they were doing just as well. I sure do. But of course, we did not have those same tests back then."

Ms. Jill, a teacher at Yellow Moon Elementary in System B where break time was encouraged, described her experience from a testing week at a previous school. She described possible negative effects on test scores from limiting recess at this school:

I know that we were encouraged to have very short recesses at another school I was teaching in right before TCAPS. And I don't think...I'm not positive...I did not do research, but I do not think they did as well. I had more crying. Crying during the test. Just crying. They were very nervous and upset. I think it cheats children many times of a recess because they have to be into the test, learning to the test. I don't like that.

### *Policies*

Every central office level administrator stated at the time of the interview that there was no official written policy regarding recess and free play. However, when I initially contacted System C, the assistant director of schools told me that their system did not encourage recess; instead, they depended on the physical education classes to provide exercise for the children. This individual told me that most elementary schools did not have recess because there just was not enough time. I was then given a list of a few schools that were still having recess breaks. However, upon interviewing the administrators for this system, I was told that they were not opposed to recess; rather, teachers were feeling pressure to perform on standardized tests and had perhaps stopped having recess in order to increase time on task. In securing permission and scheduling interviews with the other two systems, there was no mention of discouraging recess.

Mr. Phillip, who was the director of schools for System C, described the way the day was divided for their system. Apparently, the schools in this district had been issued time requirements for instruction in the school day. Mr. Phillip gave details by grade levels of these requirements:

What we do, on the other hand, is we dictate locally time allocations to particular curriculum areas. For example, in kindergarten through second grade, we say we want teachers to have two large blocks of instruction, one for reading and one for math and in those, you integrate science and social studies as appropriate. Then in grades three through five, we require 90 minutes of reading and math, and so much language arts and so forth. So rather than say whether or not you have recess or how long recess is, we put in our curriculum requirements.

Mr. Phillip then explained that the teachers had discretion to decide what they would do with the time that was left over. However, Ms. Jean, an assistant principal in System C, pointed out:

There are just time requirements. An hour and a half for math in the fifth grade and you cannot deviate from that at all. And there again, you just add those minutes and hours up and there is not enough time in the day.

The administrators in System A referred to an old policy that is no longer in effect that required school systems to provide a certain number of minutes of physical activity in the school day. Most of them referred to a time before the majority of schools had physical education instructors and the regular classroom teacher was responsible for scheduling this time in the day for students. Ms. Cindy, in particular remembered the policy from her days as a principal. She recalled:

There absolutely was a policy. We had to fill out a form to turn into the state every year. We would have to show our schedules for certain grades. We would have to fill out math for a certain number of minutes each day. Physical education and playtime were also part of those. Several years ago they did away with that and there is no set amount of time mandated by the state for any particular subjects now.

Principals did not state that they had a written policy. However, they did go by some informal, unwritten policies. Most of these policies revolved around time limits and weather situations. Principals stated consistently that recess and free-play breaks were to be limited to no more than 30 minutes. Ms. Teresa, from Yellow Moon Elementary in System B stated, “We do have a cut-off time here. If they go outside, it has to be no more than 30 minutes.” Two principals stated that for days when physical education classes were provided for students, recess breaks should be limited or postponed. Ms. Barbara, from Green Clover Elementary in System A, noted that teachers had the option to go onto the playground on the days they did not have PE if they chose to. The policy at Ms. Teresa’s school, Yellow Moon Elementary, was the only one with a specific weather requirement. The temperature must be at 50 degrees or above before students are allowed to go outside. She defended this policy by saying:

We follow the same policy that the other elementary schools do. If high school athletes don't practice outside in certain temperatures, then to me it makes sense that elementary kids would not go outside for their 30 minutes in cold, cold weather, or windy weather, or weather conditions.

Teachers had a different take on the policies regarding recess and free play. For example, Ms. Kathy was a teacher at Blue Diamond Elementary School in System C. In talking to this system's director of schools, I was told that the teachers in the system had to meet certain time requirements for each subject; then they could elect to have recess or other activities with any time that was left. However, when Ms. Kathy was asked about this policy, she stated:

My whole day is planned for me. We are not supposed to deviate from this plan whatsoever. If the central office knew we had altered the schedule to have recess once a week, they would not like it.

When I asked if I could see a copy of this plan, she gave me a copy. Every moment of the school day for the fifth grade was planned. When asked to describe her day, Ms. Pat, who was also a fifth-grade teacher at Blue Diamond Elementary in System C, stated, "It is planned out. We are supposed to be at a certain place on a certain page at a certain whatever . . . every day."

At Blue Diamond Elementary School, the time requirements seemed to be a little less rigid for the fourth grade. Teachers from this grade level had recess breaks every day for about 15 or 20 minutes. On cold days, they use reserved time in the gym for play, but only for once a week. The fourth grade students had limited PE classes as well. Ms. Yolanda acknowledged:

We have an unusual schedule, because we have five classes in the fourth grade and that has been hard on the PE teacher. You can see here that one week we have art and music, the second week we have PE, the third week we have guidance, the fourth week we have library, and the fifth week we have PE again. Because they can take two weeks, we have two PE teachers and they can take two classes in the gym at the same time, so we have two weeks out of a five-week period that they have PE—every day of that week. So 10 days in five weeks.

Teachers at Yellow Moon Elementary in System B were allowed to take students outside for breaks. The only restrictions that teachers in this system quoted to me were the temperature requirements and that they were to be limited to 30 minutes. This group of teachers also referred



to having break time inside if the weather did not permit them to go out. Ms. Emma explained the procedures:

We have a break every day, but it is not always that we go outside. I mean, they are not sitting still all day long...I don't expect them to sit from 8:00 in the morning to 2:30 in the afternoon without some kind of break. You know, sometimes you have to completely ignore your lesson plans and get up and do something else in the room if it is bad out.

Ms. Jill explained how she handled breaks when the weather was not cooperative:

I have recess indoors. And, it is not just work. Of course, they are going to have to be somewhat quieter. It would disturb the entire wing. We play blocks, they can draw or paint, write on the board, play with Lincoln Logs; creative play that they can do the way they want to with a partner.

Teachers from all schools in the study referred to precious time needed to cover material. Many of these teachers managed to find a little time in the day that they could use for a break, even though there are more requirements and standards to cover than ever before. Ms. Emma, a teacher from Yellow Moon Elementary where recess and free-play breaks are encouraged, stated:

In fourth and fifth grade, we don't feel it is necessary that they go out, especially when they have gym twice a week. We go out in the springtime. When it is nice weather, we let them eat outside and when they finish eating, they can go play. But our schedule is such that we are very, very, extremely crowded for time.

Teachers are under pressure to perform. They expressed that they were under pressure because of the federal testing craze and this pressure trickled down to them from the state, the central office, the building level principal, and the community. Ms. Samantha bemoaned:

As a first-grade teacher, I know the importance of free play and/or recess for young children. However, I feel at times, it is discouraged at my school, especially if you teach any grade beyond first or second. I do allow my students at least 20-30 minutes of free time either outside or inside during winter months. Even though my test scores are good, sometimes I notice when I take my children outside, there will be an announcement on the intercom the next day saying that if we have an extra 15 minutes, we are to be on task. I feel that my children need a break to better perform in the classroom and that I am not really losing anything. But, it is difficult when your principal does not see it that way.

Ms. Samantha, who was a teacher in Green Clover Elementary where recess was more restricted than in the other schools, referred to another point that was central to the time-on-task

debate. Time-on-task research does not just address the amount of time dedicated to a certain task, it also pertains to the amount of engaged activity time (American Association of School Administrators, 1982). Ms. Samantha explained:

I feel recess and free play are essential to an early childhood classroom as well as older children. As children of today experience pressure to succeed in all areas of life, the necessity for play becomes even more critical. Most children learn through active education, therefore, active education can be connected to play.

Ms. Kathy, from Blue Diamond Elementary, also referred to this concept in her comments about the rigorous time schedule that was provided to her, admitting:

Kids that are all over the place, that are not focused, that have behavior problems; you don't have learning going on in that classroom, whether you have an hour and 15 minutes or an hour and a half. Whatever time you have scheduled, you are only going to reach those kids so far. I would rather have 15 minutes of focused instruction time versus an hour and 15 minutes of ...

### *Research*

When asked about any research conducted in the school system regarding recess and free play, teachers, principals, and administrators in all systems, with the exception of System A, stated that there had been none. In response to the legislation proposed by Senator Frist seeking to mandate 30-minutes of physical education per day to all students in kindergarten through the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, the director of schools from System A surveyed all principals in the system to determine if additions to the staff were needed, the adequacy of the facilities, and the amount of time physical education along with recess and free play was provided currently to the students. Results of this survey as it pertains to elementary schools are shown in Table 8.

Table 8

*Results of Physical Education and Play Survey Conducted by System A*

School Number	Grades Served	PE per week in minutes/structured or Fit Kids program	Recess per week in minutes (weather permitting)	Adequate indoor and outdoor facilities
1	K-5	Two thirty-minute blocks; extra 30 mins. every other Friday	K-2 20-30 minutes on days without PE; 3-5 rarely	Yes
2	K-8	75 minutes	Not addressed in self report	Outdoor-Y Indoor-N
3	K-6	45 minutes	150 minutes	Yes
4	K-5	60 minutes	Variable	Indoor-N Outdoor-Y
5	K-8	150 minutes	75 minutes	Yes
6	K-8	60 minutes	Not reported	Yes
7	K-4	87 minutes	70 minutes	Yes
8	K-4	90 minutes	150 minutes	No
9	K-8	90 minutes K-5 120 minutes 6-8	Not reported	Yes

*Physical Benefits*

When asked about the physical benefits of recess and free-play time, all central office level administrators spoke favorable of playtime. Ms. Cindy stated, “They burn off energy, they get socialization, just getting to be a child. They need movement.” Ms. Teresa, a principal, also addressed the physical benefits of play time, stating:

I think those little bodies need that time for skills as much as they do play. Most of our boys will play football or something, or flag football or something and they enjoy that, but I think there would be lots of complaints if we did away with it and we have never seen any reason to do away with it.

All principals interviewed also hailed the physical benefits of having recess and free-play opportunities during the school day. They also referred to the organized physical education classes in this discussion and the merits of playtime.

Teachers across all systems were in agreement about the physical needs of children. They all expressed that children needed physical activity and play. Ms. Jill stated:

Children need play. Play is work for children, in my opinion, and they need to play. They need the exercise. I think that is one reason we have obesity. I think children are cooped up in classrooms all day long—plus the junk food—but, I think they need recess and I think they need to be encouraged to really play during that time.

Ms. Lana added, "A lot of children go home and sit down in front of the computer, the TV, the Gameboy, or whatever and that is it. I think whatever they get here at school is just icing on the cake."

In order to determine better the physical benefits of recess and free play for children, as they saw them, I asked the students surveyed what they liked to do during recess. They cited many physical activities that they enjoyed participating in. Ann stated, "I like to play volleyball, but my dad is the coach of our basketball team, so when it is getting closer to the basketball season, I would rather play basketball to get working on that." Tina joined in with, "We play games with the other class, sort of like tag games and stuff like that." David added, "I like to play basketball, kickball, football, volleyball if I have to. It's fun though. It doesn't matter what you are playing as long as you have fun friends and you like what they do." Tyler replied, "I have been playing a lot of football lately. I also used to play Army with my friends." Tiffany admitted, "I usually play football with the boys or something." Kendra related, "I like to play on the swings and a jungle gym. I also like to do cartwheels and stuff."

Six of the 11 teachers interviewed commented that students probably did not play outside at home and that the playtime provided at school made up the majority of their physical activity.

For this reason, I asked students what they liked to play when they were at home. Most of them initially spoke of outside games that they liked to play. I realized that they were still thinking of what they did at recess, so, I then told them that they could talk about any games that they liked to play: inside or outside. After that, every one of them began to talk about computer games, Play Station games, indoor games with friends, and watching television. David confessed:

I like stuff we play outside...but if it rains about all I do is play or watch TV with my sister or watch something with my mom and dad. I also play Play Station 2 and sometimes I even play with my cat.

Gina admitted, "When I go home, I usually watch cartoons or play with my brother." Lauren said, "I usually ride my horse, but if it rains I usually play on the computer." Tammy pointed out, "Well, I like to watch TV . . . I have to do my homework first."

A few of the students interviewed also talked about the fact that they liked to read and they spent a lot of their free time at home doing that. Tina said:

When I am done reading and playing on the computer for a couple of hours, then supper will be ready. After supper, I play with my toys because we are not home very much because Mom has a long job and I have a long day of school. But, I do like watching CSI on TV. (I then told her that this was my favorite show too.)

Ann described her typical play day at home:

We just go to the backyard. I have a basketball goal down there. And, we have a trampoline and a swimming pool, but that is only for summer. If the weather is bad, we have the American Girls . . . They are 18-inch dolls and they have stories about them. So, you get to read books about them and they are from different cultures.

### *Social Benefits of Play*

Teachers and students referred to the social benefits of recess and free play most often and in the most specific terms. Teachers stated that recess and free play were some of the only times that students honed their skills of socialization. Mr. Dennis, a teacher, said:

I think it is important for the kids to unwind a little bit, to have a bit of time to talk with their friends, whether that be on a pretty day and go outside or whether it be just playing board games or whatever in the classroom. I think it is good for them to be able to socialize.

Ms. Maxine pointed out that children learn to get along better with each other during play time, saying:

They learn to get along with other children. Sometimes they all want the ball. There could be 25 balls out there and they all want the red ball. So, they kind of learn to make up a game or something. They just learn to get along better. Sometimes you have to help them a bit, but still it is unstructured. They are doing it. You don't have to tell them. And I think it is good for them.

Ms. Samantha gave a philosophical viewpoint:

Play allows children to construct all kinds of knowledge and to better understand the physical and social worlds in which they live. Play is a time in which they are in control of their own social/learning needs. Children learn many important things through play: conflict resolution, cooperation, concepts of rules, etc.

Students were asked what games they liked to play and invariably they mentioned team sports or games that require having to play with at least one other person. One student stated that she did not always play games; her activities were social in nature as well. Tina, a third grader at Yellow Moon Elementary, stated, "Normally, me and my friends just walk around and talk and stuff."

Ms. Barbara, the principal of Green Clover Elementary, was quoted previously in reference to activities leading to fights and discipline problems on the playground. Ms. Barbara's school was one in which recess had been limited in grades three through five. When asked why she thought that the older children had problems getting along on the playground, she replied, "Because they have not had practice playing."

### *Feedback*

Central office administrators were asked if they had received any positive or negative feedback regarding the inclusion or reduction of recess and free play. The director of schools for System A, Mr. John, made the following comment:

I have had some discussion with parents around testing time about too much emphasis being placed on these tests, about their children coming home and really being stressed about the test. During that time, all the classrooms have to have proctors in there with them and the students see all of this formality and teachers realize that is the heart of their

evaluations and principals realize it is their school and so forth. This is carrying over and the parents are seeing that. There is a lot of discussion about the fact that there are more things to schools than tests. That does include activity: physical activity and other things that are not tested on the state-testing model. There is beginning to be a bit of concern and I have heard some of it this past year, during the test time, especially.

Mr. Paul, the assistant director of schools for System A made these comments regarding feedback he had received:

I have had some feedback from teachers about the fact that they feel they are pressed to let some things slide that they feel the kids need: art, music, recess, break time, things of this nature. Teachers feel stressed and they sort of feel inhibited to take the kids out.

Principals also talked about feedback that they have experienced when dealing with recess and free-play policies. No principal talked of positive feedback from limiting the amount of recess time, unless it was for a weather situation. Ms. Barbara, from Green Clover Elementary, shared the following description of some feedback that she received regarding her school's decision to strictly limit recess and free-play opportunities beginning in the third grade:

I'll have parents come in because their children aren't being taken outside enough. They are used to those lower grades getting some free play just about every day, and in the third grade, they do not. It is always at the beginning of the year when they come to that new grade with that new teacher and they [parents] want to come and let me know that their children are not getting to play outside and I always back the teacher on that. I explain to the parents that it is the teacher's priority to put the curriculum first. It is the teacher's responsibility to teach the curriculum so that they have good scores on the test.

Ms. Jean, the assistant principal at Blue Diamond Elementary, shared the following about the feedback she got from teachers concerning recess and free-play time:

Kindergarten through third graders have a lot of recess and free-play time and have time to go out daily for 30 minutes. But in fourth and fifth grade, that changes drastically because the time requirements change and they have a very difficult time finding the time in their schedule to take the students outside. Because of that, we hear lots of things from teachers: "The kids need time. They need to go outside." We just can't find it.

Teachers had experienced fewer instances of negative feedback from parents than principals and central office personnel had. Many of their comments were very general, but a few spoke in terms that are more specific. Ms. Yolanda, from Blue Diamond Elementary in System C, related:

I think a couple of years ago, or maybe it was last year. Every once in a while you get, “They got to play more last year” or whatever, but we have the addition of science and social studies into our time in the fourth grade. That is where the tightness comes in. Fifth grade, they say they don’t have any time.

Ms. Kathy, who was a fifth-grade teacher in the same school, confirmed this, saying:

I have a lot of students in my homeroom class that came from other school systems. One parent in particular was appalled that we do not have a scheduled recess time in the fifth grade, after all they are just fifth graders, and so on. Well, yes they are but [system] does not schedule a time for me. I have so much instruction time that I have to get in and that is the way it is.

Ms. Pat, another teacher in the same school also stated she had similar feedback from parents.

She acknowledged:

The parents are kind of upset because we don’t take their kids out to play. But, they are also upset about their scores. They are not pleased but they don’t realize the time factor. I understand that, but you just can’t squeeze more minutes out of a day than are there.

### *Time on Task*

Time on task was also addressed by central office administrators. Most of these discussions were sparked by questions about policy and the amount of time schools dedicated to both physical education and recess breaks. The director of System A stated:

I am afraid that in some of our schools and classrooms that the teachers are concentrating so much on the other academic areas that they are probably not as involved in the physical activity as they used to be. There is a lot of stress and pressure on teachers today to make sure they cover the *No Child Left Behind* standards and the state standards and to make sure that the students are successful in those areas.

Mr. Phillip, the director of System C, stated:

I do think because of the heightened accountability system we have in place, both from the state and the federal levels, *No Child Left Behind*, I think a lot of teachers are really feeling the pressure and a lot of them may have reduced or even eliminated or a least restricted recess time. I have heard some comments from parents that maybe a certain teacher here or there did not have as much recess.

Time on task was discussed in one form or another by all principals. Time on task was reported by almost everyone interviewed as a method for increasing students' performance on standardized tests. Ms. Jean, the assistant principal of Blue Diamond Elementary, talked about



increasing time on task when addressing the question of the benefits of having or eliminating recess and free-play time. She questioned:

Of course they are telling us the more time you spend in the classroom, the better those test scores are going to be and our test scores have gradually increased throughout the past few years. Was that the difference? Did that make the difference? I don't know. I think it is just our emphasis on those tested items and those objectives more than just the time we spend, but I don't know. There has been an increase in test scores. Was it the time? I don't know.

Ms. Teresa, however, talked more about the quality of the time on task. She stated that if the time spent in class was engaging and productive, it was not the quantity of time spent as much as it was the quality of that time. She continued by saying, "Time lost in class to poor transitions between activities and poor classroom management is much more detrimental in the elementary school classroom than time lost to recess." Ms. Teresa's comments echoed those of the administrator for her system--System B. He referred to the type of learning that was taking place in the classroom not just the time dedicated to the learning. He related:

We encourage movement and active learning. When I was a classroom teacher, my room was filled with games, manipulatives, and other activities to get the brain going. We did not just sit in a desk all day. Our days were filled with movement. That is what we encourage.

Teachers said they were feeling pressure to maintain sufficient time on task. Teachers referred either directly or indirectly to time on task in almost every question posed to them. Ms. Pat, of Blue Diamond Elementary in System C, summed up the sentiments of most teachers in her comment, "This has been a problem for quite a while. Especially as the kids get older because they have got so many more objectives to cover and it is just . . . we don't have time."

### *Quantitative Analysis of Standardized Test Scores*

In the quantitative portion of the study, academic performance for the three schools studied were analyzed on the basis of performance on the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) achievement test scores as reported by those schools to the State of Tennessee and recorded on the State Report Card (Tennessee State Department of Education, 2005).

A Three-year average of the academic achievement scores for Green Clover Elementary School are provided in Table 9.

Table 9

*A Three-Year Average of the Academic Achievement Scores for Green Clover Elementary School*

Subject Area	Criterion Referenced: School Score/Grade	Criterion Referenced: State Score/Grade
Math	50/C	51/B
Reading/Language	47/C	50/C
Social Studies	47/D	50/C
Science	48/D	50/C

Green Clover Elementary is reported to be below the state average in every area except reading, where they are equivalent. A three-year average of the academic achievement scores for Yellow Moon Elementary was reported by the State of Tennessee as shown in Table 10.

Table 10

*A Three-Year Average of the Academic Achievement Scores for Yellow Moon Elementary School*

Subject Area	Criterion Referenced: School Score/Grade	Criterion Referenced: State Score/Grade
Math	63/A	51/B
Reading/Language	58/A	50/C
Social Studies	63/A	50/C
Science	62/A	50/C

As shown, Yellow Moon Elementary School scored well above the state average in every area. Blue Diamond Elementary was reported to have the following scores as shown in Table 11.

Table 11

*A Three-Year Average of the Academic Achievement Scores for Blue Diamond Elementary School*

Subject Area	Criterion Referenced: School Score/Grade	Criterion Referenced: State Score/Grade
Math	53/B	51/B
Reading/Language	51/C	50/C
Social Studies	50/C	50/C
Science	50/C	50/C

Blue Diamond Elementary School's scores on criterion referenced standardized tests fell exactly in line with the state's average and they were slightly above the state's average on the writing assessment. Table 12 provides a three-year average of the writing scores on the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program writing assessment for grades four and five in each of the three schools in the study. Data are provided for both grades four and five even though currently the test is administered during the fifth-grade year. During the three year period examined by the state to determine test scores, the year of test admission was changed from the fourth to the fifth grade.

Table 12

*A Three-Year Average of Writing Scores for Grades Four and Five*

School Name	2002		2003			2004			State
	Score	Grade	Score	Grade	Trend	Score	Grade	Trend	
Green Clover	3.3	C	3.5	B	+	3.8	B	NC	3.9
Yellow Moon	4.5	A	4.6	A	NC	4.5	A	NC	3.9
Blue Diamond	3.7	B	3.8	B	NC	4.0	A	+	3.9

### *Summary*

Chapter 4 contained research data collected from 32 open-ended interviews and follow-up e-mail and phone correspondence with first through fifth grade teachers located in Northeast Tennessee. The respondents represented various levels of stakeholders in the educational system. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and hand coded. A peer debriefer, Becky Raulston, was asked to help with the interview questions. I drew on her years of experience in the elementary setting to help me determine the best questions by which to elicit true and

accurate responses. Responses were classified between the need for recess and the need for more time on task. Within each category, subcategories emerged. The categories were then examined holistically to avoid repetition and to develop emerging themes. An external auditor examined my research to assure that the findings reported accurately encompassed the statements and perceptions of those interviewed.

## CHAPTER 5

### FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The intent of the first phase of this mixed methods study was to investigate the perceptions of directors of schools, assistant directors of schools, supervisors, principals, teachers, and students to glean information concerning their perceptions about recess and free-play time in the public school system as well as the rationale of directors of schools, assistant directors, supervisors, and teachers in deciding to keep or limit recess and free play. Three school systems in the East Tennessee region were studied to assess their policies and perceptions regarding recess and free play. A representative kindergarten- through fifth-grade school was selected from each system. Each school allowed differing levels of recess and free time opportunities to be realized by children. Administrators, teachers, and students from individual schools were interviewed to better ascertain the rationale behind these decisions and the value of these decisions as perceived by the various stakeholders in the individual school and the system as a whole. The second phase of the study examined the standardized test scores of these schools as reported by the State of Tennessee on the state report card (Tennessee State Department of Education, 2005).

Changes are being made in schools across the country regarding recess and free play. Most of the research dedicated to the rationale for these changes revolved around a few central themes. School administrators and teachers are reacting to pressure to perform by trying to increase time on task. Many states, including Tennessee, have developed accountability systems for education that are coupled with the stigma of a grade for a particular class and schools and systems' names are being published across the headlines of local newspapers and television as well as on the Internet. This is also coupled with the threat of state or federal takeover for

consistently low-performing schools (Henry, 1996). Because of this push to perform, recess is often considered to be a waste of precious time.

Other factors were previously reviewed in the literature as reasons for keeping children from having a recess break. These factors included the possible disruption that recess has in the work patterns of children, the encouragement of aggression, and safety factors. All of these were discussed in the study; however, these were secondary themes to the pressure at all levels to increase time on task and thus, in theory, to increase test scores.

### *Findings Related to Central Office Administrators*

In addressing the research question concerning the perceptions regarding recess and free play, administrative personnel at the central office level invariably spoke favorably toward recess and free-play time and its value. All of the directors of schools stated that recess or free play was important to the development of the child and it was not discouraged by the system in any sort of official policy. The other supervisors who were interviewed also spoke favorably about recess and play time.

#### *System A*

Administrators and supervisors at this level spoke about the importance of time on task. The director of schools and assistant director of schools for System A expressed that recess was important and they stated that most of their schools provided this opportunity for students. Each spoke fondly of his or her own days as a student and how much he or she loved to play and have recess and free time. In regard to the research question addressing the rationale behind the decision to limit recess and free play, central office personnel soon reminded me that in those days there was no high stakes testing figured into the equation. They stated that if recess and free play was limited by schools in their system, they believed the pressure to improve test scores at a building level was behind the push to increase time on task.

### *System B*

Because of the short length of time that the director of schools had been employed with System B, I was directed to a supervisor with more knowledge of the system. In reference to the research question regarding perceptions of recess and free-play time, the administrator interviewed in this system spoke favorably of recess and was the only administrator in the study who spoke about the value of movement in all areas of education. He not only spoke about the value of recess and free play but also addressed many areas of education. Many of his comments revolved around the concept of brain-based learning that was previously reviewed in the literature. He spoke of how System B encourages teachers to vary their teaching methods and get students moving and using their thinking and logic skills. He referred to his own days as a teacher and how he used centers, manipulatives, and even simple board games to encourage critical thinking and logical development in his students. He said that teachers in System B were encouraged to do the same. He said that System B did not limit recess and free play to any strong degree and maintained an environment of changing practices.

### *System C*

In System C, the administrators interviewed expressed positive perceptions in reference to recess and free play thereby answering the research question that addressed the perceptions of directors of schools, principals, assistant principals, and teachers regarding recess and free play. In reference to the research question that examines the rationale for deciding to limit or keep recess and free play, System C had developed a plan for every day for its teachers. Teachers in this system were required to spend a certain amount of time on each individual subject. All teachers in the system, according to the description of the director of schools, principals, and teachers within the system, were to be on the same objective each day according to grade level. According to the director, the teacher may use whatever time is left to have a break as



determined by the teacher. According to the building level administrator, teachers, and students interviewed in this system, in the fifth grade, there is no time left.

### *Findings Related to Building Level Administrators*

Three building level administrators were interviewed. This group was comprised of two principals and one assistant principal. All of these building level administrators were female. These administrators as a whole spoke favorably about the potential benefits of recess; however, they differed in how valuable they considered recess and free play would be when balanced with the need to improve standardized test scores in their own schools.

#### *System A*

The principal at Green Clover Elementary in addressing the perceptions toward recess and free-play time spoke the least favorably toward the value of recess and she expressed that increased time in the classroom was the strongest weapon in her battle to raise test scores. Her school permitted up to a 30-minute recess break for students in kindergarten through second grade on days when a structured physical education course was not provided. Beginning in the third grade, which coincides with the beginning of TCAP testing, recess and free-play time is limited. In addressing the research question addressing the rationale in deciding to limit or keep recess and free play, the principal stressed that the students are to be in the classroom getting that instruction and she stated that she reminds teachers of that throughout the year. Her comments addressed the fact that there was pressure from higher-level administration to raise test scores even though the administrators interviewed in System A expressed no sentiments resembling support for limiting recess.

### *System B*

The principal of Yellow Moon Elementary spoke the most favorably concerning recess and free play when stating her perceptions. She supported the idea of her teachers taking students outside for breaks or playing inside on days when the weather did not permit outside free-play time. Her comments coincided with those of the administrator interviewed concerning time on task. Whereas she did consider that time was a factor and mandated in most cases that teachers limit recess and free play breaks to a maximum of 30 minutes, she also expressed that what was happening in the classroom in the way of instruction and classroom management was much more of a factor in producing higher test scores than merely the amount of time spent on a subject. She also referred to many components of the brain-based learning theory when referring to movement and discovery in the classroom. She stated that many other factors were more detrimental to learning and that there were more benefits than problems with having recess. This was her rationale for allowing recess and free play in her school.

### *System C*

The sentiments expressed by the building level administrator from System C fell somewhere in between the comments of the other two principals interviewed. The assistant principal of this school volunteered to participate in my study. Although she expressed that recess and free play were definitely important in the development of the child, she also commented that time on task had been proven to raise test scores. She stated that test scores had indeed risen, but she could not, with certainty, attribute that to the increased time requirements mandated by the system. Her comments also indicated that this rise in test scores was more the direct result of the creative learning that was taking place in the classroom than simply the amount of time spent there. She also admitted, however, that they too reminded teachers in faculty meetings that those who had a recess time in their grade were to watch the time limits and spend time on task in the classroom. The rationale behind limiting recess and free-play

opportunities in her school was driven by the central office's decision to require strict time requirements for all academic subjects, leaving this school with little input in the decision.

### *Findings Related to Teachers*

Teachers were the most verbal of the groups in the study. Every teacher interviewed spoke of recess as a valuable component in the development of the child in many areas: socially, mentally, and physically. Only one expressed concern that time spent on recess might be better spent in the classroom yet she too admitted that recess had a value in the development of children. She, along with the other teachers, stated that the pressure of testing was pushing things such as recess and other special classes such as music and art to the background.

### *System A*

Teachers interviewed in Green Clover Elementary School in System A explained that they were allowed to have recess in the younger grades but admitted they did not feel that it was encouraged. The rationale behind the decision to limit recess and free-play breaks was at times fueled by pressure from the administration. They considered that the comments of the principal regarding time on task and keeping students in the classroom were directed at them when they took their students out to play. From the findings of the study, Green Clover Elementary was not the only school that made such reminders of time. One teacher stated that when she used different teaching methods and games to present objectives, she thought she might be looked down on by other educators in the building.

Teachers in this system hailed the benefits of recess in sharing their perceptions. They invariably spoke of recess as a valuable time for children to learn to socialize with other children and develop conflict-resolution skills. The physical development of the child was also a factor in their support of recess. Each teacher interviewed stated that the inclusion of recess and free-play breaks in the school day had a positive effect on classroom performance and in turn had a

positive effect on standardized test scores. Their thoughts aligned with the novelty theory previously defined as the theory that proposes as classroom work becomes less interesting, children become less attentive and need playtime to re-introduce novelty (Evans & Pellegrini, 1997). According to this theory, recess breaks allow children the opportunity to engage in activities different from academic lessons. Once the children return to class, students perceive schoolwork as new and novel again (Sindelar, 2002). Teachers in System A stated that after a break, students returned to the classroom refreshed and ready to learn again. One teacher in System A acknowledged that she could learn a lot about students just from watching them on the playground. She stated that she could determine much more quickly which of her students were loners, bullies, leaders, or followers and she was able to transfer this information into her classroom.

### *System B*

Teachers interviewed in System B spoke very favorably of recess and free-play breaks, whether the breaks were indoors or outside. Teachers in every grade level at Yellow Moon Elementary were allowed to have up to a 30-minute break for recess. One teacher requested an extra 10-minute morning break for her students and was granted this time. Teachers in the fourth and fifth grade, however, limited their breaks to lunchtime when weather permitted. The students were allowed to eat their lunches outside and were allowed to play during whatever time was left. This usually averaged out to be a 10- to 15-minute break. Teachers in this system were quick to point out that they provided an indoor break as well and that many types of brain-based learning activities were used. The comments of teachers in this system coincided with those of the supervisors and administrators whom I had interviewed. Movement was connected to learning in the majority of these classrooms, according to the comments of teachers, and the quality of time was stressed as much or more than the quantity. This connection between

movement, novelty, and learning was expressed as the rationale for keeping recess in their classroom by all teachers interviewed from this school.

Teachers in this system also had many comments that aligned with the surplus energy theory that was defined earlier as the theory that suggests when children are sedentary for long periods of time they build up surplus energy. Fidgeting, restlessness, waning concentration, and general off-task behavior are indications that children need a break (Sindelar, 2002). According to this theory, only after this pent-up energy is released can children return to the classroom refreshed and ready for more work (Evans & Pellegrini, 1997). These teachers almost without fail referred to the need for students to “burn off energy.” They spoke of the need to realize when the students were not concentrating any longer and to take a break to allow the students to “get the wiggles out” and then return to the classroom or the activity at hand ready to learn.

### *System C*

Teachers interviewed in System C were primarily from grade levels that had been forced to limit or eliminate recess breaks from the school day. These teachers by far were the most frustrated group. Many of the teachers talked about the rigid time restraints that had been placed upon them by their system. They did realize the need for concentrated time on task that addressed the rationale of the system in limiting recess and free-play opportunities; at the same time, however, they explained that breaks such as recess were important. Only one teacher interviewed in the study stated that her time was better spent in the classroom than spent at recess. She stated that she had objectives to cover and only so many minutes in the day to do so. She was also the teacher with the most experience of all the teachers whom I interviewed. When asked about her perceptions concerning the value of recess, she stated that she believed that recess was important and if she were speaking as a parent, she would want her kids to have it. Again, her comments reverted to the pressure of testing and scores. When asked if she had ever had recess, she stated that she had it every day in a previous school before the pressures of

testing. When asked if she thought her students had done just as well in acquiring the objectives of that grade level, she stated that she believed they did just as well, but there were no tests back then.

The other teachers from Blue Diamond Elementary stated that recess was important when relating their personal perceptions and expressed a desire to include it in the school day. These teachers had stolen a few minutes from each class on Fridays to give their students a recess break one day a week as a reward. One teacher expressed that the central office would not be pleased with that decision; even though the director of schools for the system had stated that once the time requirements were met, teachers could give their students a break. The teachers informed me that once the time requirements were met, there was no time for a break.

Teachers in grade levels that had reduced or eliminated recess were also frustrated with the fact that once recess was limited, there was nothing to offer as a reward or punishment for students. Recess time was seen by them as a privilege and without it, they had less to offer their students for compliance with the rules and good behavior. Teachers, in the fifth grade especially, stated that recess would have a positive effect on discipline. They explained that they needed it to offer as a reward and that participating in recess would help to reduce disruptive behavior in the classroom. However, one teacher commented that the way they do it now did not have much of an effect. With recess only being offered once a week, the immediacy of a reward was not felt by the students and therefore was not of much benefit.

### *Findings Related to Students*

In answer to the research question that sought to determine the perceptions of students regarding recess and free play, students in all schools and systems stated that they enjoyed recess and break time. They told of many different things that they liked to do when they were playing at school. Most of them spoke of sports and games but some referred to the social aspects of recess and stated that they liked to walk around and talk to friends. The social benefits of recess

were most evident when talking to students. They talked of playing team sports and games. No students talked about playing alone; they always talked about games they played with their friends.

When students who were currently allowed to have recess and free play breaks were asked how they would feel if recess was limited or taken away completely, only one student stated that she would be "okay with it." She stated that she did not mind schoolwork but that she also enjoyed playing. Most students stated that they would not take it very well or that they would be very sad. Some students spoke of bad behaviors in the classroom on days that they did not get to go outside because as one student put it, "That is where we get our energy out."

Students with limited recess time stated that they would enjoy having recess again. They talked of becoming bored with sitting in the classroom. They remembered they were permitted to play more when they were younger and they usually had a story about playing on the playground. One student complained that all she did all day long was sit. When asked if they would like to have a recess break every day, students invariably said yes.

### *Conclusions for Qualitative Data*

The vast majority of system administrators, building level administrators, teachers, and students stated that recess and free play was an enjoyable and vital part of the development of a well-rounded child. Children were thought to gain social skills, develop creativity, reap physical benefits, and perform better in the classroom by the majority of all participants. However, the schools and systems participating in this study have begun to reduce or eliminate the recess and free-play time for certain grade levels. Without exception, pressure to perform well on standardized tests was given as the reason for this reduction. Increasing time on task in the classroom was given as the means to this goal. Recess was seen as an expendable time by some administrators but by a smaller percentage of teachers. An overwhelming majority of teachers stated that the benefits of having recess outweighed classroom time. In addition, the majority of

teachers stated that they believed that having recess would actually lead to better test scores. The benefits of having students who were more alert, awake, and ready to learn were given as reasons to provide recess.

Time on task was addressed by educators in all levels of the study. Educators addressed it in different ways. Whereas simply increasing time in the classroom was more likely to be heralded by system level administrators, teachers addressed the quality of what was taking place in the classroom as opposed to just the quantity of time spent there.

Safety and aggression on the playground was addressed by only one building level administrator as a reason to limit recess and free-play opportunities. The other schools considered that the playground area was safe and the children were well supervised. Only one principal spoke of the older children's tendency to fight and not be able to play socially. This phenomenon was found in the school with the most limited opportunities for recess and play.

The physical need that children have to play was addressed by the adults in the study. When asked about their activities at home, the students interviewed spoke of sedentary indoors activities as much as physical play. When asked about their activities during outdoor free-play time at school, the answers overwhelmingly involved physical play, team sports, pretend play, creative activities, and social interactions. Students also described activities during indoor free-play time that included building with blocks, playing board games, drawing, and writing. Students self-reported more participation in physical and creative play at school than at home.

A surprising theme of miscommunication emerged during the interview process. In many instances, each level of educator interviewed gave the ownership of the decision to include or limit recess to the other. Central office personnel laid this decision at the feet of building level administrators. Building level administrators discussed the teacher's discretion to allow recess. Teachers, however, most often indicated that they had to abide by a policy that was not of their design.



### *Findings Related to Standardized Test Scores*

In referring to performance on standardized test scores, the following research question was postulated: Has there been a difference in test scores in individual schools or school systems in which recess breaks or free-play opportunities have been reduced or eliminated?

In order to examine the schools under study, one must first look at the performance of the system as a whole. Systems A and B were given a Good Standing rating by the State of Tennessee. System C had been placed on the target list. Each school that was studied had been given the rating of Good Standing. The schools appear in the order of their affiliation with the systems mentioned above from A to C.

Green Clover Elementary had the most students with limited recess opportunities. Recess opportunities for this school were not encouraged after the second grade. Increasing time on task was repeatedly stressed as one of the goals of this administration. The 2003-2004 report card as it refers to testing for Green Clover Elementary was provided in Table 9.

Schools are graded in the areas of math, reading/language, social studies, and science. Green Clover Elementary scored one level below the state's average in every area with the exception of reading/language, where they scored equal to the state's average. As illustrated in Table 12, Green Clover Elementary has gradually increased its scores on the state's writing assessment improving from a 3.3 in 2002 to a 3.8 in 2004 that is one point away from the state's average for that year. The scores for Green Clover Elementary were high enough to keep them in good standing but were still not exemplary.

The students at Yellow Moon Elementary were afforded the most recess and free-play opportunities of any school studied; even though they, too, had limited recess time in the fourth and fifth grades, they still had the same number of breaks. The school report card as it refers to state testing for Yellow Moon Elementary was provided in Table 10.

Yellow Moon Elementary received an A in every subject across the board. They were one level above the state's average in math and two grade levels above the state's average in

reading/language, social studies, and science. The students from Yellow Moon Elementary also scored very well on the writing assessment. Scores from the writing assessment are provided in Table 12. Yellow Moon Elementary scored a 4.5 in 2002, a 4.6 in 2003, and a 4.5 in 2004; all of which are far above the state's average for 2004 of 3.9.

Blue Diamond Elementary fell in between the two schools in the percentage of students who were given opportunities for recess and free play breaks. An opportunity for recess was provided to students through the fourth grade; although in the fourth grade the time per day was reduced. In the fifth grade, however, recess was all but eliminated as it was only offered to the students on Fridays. The School Report Card for Blue Diamond Elementary is provided in Table 11.

Blue Diamond Elementary students' scored equal to the state's average in every area tested. In addition, they demonstrated growth in their writing scores as shown in Table 12. They improved from a grade level B score of 3.7 in 2002, to a 3.8 in 2003, to an A grade level score of 4.0 in 2004; this was one tenth of a point above the state's average of 3.9.

In examining these data as a group, it can be determined that Yellow Moon Elementary was the highest scoring school in the study, followed by Blue Diamond Elementary, and then Green Clover Elementary. This order also reflects the amount of recess and free play opportunities afforded students. Yellow Moon Elementary had the least restrictive policy regarding recess breaks followed by Blue Diamond and Green Clover Elementary Schools. Yellow Moon also had the lowest number of students who were classified as economically disadvantaged followed by Blue Diamond Elementary and then Green Clover Elementary. Socioeconomic status is often looked upon as the leading indicator in academic achievement. This pattern of test scores fell in line with that statement. This information also indicated that keeping recess and free play as part of the curriculum did not appear to have any negative effect on the learning that is occurring in the schools. Nor does limiting recess or free-play

opportunities in favor of spending this time in the classroom appear to have any measurable favorable effect on standardized test performance.

### *Conclusions for Quantitative Data*

Many administrators and teachers across the country are greatly limiting or removing recess and free-play opportunities from the school day in order to garner precious time for instruction in the classroom. Pellegrini and Smith (1993) identified three major arguments that school systems have used to justify the abolition of recess:

(a) There is not time for recess because more instructional time is needed to raise test scores; (b) recess disrupts the work patterns of the children, causing high levels of excitement and subsequent inattentiveness; and (c) recess encourages aggressions and antisocial behavior. (p. 52)

All of these factors were mentioned by stakeholders in my study. However, in comparing schools that have limited recess and free-play time, no great gain was seen in their standardized test scores. The school with the highest test scores in the study allowed the most recess breaks and free-play time for its students. Other things such as socioeconomic status can definitely be seen as a factor in these scores. However, limiting recess and free play to gain time in the classroom showed no significant gain in test scores just as having recess and free play showed no significant reduction in test scores.

### *Overall Conclusions*

In conclusion, the stakeholders involved in this study had similar responses to the questions involved in this research. The majority stated that recess and free-play opportunities were important for the overall development of children. Common benefits were discussed by almost all participants. Systems and schools that have reduced or limited recess and free-play opportunities all noted the same basic reason for doing so: pressure to perform on standardized tests. Upon examining the latest scores for these schools, it was found that no measurable gain was realized by limiting this time, just as no significant loss in test scores was realized by

schools that continued to provide recess breaks. Schools also cited improved focus on objectives and creative teaching methods as greater indicators for success than just an increase in classroom time. Many stakeholders also expressed a belief that recess and free-play opportunities could actually have a positive effect on test scores. A better look into the engagement in the classroom would be warranted in these cases.

Although most participants heralded the benefits of recess and free play, they also spoke of its inclusion into the day as a reward and its revocation as a punishment. In the schools where recess had been eliminated solely for the purpose of increasing time on task, the students interviewed still perceived that the absence of recess was due to their misbehavior or that of their classmates. If recess and free play are perceived to be beneficial learning tools for students, this benefit should not be withheld from them as a punishment, just as math or any other learning opportunity should not be withheld.

Differences in perceptions of what was occurring in the system emerged as a prevalent and surprising theme. In two of the three systems studied, the central office staff had an idea of how recess was conducted that was different from what was indeed happening in the schools. This miscommunication continued to be a repeated theme in the study. Participants stated that that decision to have recess or to limit recess came from another source. These statements often contradicted each other in the same system. Better communication is needed between the central office personnel and the building level personnel to solidify expectations, discuss classroom practices, and come to a consensus regarding a schedule that is most beneficial to all parties involved.

### *Recommendations*

The first segment of this study was conducted to determine the perceptions regarding the value or lack of value of recess and free play in the public school system and the rationale behind the decision to maintain a policy of allowing recess regularly or limiting its place in the

classroom. The second segment was conducted to examine the trend of reducing or eliminating recess and free-play opportunities to determine if this action did indeed yield better test scores by providing more time on task in the classroom. The limited scope of this study and themes that emerged during this study suggest the need for additional research.

### *Recommendations for Further Research*

1. Only three systems were included in this study; therefore, the results are limited to those systems and schools. In order to generalize these findings to the larger educational system, additional research is needed in other school settings to see if the same results are realized. If similar results were realized, it would further support the accuracy of this study and would provide additional support to the findings.
2. More quantitative research should be conducted on a larger scale regarding the performance on standardized test scores in schools that permit recess and free play versus schools that have limited its use. More quantitative research would allow the results to be generalized to the larger population.
3. Further research should be conducted by introducing recess and free play into half of the classes in a single grade level in a school that does not currently allow daily recess and free-play time. A comparison should be made between the test classes and the control classes in terms of overall satisfaction with school, standardized test scores, social development, and physical fitness.
4. The development of social skills as a direct benefit of having recess was a repeated theme in this study. Further research should be conducted to determine if students who are not afforded the opportunity to regularly participate in recess and free play are found deficient in those crucial skills.
5. There is a vast quantity of research available concerning the best practices for the classroom. Further examination of the implementation of these practices into the

- classroom should be conducted. This evaluation should focus on system-wide models to better the achievement in schools.
6. The current *No Child Left Behind* legislation includes all populations under the blanket of standardized testing. Further research should be expanded to include special education and gifted students to determine the effect of including or limiting recess on this student population and their achievement
  7. Additional research should be conducted regarding the apparent gap in communication between system administrators, building level administrators, and teachers. Methods of improving this communication should be examined.

### *Recommendations for Practice*

Time on task research appears to be oftentimes misquoted in the defense of providing more classroom time for instruction. As referred to in the literature review, there must be time in the classroom, but the number of minutes provided on a certain subject does not guarantee success. It is the number of minutes a student is actively engaged in learning that provides results. In order to ensure that the time spent in the classroom is time spent wisely, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. All stakeholders in the educational process, including directors of schools, building level administrators, and teachers need to develop better communication regarding the ownership of decisions about time on task, recess, and the quality of instruction.
2. This research indicates a need within each of the systems studied for a school-by-school and classroom-by-classroom analysis of the value of recess as a support for higher quality student engagement.
3. Principals should observe classroom procedures and teaching methods at length in place of the “drop by” observation. The “task” should be defined before the best practice and the appropriate length of time on task is determined.

4. Budget issues are a concern for the systems and schools studied. Adequate monies should be provided to allow all educators to enjoy staff development opportunities that will better prepare them to use the best practices available in their classrooms.

### *Personal Reflections*

I began this study with some ideas about recess and free-play opportunities. During the research process, notions that I had never thought about emerged. Throughout this study, I better realized the intense pressure to perform at all levels of the educational process, from the director of schools down to the students in the classroom. I learned through this study that I must remain sympathetic to educators who feel this pressure and respect the methods that they employ in order to realize their goals.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Childhood Obesity Reduction Act

(Introduced in Senate)

S 2551 IS

108th CONGRESS

2d Session

S. 2551

To reduce and prevent childhood obesity by encouraging schools and school districts to develop and implement local, school-based programs designed to reduce and prevent childhood obesity , promote increased physical activity, and improve nutritional choices.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

June 21, 2004

Mr. FRIST (for himself and Mr. WYDEN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

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A BILL

To reduce and prevent childhood obesity by encouraging schools and school districts to develop and implement local, school-based programs designed to reduce and prevent childhood obesity, promote increased physical activity, and improve nutritional choices.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

**SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

This Act may be cited as the `Childhood Obesity Reduction Act' .

**SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

Congress makes the following findings:

- (1) According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, obesity may soon overtake tobacco as the leading preventable cause of death.
- (2) In 1999, 13 percent of children aged 6 to 11 years and 14 percent of adolescents aged 12 to 19 years in the United States were overweight. This prevalence has nearly tripled for adolescents in the past 2 decades.

- (3) Risk factors for heart disease, such as high cholesterol and high blood pressure, occur with increased frequency in overweight children and adolescents compared to children with a healthy weight.
- (4) Type 2 diabetes, previously considered an adult disease, has increased dramatically in children and adolescents. Overweight and obesity are closely linked to type 2 diabetes.
- (5) Obesity in children and adolescents is generally caused by a lack of physical activity, unhealthy eating patterns, or a combination of the 2, with genetics and lifestyle both playing important roles in determining a child's weight.
- (6) Overweight adolescents have a 70 percent chance of becoming overweight or obese adults.
- (7) The 2001 report 'The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity' suggested that obesity and its complications were already costing the United States \$117,000,000,000 annually.
- (8) Substantial evidence shows that public health risks can be reduced through increased public awareness and community involvement.
- (9) Congress needs to challenge students, teachers, school administrators, and local communities to voluntarily participate in the development and implementation of activities to successfully reduce and prevent childhood obesity

## **TITLE I--CONGRESSIONAL COUNCIL ON CHILDHOOD OBESITY**

### **SEC. 101. CONGRESSIONAL COUNCIL ON CHILDHOOD OBESITY .**

- (a) ESTABLISHMENT OF COUNCIL- There is established a 'Congressional Council on Childhood Obesity' (referred to in this title as the 'Council').
- (b) PURPOSES- The purposes of the Council shall be--
  - (1) to encourage every elementary school and middle school in the United States, whether public or private, to develop and implement a plan to reduce and prevent obesity , promote improved nutritional choices, and promote increased physical activity among students; and
  - (2) to provide information as necessary to secondary schools.

### **SEC. 102. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL.**

- (a) COMPOSITION OF THE COUNCIL- The Council shall be composed of 8 members as follows:
  - (1) The majority leader of the Senate or the designee of the majority leader of the Senate.
  - (2) The minority leader of the Senate or the designee of the minority leader of the Senate.
  - (3) The Speaker of the House of Representatives or the designee of the Speaker of the House of Representatives.
  - (4) The minority leader of the House of Representatives or the designee of the minority leader of the House of Representatives.
  - (5) 4 citizen members to be appointed in accordance with subsection (b).

(b) **APPOINTMENT OF CITIZEN COUNCIL MEMBERS-**

(1) **METHOD OF APPOINTMENT-** For the purpose of subsection (a)(5), each of the 4 members described in paragraphs (1) through (4) of subsection (a) shall appoint to the Council a citizen who is an expert on children's health, nutrition, or physical activity.

(2) **DATE OF APPOINTMENT-** The appointments made under paragraph (1) shall be made not later than 120 days after the date of enactment of this Act .

(c) **VACANCIES-** Any vacancy in the Council shall not affect its powers, but shall be filled in the manner in which the original appointment was made under subsection (a).

(d) **CHAIRPERSON-** The members of the Council shall elect, from among the members of the Council, a Chairperson.

(e) **INITIAL MEETING-** The Council shall hold its first meeting not later than 120 days after the date of enactment of this Act .

**SEC. 103. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COUNCIL.**

(a) **IN GENERAL-** The Council shall engage in the following activities:

(1) Work with outside experts to develop the Congressional Challenge to Reduce and prevent Childhood Obesity , which shall include the development of model plans to reduce and prevent childhood obesity that can be adopted or adapted by elementary schools or middle schools that participate.

(2) Develop and maintain a website that is updated not less than once a month on best practices in the United States for reducing and preventing childhood obesity .

(3) Assist in helping elementary schools and middle schools in establishing goals for the healthy reduction and prevention of childhood obesity .

(4) Consult and coordinate with the President's Council on Physical Fitness and other Federal Government initiatives conducting activities to reduce and prevent childhood obesity .

(5) Reward elementary schools, middle schools, and local educational agencies promoting innovative, successful strategies in reducing and preventing childhood obesity .

(6) Provide information to secondary schools.

(b) **CONGRESSIONAL CHALLENGE WINNERS-**

(1) **IN GENERAL-** The Council shall--

(A) evaluate plans submitted by elementary schools, middle schools, and local educational agencies under paragraph (2);

(B) designate the plans submitted under paragraph (2) that meet the criteria under paragraph (3) as Congressional Challenge winners; and

(C) post the plans of the Congressional Challenge winners designated under subparagraph (B) on the website of the Council as model plans for reducing and preventing childhood obesity .

(2) **SUBMISSION OF PLANS-** Each elementary school, middle school, or local educational agency that desires to have the plan to reduce and prevent childhood obesity of such entity designated as a Congressional Challenge winner shall submit to the Council such plan at such time, in such manner, and accompanied by such information as the Council may reasonably require.

(3) SELECTION CRITERIA-

(A) IN GENERAL- The Council shall evaluate plans submitted by elementary schools, middle schools, and local educational agencies under paragraph (2) and shall designate as Congressional Challenge winners the plans that--

- (i) show promise in successfully increasing physical activity, improving nutrition, and reducing and preventing obesity ; or
- (ii) have maintained efforts in assisting children in increasing physical activity, improving nutrition, and reducing and preventing obesity .

(B) CRITERIA- The Council shall make the determination under subparagraph (A) based on the following criteria:

- (i) Strategies based on evaluated interventions.
- (ii) The number of children in the community in need of assistance in addressing obesity and the potential impact of the proposed plan.
- (iii) The involvement in the plan of the community served by the school or local educational agency.
- (iv) Other criteria as determined by the Council.

(c) MEETINGS- The Council shall hold not less than 1 meeting each year, and all meetings of the Council shall be public meetings, preceded by a publication of notice in the Federal Register.

**SEC. 104. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS.**

(a) PAY AND TRAVEL EXPENSES-

(1) PROHIBITION OF PAY- Members of the Council shall receive no pay, allowances, or benefits by reason of their service on the Council.

(2) TRAVEL EXPENSES-

(A) COMPENSATION FOR TRAVEL- Each member of the Council shall be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for employees of agencies under subchapter I of chapter 57 of title 5, United States Code, while away from their homes or regular places of business in the performance of services for the Council, to the extent funds are available under subparagraph (B) for such expenses.

(B) LIMIT ON TRAVEL EXPENSES- Travel expenses under subparagraph (A) shall be appropriated from the amounts appropriated to the legislative branch and shall not exceed \$1,000,000.

(b) STAFF- The Chairperson of the Council may appoint and terminate, as may be necessary to enable the Council to perform its duties, not more than 5 staff personnel, all of whom shall be considered employees of the Senate.

## **SEC. 105. TERMINATION OF COUNCIL.**

The Council shall terminate on September 30 of the second full fiscal year following the date of enactment of this Act .

## **SEC. 106. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this title \$2,200,000 for each of fiscal years 2005 and 2006.

# **TITLE II--NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR THE PREVENTION AND REDUCTION OF CHILDHOOD OBESITY**

## **SEC. 201. ESTABLISHMENT AND DUTIES OF FOUNDATION.**

(a) **IN GENERAL-** There shall be established in accordance with this section a nonprofit private corporation to be known as the National Foundation for the Prevention and Reduction of Childhood Obesity (referred to in this title as the 'Foundation'). The Foundation shall not be an agency or instrumentality of the Federal Government, and officers, employees, and members of the board of the Foundation shall not be officers or employees of the Federal Government.

(b) **PURPOSE OF FOUNDATION-** The purpose of the Foundation shall be to support and carry out activities for the prevention and reduction of childhood obesity through school-based activities.

(c) **ENDOWMENT FUND-**

(1) **IN GENERAL-** In carrying out subsection (b), the Foundation shall establish a fund for providing endowments for positions that are associated with the Congressional Council on Childhood Obesity and the Department of Health and Human Services (referred to in this title as the 'Department') and dedicated to the purpose described in such subsection. Subject to subsection (g)(1)(B), the fund shall consist of such donations as may be provided by non-Federal entities and such non-Federal assets of the Foundation (including earnings of the Foundation and the fund) as the Foundation may elect to transfer to the fund.

(2) **AUTHORIZED EXPENDITURES OF FUND-** The provision of endowments under paragraph (1) shall be the exclusive function of the fund established under such paragraph. Such endowments may be expended only for the compensation of individuals holding the positions, for staff, equipment, quarters, travel, and other expenditures that are appropriate in supporting the positions, and for recruiting individuals to hold the positions endowed by the fund.

(d) **CERTAIN ACTIVITIES OF FOUNDATION-** In carrying out subsection (b), the Foundation may provide for the following with respect to the purpose described in such subsection:

(1) Evaluate and make known the effectiveness of model plans used by schools to reduce and prevent childhood obesity .



- (2) Create a website to assist in the distribution of successful plans, best practices, and other information to assist elementary schools, middle schools, and the public to develop and implement efforts to reduce and prevent childhood obesity .
- (3) Participate in meetings, conferences, courses, and training workshops.
- (4) Assist in the distribution of data concerning childhood obesity .
- (5) Make Challenge awards, pursuant to subsection (e), to elementary schools, middle schools, and local educational agencies for the successful development and implementation of school-based plans.
- (6) Other activities to carry out the purpose described in subsection (b).

(e) CHALLENGE AWARDS-

- (1) PROGRAM AUTHORIZED- The Foundation may provide Challenge awards to elementary schools, middle schools, and local educational agencies that submit applications under paragraph (2).
- (2) APPLICATION- Each elementary school, middle school, or local educational agency that desires to receive a Challenge award under this subsection shall submit an application that includes a plan to reduce and prevent childhood obesity to the Foundation at such time, in such manner, and accompanied by such additional information as the Foundation may reasonably require.
- (3) SELECTION CRITERIA- In the program authorized under paragraph (1), the Foundation shall provide Challenge awards based on--
  - (A) the success of the plans of the elementary schools, middle schools, and local educational agencies in meeting the plans' stated goals;
  - (B) the number of children in the community served by the elementary school, middle school, or local educational agency who are in need of assistance in addressing obesity ; and
  - (C) other criteria as determined by the Foundation.

(f) GENERAL STRUCTURE OF FOUNDATION; NONPROFIT STATUS-

- (1) BOARD OF DIRECTORS- The Foundation shall have a board of directors (referred to in this title as the `Board'), which shall be established and conducted in accordance with subsection (g). The Board shall establish the general policies of the Foundation for carrying out subsection (b), including the establishment of the bylaws of the Foundation.
- (2) EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR- The Foundation shall have an executive director (referred to in this title as the `Director'), who shall be appointed by the Board, who shall serve at the pleasure of the Board, and for whom the Board shall establish the rate of compensation. Subject to compliance with the policies and bylaws established by the Board pursuant to paragraph (1), the Director shall be responsible for the daily operations of the Foundation in carrying out subsection (b).
- (3) NONPROFIT STATUS- In carrying out subsection (b), the Board shall establish such policies and bylaws under paragraph (1), and the Director shall carry out such activities under paragraph (2), as may be necessary to ensure that the Foundation maintains status as an organization that--
  - (A) is described in subsection (c)(3) of section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986; and
  - (B) is, under subsection (a) of such section, exempt from taxation.

(g) BOARD OF DIRECTORS-

(1) CERTAIN BYLAWS-

(A) INCLUSIONS- In establishing bylaws under subsection (f)(1), the Board shall ensure that the bylaws of the Foundation include bylaws for the following:

(i) Policies for the selection of the officers, employees, agents, and contractors of the Foundation.

(ii) Policies, including ethical standards, for the acceptance and disposition of donations to the Foundation and for the disposition of the assets of the Foundation.

(iii) Policies for the conduct of the general operations of the Foundation.

(iv) Policies for writing, editing, printing, and publishing of books and other materials, and the acquisition of patents and licenses for devices and procedures developed by the Foundation.

(B) EXCLUSIONS- In establishing bylaws under subsection (f)(1), the Board shall ensure

that the bylaws of the Foundation (and activities carried out under the bylaws) do not--

(i) reflect unfavorably upon the ability of the Foundation, or the Department, to carry out its responsibilities or official duties in a fair and objective manner; or

(ii) compromise, or appear to compromise, the integrity of any governmental program or any officer or employee involved in such program.

(2) COMPOSITION-

(A) IN GENERAL- Subject to subparagraph (B), the Board shall be composed of 7 individuals, appointed in accordance with paragraph (4), who collectively possess education or experience appropriate for representing the fields of children's health, nutrition, and physical fitness or organizations active in reducing and preventing childhood obesity . Each such individual shall be a voting member of the Board.

(B) GREATER NUMBER- The Board may, through amendments to the bylaws of the Foundation, provide that the number of members of the Board shall be a greater number than the number specified in subparagraph (A).

(3) CHAIRPERSON- The Board shall, from among the members of the Board, designate an individual to serve as the Chairperson of the Board (referred to in this subsection as the `Chairperson').

(4) APPOINTMENTS, VACANCIES, AND TERMS- Subject to subsection (k) (regarding the initial membership of the Board), the following shall apply to the Board:

(A) Any vacancy in the membership of the Board shall be filled by appointment by the Board, after consideration of suggestions made by the Chairperson and the Director regarding the appointments. Any such

vacancy shall be filled not later than the expiration of the 180-day period beginning on the date on which the vacancy occurs.

(B) The term of office of each member of the Board appointed under subparagraph (A) shall be 5 years. A member of the Board may continue to serve after the expiration of the term of the member until the expiration of the 180-day period beginning on the date on which the term of the member expires.

(C) A vacancy in the membership of the Board shall not affect the power of the Board to carry out the duties of the Board. If a member of the Board does not serve the full term applicable under subparagraph (B), the individual appointed to fill the resulting vacancy shall be appointed for the remainder of the term of the predecessor of the individual.

(5) COMPENSATION- Members of the Board may not receive compensation for service on the Board. The members may be reimbursed for travel, subsistence, and other necessary expenses incurred in carrying out the duties of the Board.

(h) CERTAIN RESPONSIBILITIES OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR- In carrying out subsection (f)(2), the Director shall carry out the following functions:

(1) Hire, promote, compensate, and discharge officers and employees of the Foundation, and define the duties of the officers and employees.

(2) Accept and administer donations to the Foundation, and administer the assets of the Foundation.

(3) Establish a process for the selection of candidates for holding endowed positions under subsection (c).

(4) Enter into such financial agreements as are appropriate in carrying out the activities of the Foundation.

(5) Take such action as may be necessary to acquire patents and licenses for devices and procedures developed by the Foundation and the employees of the Foundation.

(6) Adopt, alter, and use a corporate seal, which shall be judicially noticed.

(7) Commence and respond to judicial proceedings in the name of the Foundation.

(8) Other functions that are appropriate in the determination of the Director.

(i) GENERAL PROVISIONS-

(1) AUTHORITY FOR ACCEPTING FUNDS- The Secretary of Health and Human Services (referred to in this title as the `Secretary') may accept and utilize, on behalf of the Federal Government, any gift, donation, bequest, or devise of real or personal property from the Foundation for the purpose of aiding or facilitating the work of the Department. Funds may be accepted and utilized by the Secretary under the preceding sentence without regard to whether the funds are designated as general-purpose funds or special-purpose funds.

(2) AUTHORITY FOR ACCEPTANCE OF VOLUNTARY SERVICES-

(A) IN GENERAL- The Secretary may accept, on behalf of the Federal Government, any voluntary services provided to the Department by the Foundation for the purpose of aiding or facilitating the work of the Department. In the case of an individual, the Secretary may accept the services provided under the preceding sentence by the individual for not more than 2 years.

(B) NON-FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES- The limitation established in subparagraph (A) regarding the period of time in which services may be accepted applies to each individual who is not an employee of the Federal Government and who serves in association with the Department pursuant to financial support from the Foundation.

(3) ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL- No officer, employee, or member of the Board may exercise any administrative or managerial control over any Federal employee.

(4) APPLICABILITY OF CERTAIN STANDARDS TO NON-FEDERAL EMPLOYEES- In the case of any individual who is not an employee of the Federal Government and who serves in association with the Department pursuant to financial support from the Foundation, the Foundation shall negotiate a memorandum of understanding with the individual and the Secretary specifying that the individual--

(A) shall be subject to the ethical and procedural standards regulating Federal employment, scientific investigation, and research findings (including publications and patents) that are required of individuals employed by the Department, including standards under this Act, the Ethics in Government Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.), and the Federal Technology Transfer Act of 1986 (Public Law 99-502; 100 Stat. 1785); and

(B) shall be subject to such ethical and procedural standards under chapter 11 of title 18, United States Code (relating to conflicts of interest), as the Secretary determines is appropriate, except such memorandum may not provide that the individual shall be subject to the standards of section 209 of such chapter.

(5) FINANCIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST- Any individual who is an officer, employee, or member of

the Board may not directly or indirectly participate in the consideration or determination by the Foundation of any question affecting--

(A) any direct or indirect financial interest of the individual; or

(B) any direct or indirect financial interest of any business organization or other entity of which the individual is an officer or employee or in which the individual has a direct or indirect financial interest.

(6) AUDITS; AVAILABILITY OF RECORDS- The Foundation shall--

(A) provide for biennial audits of the financial condition of the Foundation; and

(B) make such audits, and all other records, documents, and other papers of the Foundation, available to the Secretary and the Comptroller General of the United States for examination or audit.

(7) REPORTS-

(A) IN GENERAL- Not later than February 1 of each fiscal year, the Foundation shall publish a report describing the activities of the Foundation during the preceding fiscal year. Each such report shall include for the fiscal year involved a comprehensive statement of the

operations, activities, financial condition, and accomplishments of the Foundation.

(B) INCLUSIONS- With respect to the financial condition of the Foundation, each report under subparagraph (A) shall include the source, and a description, of all gifts to the Foundation of real or personal property, and the source and amount of all gifts to the Foundation of money. Each such report shall include a specification of any restrictions on the purposes for which gifts to the Foundation may be used.

(C) PUBLIC INSPECTION- The Foundation shall make copies of each report submitted under subparagraph (A) available for public inspection, and shall upon request provide a copy of the report to any individual for a charge not exceeding the cost of providing the copy.

(8) LIAISONS- The Secretary shall appoint liaisons to the Foundation from relevant Federal agencies, including the Office of the Surgeon General and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Secretary of Agriculture shall designate liaisons to the Foundation as appropriate.

(9) INCLUSION OF THE PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL- The Foundation shall ensure that the President's Council on Physical Fitness is included in the activities of the Foundation.

(j) FEDERAL FUNDING-

(1) AUTHORITY FOR ANNUAL GRANTS-

(A) IN GENERAL- The Secretary shall--

(i) for fiscal year 2005, make a grant to an entity described in subsection (k)(9) (relating to the establishment of a committee to establish the Foundation);

(ii) for fiscal years 2006 and 2007, make a grant to the committee established under such subsection, or if the Foundation has been established, to the Foundation; and

(iii) for fiscal year 2008 and each subsequent fiscal year, make a grant to the Foundation.

(B) RULES ON EXPENDITURES- A grant under subparagraph (A) may be expended--

(i) in the case of an entity receiving the grant under subparagraph (A)(i), only for the purpose of carrying out the duties established in subsection (k)(9) for the entity;

(ii) in the case of the committee established under subsection (k)(9), only for the purpose of carrying out the duties established in subsection (k) for the committee; and

(iii) in the case of the Foundation, only for the purpose of the administrative expenses of the Foundation.

(C) RESTRICTION- A grant under subparagraph (A) may not be expended to provide amounts for the fund established under subsection (c).

(D) UNOBLIGATED GRANT FUNDS- For the purposes described in subparagraph (B)--

(i) any portion of the grant made under subparagraph (A)(i) for fiscal year 2005 that remains unobligated after the entity receiving the grant completes the duties established in subsection (k)(9) for the entity shall be available to the committee established under such subsection; and

(ii) any portion of a grant under subparagraph (A) made for fiscal year 2005 or 2006 that remains unobligated after such committee completes the duties established in such subsection for the committee shall be available to the Foundation.

(2) FUNDING FOR GRANTS-

(A) IN GENERAL- For the purpose of grants under paragraph (1), there is authorized to be appropriated \$2,200,000 for each fiscal year.

(B) PROGRAMS OF THE DEPARTMENT- For the purpose of grants under paragraph (1), the Secretary may for each fiscal year make available not more than \$2,200,000 from the amounts appropriated for the fiscal year for the programs of the Department. Such amounts may be made available without regard to whether amounts have been appropriated under subparagraph (A).

(3) CERTAIN RESTRICTION- If the Foundation receives Federal funds for the purpose of serving as a fiscal intermediary between Federal agencies, the Foundation may not receive such funds for the indirect costs of carrying out such purpose in an amount

exceeding 10 percent of the direct costs of carrying out such purpose. The preceding sentence may not be construed as authorizing the expenditure of any grant under paragraph (1) for such purpose.

(k) COMMITTEE FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF FOUNDATION-

(1) IN GENERAL- There shall be established, in accordance with this subsection and subsection (j)(1), a committee to carry out the functions described in paragraph (2) (referred to in this subsection as the 'Committee').

(2) FUNCTIONS- The functions referred to in paragraph (1) for the Committee are as follows:

(A) To carry out such activities as may be necessary to incorporate the Foundation under the laws of the State involved, including serving as incorporators for the Foundation. Such activities shall include ensuring that the articles of incorporation for the Foundation require that the Foundation be established and operated in accordance with the applicable provisions of this title (or any successor to this title), including such provisions as may be in effect pursuant to amendments enacted after the date of enactment of this Act .

(B) To ensure that the Foundation qualifies for and maintains the status described in subsection (f)(3) (regarding taxation).

(C) To establish the general policies and initial bylaws of the Foundation, which bylaws shall include the bylaws described in subsections (f)(3) and (g)(1).

(D) To provide for the initial operation of the Foundation, including providing for quarters, equipment, and staff.

(E) To appoint the initial members of the Board in accordance with the requirements established in subsection (g)(2)(A) for the composition of the Board, and in accordance with such other qualifications as the Committee may determine to be appropriate regarding such composition. Of the members so appointed--

(i) 2 shall be appointed to serve for a term of 3 years;

(ii) 2 shall be appointed to serve for a term of 4 years; and

(iii) 3 shall be appointed to serve for a term of 5 years.

(3) COMPLETION OF FUNCTIONS OF COMMITTEE; INITIAL MEETING OF BOARD-

(A) COMPLETION OF FUNCTIONS- The Committee shall complete the functions required in paragraph (1) not later than September 30, 2007. The Committee shall terminate upon the expiration of the 30-day period beginning on the date on which the Secretary determines that the functions have been completed.

(B) INITIAL MEETING- The initial meeting of the Board shall be held not later than November 1, 2007.

(4) COMPOSITION- The Committee shall be composed of 5 members, each of whom shall be a voting member. Of the members of the Committee--

(A) no fewer than 2 of the members shall have expertise in children's health, nutrition, and physical activity; and

(B) no fewer than 2 of the members shall have broad, general experience in nonprofit private organizations (without regard to whether the individuals have experience in children's health, nutrition, and physical activity).

(5) CHAIRPERSON- The Committee shall, from among the members of the Committee, designate an individual to serve as the Chairperson of the Committee.

(6) TERMS; VACANCIES- The term of members of the Committee shall be for the duration of the Committee. A vacancy in the membership of the Committee shall not affect the power of the Committee to carry out the duties of the Committee. If a member of the Committee does not serve the full term, the individual appointed by the Secretary to fill the resulting vacancy shall be appointed for the remainder of the term of the predecessor of the individual.

(7) COMPENSATION- Members of the Committee may not receive compensation for service on the Committee. Members of the Committee may be reimbursed for travel, subsistence, and other necessary expenses incurred in carrying out the duties of the Committee.

(8) COMMITTEE SUPPORT- The Secretary may, from amounts available to the Secretary for the general administration of the Department, provide staff and financial support to assist the Committee with carrying out the functions described in paragraph (2). In providing such staff and support, the Director may both detail employees and contract for assistance.

(9) GRANT FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMITTEE-

(A) IN GENERAL- With respect to a grant under paragraph (1)(A)(i) of subsection (j) for fiscal year 2005, an entity described in this paragraph is a private nonprofit entity with significant experience in children's health, nutrition, and physical activity. Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act , the Secretary shall make the grant to such an entity (subject to the availability of funds under paragraph (2) of such subsection).

(B) CONDITIONS- The grant referred to in subparagraph (A) may be made to an entity only if the entity agrees that--

(i) the entity will establish a committee that is composed in accordance with paragraph (4); and

(ii) the entity will not select an individual for membership on the Committee unless the individual agrees that the Committee will operate in accordance with each of the provisions of this subsection that relate to the operation of the Committee.

(C) AGREEMENT- The Secretary may make a grant referred to in subparagraph (A) only if the applicant for the grant makes an agreement that the grant will not be expended for any purpose other than carrying out subparagraph (B). Such a grant may be made only if an application for the grant is submitted to the Secretary containing such agreement, and the application is in such form, is made in such manner, and contains such other agreements and such assurances and information as the Secretary determines to be necessary to carry out this paragraph.



## APPENDIX B

### Interview Guides

#### Interview Guide for Directors/Assistant Director of Schools

1. Is there an official policy in your system regarding recess and free play? If so, what is the policy? Is it written? How is it conveyed to principals, teachers, parents, and students?
2. Is this policy, written or unwritten, based on a directive from the state or did you have control of the decision?
3. What is the rationale for your system's policy? What type of feedback, if any, have you received from parents, teachers, students, etc.?
4. Tell me about the history of recess and free play in your school system.
5. What was your specific role in this history?
6. Has any research been conducted in your school system regarding the use of recess and free play?
7. Do you believe recess (or eliminating recess) affects the discipline of the schools in your system? If so, how?
8. Do you believe recess (or eliminating recess) affects the standardized test scores of your students? If so, how?
9. What are your personal perceptions regarding recess and free play?

#### Interview guide for Administrators

1. Is there an official policy in your system regarding recess and free play? If so, what is the policy? Is it written? How is it conveyed to principals, teachers, parents, and students?

2. Is this policy, written or unwritten, based on a directive from the state or did you have control of the decision?
3. What is the rationale for your system's policy? What type of feedback, if any, have you or your system received from parents, teachers, students, etc.?
4. Tell me about the history of recess and free play in your school system.
5. Has any research been conducted in your school system regarding the use of recess and free play?
6. Do you believe recess (or eliminating recess) affects the discipline of the schools in your system? If so, how?
7. Do you believe recess (or eliminating recess) affects the standardized test scores of your students? If so, how?
8. What are your personal perceptions regarding recess and free play?

#### Interview guide for Principals/Assistant Principals

1. Tell me about the history of recess and free play in your school.
2. What was your specific role in this history?
3. Do you have an established policy in your school regarding recess and free play? If so, what is the policy? Is it written? How is it conveyed to teachers, parents, and students?
4. Has any research been conducted in your school regarding the use of recess and free play?
5. Is this a policy that is a directive from the central office or are you allowed to make this decision? Were teachers given input into this policy decision?

6. What is the rationale for your school's policy? What type of feedback, if any, have you received from parents, teachers, students, etc.?
7. Do you believe recess (or eliminating recess) affects the discipline of your school? If so, how?
8. Do you believe recess (or eliminating recess) affects the standardized test scores of your students? If so, how?
9. What are your personal perceptions regarding recess and free play?

#### Interview guide for Teachers

1. Tell me about the history of recess and free play in your school.
2. What was your specific role in this history?
3. Do you have an established policy in your school regarding recess and free play? If so, what is the policy? Is it written? How is it conveyed to teachers, parents, and students?
4. Has any research been conducted in your school regarding the use of recess and free play?
5. Do you have discretion to vary your classroom policy from the established school policy? If so, how?
6. Has the current policy been questioned by teachers, parents, or other? If so, tell me about the discussion.
7. What are your personal perceptions about recess and free play?

#### Interview guide for Students

(These questions will be very open-ended and may change with the flow of the conversation)

1. Do you have recess or play time in your class? (I may have to explain the difference between recess and physical education) *If no, proceed to question 5.*
2. What do you like to do during recess?
3. How do you feel after you have recess?
4. How do you feel if for some reason you don't get to have recess? What would you think if you were told you would not get to have recess anymore?
5. Would you like to have recess?
6. Have you had recess in other classes before this year? Did you enjoy it? Why?
7. Have you ever been told why you do not have recess in this class?

APPENDIX C

Letter to Parents

April 19, 2005

Dear Sir or Madam:

Hello. My name is Amy Bennett Banner and I am a doctoral student at East Tennessee State University. I am currently conducting research concerning recess and play.

In order to better understand recess, I would like to interview your child with your permission. I will be asking your child approximately five questions. I do not anticipate that this process will take over 10 minutes. These interviews will only be conducted at a time approved by your child’s teacher, so as not to interfere with valuable class time. Your child does not have to participate in this interview if he or she does not want to. In addition, if at any time he or she would like to end the interview, your child has that right. Your child may also skip any questions that make him or her uncomfortable. Your child will not be identified in the study in any way.

A copy of the records from this study will be stored in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis and at 268 Dogwood Acres, Hampton, TN for at least 10 years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming your child specifically as a subject. Your child’s records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter. If you agree to allow your child to be interviewed, simply sign in the space provided below. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at 423 725 4520, or 423 957 1697. You may also contact me by e-mail at bannerab@earthlink.net.

Sincerely,

Amy Bennett Banner

The nature demands, risks, and benefits of the project have been explained to me as well as are known and available. I understand what my child’s participation involves. Furthermore, I understand that my child is free to ask questions and withdraw from the project at any time, without penalty. I have read, or have had read to me, and fully understand this request for permission. I sign it freely and voluntarily. My child’s study record will be maintained in strictest confidence according to current legal requirements and will not be revealed unless required by law or as noted above. I agree to allow my child to participate in this study.

Child’s name \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX D

Child Assent Document

Hello. My name is Amy. I have some homework that I need you to help me with. I want to learn more about recess and playtime and I need you to help me. I would like to ask you some questions about recess and play. I want to learn more about what you do during playtime and how you feel about it.

You do not have to answer any of my questions if you do not want to. If I ask you a question that you do not want to answer, just tell me. If I ask you a question that you do not understand, just tell me and I will ask it to you another way. You may stop at any time.

Thank you for your help. I will enjoy talking to you and learning more about playtime.

Child Signature

I understand what I have just read and would like to be a part of this study. I understand that I may stop at any time and do not have to answer any questions if I do not want to.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX E

### Informed Consent Document

Page 1 of 3

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Amy C. Bennett

TITLE OF PROJECT: A Comparative Study of the Perceptions Regarding Recess and Free Play in Selected Public Schools in East Tennessee

The purpose of this note of INFORMED CONSENT is to explain a research project in which I am requesting your participation. It is important that you read this material carefully and then decide if you wish to be a volunteer. By no means is there any pressure for you to participate in this research.

#### PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions regarding recess among teachers, principals, supervisors, other school personnel, and students in public schools in East Tennessee. Part of the schools examined allows its students to participate in recess and the other segment of schools that will be examined has a no recess policy. The interviews will be analyzed to better determine if recess and free-play time plays a valuable part in the education of children, or if this time would be better spent in the classroom. In addition, I will be examining the standardized test scores for each school to see if there is a significant difference between the schools.

#### DURATION

Participants in this study can expect to be interviewed face to face at least one time. One may also receive a follow-up interview or phone call. However, this phase of the study is not expected to last over one month in total. Due to the emergent nature of qualitative research and interviews, the duration of each session cannot be predetermined and may vary from person to person.

#### PROCEDURES

Participants will be asked between five and fifteen predetermined questions. These questions may lead to additional questions that will be discussed during the session. The interview will include several questions that build on the other permitting participants to share their perceptions regarding the topic of recess and free play. After receiving a verbal summary of the session, the participants will be invited to share anything else they feel would be beneficial to the study, ensuring that nothing has been missed. Names will not be used in the interview notes. Each person will be identified with a number in the written study.

#### POSSIBLE RISK/DISCOMFORTS

There are no known or expected risks or discomforts associated with this study. However, you as a subject have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. You also have the right to skip any questions that provoke feelings of discomfort.

#### POSSIBLE BENEFITS and/or COMPENSATION

Potential benefits to participants include the consideration of the importance of recess in the public school system. Depending on the results of the study, districts, which have stopped recess in favor of class time, may reconsider this action. The opposite may also be true.

#### CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS

If you have any questions or research related problems at any time, you may call Amy Bennett at 423/725 4540 or 423/957 1697. You may also call Dr. Nancy Dishner at 423/439 6162. You may call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at 423/ 439-6055 for any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

Every attempt will be made to see that my study results are kept confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis and at 268 Dogwood Acres, Hampton, TN for at least 10 years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming me as a subject. Although my rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the East Tennessee State University IRB, and research related personnel from the ETSU Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis have access to the study records. My records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

#### VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

The nature demands, risks, and benefits of the project have been explained to me as well as are known and available. I understand what my participation involves. Furthermore, I understand that I am free to ask questions and withdraw from the project at any time, without penalty. I have read, or have had read to me, and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A signed copy has been given to me. My study record will be maintained in strictest confidence according to current legal requirements and will not be revealed unless required by law or as noted above.



SIGNATURE OF VOLUNTEER

DATE

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SIGNATURE OF PARENTS OR GUARDIAN (if applicable)

DATE

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SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

DATE

---

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS (if applicable)

DATE

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## APPENDIX F

### External Auditor's Letter

March 3, 2005

To Whom It May Concern:

I was asked by Amy Banner to be the external auditor for her dissertation. I was happy to do so. I found her project interesting and very informative.

Her topic was an interesting choice. I am sure that many people are not aware of the things lost in education to the pressure put on schools by the increased push on testing as well as maintaining a safe environment for students. Recess is just one of the casualties of this push. Amy's decision to include varying levels of stakeholders in her interviews provided an interesting view from all parties involved. If research on this topic were continued in the future, I wonder how parents would answer the same type of questions.

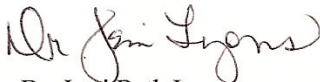
The literature review was thorough and well documented. All information was related to the topic and appeared to be from reliable sources. The interview questions used were worded well for their audience. The charts provided helped in keeping track of the participants and their stake in this process.

In looking at the participants quoted in the Data Analysis portion of the project, Amy accurately quoted the participants from the transcript of the interview. Using the true voice of the participants added personality to this process. Amy was also careful not to overload a portion of the research with repetitive quotes. Each quote used in the project provided a new bit of information or added a new voice to the question at hand. In the quantitative portion of her study, I felt that the charts included provided a very simple and easy to understand representation of the performance of the schools under study in the research.

In reading the Findings section of her project, I believe Amy was truthful in her representation. She was also careful to point out other factors that are thought to have an effect on classroom performance. I think she has a valid point in stating that having recess does not appear to have any negative affect on test scores; just as limiting its use does not appear to have a positive one. In examining the perceptions of those interviewed most stakeholders interviewed in this study would concede that student may be losing more by not having recess than what they would gain by that extra few minutes in the classroom. I also thought it was insightful to refer to the practices used in the classroom to engage the students as more important than just the number of minutes spent in the classroom. As a Special Education Director, I know that no matter how long one presents information, if the student is not engaged in the learning, no learning is taking place. Teaching must match the way students learn.

I was pleased to have the opportunity to help a friend and fellow colleague in education in this endeavor. I wish Amy Banner the best in all her educational pursuits.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jerr Beth Lyons  
Special Education Director  
Carter County Schools

VITA

AMY CAROL BENNETT BANNER

Personal Data:                   Date of Birth: September 28, 1970  
  Place of Birth: Johnson City, Tennessee  
  Marital Status: Married

Education:                        Hampton High School, Hampton, Tennessee  
  Honors Diploma-1988

  East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN  
  Criminal Justice, B.S., 1992  
  Spanish, B.S., 1992

  East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN  
  Masters of Arts in Teaching, 1995

  East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee;  
  Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, Ed.D.;  
  2005

Professional  
Teaching  
Experience:                        Spanish Teacher, Morristown-Hamblen High School West;  
  Morristown, Tennessee  
  1995 - 1997

  Spanish/Journalism Teacher, Hampton High School;  
  Hampton, Tennessee  
  1997 - Present

Presentations:                    “Positive Behavior Support”.  
  Northeast Tennessee Special Education Conference;  
  Knoxville, Tennessee. July 13, 2004

Honors and  
Awards:                            Student Teacher of the Year,  
  East Tennessee State University,  
  Johnson City, Tennessee