

KIDS REALLY NEED RECESS!

BY RITA HENRIQUEZ ROARK

"Mommy, I don't want to go to school!"

"Kelly, you love school. What's wrong?"

"I'm going to miss recess for a whole week. I love recess."

Before long Kelly's mother discovered that her daughter had to make up some missed assignments. While she knew that it was important for children to complete their work and to learn responsibility, she wondered whether depriving Kelly of recess would really help achieve these goals.

The scenario above, while fictional, is all too common in many schools. For a variety of reasons, ranging from uncompleted work and discipline problems to failure to turn in parental permission forms, children are regularly deprived of recess. This causes resentment, frustration, and anger that affects parents, students, and teachers. Is there a better way? Could other approaches be used to deal with these problems?

Why Have Recess?

Why do students need recess anyway? Because it serves a variety of useful and necessary purposes. As Adventists we have known the importance of exercise and fresh air for years, yet we have been slow to follow the guidelines given to us. Let's review some of the reasons why recess should be part of the school program:

1. *It is necessary for well-developed muscles and brains.*

In order for children and youth to have health, cheerfulness, vivacity, and well-developed muscles and brains, they should be much in the open air.¹

2. *It is essential to keep the blood in balance.*

The exercise of the brain in study, without corresponding physical exercise, has a tendency to attract the blood to the brain and the circulation of the blood through the system becomes unbalanced.²

3. *It provides recreation.*

Recreation in the open air, the contemplation of the works of God in nature, will be of the highest benefit.³

Recreation is needful to those who are engaged in physical labor, and is still more essential for those whose labor is primarily mental.⁴

4. *It rests and invigorates the brain.*
Many children have been ruined for life by urging the intellect, and neglecting to strengthen the physical powers.⁵

Healthy, active exercise... will invigorate the mind.⁶

5. *It provides new life and vigor.*

If physical exercise were combined with mental exertion, the blood would be quickened in its circulation, the action of the blood would be more perfect, impure matter would be thrown off and new life and vigor would be experienced in every part of the body.⁷

6. *It prevents sickness.*

Inactivity is a fruitful cause of disease. Exercise is vital.⁸

Out-of-door exercise will work miracles.⁹

7. *It strengthens the mental faculties.*

Strictly temperate habits, combined with proper exercise, would insure both mental and physical vigor, and would give power of endurance to all brain workers.¹⁰

8. *It provides relaxation.*

Those who are engaged in study should have relaxation. The mind must not be constantly confined to close thought, for the delicate mental machinery becomes worn. The body as well as the mind must have exercise.¹¹

Does depriving children of recess really help them to learn to complete their work and to take responsibility?

9. *It helps children form habits that will contribute to lifelong health.*

Pure air, sunlight, abstemiousness, rest, exercise, proper diet, the use of water, trust in divine power—these are the true remedies.¹²

Modern researchers also recognize the importance of recess. In their book, *The Gift of Play*, Maria Piers and Genevieve M. Landau state:

Play activities are the most important things young children do.... Through play children learn and polish skills—social, emotional, physical, and mental.¹³

It is literally true; playing is as necessary as breathing, eating and sleeping.¹⁴

Young children learn almost everything they need to know through the powers of

play—how to get along in the world; how to solve intellectual, social and emotional problems; how to cope with stress and heal themselves of hurt. Why does play work to fulfill these goals? It works because it is spontaneous, self-teaching exercise. True play is always active and full of effort.¹⁵

Recess or Physical Education?

The above references to play make it clear that recess has a function beyond that of mere physical activity. Educators often see the value of recess as primarily related to exercise, so they reason that holding physical education classes takes care of this need. However, recess is free time when students can choose what they want to do.

Physical education needs to be a structured class with goals and objectives, tests and grades, just like social studies or mathematics. Although students may organize the same activities and games at recess, they do so spontaneously, without adult prompting. Children need *both* physical education and recess, not one or the other.

When we deprive children of the time, space, and opportunity to play spontaneously and imaginatively, safely and freely, we are robbing them

of their childhood.

In the book *Play as a Medium for Learning and Development*, Doris Bergen says:

Play helps children learn about their world, how to express their ideas and feelings, and develop social relationships with their peers... Play also helps children gather the information needed to create ideas, compare and contrast this information with their old knowledge, and then reject, confirm, expand, or modify their ideas accordingly.¹⁶

When children play they learn to understand the world around them. Play often provides the testing ground for learning about conflict resolution, negotiation, fairness and both cooperative and competitive social strategies.¹⁷

Play is intelligence, problem solving, and creativity in action. It is essential to children's development and learning.

In defining play, Robert Lee states that "leisure and play are the occasion for the development of a broader and deeper perspective and for renewing the body, mind, and spirit."¹⁸

Unrealistic Ideal?

At this point readers may say that the concept of play as essential is ideal, but unrealistic. How can you discipline a student if you do not deprive him of recess or playtime?

Teachers have the opportunity to

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give every child the gift of a life-style that includes exercise and play in the daily routine. Such a program is not only ideal, but also realistic, since there are alternatives to discipline that do not deprive children the opportunity to interrupt book work in order to gain the benefits of exercise and play.

Discipline is more than seeing that rules are obeyed. Its penalties should go beyond the record-keeping mentality of "gum chewing/lose one recess; late papers/lose two recesses" to the level of teaching, correcting, and training young minds for life on this earth and for eternity.¹⁹ Discipline should

help students learn acceptable attitudes and social behavior. Its objective is to train the child for self-government.

For discipline to be effective it should do more than punish—it should *teach*. In finding techniques for effective discipline, we must keep in mind some of the characteristics of good discipline:

- It is the natural consequence of the action.
- It is certain.
- It is impartial and just.
- It is constructive and leads to better self-control.

Discipline should always seek to foster self-esteem, while at the same time avoiding any approaches that foster hate or give the appearance of favoritism.

Here are some practical ideas that teachers and parents have used successfully to discipline young people:

Realistic Expectations

Teachers and parents must recognize that each child is different. While holding high expectations, they must make allowances for maturity, learning disabilities, and attention span.

Structuring Tasks

Students are expected to become efficient time managers at an early

age. In multigrade classrooms and one-room schools they are given long blocks of time to accomplish many tasks. Some students have difficulty staying on task for such long periods.

Parents and teachers can help the child become a good time manager by breaking down the time and tasks into smaller blocks. Using a timer, assign a 10-minute task to the student. Show him or her how to use the timer.

Each time the student is successful, reward him with a smiley face and a word of encouragement. Eventually the child will be able to organize longer blocks of time and efficiently manage his or her time.

Isolation and Withdrawal

Often a student misbehaves in order to gain attention. Asking the child to leave the group and play or work

Recess has a function beyond that of mere physical activity.

alone helps discourage such attention-getting methods. For older students, isolation gives them opportunity for meditation, which often results in a sincerely repentant heart.

Restitution

If a student hurts another person's feelings or destroys property, he or she should make restitution insofar as this is possible. The student can be required to repair or replace broken or damaged property, or to perform certain duties to pay for the damage.

Sometimes the parent or teacher may have to help with the restoration, but the student should do as much as he or she can. By having discipline related directly to the results of disobedience, the student learns how difficult it is to restore damaged property or hurt feelings. He will be unlikely to repeat the offense.

Persuasion

Teachers need to talk earnestly with the child who is being punished in order to gain his cooperation and commitment to better behavior. Because of trust and respect, often a quiet talk about respect and the importance of positive attitudes will reach the heart of a seemingly obstinate child. Students should be encouraged to obey even when they don't fully understand the teacher's

reasoning. Always end the session with prayer.

Change of Pace

Allow students to pace themselves and to determine when they need a break from close work. Giving students the privilege of walking or running around the playground when they need to do so will help them get back to work refreshed and ready to concentrate. Be sure to praise them when they return and begin to work again.

There are many other effective and practical ways to discipline students. If you need more ideas, brainstorm with other teachers. Once you have the ideas, you can choose the ones that meet your particular situation and style of teaching.

Uncompleted Work

Students should not generally be deprived of recess for late papers or uncompleted work. They can be asked to stay after school to complete the work, or have points deducted for each day the work is late. The school should have a written policy relating to late papers, which should be sufficiently flexible to allow for family emergencies and illness.

The primary goal should be to get all the work completed. When teachers refuse to accept late papers, this creates gaps in the framework needed for later work.

Some children have difficulty getting organized and remembering their assignments. A variety of methods have been successful in assisting these

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edge their personal limitations, they give up presumption in favor of collaboration. An important agenda for teacher education is the preparation of candidates to utilize volunteers. The key to individualized instruction is not smaller class size, but more helpers. Tutoring experience helps children mature, become responsible, and improve academically. Similarly, volunteering in the classroom can help the elderly value modern education and regain the responsible roles they desire.

Junior and senior high school faculty need a plan to coordinate their assignments of homework so that students are not overwhelmed.

Responding to one another's needs is essential for a partnership. In this connection, parents ought to help teachers feel valued, and teachers should modify the school day to fit parents' schedules. By providing parents continuing education for their ever-changing role, we can help them have more reasonable child-rearing expectations, more confidence in their teaching and guidance skills, more satisfaction in day-to-day relationships with sons and daughters, and more readiness to share an education partnership with the schools. □

At the time this article was written, Dr. Robert Strom was Professor of Education and Director of the Parent-Child Laboratory at Arizona State University, Scottsdale, Arizona.

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youngsters in organizing their time and materials.

1. First, and most important, consult with the parents to gain their cooperation. Compile a list of suggestions they can use at home to help the student organize his time and materials.

2. Compile a syllabus for every student. List daily assignments for each subject, giving the dates of quizzes and tests (if surprise quizzes are planned, this should be indicated). Include a list of materials necessary for the class (spiral-bound notebook, crayons, pencil, protractor).

3. Make certain that each child understands the assignments and knows what materials are necessary to complete them. Offer peer tutoring or after-school assistance for students who are struggling with a particular subject.

4. Have the child write all assignments in a special notebook, with the teacher initialing each one as it is completed.

5. Supply different-colored folders so that the student can organize papers for each class.

6. Set up an a telephone "assignment line" with a recording that lists the homework for each subject on a given day.

Minor offenses, such as failure to bring in a permission slip or school supplies, are not sufficient reason to deny children recess. In many cases, this punishes the student for some-

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thing that is really the fault of the parent.

Ideas for Recess Indoors

We have established that recess is important and necessary, have discussed ways of dealing with uncompleted work or misbehavior. But what does one do for recess if there is no gym and the students cannot go outside?

Here are some activities and resources that you can use to cope with energetic students on rainy days.

Exercises

These can be done in a classroom or hallway. Have students participate by bringing an exercise and teaching it to the class. Look for exercises developed for office workers that make use of chairs and desks.

Aerobics

This is simply exercising to music. Students can help you make up routines. They often have so much fun that they forget they are exercising. Be sure to include a warm-up and a cool-down exercise.

Action Records

Many records have activity songs that require lots of movement. Often done in circle formation, these activities help burn a lot of youthful energy and provide good exercise. (See RESOURCES.)

Parachute Games

Small parachutes can be purchased for use indoors or outdoors. Many activities can be developed around these that provide exercise for arms, legs, and the entire body. Cat-and-Mouse is a favorite that includes everyone.

Lummi Sticks/Beanbags

These usually involve arm and upper-chest activities. However, some records use these props as part of exercises for the entire body. (See RESOURCES.)

Conclusion

Recess, physical education, and dis-

cipline are all part of a balanced curriculum. Integrating them in creative ways into the school program will help each teacher make education the best it can be, for every child. □

RESOURCES

KBH Productions, Inc.
Kimbo Educational Records and Educational Activities.
P.O. Box 477, Long Branch, NJ 07740
KIM 9068C "Children's Games" tape—excellent for K-3.
KIM 2015 "Simplified Rhythm Stick Activities" LP record by Laura Johnson—very good for younger students.
KIM 7054 "Get a good START" Aerobics fitness activities for young children by Georgiana Luccione Stewart.
KEA 6020 C "Rhythmic Parachute Play" tape by JoAnn Seker and George Jones.
LP 9015 "Tinkling" by Carmencita Y. Kazan Educational Activities, Inc.
Box 392
Freeport, NY 11520 (ask for free catalog)
"Learning Basic Skills Through Music" volume 2 by Hap Palmer—excellent.
"Clap, Snap, and Tap" by Ambrose Brabelton.

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- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 131.
- ¹⁸ Robert Lee, *Religion and Leisure in America*, quoted by Robert E. Neale in *In Praise of Play* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 14.
- ¹⁹ *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 73, 74.
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LEGAL UPDATE

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mentioned sexual harassment/misconduct guidelines may include but are not limited to the following:

- 1) Verbal harassment or abuse (e.g. degrading comments, propositions, jokes, etc.);
 - 2) Subtle pressure or requests for sexual activity;
 - 3) Unnecessary touching of an individual (e.g. patting, pinching, hugging, repeated brushing against another person's body, etc.);
 - 4) The threat or suggestion that a person's job, future promotions, wages, etc. depends upon whether he/she submits to sexual demands or tolerates harassment.
4. *Working Environment*—The General Conference recognizes its responsibility to all employees to maintain a working environment free from sexual harassment, and endeavors to achieve this environment through prevention by informing employees that sexual harassment violates the law and is strongly disapproved of by the General Conference, by developing appropriate sanctions and by informing all employees of their right to raise the issue of sexual harassment.
5. *Reporting Incidents*—Sexual harassment at the General Conference will no be tolerated in any form. If any employee encounters such treatment from supervisors, fellow employees, clients or non-employees, the following steps should be taken immediately:
- a. The complainant should report the incident(s) to the department director or director of Personnel Administration. If possible, the complaint should be in written form. The discussion should be conducted in an objective and thorough manner and the complainant should be advised not to discuss the matter elsewhere due to the sensitivity of the complaint.
 - b. The director of Personnel Administration (or designee) will talk confidentially to all involved persons and determine whether an act of unwanted sexual harassment did occur. If possible, written statements will be obtained. If it is determined the complaint is

valid, immediate and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken. Depending on the severity of the act, the discipline may range from a written warning placed in the offending person's file to immediate termination.

- c. The director of Personnel Administration will then talk to the complainant and explain that corrective action has been taken.
6. *Third-Party Reports*—All employees who are aware of incidents of sexual harassment in the workplace are responsible for reporting such incidents to the director of Personnel Administration for investigation. □

**General Conference Employee Handbook* (February, 1988), pp. 29-31.

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OF INTEREST TO TEACHERS

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and content needed to substantially improve math and science education," says Susan Fuhrman, National Science Foundation consortium director.

Who Wants to Teach?

In interviews with 275 college-oriented high school sophomores about their perceptions of the teaching profession, researchers for the Southeastern Educational Improvement Laboratory found only 16 who were interested in teaching. Of the 170 of these students who were taking advanced courses, only four professed an interest in teaching. One student said, "To get me to teach you would have to kill me first."—Reported by *R&D Preview*, April 1989.

What Students Do in Summer

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 33 percent of children spend the summer at home with someone; 22 percent attend school; 17 percent go to someone else's home; 13 percent are at home alone; 9 percent go to work with their parents; and 6 percent have other arrangements. □