

Los Olivos School Schedules Recess Before Lunch For Better Student Health and Behavior



Los Olivos School Principal Bridget Baublits implemented Recess Before Lunch, with the help of her teachers, staff, food service team, and students.

At Los Olivos School in the Santa Ynez Valley, grades 1-5 participate in Recess before Lunch. After learning about the health and education benefits of eating after – rather than before – play, the school implemented the change at the start of the 2012/2013 school year.

According to Principal Bridget Baublits, “**The logistics of implementation were quite simple.** We already had personnel coverage for both play time and eating time. We just flipped the schedule around. Our students bring their lunches to the designated lunch area, set them down, and then head out to play for 20 minutes. When the whistle blows, the students proceed to the lunch tables and enjoy their lunches for the remaining 20 minutes.”

This very simple schedule change has delivered impressive results. Principal Baublits tells us that **students consume more of their lunches and return to class more focused and settled.** Teachers report an easier transition back to academics in the afternoon, as the students have already had a cool-down period (eating), rather than returning to class straight from the playground.

The switch also gave the school more time to prepare to serve hot lunches “We don't have a large hot lunch program, and this may be why the switch was so easy, but we would still use this model with a large hot lunch program because the benefits are evident,” says Principal Baublits

As of this writing, the school is looking into implementing Recess Before Lunch school-wide, to incorporate junior high and kindergarten students.

Principal Baublits added these comments about her experiment with Recess Before Lunch: “We began this on the first day of school. **As with any new idea, it took a few weeks for the students to adapt to the change,** and I heard a few grumbles right at the start. However, now if you ask a student if they like playing before lunch, I guarantee they would all say yes. Playing first gives them the opportunity to get out of class and have some exercise first, so they are not rushing to eat just so they can go play. **This simple little change lets the students enjoy their playtime, enjoy their lunch time, and return to class ready to learn.**”

Of course, not all districts are created equal, and others may face different challenges. The Montana Office of Public Instruction shares the lessons they learned in a publication called *Recess Before Lunch: A Guide for Success*, available for download here: <http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/state-resources/recess-lunch-guide-success>. Santa Barbara County schools interested in implementing Recess Before Lunch can also get assistance from the [School Food Initiative](http://www.SchoolFood.org).