

Recess Before Lunch Toolkit

F O R H A W A I I S C H O O L S



This guide was developed to support Hawaii's elementary schools that currently implement a Recess Before Lunch schedule and those schools that are interested in developing one.

This booklet is available electronically on the Healthy Hawaii Initiative web site at <http://www.healthyhawaii.com/>

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Recess Before Lunch Toolkit for Hawaii Schools

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What is Recess Before Lunch?

Recess Before Lunch (RBL) is a change in the traditional lunchtime schedule that allows students to be active immediately prior to eating lunch.

RBL can be implemented in a variety of ways. Schools in Hawaii have RBL schedules during all lunch periods and some lunch periods; with students in all grades or selected grades only. It is recommended that the school staff be involved in determining how to best implement the RBL schedule.





More students get recess now because they aren't naughty in the cafeteria. That used to be a big problem.

—Teacher

A photograph of four children lying on their backs on a lush green lawn. They are arranged in a circle, looking towards the camera with various expressions of joy and relaxation. The child at the top left is wearing an orange shirt and has a slight smile. The child at the top right is wearing a red shirt and has their eyes closed. The child at the bottom left is wearing a red shirt and is smiling broadly. The child at the bottom right is wearing a blue and white striped polo shirt and is looking directly at the camera.

The health reason is important, but the reason why we have recess before lunch is that it helps with student behavior.

—Administrator

Why Do It?

National studies have shown that when schools have an Recess Before Lunch (RBL) schedule, the students consume more nutrients and waste less food. With greater nutrient intake, students are able to focus more on achieving learning goals in class. An RBL schedule may also improve student behavior in the classroom, on the playground, and in the cafeteria.

Evaluation of RBL at Kaneohe Elementary School demonstrated positive results. Since RBL was implemented with one grade during each lunch period, there have been decreases in discipline referrals, lunch waste, and lunch line wait.

RBL is quickly gaining recognition in Hawaii schools as an effective lunchtime schedule with many potential benefits. Unexpected results have included increased time for instruction, decreased number of students in the health room after lunch, and better recess participation.



Getting Started

- **Build support within the school and community.**
 - A. Within the school, the administrators, teachers, School Administrative Services Assistants (SASA), food service staff, dining room supervisors, playground supervisors, and custodians need to be involved from the very beginning.
 - B. The parents should be aware of the lunch schedule change. An article in the school newsletter or a letter to parents should include information about the reasons why the school has chosen to implement Recess Before Lunch (RBL) and how the schedule change may affect the students (see the sample parent letter on page 15). A Parent Community Networking Center or Parent Teacher Community Organization may help with the initiation and on-going support of the RBL schedule.
 - C. Information about the RBL schedule should be shared with the community. This is an opportunity for positive public relations for the school!
 - D. Prepare the students so that they understand the schedule. Engage student leaders to promote the new schedule on campus and ask for student feedback when appropriate.
- **Make sure students know where to put their belongings, including home lunches or lunch cards, during recess.**



- **Plan the new recess and lunch schedule. Meet with all of the staff involved, especially those directly affected by the schedule change (e.g., teachers, food service staff, playground supervisors, dining room supervisors, etc.) to work out the details. Realize that the schedule is a work in progress which may need to be revised a few times.**
- **Include a hand washing plan in the lunch schedule. Hand washing is an important health and food safety issue that should not be overlooked.**

Some schools that implement RBL suggest that the students line-up on the playground after recess, walk to the bathroom or sink to wash their hands, and then enter the cafeteria as a group. Other schools provide waterless sanitizer in the cafeteria for students to clean their hands before eating.

- **Allow adequate time for the students to play and to eat lunch (a minimum of 20 minutes is recommended from the time students are seated). Keep in mind that the younger students require more time to get through the serving line and to eat.**
- **Initially, increase the presence of adults on the playground and in the cafeteria. This helps ease the transition into and out of the cafeteria, facilitates hand washing, and provides extra supervision as the students learn a new routine.**



Practical Tips and Advice from Hawaii Schools

- Consider a modified Recess Before Lunch (RBL) schedule with one grade level from each lunch period. A staggered lunch schedule helps eliminate long lines and waiting time.
- Older grades are usually better for piloting the new schedule since they are more likely to adapt easily to the change and will be more independent in regards to hand washing.
- Have a system to help students calm down before they enter the cafeteria. Having students line-up outside and washing hands before entering the cafeteria helps them transition.
- Try replacing temporary lunch monitors with grade level Educational Assistants who are full-time staff, really know the students, and will monitor them and work with teachers.
- On hot days, students who engage in vigorous activity during recess might like to wipe-off with paper towels before eating.
- Find ways to keep students occupied after eating. Some schools have students line-up outside after eating and others provide play equipment outside. Other suggestions are to provide reading material or games for students while they wait.
- Changing the schedule may be a challenge. Expect the schedule to be a work in progress.



*We have had a decrease
in health room visits
due to sore stomachs
after running
and playing
after lunch.*

—Administrator

Sample Recess Before Lunch (RBL) Schedules

- A. Recess Before Lunch (RBL) is implemented during all lunchtimes, with all students. For example, all of the students go to recess first and then they proceed to the cafeteria. This method is simplest because all students and staff experience the same lunchtime routine.
- B. RBL is implemented during some of the lunchtimes, with all students. For example, the school has two lunchtimes and the first bell schedule has RBL, but the second lunchtime has lunch before recess. If the students have RBL during the first bell schedule, this provides extra time for meal preparation. The extra time is especially helpful for schools that also provide breakfast for students. Having the traditional lunch before recess schedule for the second bell facilitates a faster clean-up in the cafeteria after lunch.
- C. RBL is implemented during all lunchtimes, but only one grade per schedule has RBL. For example, the first bell schedule has grades 1 - 3 and grade 3 has RBL while grades 1 and 2 go directly to lunch. This method of implementation has the advantage of fewer students on the playground or in the cafeteria at one time, resulting in shorter cafeteria lines and a greater ratio of supervisors to students in each location. This schedule works well to address student behavior problems.
- D. RBL is modified so that students have recess, lunch, and then recess again. In this way, students may go back outside after finishing their lunch.

Children seem to be less antsy, tend to eat more, and waste less.

—Playground Supervisor



One Lunch Period All Students Have Recess Before Lunch

TIME	ACTIVITY
8:00 - 8:15	Morning Business
8:15 - 9:45	Instructional Block
9:45 - 10:00	Morning Recess
10:00 - 11:15	Instructional Block
11:15 - 11:30	Recess
11:30 - 11:45	Transition time for grades K-2
11:45 - 12:15	Lunch
12:15 - 1:15	Instructional Block
1:15 - 2:15	Instructional Block

Two Lunch Periods Recess Before Lunch: *Second Lunch Only*

TIME	ACTIVITY
8:00 - 8:15	Morning Business
8:15 - 9:45	Instructional Block
9:45 - 10:00	Morning Recess
10:00 - 11:00	Instructional Block
11:00 - 11:30	Grades K-2 to Lunch
11:30 - 11:45	Grades K-2 to Recess
11:45 - 12:00	Grades 3 – 5 to Recess
12:00 - 12:30	Grades 3 – 5 to Lunch
12:15 - 1:15	Instructional Block
1:15 - 2:15	Instructional Block

Three Lunch Periods Recess Before Lunch: *Selected Grades Only*

TIME	ACTIVITY
7:55 - 9:50	Instructional Block
9:50 - 10:10	Morning Recess
10:00 - 10:55	Instructional Block K-1
10:55 - 11:25	First Lunch Grades K-1
11:25 - 11:35	Recess for Grades K-1
10:10 - 11:15	Instructional Block for Grades 2 & 6
11:45 - 12:00	Second Lunch for Grades 2 & 6 (6th Grade Recess 11:15 - 11:25)
12:00 - 12:30	Recess for Grades 2 & 6 (6th Grade Lunch 11:25 - 11:55)
10:10 - 11:55	Instructional Block for Grades 3, 4 & 5
11:45 - 12:00	Third Lunch for Grades 3, 4 & 5 (5th Grade Recess 11:55 - 12:05)
12:00 - 12:30	Recess for Grades 3, 4 & 5 (5th Grade Lunch 12:05 - 12:35)
11:35 - 2:07	Instructional Block for Grades K-1
11:55 - 2:07	Instructional Block for Grades 2 & 6
12:35 - 2:07	Instructional Block for Grades 3, 4 & 5



Recess Before Lunch Key Points

Expected benefits of the Recess Before Lunch (RBL) schedule

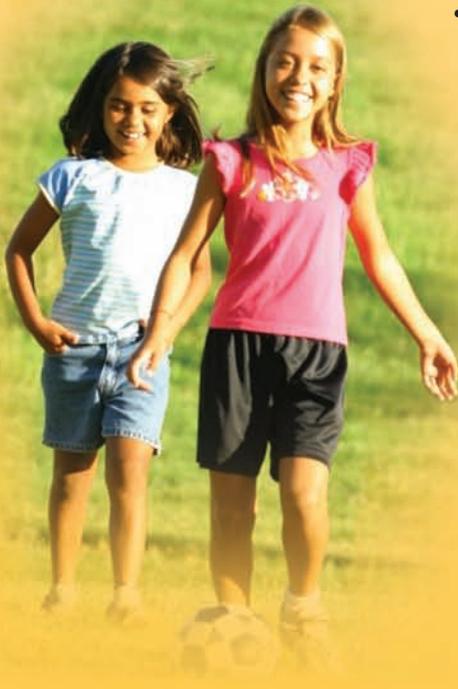
- Better classroom performance – students focus more on learning when they are not hungry.
- Fewer discipline problems – students are more settled in the cafeteria and in the classroom after they have had the opportunity to be active.
- Greater nutrient intake – students consume more milk, fruits, and vegetables as part of their lunchtime meal.

Potential benefits

- Students spend less time waiting in lines.
- Students have more time to be physically active.
- The cafeteria atmosphere is more relaxed.
- Less food is wasted.

Tips for success

- Share the benefits of the schedule with the parents, staff, and community.
- Use a trial period to help staff and students adjust to the new schedule and provide input.
- Initially provide extra support for staff and students.
- Have a system for students to wash their hands before eating lunch.
- Inform students where to place belongings during recess.
- Have a system to help students transition between the playground and the cafeteria.



*It's obvious that
their brains have
been fed and
hydrated.*

-Teacher

*Kids don't come back
hyper. They are better
able to re-focus.*

-Teacher



Sample Letter to Parents

Dear Parents:

Beginning next week, _____ Elementary School will be trying a new schedule during our lunchtime called, "Recess Before Lunch." Several schools in Hawaii have successfully implemented this schedule and others will be trying it for the first time this year.

A Recess Before Lunch schedule allows students to play first, and then eat lunch. Following lunch, students will return to class, ready to learn. Students should have the same amount of time for playing and eating during the new schedule.

There are many benefits to having a Recess Before Lunch schedule. National studies have shown that when schools have a Recess Before Lunch schedule, the students consume more nutrients and waste less food. When students are not hungry, they are able to focus more on learning and achieve better in class. Positive changes in student behavior have also been observed on the playground, in the cafeteria, and in the classroom.

We hope that this new schedule will promote better nutrition and student achievement for all of our students. We will try this schedule for _____, and if successful, will implement it for _____. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Thank you for supporting our school!

Sincerely,
Principal
Principal



Research and Supporting Information



Online Resources

- A pilot study at Kaneohe Elementary School
<http://www.csuchico.edu/cjhp/3/4/01-07-tanaka.pdf>
- “A Recess Before Lunch Guidebook, PowerPoint presentations, and brochures
<http://opi.mt.gov/schoolfood/recessBL.html>
- “Best Practice Checklist for Nutrition Professionals Implementing or Assessing Recess Before Lunch in Elementary Schools”
<http://www.nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=302>
- “Recess Before Lunch: Playtime before lunchtime!” Washington promotional flyer
http://www.eatsmart.org/client_images/recess_before_lunch_wa_final.pdf
- “The Benefits of Recess Before Lunch” brochure
<http://www.healthysd.gov/Documents/RecessBeforeLunch.pdf>

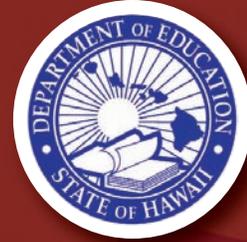
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Notes



A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing, set against a decorative background of floral and leaf patterns in shades of grey, yellow, and orange.



Linda Lingle, Governor of Hawaii

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