

TULSA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Balancing Instructional Time and the New Recess Requirement

Operational Impacts and Implementation Planning





WHO WE ARE



OUR VISION AND MISSION

Tulsa Public Schools is the destination for extraordinary educators who work with our community and families to ignite the joy of learning and prepare every student for the greatest success in college, careers and life. Our mission is to inspire and prepare every student to love learning, achieve ambitious goals and make positive contributions to our world.



WHOLE CHILD PROMISE

Educating the whole child means supporting not only academic growth, but also ensuring that students have strong social emotional skills, participate in the fine arts, and explore diverse experiences and viewpoints. Our students learn to be responsible decision-makers who know how to manage their emotions, build relationships, and set and achieve goals.



COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

Our schools offer 70+ career and technology education programs in which students can earn industry certifications. Through our partnership with Tulsa Community College, high school students can graduate with college credits. Our 12 high schools provide 100+ Advanced Placement courses with rigorous college-level content.



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Our early childhood classrooms provide joyful, purposeful play environments that engage students through exploration, inquiry and conversation to build language, literacy, and math skills. Students also develop social emotional skills; learning to understand and manage emotions, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.



NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS EXPERIENCE

Great schools are the hearts of thriving communities. Our neighborhood schools have served generations of Tulsans; each school with its own unique traditions and educational approaches. Our 76 schools offer safe and welcoming learning communities that meet the needs of every kind of learner.



INCLUSIVE LEARNING COMMUNITIES

We know that all children thrive within a diversity of experiences and perspectives that reflect the world outside of the classroom. We believe that Black and Brown lives matter and that living our values requires working actively to dismantle systems of racial oppression. We celebrate and affirm every individual regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or country of origin.

What Changed?



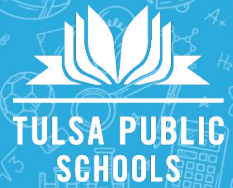
Oklahoma Senate Bill 1481

Beginning with the **2026–2027 school year**, Oklahoma requires all public elementary schools (K–5) to:

- ✓ Provide **40 minutes of supervised, unstructured recess daily**
- ✓ Allow the 40 minutes to be scheduled as one period or two periods in accordance with state guidance
- ✓ Maintain recess as a protected part of the school day—it may not be withheld as discipline
- ✓ Meet these requirements as a condition of school accreditation

Bottom Line: Recess is now a required instructional-day component, not simply a local scheduling decision.

What Does This Mean for TPS?



We already have 20 minutes of recess built into the daily schedule. Not only does this legislation require adding 20 minutes to the schedule, but we must also balance:

- Protecting instructional time (*for 26-27 only, Oklahoma State Department of Education is allowing 20 min of the 40 min requirement to count towards instructional time*)
- Maintaining core instructional priorities
- Coordinating transportation and operations
- Providing adequate supervision during recess and lunch
- Ensuring consistency across elementary schools

The challenge is not simply finding the additional 20 minutes. The challenge is redesigning the elementary day while maintaining high-quality instruction.

The Scheduling Trade-Offs

The additional time must come from somewhere in the schedule where TPS is already exceeding the state- and district-required minutes.

If More Time Is Added Here...	It Must Come From Somewhere Else
Recess	Literacy
Recess	Math
Recess	Intervention
Recess	Science/Social Studies
Recess	Specials
Recess	School Day Length

Additional Considerations

- Transition times
- Restroom breaks
- Supervision
- Playground capacity
- Breakfast / Lunch schedules
- Staffing

How do we comply with state law while protecting the instructional experiences that have the greatest impact on student learning?

TPS Scheduling Principles



As we redesign elementary schedules, TPS will:

- 1) **Comply with State Law** - Meet all [SB 1481](#), [SB 1778](#), and [SB 1360](#) requirements.
- 2) **Protect Academic Priorities** - Maintain district expectations for:
 - a) Core Instruction (Literacy, Math, Science, Social Studies, etc.).
 - b) Response to Intervention.
 - c) Character Development.
- 3) **Maximize Instructional Minutes** - Reduce unnecessary transitions and lost learning time.
- 4) **Ensure Operational Feasibility** - Design schedules that schools can consistently implement.
- 5) **Maintain Equity** - Every elementary student deserves the same opportunity regardless of school.

*Planning ahead: [HB 3151](#) mandates a minimum of 173 instructional days for 2027-2028, IF state funding increases by \$175M next year.

Elementary Instructional Priorities

Area	Daily/Weekly Expectation*
Core Literacy	110-120 minutes*
Walk to Read	30+ minutes
Core Math	60 minutes
Math Intervention	30 minutes
Science/Social Studies	90-150 minutes per week*
Specials (Art, Music, PE)	40 minutes
Physical Education (part of the Specials rotation)	60 minutes/week
Recess	40 minutes
Character Development	15-30 minutes*

425 Minute School Day

7:30 AM ← 425 Minutes → 2:35 PM



Approximately 390 Minutes

Committed to Instruction & Student Support

Approximately 35 Minutes

Remain Flexible



92%

of the school day is already committed to required or district-priority instructional components.

OPERATIONAL IMPLICATIONS



MOVE BREAKFAST BEFORE THE INSTRUCTIONAL DAY.



MINIMIZE TRANSITIONS THROUGHOUT THE DAY.



LIMIT ADDITIONAL ASSEMBLIES AND NON-INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES.



PROTECT UNINTERRUPTED INSTRUCTIONAL BLOCKS.



MAXIMIZE EFFICIENT SCHEDULING AND SUPERVISION.

The Elementary School Day Is Full

Every new statutory requirement competes for time within a finite school day.



Strong Readers Act

90 minutes uninterrupted
Tier I reading instruction
(K–3)



Math Achievement & Proficiency Act

Universal screening,
intervention requirements,
individual plans, and
progress monitoring



Physical Education

60 minutes per week



SB 1481 Recess

40 minutes daily recess;
protected from removal
as discipline



Strong Readers Act
90 minutes
uninterrupted
Tier I reading
(K–3)



Math Achievement & Proficiency Act
• Universal screening
• Intervention plans
• Progress monitoring



Physical Education
60 minutes
per week



SB 1481 Recess
40 minutes
daily



Science Standards



Computer Science Standards



SEL
Social-Emotional
Learning



Social Studies Standards



Intervention for Students



Academic Standards

- Reading
- Math
- Science
- Social Studies
- Computer Science

*Standards are required,
but instructional minutes
are locally determined.*



The question is no longer whether these requirements are important.

The question is how we implement them all while preserving high-quality instruction.



Two Separate State Requirements Must Be Met

Senate Bill 1481

Daily Recess Requirement

- 40 minutes of recess each school day (K–5)
- Protected from removal as a disciplinary measure
- Effective July 1, 2026

OAC 210:35-13-26

School Day & School Year

- Districts must provide 1,086 instructional hours annually

These are two independent state requirements. Tulsa Public Schools must comply with both.

2026-2027 What Counts as Instructional Time?

Counted Toward Instructional Hours

- ✓ Literacy
- ✓ Mathematics
- ✓ Science
- ✓ Social Studies
- ✓ Physical Education
- ✓ Specials (ex. Art, Music, PE)
- ✓ Character Development
- ✓ 20/40 min of recess (*for 26-27 only*)
- ✓ 12 hours for Parent Teacher Conferences
- ✓ 30 hours of Professional Development



Does NOT Count

- ✗ Lunch
- ✗ 20/40 min of recess (*per current Oklahoma State Department of Education guidance*)

Students are present for 425 minutes each day, but only 380 of those minutes count toward the required 1,086 instructional hours.

TPS Current Instructional Minutes



2026-2027 Student Day	425 min
Lunch	-25
Non-countable Recess	-20
Instructional Minutes	380

$$\begin{array}{r} 380 \text{ minutes/day} \\ \times \\ 166 \text{ instructional days in 2026-2027 calendar} \\ = \\ \text{Approximately 1,051 instructional hours} \\ + \\ \text{12 Hours of parent/teacher conference time} \\ + \\ \text{30 hours of Professional Development} \\ = \\ \text{Approximately 1,093} \end{array}$$

The TPS 2026–27 calendar exceeds current state requirement of 1,086 hours.

If the funding condition in [HB 3151](#) is met, beginning in 2027–28 TPS will be required to provide at least 173 instructional days while continuing to meet the annual requirement of 1,086 instructional hours. TPS must also plan for the possibility that none of the required 40 minutes of recess will count as instructional time.