STUDENTS
Series 5000
Policy # 5018.1.1

RECESS AND PLAY-BASED LEARNING

It is the policy of the EASTCONN Board of Directors (the "Board") to promote the health and well-being of district students by encouraging healthy lifestyles and mental health wellness, including promoting physical exercise, activity and play as part of the school day within the EASTCONN Schools ("District").

For purposes of this policy, a "school employee" is defined as (1) a teacher, substitute teacher, school administrator, principal, guidance counselor, school counselor, , nurse, physician, provider (school psychologist, board certified behavior analyst [BCBA], social worker, speech and language pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, assistive technology specialist, etc.) or school paraprofessional employed by the Board or working in the district schools, or (2) any other individual who, in the performance of his or her duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to or on behalf of students enrolled in the district schools pursuant to a contract with the Board.

For purposes of this policy, "recess" means the time during the regular school day for each student enrolled in elementary school that is devoted to physical exercise of not less than twenty minutes in total pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-221o.

I. Deprivation of Recess or Undirected Play Period as a Form of Discipline

For elementary school students, the Board includes a time of not less than twenty (20) minutes in total, during the regular school day, for recess, except that a planning and placement team ("PPT") may develop a different schedule for students requiring special education and related services.

The administration may include additional time, beyond the twenty (20) minutes required for recess, devoted to undirected play during the regular school day for elementary school students.

In an effort to promote physical exercise and undirected play, the Board prohibits school employees from disciplining elementary school students by preventing them from participating in the full twenty (20) minutes of recess or additional time devoted to undirected play during the regular school day, except in accordance with this policy or as determined by a student's Section 504 team or PPT.

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A. *Recess Period*

School employees may prevent or otherwise restrict a student from participating in the entire time devoted to recess as a form of discipline only under the following circumstances:

1) When a student poses a danger to the health or safety of themselves, other students or school personnel; or

2) If there are two or more periods devoted to recess in a school day, then when the prevention or restriction of recess is limited to the period of recess that is the shortest in duration, provided that the student still participates in at least twenty minutes of recess in a school day.

School employees may prevent or restrict a student from participating in the entire time devoted to recess as a form of discipline, in accordance with this policy, only one time during a school week, unless the student is a danger to the health or safety of themselves, other students or school personnel.

School employees may not prevent or restrict a student from participating in the entire time devoted to recess if such prevention or restriction is related to the student's failure to complete school work on time or to the student's academic performance.

This policy distinguishes between a) discipline that is imposed before recess begins and b) discipline imposed during recess or methods used to redirect a student's behavior during recess. School personnel may impose discipline during recess as a result of student's behavior during recess, if such discipline is in accordance with Board policies and procedures. . School personnel may also use approved methods aligned with school training and student-specific behavior plans, IEPs, or 504s that teach appropriate alternative behaviors and/or redirect behavior to ensure safety for all. For clarity, the prohibition against preventing or restricting a student's participation in the time devoted to recess shall apply to student conduct that occurs prior to the recess time, rather than during the recess time.

B. *Undirected Play Period*

School employees may not discipline elementary school students by preventing them from participating in the full time devoted to undirected play, if any, during the regular school day, except when a student poses a danger to the health or safety of other students or school personnel, or as determined by a student's Section 504 team or PPT.

II. Play-Based Learning Requirements for Pre-Kindergarten to Grade Five

Effective July 1, 2024, the Board directs the District administration to 1) provide for play-based learning during the instructional time of each regular school day for all students in kindergarten

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and any preschool program operated by the Board; and 2) permit a teacher to utilize play-based learning during the instructional time of the regular school day for all students in grades one to five, inclusive.

A. Definitions for Section II

1) "Free play" means unstructured, voluntary, child-initiated activities that are performed by a child for self-amusement and have behavioral, social and psychomotor rewards, except free play may be structured to promote activities that are child-directed, joyful and spontaneous.

2) "Guided play" means learning experiences that combine the child-directed nature of free play with a focus on learning outcomes and adult guidance.

3) "Play-based learning" means a pedagogical approach that emphasizes play in promoting learning and includes developmentally appropriate strategies that can be integrated with existing learning standards. Play-based learning does not mean time spent in recess or as part of a physical education course or instruction.

4) "Mobile electronic device" means any hand-held or other portable electronic equipment capable of providing data communication between two or more individuals, including, but not limited to, a text messaging device, a paging device, a personal digital assistant, a laptop computer, equipment that is capable of playing a video game or a digital video disk, or equipment on which digital images are taken or transmitted.

5) "Instructional time" means the time of actual school work during a regular school day.

B. Play-Based Learning Requirements for Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten

Play-based learning shall be provided during the instructional time of each regular school day for all students in kindergarten and any preschool program operated by the Board. Such play-based learning shall:

1) be incorporated and integrated into daily practice;

2) allow for the needs of such students to be met through free play, guided play and games; and

3) be predominantly free from the use of mobile electronic devices.

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C. Play-Based Learning Requirements for Grades One to Five, Inclusive

The Board permits teachers to utilize play-based learning during the instructional time of a regular school day for all students in grades one to five, inclusive. Such play-based learning:

1) may be incorporated and integrated into daily practice;

2) shall allow for the needs of such students to be met through free play, guided play and games; and

3) shall be predominantly free from the use of mobile electronic devices.

D. Play-Based Learning for Students with IEPs or Section 504 Plans

Any play-based learning utilized shall comply with a student's individualized education program ("IEP") or Section 504 plan.

E. Deprivation of Play-Based Learning as a Form of Discipline

School employees may not discipline elementary school students by preventing them from participating in the full time devoted to play-based learning, if any, during the regular school day, except when a student poses a danger to the health or safety of other students or school personnel, or as determined by a student's Section 504 team or PPT.

III. Prohibition on Compulsion of Physical Activity as a Form of Discipline

For all students, the Board prohibits school employees from disciplining students by requiring students to engage in physical activity as a form of discipline during the regular school day.

IV. Disciplinary Action for Failure to Follow Policy

Any employee who fails to comply with the requirements of this policy may be subject to discipline, up to and including termination of employment. Any contracted individual who provides services to or on behalf of students enrolled in the district and who fails to comply with the requirements of this policy may be subject to having the individual's contract for services suspended by the district.

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Legal References:

Connecticut General Statutes:

§ 10-221o Lunch periods. Recess. Boards to adopt policies addressing limitation of physical exercise

§ 10-221u Boards to adopt policies addressing the use of physical activity as discipline

Public Act No. 23-159, "An Act Concerning Teachers and Paraeducators"

Public Act No. 23-101, "An Act Concerning the Mental, Physical and Emotional Wellness of Children"

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