

RCW 28A.230.295 Daily recess. (1) (a) Beginning with the 2024-25 school year, public schools, for each school day that exceeds five hours in duration, must provide a minimum of 30 minutes of daily recess within the school day for all students in grades kindergarten through five and students in grade six that attend an elementary school.

(b) The office of the superintendent of public instruction may waive the requirement in (a) of this subsection during the 2024-25 school year for public schools demonstrating that they are unable to comply with the requirement.

(c) Public schools may provide additional recess before or after the school day, but that time may not be used to meet the requirements of this subsection (1).

(d) Time spent changing to and from clothes for outdoor play should not be used to meet the requirements of this subsection (1).

(2) (a) Recess must be supervised and student directed and must aim to be safe, inclusive, and high quality as described in the model policy and procedure referenced in RCW 28A.210.368. It may include organized games, but public schools should avoid including, or permitting the student use of, computers, tablets, or phones during recess.

(b) Recess should be held outside whenever possible. If recess is held indoors, public schools should use an appropriate space that promotes physical activity.

(3) The daily recess required under this section may not be used to meet the physical education requirements under RCW 28A.230.040.

(4) For the purposes of this section, "public schools" has the same meaning as in RCW 28A.150.010. [2023 c 272 § 2.]

Intent—2023 c 272: "(1) The legislature recognizes that recess is an essential part of the day for elementary school students. Young students learn through play, and recess supports the mental, physical, and emotional health of students and positively impacts their learning and behavior. Given the state's youth mental health and physical inactivity crisis, as well as learning loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic, recess is vital to support student well-being and academic success.

(2) The legislature also acknowledges that the amount of time spent on recess varies throughout the state; therefore, youth do not have equitable access to opportunities for physical activity, self-directed play, and time outdoors. The legislature intends to set a minimum requirement for daily recess to ensure that all students have equal access to recess, but school districts are encouraged to exceed this requirement.

(3) Further, the legislature intends to clarify that recess should not be withheld as a disciplinary or punitive action during the school day, and that recess should not be withheld to compel students to complete academic work. The legislature believes that these clarifications and other policies will help make elementary school recess safe, inclusive, and high quality for all students." [2023 c 272 § 1.]