

Summary of School Nurse Survey Results for Pre-K to Grade 6 Schools

1. Please select your school district.

School District	Number of responses	Percentage of Respondents
East Windsor	6	12%
Ewing	2	4%
Hamilton	10	20%
Hopewell	4	8%
Lawrence	1	2%
Mercer Vocational/Technical	0	0%
Mercer Special Services	1	2%
Princeton	6	12%
Robbinsville	3	6%
Trenton	6	12%
West Windsor Plainsboro	7	14%
Other	5	10%
Total	51	102%

Note: #72 checked off all options and commented "all rotating nurse"

2. Please select the configuration that best describes your school:

Option	Number of responses	Percentage of Respondents
Pre-K	6	12% of the school nurses came from schools that included Pre-K
Elementary	48 of the responses included variations of grades K through 6 in their schools	94% of the school nurses came from schools that included variations of grades K through 6 in their schools

3. How many students attend your school?

Option	Number of responses	Percentage of Respondents
1-100	1	2%
101-450	24	48%
451-750	16	32%
Over 750	9	18%
No response	1	N/A
Total	51	100%

4. What is the frequency of recess offered at your school?

Option	Number of responses	Percentage of Respondents
Daily	46	90%
3-4 days	4	8%
1-2 days	0	0%
No recess	1	2%
Total	51	100%

5. Recess at your school includes (you may check all that apply):

Option	Number of responses	Percentage of Respondents
Unstructured indoor or outdoor playtime	49	96%
Required structured activity (please specify program or curriculum)	2	4%
Recess is incorporated with Physical Education class	1	2%
Other (please specify)	3	6%

6. On average, how many minutes do students spend each day at scheduled recess?

Option	Number of responses	Percentage of Respondents
1-15 minutes	4	8%
16-30 minutes	43	84%
31-45 minutes	2	4%
More than 45 minutes	2	4%
Total	51	100%

Note: Surveys #44 and #49 had special circumstances. Survey #44 noted that students spend 15-20 minutes every day at recess, which is why she checked off both the 1-15 min option and the 16-30 min option. Survey #49 also checked off both of these options, stating that it “depends on how quickly students eat before running outside.” Since these survey responses had 2 options, I only included the option with the lower amount of minutes since there was a note written on Survey #49 to “Put 1-15 as can’t put both + recess not the priority of admin.”

7. When does scheduled recess occur? (Check both if both apply.)

Option	Number of responses	Percentage of Respondents
Recess is before lunch	8	17%
Recess is after lunch	16	35%
Both	22	48%
No response	5	N/A
Total	51 total (only 46 had answered this question)	100%

8. Do teachers have the opportunity to provide unscheduled recess during the school day?

Option	Number of responses	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	40	87%
No	6	13%
No response	5	N/A
Total	51 total (only 46 answered this question)	100%

9. Has the amount of time devoted to recess changed over the last five years?

Option	Number of responses	Percentage of Respondents
Increased	5	11%
Decreased	6	13%

No change	34	76%
No response	6	N/A
Total	51 (only 45 answered this question)	100%

10. Below is a list of possible reasons for increasing or decreasing scheduled recess minutes. If your school has made changes in the last 5 years, please mark those that influenced the decision.

Option	Number of Responses	Percentage of Respondents
To increase academic time	7	19% of those who responded to this question stated that this option was one of the possible reasons for increasing or decreasing scheduled recess minutes
Facilities	2	5%
Supervision/staffing	5	14%
New policy	1	3%
New leadership	1	3%
Behavioral concerns	4	11%
Not Applicable/No change	23	62%
Other (please specify)	5	14%
No responses	14	27% of the total number of survey respondents did not respond to this question

Responses for "other (please specify):

Survey number	Response for Question #10 when they checked off "other (please specify)"
12	"while the amount of time has not changed it is very difficult to have adequate supervision daily"
24	"to improve balance of day academic and playtime"
27	"only at the school –" (last word was illegible)
28	"extra recess according to class"
63	"weather – shortened if temp too cold"
69	"HIB potential for incidents, restricted open space that is not entirely secure, other reasons below" "HIB; loose structured time, mixed grade levels, and restricted open space made recess difficult"

11. Is your staff allowed to exclude students from all or part of recess as a consequence for academic or discipline reasons?

Option	Number of responses	Percentage of Respondents
No, not allowed	6	15% of respondents who answered this question checked off this option
Exclusion is discouraged school-wide	11	27%
Teachers have discretion as to how they handle exclusions	8	20%
Yes	17	41%
No response	10	N/A
Total	51 surveys (only 41 responses for this question)	

Note: #3 checked off both 'exclusion is discouraged school-wide' and 'teachers have discretion as to how they handle exclusions'

12. Please rate the following statement: Recess is an important part of the school day.

Option	Number of responses	Percentage of Respondents
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Strongly Agree	36	77%
Somewhat Agree	8	17%
Neutral	2	4%
Somewhat Disagree	0	0%
Strongly Disagree	1	2%
No response	4	N/A
Total	51 (only 47 answered this question)	100%

Notes:

- There were 51 school nurses who responded to the survey.
- The “percentage of respondents” reflects only the number of school nurses who provided an answer for each particular question.

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Important Findings:

- 51 responses were collected from schools that include any of the following grades: Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 6
- Note: Since the respondents were not required to answer every question, only the total number of answered responses were taken into consideration when calculating percentages.
- Approximately 90% of the schools offer recess daily, with only 1 school in the sample offering no recess at all.
- Approximately 96% of the schools offer recess that includes unstructured indoor or outdoor playtime.
- Approximately 84% of the schools schedule recess for at least 16-30 minutes on each scheduled recess day.
- Approximately 48% of the schools schedule recess both before lunch and after lunch, while 35% of the schools schedule recess after lunch.
- Approximately 87% of the schools allow teachers to have the opportunity to provide unscheduled recess during the school day.
- There has been no change in the amount of time devoted to recess over the last 5 years for approximately 76% of the schools. Only 11% of the schools were able to increase the amount of time devoted to recess over the last 5 years, while 13% of the schools had to decrease this amount of time.
- The top 3 factors that influenced the schools' decision to change the amount of scheduled recess minutes include: 19% of the schools wanted to increase academic time; 14% of the schools attributed the decision to supervision and staffing; and 14% of the schools marked "other" reasons that were not listed as an option.
- Approximately 41% of the schools are allowed to exclude students from all or part of recess as a consequence for academic or discipline reasons.
- Approximately 77% of the school nurses "strongly agree" and 17% "somewhat agree" with the statement: "Recess is an important part of the school day."

Policy Recommendations:

- All schools should schedule at least 16-30 minutes of recess into every school day for students of all grades.
- Since recess is important for students' physical, emotional, and mental health, schools should develop a policy that discourages faculty from excluding students from recess as a consequence for academic or discipline reasons.

Future Research Recommendations

- A follow-up survey should be sent to all school nurses who completed this survey to assess for open-end responses of why they agree or disagree with the statement: “Recess is an important part of the school day.” Open-ended responses about recess during the school day may provide additional valuable feedback about recess within the context of their individual schools and allow school nurses to identify current and potential obstacles to offering recess on a daily basis.