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School Recess and Group Classroom Behavior

Romina M. Barros, MD, Ellen J. Silver, PhD and Ruth E. K. Stein, MD

Department of Pediatrics, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Children's Hospital at Montefiore and Rose F. Kennedy Center, Bronx, New York

OBJECTIVES. This study examines the amount of **recess** that children 8 to 9 years of age receive in the United States and compares the **group classroom behavior** of children receiving daily **recess** with that of children not receiving daily **recess**.

METHODS. This is a secondary analysis of a public-use data set, the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998–1999, third-grade data set. Children were categorized into 2 levels of **recess** exposure, that is, none/minimal break (<1 break of 15 minutes/day) or some **recess**. Some **recess** was further categorized into 5 levels on the basis of frequency and duration of **recess**. Child, parent, **school**, and **classroom** characteristics of those with and without **recess** were compared. The **group classroom behavior** was assessed by using the teacher's rating of class **behavior**.

RESULTS. Complete data were available for 10301 to 11624 children 8 to 9 years of age. There were equal numbers of boys and girls (boys: 50.3%). Children exposed to none/minimal break (30%) were much more likely to be black, to be from families with lower incomes and lower levels of education, to live in large cities, to be from the Northeast or South, and to attend public **school**, compared with those with **recess**. Teacher's rating of **classroom behavior** scores were better for children with some **recess** than for those with none/minimal break. This finding was maintained in multivariate regression analysis. However, among children receiving daily **recess**, the teacher's rating of class **behavior** scores did not differ significantly according to the level of exposure.

CONCLUSIONS. These results indicated that, among 8- to 9-year-old children, having ≥ 1 daily **recess** period of >15 minutes in length was associated with better teacher's rating of class **behavior** scores. This study suggests that **school**children in this age **group** should be provided with daily **recess**.
