

21st Century Teaching and Learning—Part 2 of 5

Why Recess and the Arts Matter



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The Colorado
Education
Association has over
38,000 members
most of whom are
K-12 public school
teachers and other
public school
employees. CEA is
affiliated with the
3.2 million member
National Education
Association.

Take a break! We all know that taking a well-placed break during a hectic work day means more productivity for the next part of our day. We take breaks when we need to recharge mentally, increase our energy or just collect our thoughts. Our school-age children have the same need to recharge and reenergize by taking recess and creative classes in art and music.

As our teachers are pressured more and more to teach to the test and focus on the basics, programs and activities viewed as non-essential to higher test scores continue to get squeezed from the school day. Increasingly, this means less physical movement—recess and P.E.—and few if any creative classes in the arts.

Recess

On the surface, recess and P.E. may seem like a waste of time when there are so many important subjects to cover each day. After all, children have time to play after school.

According to Dr. John J. Ratey, a clinical associate professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, there is an increasingly strong link between exercise and academic performance. Other research indicates a strong correlation between reading ability and physical activities.

Dr. Ratey says, “The exercise itself doesn’t make you smarter, but it puts the brain of the learners in the optimal position for them to learn.” This seems like plain old common sense and doesn’t even take into account the health benefits of allowing children the hour a day of exercise recommended by the U.S. Surgeon General.

Think again about your own performance. How do you feel after a workout or a run compared to being stuck in the office all day in front of your computer screen? Chances are good you’re more alert, less lethargic, and much better equipped to handle your day after exercising. Why would our kids be any different? On top of that, children learn to organize themselves into teams while playing sports, deepen personal connections with one another, tap into their creative side and continue their growth toward maturity.

The Arts

An active mind leads to creativity and imagination, two of the most desirable traits an employee can display to an employer. Fostering creative development through the arts enhances these traits in our kids, and prepares them for an increasingly complex and ever-changing world. No one can get

by on the basics alone. Succeeding in this world takes creativity and imagination.

When you conduct an interview to hire a new colleague, what do you look for? Necessary skills and experience, obviously—but equally as important are creativity, imagination, compatibility and a team-oriented attitude.

I urge you to think differently about recess, P.E., music and the arts. Supporting these activities in school from an early age will ready our students for the world that awaits them.

In short, a well-rounded school experience allows children to grow into 21st Century learners. It fosters their growth in a way that no test can ever measure.

To learn more please visit
www.coloradoea.org.



No one knows education better.