

Viscaino, Kiara

Professor Kirsten Cole

ECE 210 - 190W

11/27/2024

Reduction of Recess as Discipline

Teachers are reducing recess play as a disciplinary act for those kids who are not responding academically as the teacher desires. Infants and toddlers in elementary school programs are the center of those being affected by this issue. The children are being affected cognitively and emotionally. The families are also being affected by seeing drastic changes in their child's academic performance. Discipline most likely falls under the parents role, but inside a classroom any discipline should be communicated with these families. This problem starts with miscommunication from the teacher to the infant/toddler and this could furthermore impact their responsiveness. The classroom setting should always be a safe environment for infants and toddlers to learn and explore. Recess time is essential in a child's early stages of development. If their play time is reduced this could potentially harm and delay their motor skills.

Urgent intervention is needed to avoid negative consequences. The phrase ASAP, as soon as possible, could be used in this matter. The more time we allow teachers to keep this going, the more problems can occur. The solution to this problem is simple; correct disciplinary training must be given to all educators before and during school sessions. To begin this action, we must communicate to the NYC Chancellor, Melissa Aviles-Ramos, and inform her of these harms. This will lead us into looking at an updated policy on city wide recess guidelines.

In Evie Blad's (2015) article titled "Withholding Recess as Discipline in Decline: As Schools Move to Ban Restrictions on Playtime, Some Teachers Resist Losing Discretion over Discipline." She discusses the argument of teachers resisting the use of recess withdrawal time as educational punishments. The main issue the article addresses is how some teachers deliberately have an aggressive approach when disciplining the children inside a classroom. Although this discipline is not a physical response like yelling or contact, the students are decreasing their cognitive development and are negatively impacted by it. This article is informative and a key piece to discussing how infants and toddlers aren't receiving cognitive, social, emotional, or physical benefits in school.

When young children hear the word "Recess" they immediately know it's time to play. Play is very essential in a child's early development. According to The American Academy of Pediatrics, their research shares the importance of play. "Young students have improved literacy scores and better cognitive functioning when they get breaks for physical activity." (Blad, 2015, p. 2) Throughout play time, children are engaging with other classmates in activities that allow them to explore and learn through experience. Along with exercises, children are working out their brain. To get into psychology, the brain is divided into four lobes, but I'd like to focus on two. The frontal lobes is the compartment that is involved in speaking and muscle movements, and in making plans and judgments. The parietal lobes also receive sensory input for touch and body position. These two work alongside each other when children engage in physical activity. In simpler terms, when children are actively playing, their brain is functioning to max capacity. The American Academy of Pediatrics shares that with this physical activity outside the classroom, their academic benefits inside the classroom. As children get the right amount of play, they could show outstanding academic scores.

In addition, another research conducted by the University of Colorado in Boulder and the University of Denver, “found in a 2014 study that 6-year-olds who spent more time in unstructured play showed more signs of strong executive functioning and decision making skills. Those skills are supportive of strong social relationships, which researchers have linked to academic success throughout a student's school career.” (Blad, 2015, p. 2) As an educator, our goal is to see our children succeed, academically and socially. If physical activity allows them to gain bright qualities, why would we want to decrease their chances of constantly growing and learning? It wouldn't make sense. Educators must primarily emphasize on the care and nurture of children.

Therefore, the CDC, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “recommend that all elementary school students get at least 20 minutes of recess time each day.” With these internal data sources, it can be shown clearly that playtime in school is essential for children's development and academic performance. I would like to keep informing others and advocate for this issue, as it can potentially harm our future generation. Some educators don't see the importance of allowing their students to engage in physical activity, despite their lack of attention.

In an interview podcast on “This American Life” from October 17, 2014, Chana Joffe-Walt interviews Tunette Powel, a mother to a little 5 year old boy named JJ. Ms.Powel shares an unexpected story about how JJ is treated at school and finds out the reality behind it. JJ's school had contacted Ms.Powel several times to alert her about her son's behavior and how disruptive he has become inside the classroom. This made Ms.Powel feel like she had failed in parenting her child, but in reality, the school educator system had failed her child. JJ's teacher would react to his misbehavior by sending him to an isolated room again, where he wasn't allowed to have snacks nor toys. This later proceeded to be an “at-home suspension.” JJ was only

4 years old when these suspensions took place, and wasn't aware of what he was doing wrong. The teacher failed to educate him on his behavior. The teacher just isolated him from the class and thought this way the best way he was going to learn. This started to make Ms.Powel wonder why his behavior wasn't changing after constant consultations.

A sociologist named Pedro Noguera, another person involved in this interview shared his perspective on what was going wrong. He emphasized the racial segregation aspect of it all. "Suspensions have become the go-to move in response to disruptive behavior, for everyone, actually, but especially Black and Hispanic kids." Although comparison is bad, some teachers are still poorly trained and still see a difference. As Ms.Powel gathered more insight on what was going on in JJ's school, she saw how JJ's White classmates had harsher problems but no serious effects like suspension like her son. As a White infant physically punches another kid, sending them to the hospital- only receives a phone call to alert the family. Meanwhile, JJ's get a physical exclusion outside of the classroom, for spitting on another peer. In addition, Pedro Noguera (2014) stated the following:

"There's this assumption that, if we get rid of the bad people, that the good people will be able to learn, the good people will be safe. What we continue to ignore is that we are producing the bad people. We're producing in school the bad behavior. Producing it through the system of punishment that convinces some kids that they're bad."

This scientific research proves how easily teachers use their influence and label students. Labeling a scholar by their periods of misbehavior is not proper in teaching a classroom. A teacher must view all the students equally, not diminishing them because of their skin color, nonetheless by their academic performance. If a child becomes a "bad student" the teacher should not overlook their capacity to keep learning. Removing them from the classrooms won't make them self learn the curriculum.

This proves with more urgency why essential disciplinary training is needed for all staff and educators. If teachers keep believing their selfish mindset and labeling students by their behaviors, then there will be no united classroom and no fair education. School is an environment where parents trust educators to educate them, not to treat them unfairly.

I also learned a lot from reading an excerpt of “Troublemakers: Lessons in Freedom from Young Children at School” by Carla Shalaby and viewed discipline inside a classroom from a different perspective. The pedagogy I extracted from this reading revolved around how teachers use conventional disciplinary methods and how this harmed students. Shalaby advocates for teaching freedom in schools and inputs positive norms within a classroom. Based on the title of her book, she viewed bad behaved scholars as something more than just “troublemakers.” These students act out in response to inform others that their educators are doing something wrong. These teachers are using discipline as a way to prove that they are the ones who have authority to name what’s right and wrong. In contrast to this, these educators should’ve enlightened their students with correct mannerism, pointing them towards a positive direction.

In Shalaby’s book, she scripted; “Schools engender trouble by using systems of reward and punishment to create a certain kind of person– “a good student” –a person suited for the culture of schooling.” (Shalaby, 2017, p. 152) Teachers create labels such as the “good student” and then proceed to isolate the “bad” ones. This type of grouping is very harmful as it can hurt children emotionally and mentality. The teacher is abusing their power and controlling who will be able to learn from their lectures. This quote urged a strong feeling in me and taught me that isolation shouldn’t be an option. I find the need to advocate for properly teaching educators on how to discipline in an adequate effectful way.

I want to bring attention to this issue within the community by inviting families to interact with the school community more often. Communication will be a key tool into maintaining a healthy relationship for parents and teachers to help educate their children. Engaging in a Teacher's Club and spending more time one on one with the child and the teacher will allow them to be trust and harmony throughout the school year. This will benefit the families by building their comfort levels with the teacher and asking reassuring suggestions.

Reaching a larger target I want to reach out to our NYC Chancellor; Melissa Aviles-Ramos and inform her about this major issue. As she is the one in charge of the policy inside the DOE, Department of Education, I would highly like to advocate and enforce annual training for all staff inside a school environment. Within this training, they will learn how to properly take care of kids, how to react to their misbehaviors, and regulate norms inside the classroom without affecting their physical play time. As research has proven, recess time brings positive benefits to young students, so within this training, they need to be reminded that every child MUST have their minimum 20 minutes every day of play as the CDC recommends. If any teacher or staff member chooses to overpower these norms and not incorporate their training into their classroom, they shall be on the lookout for potentially getting fired.

This issue has been meaningful to research and has impacted my views on my future career. As a student aspiring to become an educator, I want my future students to love my teaching approach and feel comfortable to embrace any flaw that has affected them. I've seen how children are currently being drawn to technology and not spending enough time outside. I think it's important to incorporate adequate recess time for children to have the best foundation possible for their brighter future!

References:

Blad, E. (April 15, 2015). Withholding Recess as Discipline in Decline: As schools move to ban restrictions on playtime, some teachers resist losing discretion over discipline. *Education Week*, 34 (27), 1. <https://advance-lexis-com.bmcc.ezproxy.cuny.edu/>

New York City Department of Education. (2024). Sports and Staying Active
<https://www.schools.nyc.gov/school>.

Powell, T. (2023). Is this working? Retrieved from <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/>

Shalaby, C. (2017) *Troublemakers: Lessons in Freedom from Young Children at School*. (Section 5) New York: The New Press. <https://brightspace.cuny.edu/content/>