

WWC Quick Review of the Article “School Recess and Group Classroom Behavior”[†]

What is this study about?

This study examined whether providing daily recess to third graders improves their classroom behavior.

The study analyzed a nationally representative sample of over 10,000 students enrolled in third grade during the 2001–02 school year. These data were drawn from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998–1999 (ECLS–K).

The authors analyzed data from teacher questionnaires on teachers’ assessments of their classrooms’ behavior.

The study measured effects by examining teachers’ ratings of their classrooms’ behavior, comparing the ratings from teachers whose students were offered daily recess with the ratings from teachers whose students were not offered daily recess.

What Two Groups of Third Graders Were Contrasted?

Third graders who were offered more than 15 minutes of recess each day

Third graders who did not have recess every day or had recess for 15 minutes or less each day

WWC Rating

The research described in this article is not consistent with WWC evidence standards

Cautions: The study compared the classroom behavior of students who had daily recess to the behavior of students who had little or no recess. The background characteristics of these two research groups were not similar. For example, students offered daily recess were substantially more likely than those offered little or no recess to be white, to have parents who were more educated and had higher incomes, and to live in small towns or rural areas. Although the study’s analytic methods adjust for some of these differences, there may be differences between the groups that are not accounted for, and these differences may have influenced classroom behavior. As a result, the study’s findings cannot be attributed with confidence to the effect of offering daily recess.

What did the study authors report?

The study reported that teachers rated their classrooms’ behavior more favorably when their students were offered daily recess.

The WWC does not consider these results to be conclusive because the research groups were not equivalent initially. The reported differences in behavior between the groups might reflect differences in the students that are not related to the amount of recess they were offered.

[†]Barros, R. M., Silver, E. J., & Stein, R. E. K. (2009). School recess and group classroom behavior. *Pediatrics*, 123(2): 431–436.