



# Illinois Recess in Schools Task Force Report

January 25, 2012

<http://www.isbe.net/IRTF/default.htm>

### Illinois Recess in Schools Task Force Final Report

The Illinois Task Force on Recess in Schools was created by Illinois Governor Pat Quinn and the Illinois General Assembly (Senate Joint Resolution. 80 of the 96th General Assembly and HJR 4 in the 97th General Assembly (Appendix A). The Task Force was charged with examining the barriers facing schools in providing daily recess to every age-appropriate student and making recommendations for overcoming those obstacles and bringing recess back to the maximum number of students.

The Task Force is comprised of the following 15 members:

- (1) two members appointed by the Governor, one of whom shall be a medical professional with expertise in children's health issues – **Rebecca Unger and Kemia Serraf**
- (2) one member appointed by the President of the Senate – **Sen. Kimberly Lightford**
- (3) one member appointed by the Senate Minority member – **Sen. Suzi Schmidt**
- (4) one member appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives – **Rep. Ken Dunkin**
- (5) one member appointed by the House Minority Leader – **Rep. Roger Eddy**
- (6) one member appointed by the Chicago Board of Education – **Flavia Hernandez**
- (7) one member appointed by the Governor upon recommendation of the education labor organization representing Chicago public school teachers – **Jackson Potter**

- (8) one member appointed by the Governor upon recommendation of another Statewide education labor organization – **Cecilia Benelli**
- (9) one member appointed by the Governor upon recommendation of another Statewide education labor organization – **Erin Washkuhn**
- (10) one member appointed by the Governor upon recommendation of an organization representing principals – **Andrew Pygott**
- (11) one member appointed by the Governor upon recommendation of the Chicago-based coalition of low-income mothers and grandmothers focusing on family issues – **Karen Lynn Morton**
- (12) one member appointed by the Governor upon recommendation of a parent-teacher organization – **Barbara Quinn**
- (13) one member appointed by the Governor upon recommendation of an organization advocating for juvenile justice reform – **Mariame Kaba**
- (14) one member appointed by the Governor upon recommendation of an organization that advocated for healthy school environments – **Adam Becker**

The Illinois State Board of Education was charged with providing administrative support to the Task Force.

To complete its work, the Task Force held a series of four meetings: October 18, 2011; December 12, 2011; January 11, 2012; and January 25, 2012. Meetings took place in the videoconference rooms at the State Board of Education offices located in Chicago and Springfield. A copy of the minutes and agenda for those meetings can be found in Appendix B of this report and also on the Task Force webpage located at the following link: <http://www.isbe.net/IRTF/default.htm>.

The Task Force reviewed a number of articles in support of recess and physical activity. It examined the Chicago Public Schools handbook on recess, *Developing a School Recess Plan*; as well as examples from other states.

#### Definition of Recess

Recess is an activity during the school day that provides students the opportunity to take a break from their class work, engage in play with their peers and participate in unstructured activities (*Developing a School Recess Plan*, Chicago Public Schools, May 2011).

The Task Force agreed on the importance of distinguishing between recess and physical education.

#### Benefits of Recess

Professional literature reviewed by the Task Force can be found in Appendix C of this report. Research has widely reported the benefits of recess for children. Recess improves students' physical, mental and emotional health and enhances their classroom learning opportunities. Studies have shown that

students who have recess daily have enhanced cognitive skills, reduced behavioral problems and increased attention and concentration. Classroom teachers have observed that students pay better attention to academic lessons after an active recess break. Disruptive behavior also decreases after recess.

The Council on Physical Education for Children believes that “recess provides children with discretionary time and opportunities to engage in physical activity that helps to develop healthy bodies and enjoyment of movement. It also allows elementary children to, practice life skills such as ...

- conflict resolution,
- cooperation,
- respect for rules,
- taking turns,
- sharing,
- using language to communicate, and
- problem solving in real world situations. ”

#### Barriers to Recess

At its first meeting on October 18, 2011, the Task Force focused on existing barriers to schools implementing recess during their school day. Four major barriers were identified:

- Space (meaning facilities)
- Safety and security
- Supervision of recess activities
- Time during the school day

The recommendations that follow are all categorized by the above mentioned barriers.

#### Task Force Recommendations

The Illinois Recess in Schools Task Force recommends that school districts and schools do the following to ensure that every student pre-kindergarten through eighth grade has access to daily recess.

##### 1) Space (meaning facilities)

- Use space inside the school building (such as cafeterias, hallways, gymnasiums and all-purpose rooms) when outdoor facilities are unavailable or inappropriate.
- Use adjoining Park District land or facilities through Joint Use Agreements. (Potential liability issues need to be addressed).
- Determine appropriate temperature guidelines for sending children outside during recess.

- Discretion of the building principal should be used when determining factors as to whether temperatures and conditions (extreme heat and extreme cold) are safe for recess.
- Broaden the use of school construction funding for recreational space and equipment upgrades.
- Utilize school maintenance grant dollars (when available) for recreational space upgrades.

## 2) Safety and Security

- Maintain and properly manage current recreational (playground, etc) facilities.
- Engage community leadership in ways to ensure safety during recess.
- Use police or park district security during school recess periods to minimize gang violence during recess times.
- Create ceasefire zones, utilizing parent patrols, onsite school security and by creating “respect violence-free times.”
- Include recess evacuation as part of district emergency plans (emergency plans are already required).

## 3) Supervision

- Use volunteers to assist with recess responsibilities to meet scheduling and planning time commitments to teachers while keeping cognizant of union contracts and volunteer district procedures.
- Evaluate and revise volunteer policies (if available) to enhance recess supervision.
- Encourage participation of the building principal and other administrators in a supervisory role during recess.

## 4) Time

- Provide a total of thirty (30) minutes of recess during the school day for all children pre-kindergarten through eighth grade.
- If recess is attached to the lunch period, recess should occur before lunch.
- Recess is an unstructured period that can include unstructured play time as well as games and moderately structured play activities.
- Recess shall not be withheld as a form of discipline, it can however be used as an incentive with additional “recess” minutes for good behavior.
- Disciplining children by imposing physical activity is not an acceptable practice.

## Appendices

**Appendix A – Copy of SJR 80 and HJR 4**

**Appendix B – Agendas and Minutes**

**Appendix C – Literature Review**

DRAFT

## Appendix A

<http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/96/SJR/PDF/09600SJ0080eng.pdf>

<http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/97/HJR/PDF/09700HJ0004enr.pdf>

DRAFT



09600SJ0080 Engrossed

LRB096 15335 MJR 30615 r

1 SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 80

2 (As Amended by Senate Amendment No. 1)

3 WHEREAS, Studies have shown that children provided with  
4 recess are more focused, on-task, and able to concentrate on  
5 educational material than those who are not afforded a recess  
6 period; cognitive function improves when a child has the  
7 opportunity for physical exercise and active play; and

8 WHEREAS, Obesity rates among children have skyrocketed in  
9 recent years, with one in three American children now being  
10 considered overweight or obese; recess provides children with  
11 the opportunity for physical exercise during the school day;  
12 and

13 WHEREAS, Recess is essential for providing students with a  
14 less structured period of time in which to engage in social  
15 interactions and develop interpersonal relationships with  
16 peers; it is often during this time that children improve their  
17 leadership and conflict resolution skills; and

18 WHEREAS, A large number of students go every school day  
19 with no opportunity for a recess period; therefore, be it

20 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-SIXTH GENERAL  
21 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



1 CONCURRING HEREIN, that there is created a Recess in Schools  
2 Task Force; and be it further

3 RESOLVED, That the Task Force shall be charged with  
4 examining the barriers facing schools in providing daily recess  
5 to every age-appropriate student and making recommendations  
6 for overcoming those obstacles; and be it further

7 RESOLVED, That the Task force shall be comprised of the  
8 following 15 members:

9 (1) two members appointed by the Governor, one of whom  
10 shall be a medical professional with expertise in  
11 children's health issues;

12 (2) one member appointed by the President of the  
13 Senate;

14 (3) one member appointed by the Senate Minority Leader;

15 (4) one member appointed by the Speaker of the House of  
16 Representatives;

17 (5) one member appointed by the House Minority Leader;

18 (6) one member appointed by the Chicago Board of  
19 Education;

20 (7) one member appointed by the Governor upon  
21 recommendation of the education labor organization  
22 representing Chicago public school teachers;

23 (8) one member appointed by the Governor upon  
24 recommendation of a Statewide education labor

1 organization;

2 (9) one member appointed by the Governor upon  
3 recommendation of another Statewide education labor  
4 organization;

5 (10) one member appointed by the Governor upon  
6 recommendation of an organization representing principals;

7 (11) one member appointed by the Governor upon  
8 recommendation of a Chicago-based coalition of low-income  
9 mothers and grandmothers focusing on family issues;

10 (12) one member appointed by the Governor upon  
11 recommendation of a parent-teacher organization;

12 (13) one member appointed by the Governor upon  
13 recommendation of an organization advocating for juvenile  
14 justice reform;

15 (14) one member appointed by the Governor upon  
16 recommendation of an organization that advocates for  
17 healthy school environments; and be it further

18 RESOLVED, That the Task Force must meet within 60 days  
19 after the adoption of this resolution and submit a final report  
20 to the General Assembly by January 1, 2011 with its  
21 recommendations for bringing recess back to the maximum number  
22 of students.



HJ0004 Enrolled

LRB097 02848 NHT 42870 r

1 HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 4

2 WHEREAS, During the 96th General Assembly, the Recess in  
3 Schools Task Force was established pursuant to Senate Joint  
4 Resolution 80 for the purpose of examining the barriers facing  
5 schools in providing daily recess to every age-appropriate  
6 student and making recommendations for overcoming those  
7 obstacles; and

8 WHEREAS, Further work is needed on these issues; therefore,  
9 be it

10 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
11 NINETY-SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE  
12 SENATE CONCURRING HEREIN, that the Recess in Schools Task Force  
13 is extended; and be it further

14 RESOLVED, That the Recess in Schools Task Force shall  
15 submit its final report, as established in its authorizing  
16 resolution, on or before December 31, 2011; and be it further

17 RESOLVED, That with this reporting extension, the Recess in  
18 Schools Task Force shall continue to operate pursuant to its  
19 enabling resolution.

# Appendix B

## Illinois Recess Task Force (IRTF)

James R. Thompson Center

100 W. Randolph

Floor 2, Room 2-025

Chicago, IL 60601

And

Phone Conference

1-888-557-8511

Access Code: 8 7 3 8 7 4 0

Tuesday, October 18th, 2011

2-4 p.m.

### AGENDA

- I. Welcome and introductions
- II. Review of the purpose of the task force and relevant timelines
- III. Future meeting dates
- IV. Further questions
- V. Next meeting's agenda

Illinois Recess in Schools Task Force

October 18, 2011

Meeting Minutes

At 2:15 p.m. the first meeting of the Illinois Recess in Schools Task Force was called to order by Marica Cullen and Cynthia Riseman of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). Members present included Senator Kimberly Lightford, Cecilia Bonelli, Representative Roger Eddy (by phone), Mariame Kaba, Jackson Potter, Andrew Pygott (by phone), Barbara Quinn, Kemia Serraf (by phone), Rebecca Unger, and Erin Washkuhn (by phone). A list of Task Force members appears on the final page of the minutes. Three members of the public were present at the meeting; no specific time was allotted for public participation but the audience didn't seek recognition to speak either. The group, utilizing standard procedures, designated Senator Kimberly Lightford as the Task Force Chair.

After being designated Task Force Chair, Senator Lightford welcomed the group and gave an overview of the scope of work, deadlines and other organizational information.

The conversation began with the question of “Do we all agree recess is necessary?”

Kemia Serraf from the Gen H coalition reports that she feels that recess is necessary, important and critical. Gen H is doing research in Springfield District 186 through the implementation of the “Jumpstart Project” an initiative in which children are exercising in the classroom for up to 12 minutes. Benefits of Jumpstart include no wasted transition time. Gen H also reported on the medical science behind “brain breaks” and the research of Professor John Ratey, Ph.D.

Next, the Task Force discussed the perceived barriers to recess including:

- 1) Space, meaning facilities
- 2) Safety and Security
  - a. Community security issues
  - b. Outdoor related issues
  - c. Physical safety of students
  - d. Equipment and surface issues
- 3) Supervision
  - a. Can aides, non-certified staff or volunteers assume responsibilities in order to meet scheduling and planning time commitments to teachers?
  - b. What is the role of the principal? Add in the idea of using administrators in a supervisory role on the playground.
- 4) Time
  - a. Schools are busy trying to meet all the instructional obligations (reading, math , etc)
  - b. Potential of needing longer school days

Task Force member Flavia Hernandez shared with the group the concept behind Chicago Public Schools “Developing a Recess Plan” guidance, including strategies to overcome barriers.

The Task Force then touched on the topic of adult supervision:

- Is recess a professional responsibility of teachers?
- What costs are associated with using parent/adult volunteers (background checks)?
- Who will be liable in the event a child were to be hurt?

Andrew Pygott reported on the concerns of principals including students lacking social skills to engage in constructive play and the need for structured recess time to teach kids.

Jackson Potter explained the nature of closed campus issues of the Chicago Public Schools and the nature of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) supporting at almost 80 percent the concept of implementing recess in all schools.

Senator Lightford directed the Task Force to look at what the best interests of the child are instead of focusing on the administration and union concerns.

The Task Force agreed to research comparables with other states, including California, Texas, Pennsylvania and New York.

Kemia Sarraf explained that No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and other educational “burdens” (such as RtI) are keeping children from “downtime” and that the medical research shows that recess is actually a positive teaching tool. Instead of blanket implementation, she recommends structured recess (ie. kickball, follow-the-leader, etc) that require instruction and guidance. Research in Colorado has shown increases in rest scores by over 25 percent as recess and playtime were allowed.

Senator Lightford asked if there was any research on set amount of time and recommendations. The Task Force agreed that 10-15 minutes two times per day made sense with a minimum of 10 minutes per day but agreed to look at frameworks and research surrounding adequate time.

The next meeting dates were set and the task force adjourned at 3:51 p.m.

## **Illinois Recess in Schools Task Force**

Illinois State Board of Education

James R. Thompson Center

Videoconference Room

100 W. Randolph

Suite 14-300

And

Capitol City Training Center

130 W. Mason

Room 104

Springfield, IL

62702

And

Phone Conference Line – 1-888-557-8511 Access Code: 8738740

Monday December 12th, 2011

Noon to 2 p.m.

### **AGENDA**

- I. Welcome and introductions
- II. Public Participation
- III. Approve Minutes from October 18th meeting
- IV. Follow-up discussion on identified barriers
- V. Strategies and recommendations to overcome barriers
- VI. Discussion of next steps
- VII. Next meeting's agenda

## Illinois Recess in Schools Task Force

December 12, 2011

### Meeting Minutes

At 2:10 p.m. the second meeting of the Illinois Recess in Schools Task Force was called to order by Cynthia Riseman and Dr. Glenn Steinhausen of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). Members present included Senator Kimberly Lightford, Chair (by phone), Dr. Kemia Serraf (by phone), Barbara Quinn, Adam Becker, Flavia Hernandez, Karen Morton, Rebecca Unger and Erin Washkuhn. Two members of the public were present at the meeting; however they choose not to speak during the time allotted for public participation.

The minutes from the October 18, 2011, meeting were approved unanimously following a motion by Barbara Quinn and a second by Flavia Hernandez.

Next, the Task Force discussed the perceived barriers to recess as were laid out at the first meeting:

- 1) Space (meaning facilities)
  - a. Possible use of space inside and outside the school building (such as cafeterias)
  - b. Use of adjoining Park District land or facilities
  - c. Temperature Guidelines such as DCFS Rules (indoor at 40 degrees or below)
  - d. Chicago Public Schools Guidelines for temperature
  - e. Using cafeteria space for recess activities
- 2) Safety and Security
  - a. Facilities may be available, but not usable due to conditions
  - b. Community Security Issues – use of police or park district security should be examined
  - c. Gang Violence – ceasefire zones, parent patrols, onsite school security, “respect violence free times”
  - d. Emergency Plan must be in place and needs to consider recess evacuation
- 3) Supervision



- a. Use of aides, non-certified staff or parent volunteers to assume responsibilities to meet scheduling and planning time commitments to teachers.
- b. HJR-42 (Parent Engagement)
- c. The role of the building principal and other administrators in a supervisory role during recess

4) Time

- a. It was agreed that recess before lunch was the preferred time over afternoon recess if a choice had to be made
- b. It was decided to recommend 30 minutes of uninterrupted recess during the school day
- c. 20 minutes before lunch; 10 minutes physical activity breaks were thought to be helpful
- d. Pointed out that recess needed to be unstructured play time

Ms. Riseman and Dr. Steinhausen are to prepare a draft list of recommendations prior to the next meeting.

Next Task Force Meeting is scheduled for January 11, 2012 at 12:00 Noon

Meeting was adjourned at 2 p.m.

## **Illinois Recess in Schools Task Force**

Illinois State Board of Education

3<sup>rd</sup> Floor V-tel Room

100 North First Street

Springfield, IL

62777

And

Illinois State Board of Education

V-tel Room

100 W. Randolph, Suite 14-300

Chicago, IL 60601

And

Phone Conference Line – 1-888-557-8511 Access Code: 8738740

**Wednesday January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012**

**Noon to 2 p.m.**

### **AGENDA**

I. Welcome and introductions

II. Public Participation

III. Approve Minutes from December 12th meeting

IV. Follow-up discussion on strategies and recommendations to overcome barriers

V. Overview and planning of task force report

VI. Discussion of next steps

VII. Next meeting's agenda

## **Illinois Recess in Schools Task Force**

Illinois Department of Central Management Services Videoconference Rooms

120 W. Jefferson

2nd Floor

Springfield, IL

62777

And

James R. Thompson Center

9th Floor, Room 9-036

100 W. Randolph

And

Phone Conference Line – 1-888-557-8511 Access Code: 8738740

**Wednesday January 25, 2012**

**Noon to 2 p.m.**

### **AGENDA**

I. Welcome and introductions

II. Public Participation

III. Approve Minutes from January 11 meeting

IV. Discussion and Approval of Report for Submission to the General Assembly

V. Conclusion of Task Force

# Appendix C

## Resources and Materials

Links to resources and materials that support the barriers identified by the task force (space, safety and security, supervision and time).

Chicago Public Schools, Developing a School Recess Plan, May 2011.

<http://policy.cps.k12.il.us/documents/704.7.pdf>.

Chicago Public Schools, Full School Day Website,

<http://www.cps.edu/PROGRAMS/DISTRICTINITIATIVES/FullDay/Pages/SchoolDay.aspx>

Chicago Public Schools Policy Manual, *Local School Wellness Policy Addressing Nutrition And Physical Activity In Schools*, Section 704.7, Board Report 06-0823-PO4, Date Adopted: August 23, 2006.

Jarrett, Olga S., *Recess in Elementary School: What Does the Research Say?*, Eric Digest, July 2002.

National Association of State Boards of Education, *Physical Activity Other Than Physical Education*,

[http://nasbe.org/healthy\\_schools/hs/bytopics.php](http://nasbe.org/healthy_schools/hs/bytopics.php).

National Heart Lung and Blood Institute, Expert Panel on Integrated Guidelines for Cardiovascular Health and Risk Reduction in Children and Adolescents, 2011

[http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/cvd\\_ped/summary.htm#chap6](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/cvd_ped/summary.htm#chap6)

National Policy and Legal Analysis Network on Childhood Obesity materials on joint use agreements:

<http://www.nplanonline.org/nplan/joint-use>

National Organizations in Support of Recess (List)

The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, Resources – Physical Activity Facts,

[http://www.fitness.gov/resources\\_factsheet.htm](http://www.fitness.gov/resources_factsheet.htm).

Pytel, Barbara, *The Many Benefits of Recess in Schools*, December 22, 2009, Educational Issues,

<http://barbara-pytel.suite101.com>

Pytel, Barbara, *Pros and Cons of Recess Time in School*, December 20, 2009, [http://barbara-](http://barbara-pytel.suite101.com/)

[pytel.suite101.com/](http://barbara-pytel.suite101.com/) .

Sindelar, Rachel, Clearinghouse on Early Education and Parenting, July 2004,  
<http://ceep.crc.uiuc.edu/poptopics/recess.html>.

Spencer, Kyle. At Top Public Schools, the Arts Replace Recess, The New York Times Reprints, December 6, 2011.

State of Florida Action For Healthy Kids , *Taking Action Against Obesity*, PowerPoint Presentation,  
<http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Family/GTFOE/materials/20031202/recess/recess/pdf>.

DRAFT