TEACHERS’ PERSPECTIVES, PRACTICES, AND KNOWLEDGE OF RECESS AT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL: A MIXED METHOD, CASE STUDY

Suzanne Servidio

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF EDUCATION to the faculty of the DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEadership of THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION at ST. JOHN’S UNIVERSITY New York by Suzanne L. Servidio

Date Submitted: February 25, 2020 Date Approved: February 25, 2020

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Suzanne L. Servidio Dr. Anthony Annuziato
ABSTRACT

TEACHERS’ PERSPECTIVES, PRACTICES, AND KNOWLEDGE OF RECESS AT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL: A MIXED METHOD, CASE STUDY

Suzanne L. Servidio

Prior studies about school recess focuses primarily on the effects and benefits of recess in the context of elementary education. This study focuses on middle school teachers’ perspectives, practices and knowledge of recess, which were collected using both quantitative and qualitative methods. In this case study, 61 middle school teachers participated in an online survey, seven other middle school teachers provided additional insight through a focus group discussion. Data analysis revealed that middle school teachers perceive recess as beneficial overall, but there are also some concerns. Views about recess at the middle school level were not associated with age, gender, level of education, grade level taught, and child dependent responsibilities. While middle school teachers noted benefits of recess, more than half of the participants indicated that recess was not a topic in their professional preparation. However, more than half of the participants indicated that recess deprivation was a topic of discussion with supervisors. Although the practice of recess deprivation for behavioral or academic reasons has been declining, middle school teachers indicated that it does still occur. The middle school teachers in the sample had very limited knowledge of the current trends in educational polices or scholarship about recess. Findings in this mixed-method, explanatory case study indicates that recess should be a topic of conversation among teachers at the middle school level. This study indicated that middle school teachers do not generally receive professional development about the importance of recess. With the increased burden of standardized testing and ever-growing academic demands, teachers understand that
students need self-directed time to make their own choices even as they still employ recess deprivation for behavioral or academic reasons. The importance recess at the middle school level must be realized by aligning teachers’ perspectives, practices and knowledge of recess with evidence-based educational research.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My learning journey toward my Ed.D has come to an end. While there have been many mountains and valleys along this path, I am proud to have stayed the course. It is a wonderful accomplishment not only for me but for my family. While I recognize that it took away time from my family, it is my hope that they see the bigger picture. In this process I have learned the importance of determination, love of learning and of setting goals and seeing them through. I chose a topic that was not in my realm of educational expertise, but it was something that I feel passionately about for both my own children and my students: the importance of recess. It is a running joke in my family that whenever I am asked about a television show or a game from my youth, my answer is always “I don’t know. I was outside playing.” I feel that this perspective has been lost to an upcoming generation that does not know the excitement and benefits of unstructured free time.

I would like to thank my St. John’s University family, which includes all my professors and cohort friends. Specifically, thank you to Lauren Dunne who journeyed through this program with me. Thanks also to my middle school family of supportive teachers with whom I work with that provided important data to my study. Thank you to AnneMarie Quigley for your amazing editing skills. You have been so supportive throughout the entire process. In addition, I wish to thank Dr. Annunziato, Dr. Hayes and Dr. Cozza for serving as my mentors and committee members for my dissertation.

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educational goal. I hope you see in this journey the power of perseverance and my commitment to learning and growing as an individual and an educator.

Finally, I dedicate my dissertation to two people, Gloria Ferrara, my loving and supporting grandmother, and my father, Richard Evans, who is looking down from heaven saying, “That’s my daughter!”
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The bell rings. Students leave their classrooms and enter the hallway toward the cafeteria with smiles on their faces as they walk. This describes the scene of the most common occurrence in school. The students are headed to their only unstructured free time during the school day, recess. Unstructured free time has been a topic of conversation for centuries, as noted in the 1979 Anita Wadley poem, “Just Playing:”

When you ask me what I did today, and I say,

“I just played,” please don’t misunderstand me.

For, you see, I’m learning as I play.

I’m learning to enjoy and be successful

in my work. I’m preparing for tomorrow.

Today, I am a child and my work is play.

This poem exemplifies the importance of unstructured free time and its benefits to all students. It also highlights the topic of this dissertation: the importance of recess for the middle school learner. Recess creates an educational conundrum: the to give students a break and the need to increase educational achievement can sometimes conflict.

Purpose of the Study

With growing evidence of the benefits of recess to students and the change in legislation provided by Every Student Succeeds Act, education of the “whole child” has become the focus. This provides an opportunity to prioritize recess in schools. “Daily decisions about who gets recess and when and where it will happen are often made by
teachers; thus, teachers are a crucial link for recess” (Ramstetter & Murray, 2017, p. 23). The purpose of this study is to identify middle school teachers’ perspectives, practices, and knowledge of recess. At the middle school level, students have complex academic, social, emotional and physical needs. Overall, the objective of this study is to strengthen the current body of qualitative and quantitative research on the topic of recess. By researching, writing, and speaking about this topic, educators can more fully understand the importance of recess.

**Problem Statement / Significance of the Study**

Article 31 of the U.N. Convention of the Rights of the Child recognized “the right of the child to rest and leisure and engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child” (Jarrett & Waite-Stupiansky, 2009, p.1). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) stated that “recess benefits students by increasing their level of physical activity, improving memory, attention and concentration, helping them stay on-task in the classroom, reducing disruptive behavior in the classroom, and improving their social and emotional development” (CDC & SHAPE, 2017, p. 1). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Society of Health and Physical Educators (Shape America) (2017) identified positive approaches to instituting changes in recess at schools. Its National Guidance Section for recess stated, “Guidance for recess includes the following…Prohibiting the exclusion from recess for disciplinary reasons or academic performance in the classroom” (p. 3). Shape of the Nation acknowledged that only eight states have policies mandating recess in 2016 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017). According to the Shape of the Nation report, only “16% of states require for elementary schools to provide daily recess”(Reilly, 2017, p. 2). Hunter Railey,
a policy researcher for the K-12 Institute, Education Commission of States, notes that only Connecticut, Indiana, Missouri and Virginia have passed legislation requiring recess. Several others simply have general activity requirements that may include recess, physical education classes, or after school activities (Appendix G). However, a study conducted by Booth (2011) revealed that middle school students are concerned about their personal physical needs. These adolescents made comments such as, “Let people get recess—kids need a break man, give us a break in addition to lunch.” (Booth, 2011, p. 17). While the literature states recess is important to the whole child, recess time is not a guarantee.

Decreased recess time can be attributed to the increased demand for academic rigor. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) created accountability for school districts for increased student achievement as measured by standardized tests. The NCLB’s focus was on English Language Arts and Mathematics. This led to a decreased attention on co-curricular and extra-curricular programs (Wigfield, Lutz, & Wagner, 2005). Barros et al. (2009) noted that, “Many schoolchildren are given less free time and fewer physical outlets at school, because many school districts responded to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 by reducing time committed to recess, the creative arts, and even physical education to focus on reading and mathematics” (p. 434-435). Later, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) further increased academic demands by forcing school districts to reduce non-essential classes to increase instructional time (Jarrett et al., 1998; Pellegrini & Bohn, 2005; Ramstetter et al., 2010). On December 10, 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) revised teacher accountability based on student test results in English Language Arts and Mathematics, but it still required testing for students
in grades three through eight (Ramstetter & Murray, 2017). This focus on academic
demands led to districts questioning the importance of all other areas of study.

Recess is an important component of the school day for all students. Learning
more about teachers’ demographic information, practices, and knowledge about recess
will provide useful information for educational leaders, who can then remind teachers of
the empirical evidence suggesting that recess has many benefits. Teachers have their own
values and beliefs which influence their decision-making process, but educational leaders
have an obligation to provide data-driven research on what benefits students most.

Much research has been conducted on the benefits of recess at the elementary
level. However, few studies examine the middle school level, which in many districts
contains both elementary and secondary levels of education. Middle school students are
transitioning from an elementary mentality to more rigorous secondary academic work. It
is important to help educational leaders understand the benefits of recess for students at
the middle school level so that they can provide needed professional development
opportunities for teachers. Using the results of this study, well-informed educational
leaders and teachers can reflect on the benefits of recess for students. This study hopes to
provide evidence for teachers to use in evaluating their perspectives, practices, and
knowledge of recess. With the current trend of giving students more choice and say in
their education, the importance of recess becomes an even more important topic.

**Research Questions**

**Research Question 1.** How do middle school teachers perceive recess in their
current educational school setting?
**Subquestion 1.** What do middle school teachers perceive as the benefits of recess at the middle school level?

**Subquestion 2.** What do middle school teachers perceive as the concerns of recess at the middle school level?

**Research Question 2.** To what extent do age, gender, level of education, grade level taught, and child/dependent responsibilities affect middle school teachers’ views of recess?

**Research Question 3.** In middle school teachers’ professional preparation, what are the most common factors that influence their knowledge of the benefits of recess? In middle school teachers’ professional preparation, what are the most common factors that influence their knowledge of recess deprivation?

**Research Question 4.** To what extent do middle school teachers use recess deprivation as a form of discipline for behavioral or academic issues?

**Research Question 5.** To what extent are middle school teachers knowledgeable of state policies, organizations’ and associations’ position papers on the benefits of recess?

**Overview of Methodology**

This is a case study. It follows an explanatory sequential, mixed-method research design. This method combines both quantitative and qualitative data in order to obtain a better understanding of the research questions. The quantitative data were collected by closed-ended survey questions. The focus group questions were open-ended interview questions that the researcher used to explain the quantitative results with qualitative data. The researcher administered a quantitative survey (Appendix E and F) and then refined
questions based on the results of the quantitative survey for the qualitative focus group by using an interview protocol (Appendix C and D).

**Rationale and Significance**

This study is significant in educational research because recess time is crucial for children at the middle school level. With so many changes to educational standards and increased pressure for teachers to emphasize academic rigor, unstructured free time for students is limited. Adams (n.d.) quotes Anna Monroe-Stover, who states “I wonder how grown-ups would like it if their bosses took away their lunch hours and dictated how they spent it” (p. 58). In contrast, Atlanta Public School Superintendent Benjamin O. Canada stated, “We are intent on improving academic performance. You don’t do that by having kids hanging on the monkey bars” (Jarrett, 2013, p.1). Research has shown that recess time is important. Both administration and teachers need evidence that recess is beneficial and in turn this may change their perspectives of recess.

**Role of the Researcher**

The researcher has been involved with middle school learning for twenty years. She is a tenured seventh grade Social Studies teacher working in the building where research is being conducted. Although the researcher is the Lead Teacher of the Social Studies Department, she does not observe fellow teachers and remains part of the teachers’ union. Since this is a case study, the researcher will find and interpret both quantitative and qualitative data. The researcher will analyze the quantitative data from an online survey (Appendix E and F). The researcher was not present when the questions were answered. During the qualitative portion, the researcher will act as the interviewer in focus group discussions (Appendix C and D).
Researcher Assumptions

The researcher is a parent of two young boys in elementary school, both of whom say that recess is one of the best parts of their day. Because the researcher is a passionate proponent of recess, a certain bias is inherent in the work. However, the data gathered must drive the findings. It is the researcher’s role to provide the appropriate layers of protection against these biases by sharing inquiry and data with the dissertation advisor and colleagues.

Definition of Key Terminology

“School recess, or play time, is a scheduled break period, typically outdoors” (Pellegrini & Smith, 1993, p. 51). Recess is the regularly scheduled period in the school day for physical activity and play that is monitored by trained staff or volunteers. During recess, students are encouraged to be physically active and engage with peers in activities of their choice at all grade levels (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). Recess should be “unstructured and undirected” (Barros, et al., 2009, p. 431).

“Teacher perception is a reflective, socially defined interpretation of experience that serves as a basis for subsequent action … a combination of beliefs, intentions, interpretations, and behavior that interact continually” (Clark & Peterson, 1986) as cited in Pajares (1992) p. 314.

Organization of Dissertation

This dissertation is prepared in five chapters. Chapter one presents the problem, states the purpose of the study, identifies the research questions, provides an overview of the methodology, explains the role of the researcher and the assumptions, and concludes with an overview of key terminology. Chapter two offers a general overview of the
theoretical framework, position papers and state policies related to recess, and a variety of studies to demonstrate the benefits and resistances to recess. It concludes with a conceptual framework. Chapter three describes the methodology used in selecting participants, the instrumentation used in the study, and the methods of collecting and analyzing data. Chapter four reports the results of the study. Chapter five discusses the outcomes and the implications of the study.
CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Introduction

Three components are introduced in this chapter—the theoretical framework, literature review, and conceptual framework. The theoretical framework component includes the work of Albert Bandura’s (1971) Social Learning Theory, Herbert Spencer’s (1873) Surplus Energy Theory, Anthony Pellegrini and David F. Bjorklund’s (1996) Cognitive Immaturity Hypothesis, and Anthony Pellegrini’s (1995) Play Deprivation-Rebound Theory. These theories are noted as the first component pertaining to recess, as one of the basketballs in the conceptual model for this study in Figure 1.

The literature review, this chapter’s second component, outlines the empirical studies stating the benefits of recess. The benefits include information documented in national position papers and state policies. The benefits are also included in cognitive and academic studies and implications, social and emotional studies and implications, behavioral and attentional based studies and implications, general health-based studies and implications; and gender studies and implications. In addition, the literature review continues with an examination of personal narratives related to recess. At the end of the literature review section, an examination of the possible resistance to recess is also analyzed.

The chapter’s third component is an analysis of teachers’ perspectives. The chapter concludes with the conceptual framework, which demonstrates the three components used to re-think recess at the middle school level. They are theories and polices about recess, empirical studies and implications about recess, and teachers’
perspectives, practices, and knowledge about recess. These components will serve as the triangulation of data for this dissertation.

**Theoretical Framework Pertaining to Recess – The First Component**

The theoretical framework that guides this study is Albert Bandura’s Social Learning Theory. Albert Bandura’s Social Learning Theory explains why teachers behave as they do and provides insight as to why recess can be used as a reinforcement in the educational setting. In addition to the Social Learning Theory, the Surplus Energy Theory, Cognitive Immaturity Hypothesis, and the Play Deprivation-Rebound Theory are three theories related to the understanding and importance of recess (Table 1). As shown in Table 1, this format demonstrates that the Social Learning Theory is used as the umbrella theory to which the three tenants justify the importance of recess, Surplus Energy Theory of Play, Play Deprivation-Rebound Theory, and Theory of Cognitive Immaturity.

**Table 1**

|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|

Albert Bandura’s Social Learning Theory (1971) explains that there are three distinctive features of human beings that allow for social learning to take place. First, learning comes from witnessing other people’s behavior and consequences through observation. People learn from the ways others react to both positive and negative experiences and then internalize that information for when they are in a similar situation.
Understanding this theory provides insight into why teachers use recess deprivation. A teacher learns through the process of observation. A teacher’s observations could be used in their own classroom if recess was or was not used for disciplinary measures during a teacher’s educational background. For example, if students witness others behaving well, they will likely see that unstructured free time during recess is the reward for good behavior. When students witness misbehavior and the teacher takes away the opportunity for recess, then others would instead choose the behavior necessary to receive the reward and avoid that consequence. The teacher uses this policy in the classroom to show how the benefit of good behavior leads to participation in recess; conversely, the teacher shows that the students’ misbehavior leads to consequences, such as recess deprivation. However, if students are not participating in recess due to misbehavior in class, are they also missing out on other social learning situations that could reinforce positive behaviors? When we, as teachers, apply this theory to benefits of recess for students, we understand that participating in recess provides an opportunity to witness other interactions in a social setting that leads to learning. Students will then note how others deal with social situations and will then internalize and apply a similar response when placed in the same situation.

Secondly, Bandura (1971) states, “Man’s superior cognitive capacity is another factor that determines, not only how he will be affected by his experiences, but the future direction his actions many take” (p. 3). Again, the teacher applies the recess punishment in hopes that the following day the same misbehaviors will not continue. Noting that a negative consequence was attached to misbehavior in the classroom the day before would then elicit a positive behavioral response in the classroom the day after. Students then
establish a symbolic representation of the recess deprivation and use it to “foresee probable consequences of different actions and alter the behavior accordingly” (p. 3). This social learning can also take place during recess time. For example, during recess a group of students may decide to play a game together when one student becomes too bossy. The other students may seem annoyed with the bossy student and tell him or her so. The following day the student then learns that, if he or she wants to play with the same group, he or she should not be bossy.

Finally, the third feature outlined by Bandura (1971) “is that man is capable of creating self-regulating influences. By managing the stimulus determinants of given activities and producing consequences for their own actions, people are able to control their own behavior” (p. 4). Human beings have an innate ability, in the context of situations, to regulate what is appropriate or inappropriate behavior. However, within all classrooms, teachers are faced with a variety of students with diverse needs. Again, if teachers use recess deprivation, it may be contradictory to what the child needs if they are unable to self-regulate. By rewarding positive behavior and providing consequences for undesirable ones, students may not learn that skill even if a consequence is utilized. This could also be a bigger detriment if recess deprivation is used as the consequence, whereby even more opportunities for social development to occur are now taken away.

Albert Bandura’s Social Learning Theory can be purposeful to both the teacher and student for positive learning situations. Recess provides even more benefits than just social learning. Teachers should rethink the use of recess deprivation as the method used for reinforcement behavior, since recess provides many other benefits.
The 19th-century philosopher and psychologist Herbert Spencer (1873) outlines the Surplus Energy Theory of Play. As discussed in Evans and Pellegrini (1997), Herbert Spencer suggests that children have stored energy which accumulates over the course of a day until it is released through actions such as play or recess. Spencer’s theory suggests that students who sit in an educational setting for prolonged periods of time would accumulate energy which needs to be released in the form of play or recess in the school setting. This provides a justification for the need for recess (Pellegrini and Smith, 1993). However, Evans and Pellegrini (1997) criticize the Surplus Energy Theory as a basis for scheduled educational breaks for students and contends that the Surplus Energy Theory lacks research-based evidence to support it.

Anthony Pellegrini (2008) outlines the history of recess, or breaks from a task, tracing it back to the Industrial Revolution in the United States, where factory workers were given breaks from labor on the assembly line. Pellegrini argues that breaks are necessary and appropriate in the educational setting too. Two typical arguments against recess during the school day are, first, that the time could better be used for additional instruction and, second, that recess is an unstructured space where problems such as can bullying occur. Pellegrini debunks these two arguments with research-based data.

Anthony Pellegrini (2008) cites Psychologist Frank Dempster and his studies on the importance of distributed practice (p.188). As Pellegrini (2008) notes, Dempster (1988) demonstrates that all ages learn better when information is distributed or spaced throughout the learning environment. Dempster’s results suggest that recess is a natural part of the school day schedule that will encourage distributing practice (p.188).
Another theory supported by Pellegrini and psychologist David F. Bjorklund is the Theory of Cognitive Immaturity. Bjorklund and Brown (1998) defined the cognitive benefits of physical play as “providing a break from demanding intellectual tasks and are hypothesized to be related to gender differences in spatial cognition” (p. 605). The theory that Bjorklund and Brown detail is the Cognitive Immaturity Hypothesis, which focuses on the importance of cognitive abilities throughout development. In their assessment, a student’s immature nervous system needs frequent breaks in order to decrease the amount of interference that comes from extended sedentary work. Pellegrini and Bohn (2005) also give credibility to Cognitive Immaturity Theory.

Pellegrini, Huberty, & Jones (1995) suggest an additional theory called Play Deprivation-Rebound Theory. It states, “duration of confinement period immediately before recess should result in a rebound (i.e., increased levels of those behaviors of which children were deprived)” (p. 846). In other words, the more recess time provided in a school day, the more physical and social interactions are present on the playground. Children rebound from deprivation differently based on gender, grade level, age, and proxy grade level. The results of this study indicate that children, especially boys, show signs of inattention as the length of deprivation increases. Pellegrini and Smith (1998) argue that “if children are deprived of opportunities for physical play, they will, when given the opportunity to play, engage in more intense and sustained bouts of physical play than they would have done if not so deprived” (p. 582). Again, this provides evidence for the importance of recess time.

In contrast, Dale, Corbyn, and Dale (2000) examine whether children deprived of physical activity would compensate for their lack of physical activity later in the day.
Their research participants were third and fourth graders in a private Arizona elementary school. Students wore a Computer-Science Applications Inc. (CSA) accelerometer for four days. On two days, recess and physical education class were given and on the other two days they were withheld. Study findings suggest that on the active days, when recess and physical education class were provided, students were more active after school hours. The participants’ accelerometer showed less physical activity after school on the deprivation days, meaning that participants did not compensate for the loss of physical activity within the school day. Dale Corbyn, and Dale (2000) “found no evidence for compulsory increases in activity following a sedentary school day” (p. 244). On the days when recess was withheld, students were offered participation in a computer program one day and participate in a reading activity the other day. On the computer day, students were able to sit and work without physical activity, in contrast to them becoming more fidgety on book reading day. This affirms that students need time away from educational curriculum, and that recess is a valuable tool to be utilized as time away from academic rigor.

Review of Literature – Empirical Studies and Implications about Recess – The Second Component

With the increase of academic requirements, school districts over the past twenty years have emphasized the need to focus on increasing class-time instruction. Reilly (2017) recounts how, in 2007, the Center on Educational Policy at George Washington University found that “62% of school districts had increased the amount of time spent on English language arts or math in elementary school since 2001, while 44% of school districts had cut down on time spent on other subjects…20% of school districts had
reduced recess time” (p. 2). These statistics contradict the significance of recess and importance of educating the whole-child. According to Henley, McBride, Milligan, and Nichols (2007), many school districts began to reduce recess time because of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation passed in 2004. High-stakes testing began to diminish the belief that schools should educate the whole child.

**Position Papers and State Policies about Recess.** The American Academy of Pediatrics wrote in a 2013 policy statement that children need at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity per day. They further argued that recess should be considered a student’s free time and should not therefore be withheld for academic or disciplinary reasons. In addition, the CDC and SHAPE (2017) discourages teachers and other school and community personnel from withholding chances for physical activity, such as recess, physical education as punishment for inappropriate behavior or academic issues (p. 3). Furthermore, Reilly (2017) reports that the National Association of Sports and Physical Education recommends that “physical education classes should not become a replacement for the unstructured playtime of recess” (p. 3).

According to Reilly (2017), Florida passed a law in 2017 guaranteeing students at the elementary level at least twenty minutes of recess per day (p. 1). Angela Browning, founder of Recess for All Florida Students, explained that children were leaving school upset because they did not have time to interact and play with their peers. They were only given ten minutes of recess time, twice each week. This was unacceptable to parents who now see positive changes in their children because of the new Florida law. This is like the 2016 law in Rhode Island that requires school districts to provide twenty minutes of consecutive recess for elementary students.
Guajardo (2018) notes that, following the example of Germany, Japan, South Korea, some areas of the United States have instituted *waldkitas*, or “forest kindergarten” classes, where preschoolers spend their day in the wilderness exploring, learning and playing” (p. 2). While some small steps are taking place around the world, the global conversation about the benefits of recess for all must continue.

**Benefits of Recess: Cognitive and Academic Studies and Implications.** Several studies have found that recess provides cognitive and academic benefits. Pellegrini (2008) explains that recess encourages the development of cognitive skills such as organization of roles and responsibilities during game time. Gross-Loh and Lauritzen (2007) proves that unstructured play during the school day is essential for children’s cognitive and social development. Gross-Loh and Lauritzen (2007) also demonstrate that there is a disparity among school districts in how much recess each school is given and explain why recess is endangered. Similarly, Pellegrini and Bohn (2005) argue that recess is a valuable part of the elementary school day. When reviewing different research methods, the authors determined a positive correlation between recess and students’ cognitive performance, achievement, and school adjustment. They showed that recess is an essential piece of educational development and critical to a feeling of belongingness in school.

Bjorklund and Brown (1998) define the cognitive benefits of physical play as “providing a break from demanding intellectual tasks and are hypothesized to be related to gender differences in spatial cognition” (p. 604). The authors note that cognitive developmentalists differentiate between physical play and cognition, regarding them as
two separate entities which do not co-exist. This means that physical play (i.e. recess) is important to the cognitive development of a child.

**Benefits of Recess: Social and Emotional Studies and Implications.** Several studies have found that recess provides social and emotional benefits. Pellegrini (2008) claims when students interact during recess, they are using critical social skills such as understanding perspectives, compromise, negotiation, and even language. Riley and Jones (2007) assert that, overall, when boys and girls play, growth and development occur with each social, language, and physical skill variable. More specifically, Blatchford and Sumpner (1998) note that the social benefits of recess to secondary students may at times be more limited than in the primary school years. However, the students perceive the recess time as a break and regard independence from authority as a time to socialize, suggesting that social benefits at the middle-school level are very important to the student.

There are social and emotional barriers which prevent students from actively participating in recess. Motivation and self-efficacy were examined to note which variable barriers impacted activity during recess. Efrat (2016) determines that there are no statistical pertinent variables suggesting that motivation is related to the amount of physical activity in recess. However, this proves that students need intervention to learn how to become motivated and again highlights the importance of recess.

**Benefits of Recess: Behavior and Attention-based Studies and Implications.** Several studies have found that recess provides behavioral and attention benefits. Three observational trials were conducted in a study by Pellegrini et al. (1995) to determine the effects of different recess timings on elementary students’ classroom days and their
recess behaviors. Three observational trials were conducted in a study by Pellegrini et al. (1995) to determine whether short- or long-term deprivation (condition) affected the playground physical activities and social interactions and the attention (pre- and post-recess) between boys and girls. The first experiment involved kindergarten, second grade, and fourth grade. Fourth graders were significantly more active than other children and that boys were more active than girls. Again, fourth graders were significantly more social after longer periods of deprivation. Also, inattention was higher before recess than after in second and fourth grade, but not in kindergarten. These results demonstrate that recess plays an important role in a student’s day.

Pellegrini et al. (1995) repeated the first experiment one year later and in the second experiment examined second and fourth graders. They repeated the recess deprivation effects on pre-recess inattention in the classroom and deprivation effects on recess behavior. Again, the research concluded that classroom inattention is affected by recess timing. The longer the deprivation period the less attentive the students are in the classroom. Again, the results noted that boys during recess engage in more social and physical activities. The researchers created a third experiment to note whether temperature affected recess behavior. This time the researchers used the same procedures from the previous two experiments, but this time recess was held indoors. Temperature was the constant and again the researchers examined the effects of deprivation on indoor recess behaviors and whether these behaviors related to post-recess classroom attention. Again, similar results were echoed from previous experiments. All three experiments of the study support the hypothesis that students need time after long periods of academic
instruction to be physically active and interact with other peers whether indoors or outdoors.

Ridgway, Northup, Pellegrini, LaRue, and Hightsoe (2003) use a single case study design to look at the effects of recess on the behavior of students with and without ADHD. The results indicated that students with and without ADHD benefited from recess. When recess deprivation occurs, the levels of inappropriate behaviors in the classroom increase. Essentially, the authors replicated Pellegrini et al. (1995) to evaluate the ADHD population and how recess deprivation affects their behavior, discussing different groups of students and how recess is beneficial to all. Again, the results of the Ridgway et al. (2003) study are significant for the ADHD population but also have implications for all students. Similarly, Gross-Loh and Lauritzen (2007) examine how boys and students with ADHD specifically benefit from recess opportunities. As stated by Emily O’ Winter, a wellness coordinator cited in Blad (2015), “A lot of time the kids who lose physical activity are the ones who need it the most. It can have a snowball effect” (p. 2).

Wiebelhaus and Hanson (2016) examine student behavioral and attentional levels during classroom based physical activities. Their results indicate that student behavior was positively impacted by physical activity during instruction time. The researchers also considered the students’ perception before and after the physical activities, examining whether they could focus better. Results indicated a decline in nonconformity behaviors among students, fostering improved attention to classroom activities.

**Benefits of Recess: General Health-based Studies and Implications.** There are several specific studies of recess health benefits. For instance, Byrd (2007) suggests that
there is a relationship between physical activity, students’ BMI (Body Mass Index), and their academic levels. The higher levels of physical activity had a relationship with both increased grades and faster rates of learning. However, decreased physical activity had a relationship with lower grades and learning rates. Chin and Ludwig (2013) examined whether students who participated in a REP (Recess Enhancement Program) would experience increased physical activity. Using multivariate statistical analysis, the researcher determined that both REP and non-REP programs increased physical activity with a coach. It was statistically significant \( (p = .007) \). Also, that both non-REP and REP programs increased physical activity without a coach was also significant \( (p = .016) \). The researcher also noted that boys have a higher rate of physical activity than girls when examining school demographics with the rate of activity by gender \( (p = .022) \). In addition, Hyndman, Benson, Lester, and Telford (2017) studied the importance of vigorous recess, which increased a student’s health related quality of life.

**Benefits of Recess: Gender Studies and Implications.** Research has also noted differences in the way males and females utilize their time during recess (Holmes, 2012). Holmes (2012) explains how different children expend or release energy during recess, which helps to clarify the benefits of having recess. Roberts, Fairclough, Ridgers, and Porteous (2013) utilized a cross-sectional design using the Systems of Observing Children’s Activity and Relationships during Play (SOCARP). The SOCARP noted differences in physical activity during recess between boys and girls. This research proves that boys engage in significantly higher forms of physical activity, which includes more sports play, again proving that boys need and benefit from the physical movement which is provided by the benefits of recess during the school day.
Given the positive effects in the categories of cognitive/academic, social/emotional, behavioral/attentional and overall health this researched-based empirical evidence proves that recess is valuable. In addition, these studies also examined gender, showing a need for boys, specifically, to have time to expend energy.

**Benefits of Recess: Recess Personal Narratives.** In a 2004 Association for Childhood Education International Annual Theme within the “President’s Message” President Jaqueline Blackwell discusses her questioning of why there were no students outside the school walls daily, which convinced her to question a few educators about their knowledge of recess practices in the United States, in private, public, urban, and suburban areas, as well as around the world, in Korea and Taiwan. She received a variety of answers on her recess questions but what remained most interesting were her concluding remarks. She states that she is in favor of recess and poses two interesting research questions: 1) “The brain can only endure as much as the bottom can endure. Do children and youth deserve to have fresh air and outside physical activity daily?”; and 2) “What are the high costs to children and educators when recess is missing from the school success formula?” (p. 268-H).

In Wood’s study (2014), a teacher reflects on her professional experience with implementing play in the classroom. Wood (2014) provides practical suggestions for elementary teachers. She discusses the importance of play for the whole child and the utility of documenting their experience through activities and pictures that would educate parents and the community about the importance of play (p. 50). Gross-Loh and Lauritzen (2007) suggest information on how to pursue recess advocacy in areas that need attention while making changes to school recess policies.
Jessica Lahey (2014) wrote a *New York Times* article admitting that, as a teacher, she used recess deprivation as punishment for academic and behavioral inconsistencies. In the article, Lahey (2014) interviewed educational psychologist and former teacher Michele Borba about the implications of withholding recess and Borba stated recess deprivation would cause a loss of “brain power, connection with peers, relationships with teachers, and opportunities to learn a different behavior” (p.3).

There are countless individual advocates for recess, but it will take many voices together echoing the same message at the same time to bring about change.

**Resistance to Recess.** Blad (2015) states that “it is not uncommon for elementary teachers to take away recess time to discipline students. By withholding cherished playtime clearly communicates to children that their misbehavior is unacceptable”(p. 1). Accordingly, Blad (2015) bolsters the perspective of teacher groups such as that of Cathy Campbell, President of the Berkeley Federation of Teachers. Campbell believe that recess should be used for disciplinary measures, stating, “there are times when taking away recess time is the logical and natural response to behavior” (p. 4). This contradicts the CDC paper (2017), which recommends “prohibiting the exclusion from recess for disciplinary reasons or academic performance in the classroom” (p. 3). Other arguments for limiting recess time because of academics and safety issues are noted by Jarrett and Waite-Stupiansky (2009), who observe that recess is typically determined by district, principals, and even teachers.

Unfortunately, as discussed in Anderson-Butcher, Newsome, and Nay (2003), teachers and staff do not want the responsibility of monitoring recess. In Anderson-Butcher et al. (2003), a study on social skills during recess, the researchers find that
intervention is important to diminish problematic behaviors during recess. Authors suggest that increasing the number of supervisors on the playground increased the level of appropriate play during recess. Recess can also serve as an opportunity for counselors and social workers to teach appropriate social skills in order to facilitate better behaviors during recess. Making recess seem pleasurable and organized to the teachers and staff would be beneficial when they are asked to monitor it. However, Evans (2007) argues that making recess a structured time overseen and programmed by adults may diminish the importance of recess in terms of learning and utilizing social and cognitive skills.

Some argue that decreasing recess will allow for more valuable instructional time. Chang and Coward (2015) observe that “the conventional wisdom that reducing recess is a way to increase academic achievement” is a popular notion in the United States (p. 16). However, Chang and Coward (2015) suggests that Shanghai schools receive more recess and break times than in the United States and yield better academic results. Others look toward studies like Dills, Morgan, and Rotthoff (2011), which explores whether recess and physical education class influence student learning. Dills et al. (2011) examined data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey Kindergarten Class of 1998-1999 and noted no statistical evidence that proves recess positively affects students test scores, but the caveat is also that recess does not impair student results.

In a national survey of student breaktimes at the primary and secondary levels conducted in England, staff at the secondary level noted a need for reduction of recess due to increases in educational demands and behavioral problems (Blatchford and Sumpner 1998).
Recess causes various physical injuries. Some educational leaders like Superintendent Kathleen Maloney stated that new policies were needed for recess. Weber Middle School in Port Washington, New York decided to prohibit certain equipment and activities to halt increasing injuries during recess (Grossman, 2013). Similarly, Evans (2007) explained that many of the schoolyard games, such as running and ball throwing, and equipment, like swings and slides, are being eliminated due to injuries. However, Evans (2007) states that many of these cases for removal of items on the playground are unsubstantiated by studies and are instead motivated by adult anxieties that the games and activities may cause harm. Evans (2007) also contends that the increased supervision and structured activities may benefit behavioral problems and increase physical activity, but that they also diminish many of the benefits of freedom during recess. Students’ abilities to create, negotiate, compromise, and role play are limited when given a game versus creating an opportunity to play.

Others argue that sun exposure is a national concern and recess increases this exposure. A study that promotes Sunny Days, Healthy Ways Curriculum to schools in the Midwestern United States noted that, if schools choose to incorporate educational materials to promote different ways to limit exposure to unhealthy ultraviolet radiation, middle-school students may become effective in applying ideas for sun safety (Buller et al., 2006).

However, such arguments against recess are weak given the dearth of empirical evidence provided. Opinions and perspectives about recess are not based on the data that research studies yield, again demonstrating that we, as educators, need to continue the conversation on recess benefits.
**Teachers’ Perceptions - The Third Component**

During the school day students have direct contact with their teachers. These teachers establish the culture, policies, and lessons of the classroom for each student. Prior to addressing these important components of teaching they must have a framework to draw on when making decisions about their classroom. These framework areas may include: educational practice, from pre-teacher classes; state- or district-wide classroom policies and expectations; building administration rules and procedures; and other teachers, groups, and departments, or even family and friends. There are many places to get opinions about education because, at one point or another, everyone has had an experience with education. Therefore, it is important to understand a teacher’s perception about certain topics because it directly impacts the education experience in his or her classroom.

As shown by Pajares (1992), there have been many studies on the importance of understanding the beliefs of teachers which impact their decision making and conduct in the classroom (p. 307). Even Albert Bandura, in his *Social Foundations of Thought and Action*, states that “people regulate their level and distribution of effort in accordance with the effects they expect their actions to have. As a result, teacher behavior can be predicted from their beliefs than from actual consequences of their actions”(as cited in Pajares, 1992, p. 324). The importance of understanding teacher perceptions of recess will provide insight into the way it is utilized in schools.

Pajares (1992) claims teachers’ perceptions are an important part of educational research, since teacher beliefs frame teacher decision making (p. 307). The definition of teacher beliefs has also been examined by Nespor (1987) as cited in Pajares (1992)
“beliefs have stronger affective and evaluative components than knowledge and that affect typically operates independently of the cognition associated with knowledge (as cited in Pajares, 1992, p. 309). Pajares provides a comprehensive synthesis of the many findings pertaining to beliefs, which will later prove paramount in uncovering teachers’ perceptions of recess at the middle-school level.

Teachers’ perceptions may also be influenced by the decisions of others, such as administrators, who create or dictate policies pertaining to recess. In Pellegrini and Bohn (2005), the authors suggest that school districts should base their recess policies on current theory and observational and experimental data, which holds districts accountable for their decisions when making changes to recess programs in schools. The researchers explain that schools prioritize the schedules based on academics, thus lessening non-academic opportunities such as recess. Elliot, Combs, and Boyce (2011) cautions educational leaders not to use recess to meet mandated physical education classes, even if they provide recess physical activity pacts. Physical activity pacts are recess equipment that the children could use during recess, such as balls.

Simon and Childers (2006), an exploratory study, examines the perspectives of school principals when making decisions about recess. It asked principals to comment about their decision-making process, as well as the benefits and drawbacks of recess time results. In a later study, Ren and Langhout (2010) evaluated recess by including students in a participatory action research design. Researchers collected data from structured observations and student and recess aide focus groups. Ren and Langhout (2010) found that involving students in all aspect of problem solving created a dynamic change in collaborative thinking.
Some superintendents, like Dr. Crail of the Kent City schools in Ohio, support recess, particularly for middle schoolers. Dr. Crail describes middle schoolers as students who “may look pretty grown up, but on the inside, they crave some of the same things as third- and fourth-graders want” (as cited in Coeyman, 1999, p. 13). At Stanton Middle School, which includes Grades 6 through 8, Dr. Crail notes that the implementation of this philosophy has increased time for physical play and led to more physical play, as well as created an environment conducive to socializing while eating (Coeyman, 1999).

In a George Lucas Educational Foundation article, “Longer Recess, Stronger Child Development,” Hanscom (2016) recognizes the need to extend the amount of time allocated for recess in order to increase opportunities for creative play, social-emotional development, and physical regulation. To allow for these opportunities, Hanscom (2016) suggests an hour of recess, for students to actively engage in them. In addition, Elliot et al. (2011) encourages educational leaders to provide professional development for recess staff.

Many districts make decisions about recess based on weather conditions. In a New York Times article entitled “Too Cool for School Recess,” author Bellafante notes that throughout the country and world schools have diverse policies on whether students receive outdoor recess, based on the temperature of the day. Bellafante notes that districts in typically colder regions have a higher threshold for colder weather conditions to allow their students outside more often. She notes that in New York City’s P.S. 126 students did not receive outdoor recess for 40 days due to weather until the local YMCA suggested piloting some different indoor physical activity breaks, such as yoga, during student recess time. Because of these actions, students in P.S. 126 receive 30 minutes of
recess each day. These actions are supported by the January 2017 Recess Planning Guide for Schools written by the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) and SHAPE (Society of Health and Physical Educators) under strategies for recess at school, which is to engage the school community to support recess.

**Conceptual framework**

The graphic below outlines a conceptual framework for this dissertation topic (Figure 1). The three “basketballs” are labeled as empirical studies and implications about recess; theories and policies about recess; and teachers’ perspectives, practices and knowledge about recess. Each basketball represents one component outlined in this chapter. These three components will be used for triangulation. Each “basketball” is being thrown into the “basketball hoop.” The researcher will examine each “basketball” as it relates to recess at the middle school level to provide research to the educational community that recess is important and necessary for the middle school learner.
Summary

Middle school teachers’ perspectives, practices, and knowledge of recess at the middle school level has not been the focus of extensive empirical research. The current empirical studies of recess benefits are largely situated in the elementary classroom and focus on the benefits of recess for elementary students. While results show that recess has many benefits, this trend in research shows there is a missing body of research at the middle school level. By examining the theories about recess, as well as empirical research written about recess, and identifying middle school teachers’ perspectives, practices, and knowledge of recess, the research should reveal that recess is important and necessary for the middle-level learner. Additionally, administrators and teachers should gain greater insight into the topic of recess, which may impact policy at the
middle-school level. Every decision made at the educational level ought to keep students' developmental needs in mind.
CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter the research methodology used in this study is described. The researcher also provides an explanation for the rationale for research approach. The research setting/context, research sample and data sources, data are described. Lastly, the collection methods, and data analysis methods that were followed are also discussed.

Research Questions

Research Question 1. How do middle school teachers perceive recess in their current educational school setting?

Subquestion 1. What do middle school teachers perceive as the benefits of recess at the middle school level?

Subquestion 2. What do middle school teachers perceive as the concerns of recess at the middle school level?

Research Question 2. To what extent do age, gender, level of education, grade level taught, and child dependent responsibilities affect middle school teachers’ views of recess?

Research Question 3. In middle school teachers’ professional preparation, what are the most common factors that influence their knowledge of the benefits of recess? In middle school teachers’ professional preparation, what are the most common factors that influence their knowledge of recess deprivation?

Research Question 4. To what extent do middle school teachers use recess deprivation as a form of discipline for behavior or academic issues?
**Research Question 5.** To what extent are middle school teachers knowledgeable of state policies, organizations’ and associations’ position papers on the benefits of recess?

**Rationale for Research Approach**

The study used a mixed method, which combines both quantitative and qualitative measures. The research questions required both a quantitative and qualitative approach to provide accurate answers. According to Creswell (2015), a mixed method is useful when one research method does not address the full scope of the desired study. The advantage to a mixed methods approach is its ability to connect the quantitative data to the qualitative data. Creswell (2015) stated that the three important characteristics of a mixed method design are priority, sequence and visualization.

In this case study, the researcher will use explanatory sequential design. The researcher prioritized the quantitative data and then used the qualitative data to reinforce findings. Figure 2 shows the sequence that was followed for this research. In this instance the quantitative data was collected and analyzed first, and the results were determined. Then the qualitative data was collected and analyzed, and results were determined. The researcher then integrated the two methods by connecting the quantitative and qualitative data together and interpreted how the qualitative data results explained the quantitative results.
Quantitative data gathered by Surveying middle school teachers’ perspectives, practices and knowledge of recess. Results collected, analyzed and used to determine qualitative focus group questions. Qualitative data gathered by focus group interview questions. Results collected, analyzed and used to determine results of the focus group questions. Quantitative and qualitative data connected to provide a deeper understanding of middle school teachers’ perspectives, practices, and knowledge of recess.

Figure 2. Visualization of the research approach.

Research Setting and Context

This study took place in a medium suburban school district located outside of a large metropolitan city in the northeastern part of the United States. The district was founded in 1844. This district has a total of five buildings. Two elementary buildings contain students from kindergarten through third grade, one intermediate building has students in fourth and fifth grade, middle school houses students in grades six through eight, and a high school has ninth through twelfth graders. The total student population is approximately 3,200 students and approximately 280 teachers are employed in the whole district. The teacher to student ratio is fourteen to one. The graduation rate is 99%.

Research Sample and Data Sources

The subjects of this study are teachers in a suburban middle school. The accessible population was approximately 80 teachers. These middle school teachers were asked to complete a Teachers’ Perspectives of Recess at the Middle School Level Survey (Appendix E and F). The sample size is approximately 80, which exceeds the suggested minimum number of 50 subjects for a case study (Creswell, 2015). The researcher used a purposive sampling method. The participants were selected based on their middle school
qualifications. In total, 61 teachers completed the survey for the quantitative data. For the qualitative research sample, the researcher created a focus group discussion. Seven teachers indicated that they would volunteer to further the discussion about recess at the middle school level. The seven middle school teachers participated in a focus group discussion which was used as the qualitative portion of the mixed method.

**Data Collection Method: Quantitative**

Prior to the study, the researcher met with the Superintendent of Schools in the school district to get verbal permission for data collection. After the meeting, an official IRB letter of intent was sent, and the Superintendent gave consent. A letter of intent and consent was provided to the principal of the middle school for permission to complete a study within the middle school building (Appendix A and B).

Two instruments were used for this study. One was a survey, which served as the instrument for the quantitative portion. The other was a focus group interview, which served as the instrument for the qualitative portion. The researcher constructed a mapping table to represent the alignment of the survey and focus group questions with the research questions (Table 2).
Table 2

**Alignment of Research Questions, Survey Questions, and Focus Group Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Alignment of Survey (S) and Focus Group Questions (FGQ)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ #1</td>
<td>7S, 2FGQ, 3FGQ, 5FGQ, 6FGQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ #2</td>
<td>1S, 2S, 3S, 4S, 5S, 6S, 7S, 1FGQ, 12FGQ, 13FGQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ #3</td>
<td>8S, 9S, 4FGQ, 7FGQ, 12FGQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ #4</td>
<td>10S, 11S, 12S, 13S, 8FGQ, 9FGQ, 10FGQ, 11FGQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ #5</td>
<td>14S, 15S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey for the quantitative section was created by Dale Borman Fink and Catherine L. Ramstetter, and it was used with their permission (Appendix H). The researcher modified the survey title to *Teachers’ Perceptions of Recess at the Middle School Level Survey* (Appendix E). The researcher performed a reliability test by having six middle school teachers take it and note any recommendations or comments on the survey. These notes were collected, and changes were made by the researcher. The final survey was administered as seen in Appendix E and F.

An introductory summary was given to each participant explaining the purpose of the survey. All participants were volunteers. A potential ethical issue that may arise from a mixed method approach would be assembling volunteers together that may categorize them within a certain group (Creswell, 2015). The researcher made participant anonymity a priority. Participation in this study was strictly voluntary and participants were given the option to withdraw at any time. The study involved no risk to participants taking the survey. Prior to sending the survey via email to participants, the researcher placed a small card with a Hershey kiss attached to it in all teacher mailboxes. The card simply stated
that the researcher requests their expertise in completing a survey for doctoral research (Appendix J). The card also mentioned the length of time it will take to complete the survey, approximately five minutes. All information collected was kept confidential; neither names, emails nor any personal information provided was disclosed or recorded. Once data were collected, the researcher offered participants the option of sharing the findings upon request.

The survey was written for middle school teachers and included appropriate language. It was pre-tested by six middle school teachers for accuracy and clarity prior to dissemination. Teacher demographics the survey included the following variables: age, gender, level of education, number of years taught at the middle school level, grade level taught, and child dependency. These questions are item numbers one through six of the survey (Appendix F).

In addition to providing demographic information about themselves, teachers were asked to identify their perceptions of recess benefits. They were asked eight to identify whether they were exposed to ideas about the purposes or benefits of recess in their professional preparation, either before or after becoming a teacher. They were also asked to identify whether they were exposed to ideas about withholding recess for students’ misbehavior or academic shortcomings in their professional preparation, either before or after becoming a teacher. Teachers were asked to indicate whether they have withheld all or part of a recess period from at least one student.

If they answered in the affirmative, teachers noted the reasons why recess was withheld, what the student expectations were for the time recess was withheld, and to comment on the behaviors the student or students displayed after the recess was withheld.
The final questions included check-off boxes on whether the teacher had prior knowledge of organizations, associations, and states promoting recess and policies limiting withholding of recess time.

**Data Collection Method: Qualitative**

A focus group was constructed after the quantitative data was gathered. Seven teachers volunteered and served as the sample size for the qualitative data. Creswell (2015) advocates purposeful qualitative sampling to acquire more information about the research problem. These middle school teachers represented different aspects of middle school life, so with a variety of teachers represented the research provided different perspectives for the study. The focus group members consisted of one female physical education teacher; one female seventh-grade English teacher; one male eighth-grade, mathematics teacher; one female sixth-eighth grade guidance counselor; one female sixth-grade social studies/English teacher; one female special education teacher; and one female sixth-eighth grade speech and language special area teacher.

A letter of consent (Appendix C) was sent and completed by seven teachers. After signatures were obtained, the researcher provided the questions prior to meeting (Appendix D). During a mutually agreed upon time period during the school day, the focus group gathered for approximately 45 minutes.

**Data Analysis Methods: Quantitative**

An analysis of the quantitative data was completed by exporting the results from Google forms to Microsoft Excel to sort the results. The data was then input into SPSS to determine descriptive statistics and an analysis of the demographic information received. The researcher used SPSS cross tabulations because the questions on the survey are
categorical. In addition, the Chi-Squared Test of Independence was used to find associations between different variables and beliefs about the benefits of recess. The likelihood ration was used since 20% of the categorical cells had an expected value lower than 5.

**Data Analysis Methods: Qualitative Focus Group**

The seven participants involved in the focus group discussion were recorded using an iPad. Once complete, the researcher uploaded the discussion responses to an online company (Rev.com) for transcription. The researcher took brief notes during the open-ended discussion and used probing questions when conversations needed elaboration and clarification. After the focus group meeting, the researcher thanked all participants for their time. The focus group transcripts were analyzed and coded following the first cycle and second cycle coding outlined by Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014). The first cycle used descriptive codes, which were useful to categorize information using singular words to identify trends. As Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014) explain, “coding is thus a *data condensation* task that enables you to retrieve the most meaningful material, to assemble chunks of data that go together, and further condense the bulk into readily analyzable units” (p. 3). In addition, hypothesis coding was applied to ensure that the researcher provided explanations in the data that correlated to the research questions. During the second cycle of coding, also known as pattern coding, the researcher created categories or themes. The transcripts were read from first to last, assigned coding, analyzed for themes, and similarities to and differences from the quantitative data were noted.
Limitations

The researcher recognized some limitations to this research design. First, the research used a single-site protocol. The sample size was small. This precludes any generalization of the findings. However, the results can be used to help bridge the gap in empirical research between elementary and middle level teachers’ perspectives of recess. The researcher’s close acquaintance with the research site and sample population is an additional limitation. This provided immediate access that may not have been possible if the researcher was not employed by the research site’s school district.

Summary

In summary, this section reviewed the research questions, methods, instruments, and analyses for this study. An explanatory, mixed method design was most appropriate. The quantitative instrument of the study was a survey and the qualitative instrument consisted of a semi-structured focus group discussion.
CHAPTER 4

Results

Introduction

This chapter briefly reviews the number of participants and the tools used for data collection. The focus is on reporting the results of the survey and the focus group discussion. The chapter is organized by the research questions.

This is a mixed method, case study examining teachers’ perspectives, practices, and knowledge of recess at the middle school level. This chapter analyzed middle school teacher’s responses to an online survey and focus group discussion. The quantitative data was gathered from an online survey. Afterward, the qualitative data was collected through a semi-structured, focus group discussion. The researcher followed an explanatory, sequential design to answer the following five research questions:

**Research Question 1.** How do middle school teachers perceive recess in their current educational school setting?

**Subquestion 1.** What do middle school teachers perceive as the benefits of recess at the middle school level?

**Subquestion 2.** What do middle school teachers perceive as the concerns of recess at the middle school level?

**Research Question 2.** To what extent do age, gender, level of education, grade level taught, and child dependent responsibilities affect middle school teachers’ views of recess?

**Research Question 3.** In middle school teachers’ professional preparation, what are the most common factors that influence their knowledge of the benefits of recess? In
middle school teachers’ professional preparation, what are the most common factors that influence their knowledge of recess deprivation?

**Research Question 4.** To what extent do middle school teachers use recess deprivation as a form of discipline for behavior or academic issues?

**Research Question 5.** To what extent are middle school teachers knowledgeable of state policies, organizations’ and associations’ position papers on the benefits of recess?

The data collected and analyzed from the participants provide clear patterns and themes regarding each research question. These patterns and themes are discussed in the following sections.

**Research Question One Analysis**

Research question one asked how middle teachers perceive recess in their current school setting. This question is most appropriately answered by the qualitative focus group, since a more detailed description could be gained through discussion. There are two subset questions: What do middle school teachers perceive as the benefits of recess at the middle school level and what do middle school teachers perceive as the concerns of recess at the middle school level. For the two subset questions the researcher was able to glean information from both the quantitative and qualitative data.

Table 3 represents the demographic information gathered by the participants in the focus group. A variety of different teachers were asked to participate in order to have a deeper and diverse representation from the middle school staff.
Students at this school begin class at 8:11 am and end the day at 2:23 pm. Seventh grade students attend lunch and recess from 11:02 am to 11:40 am, sixth graders from 11:43 am to 12:21 pm, and eighth graders from 12:24 pm to 1:02 pm.

Using the data from the focus group, the researcher noted that the group did not know much about recess in their school setting. The math teacher stated, “Doesn't recess just happen like the last ten or fifteen minutes of the lunch period?” A more detailed description of middle school recess was provided by the physical education teacher because she monitors the daily lunch and recess for the eighth grade. Her description of recess at this school follows:

So, recess is during the lunch period. It's a 40-minute lunch and the kids have recess. If it's a nice day, they go outside for at least 15 minutes is the goal.
Sometimes, 20 minutes. Depends on how we're doing or what they're serving up for lunch. We also have the indoor gym. It is available at recess to get them in there. We have a physical education teacher in charge of the lunch with some security guys and aids and administrative who help us out. When they go outside, they can choose to play in an intramural style game or they can be on their own playing basketball, tag, sitting at the tables doing what they want to do. They don't have to go outside. They don't have to go into the gym. It's a choice.

The response to the physical education teachers’ detailed description of recess was one of surprise. The speech pathologist stated, “That’s a lot more information than I really knew. I was on the same level as the math teacher when he said fifteen minutes or so, and I wasn’t sure what they really did.” In relation to middle school recess overall the math teacher believed that middle school students lose interest in recess as the students continue through middle school: “I think recess is more important in sixth grade, and it kind of weans out as it gets to eighth grade. I don't know if I'm wrong there. I feel like they outgrow it a little bit.” A competing view was provided by the physical education teacher who mentioned that a group of eighth grade boys were happy to go out and play in 20-degree weather:

    Doing the eighth-grade cafeteria for a lot of years, there is a big, big pocket of, especially boys, which need to go. I will go outside in 20-degree weather and they're willing to come. I'm willing to go. That's how they need it so bad, and I am going.

Another view of middle school recess is that it provides an alternative place for children to be by themselves, though not necessarily outside. Students who are very sensitive to
sounds and those who do not want to socialize can go to either the library, guidance office, or an indoor gym area. Later in the discussion, the physical education teacher summarized her opinions about recess in the middle school by explaining that after being exposed to different opinions she refined her definition:

My definition of recess now has changed from listening to this, because recess also, talking about going to the library and that pocket of like twenty kids that need to go to that library every day, because they just want to do what they need to do in the library, whether it be read a book, cause that's their recess. That's their mindset of being relaxed.

This sentiment was also expressed by the speech pathologist when she stated, “I think I’ve learned a lot more about recess just from this little round table.” These statements showed that middle school teachers were unclear about recess within their own school setting and were willing to be reflective and change their initial responses to how they described recess.

**Benefits of recess at the middle school level.** All of the middle school teachers surveyed in the quantitative instrument felt that recess does provide benefits, as no one indicated minimal or no benefits on the survey (see Table 4).
Table 4

Descriptive Statistics based on Teachers’ Perspectives of Recess at the Middle School Level Survey Results for the Benefits of Recess

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits of Recess</th>
<th>frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimal or no benefits</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes social development</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes overall health and wellness</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes students’ autonomy or self-direction</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides learning experiences related to the general curriculum</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 61.

The qualitative data included more specifics when discussing the benefits of recess. Socialization was the most discussed benefit of recess time. The teachers stressed that children were able to practice their social skills during recess. Some suggested that with the decline of face to face interaction and the rise of hand held devices, recess serves as a useful tool to facilitate social learning skills. One teacher said, “I was going to say, social stimulation, right? It's not just the physical release, but the social...But they also must learn to speak to each other, as well.” Another teacher continued the discussion of how recess provides an opportunity for learning social skills:

Using recess as an academic tool when they play games, and they are problem solving through games. That's their biggest academic tool they can probably have in life, because everything we do is group project, working with a group, working with relationships and other people, and that "figure it out" skill is lacking.
especially today, because we feel the need to hover over children all the time and figure things out for them.

Other benefits that were discussed about recess is that it provides a time and place for fun, it allows for children to expend extra energy, it gives them a break from the monotony of 80-minute educational blocks, and it helps them to prioritize themselves. Also, it was seen as an important tool for relaxation for students who go to the library or the guidance office.

As noted in Figure 3, some of the main ideas are students just “need” time; think; break; stimulation. The main idea that is front and center in this word cloud is that middle school students just need time to themselves. This was echoed by the special education teacher when she stated, “I think it’s a vital part of their day. I think they very much look forward to it. It’s a very social part of their day, and I would say that they vastly enjoy their lunch.”
An additional benefit discussed by the speech pathologist mentioned is that the physical activity during recess helps refocus students. I'm just thinking how it might relate to something when you're working with very young children, because I've done a lot with preschoolers, and sometimes with very little kids, you need a physical activity before you do the more structured activity. It gives them a chance. It centers their thinking. It helps them focus better. It stimulates ... I can't remember what part of the brain, but it stimulates a part of the brain that helps them to focus more appropriately. So, I don't know.
Maybe recess, when the kids come back, after they finally finish unwinding, maybe it helps them focus better.

The benefits of recess were clearly indicated by the data collected in the quantitative online survey. The focus group agreed with the data from the survey and provided specific examples from their own school setting.

**Concern with recess at the middle school level.** The focus group was able to identify several concerns with recess. Some areas of concern were supervision, conflict, and the effects of recess. There are sometimes challenges with student supervision. Students were often too energetic and not enough educators or aides are available to supervise them. One teacher said, “A lot of kids together with minimal supervision…We have the couple of security guards. We have some people who help out at lunch and a physical education teacher, but there are a lot of kids out there to manage.” Another teacher expressed concern about students resolving their own issues while at recess. Sometimes students need guidance from teachers. However, due to the high student to teacher ratio, sometimes teachers are not available to oversee conflict resolution. At times this may be difficult for some students:

> These kids need to sometimes talk it out themselves and learn how to fix the problem themselves without a teacher or an aid interfering with them. They're there for their guidance, and I think that one of the main concerns is that we can't be at all places at all times.

Further, not all students may find that they are included in play. This applies to children who may find that they are not able to keep up with the pace of play or may have difficulty with social skills.
Most of the kids I work with, in fact, all of the kids I work with are special needs students for various reasons, and it's hard for most of those kids to navigate around the social issues and even sports issues. Many of them are not as capable of it as others. So, it's a feeling of sometimes being left out that must be taken into consideration. It should be helped and encouraged.

One teacher complained that students were sweaty and smelly when they come back in the classroom. Another view was that the students are excited, loud, and playful after recess, and some find it difficult to transition into the classroom and learning environment. “They’re sweaty. Their shoes are filthy, and it takes them a good five, ten minutes sometimes to calm down if it was an exciting game of basketball or what not.”

In Figure 4, the main word that is front and center is “sometimes.” The emphasis from this word cloud is that because they are adolescents, middle school students are very unpredictable. There are many unknowns that can cause situation to escalate very quickly during recess time.
Figure 4. Concerns with recess word cloud.

Overall, the middle school teachers expressed legitimate concerns over what happens during recess. However, no one indicated that these concerns outweighed the benefits. The concerns are simply areas where the middle school may need to change how recess is overseen.
Research Question Two Analysis

Research question two discussed to what extent does age, gender, level of education, grade level taught, and child dependent responsibilities affect a teacher’s view of recess. The researcher tested the following hypotheses:

H₀ = There is no association between age, gender, level of education, grade level taught, and child dependent responsibilities and middle school teachers’ view of recess at the middle school level.

H₁ = There is an association between age, gender, level of education, grade level taught, and child dependent responsibilities and middle school teachers’ view of recess at the middle school level.

Using the survey instrument, the researcher was able to collect demographic information from the participants. The researcher compiled the demographic data and used SPSS cross tabulations and Chi-Square Test of Independence to discover any associations between the demographic variable and middle school teachers’ belief in the benefits of recess. However, since 20% of the cells had an expected value lower than 5, the researcher used the likelihood ratio.

**Impact of age on middle school teachers’ view of recess.** The researcher was able to note that approximately 46% of the middle school teachers taking the survey ranged in age from 41-50. A Chi-Squared Test of Independence was calculated using middle school teachers’ views of recess. The likelihood ratio was used. The percentage of middle school teachers’ view of recess did not differ by age: \( X^2 (20, N = 61) = 23.587, p = .26 \). This meant that the researcher can infer that there is no association between age and middle school teachers’ view of recess, as noted in Table 5.
Table 5

Summary of Descriptive Statistics based on Teachers’ Perspectives of Recess at the Middle School Level Survey Results for Age and Teachers’ Beliefs of the Benefits of Recess

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>$X^2$</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>23.587</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 and older</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $N = 61$. a. 26 cells (86.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .10, so the likelihood ratio is indicated.

Impact of gender on middle school teachers’ views of recess. The survey also asked middle school teachers to identify their gender. The results of this survey indicated that there are more women than men in this case study. A Chi-Squared Test of Independence was calculated using middle school teachers’ views of recess. However, using the likelihood ratio, the middle teachers’ view of recess did not differ by gender: $X^2 (5, N = 61) = 3.246, p = .66$. The researcher can therefore infer that there is no association between gender and teachers’ beliefs in the benefits of recess, as noted in Table 6.
Table 6

Summary of Descriptive Statistics Based on Teachers’ Perspectives of Recess at the Middle School Level Survey Results for Gender and Teachers’ Beliefs of the Benefits of Recess

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>$X^2$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>78.7</td>
<td>3.246</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $N = 61$. a. 8 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .43, so the likelihood ratio is indicated.

This was also true of the qualitative data. However, the only teacher that provided negative comments throughout the focus group discussion was male. Many of his comments questioned different aspects of recess from how much is enough, to the disruptive effects of returning from recess.

I want to go a different route. Sometimes when they come in from recess, they're smelly. They're sweaty. Their shoes are filthy, and it takes them a good five, ten minutes sometimes to calm down if it was an exciting game of basketball or what not… But when does it stop though? (Are) you going to put (recess) in high school then? I didn't have it in middle school. I'm just saying when does it end? It's like, you got to grow up, I feel.

These comments did not provide enough evidence that indicated gender affected his views of recess.

Impact of education on teachers’ beliefs of recess. The teachers were also asked to identify their level of education. As seen in Table 7, approximately 95% of the middle school teachers surveyed had a level of education of Master’s and Post Master’s degrees. A Chi-Squared Test of Independence was calculated using middle school
teachers’ views of recess. The likelihood ratio was implemented. The percentage of middle school teachers views of recess did not differ by the level of education: $X^2 (15, N = 61) = 13.062, p = .60$. Using the likelihood ratio, there is no association between the level of education and teachers’ beliefs in the benefits of recess.

Table 7

**Summary of Descriptive Statistics Based on Teachers’ Perspectives of Recess at the Middle School Level Survey Results for Level of Education and Teachers’ Beliefs of the Benefits of Recess**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>$X^2$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>13.062$^a$</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Masters</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 61. a. 20 cells (83.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .03, so the likelihood ratio is indicated.*

Qualitative data showed that teacher level of education did not affect their beliefs about recess. However, the middle school guidance counselor reported that the courses she took to attain her degrees provided her with opportunities to discuss recess. “Being a counselor, we do discuss it at times and in some of my classes, but I would say, for the most part, a lot of people, I would think, have not discussed the pros and the cons of it (recess) or the difficulties of it.”

The physical education teacher oversees lunch and recess for the students. Her degree provides a noteworthy background to understand recess. “…In this school, we're unique because we do have a physical education teacher at recess to oversee those purposes and to also give them the independence that they do need, but we have
somebody ... the professional eyes there.” However, she indicated that the topic of recess was not discussed in her education classes.

**Impact of grade level on teachers’ beliefs of recess.** The survey results indicated that there was a close representation of middle school teachers having the most contact with students in both 6th and 8th grade, approximately 40% and 36% respectively, as seen in Table 8. A Chi-Squared Test of Independence was calculated using middle school teachers’ views of recess. The likelihood ratio was used. Results also indicated that the percentage of middle school teachers’ views of recess did not differ by grade level: $X^2 (10, N = 61) = 16.301, p = .09$. There is no association between the grade level and teachers’ view of recess as noted by the likelihood ratio. There was no qualitative pattern with regards to grade level taught that affected their views of recess.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>$X^2$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6th Grade</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>16.301$^a$</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Grade</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Grade</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 61. a. 13 cells (72.2%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .49, so the likelihood ratio is indicated.*

**Impact of child dependent status on teachers’ beliefs of recess.** The last question on the survey that related to demographic information pertained to the middle school teacher’s child dependent status. As noted in Table 9, most middle school teachers had children (66%) that they were responsible for in their household. Results indicated that the percentage of middle school teachers’ views of recess did not differ by grade
level, \(X^2(5, N = 61) = 10.453, p = .06\), according to the likelihood ratio. There is no association between the child dependent status and teachers’ views of recess.

Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Dependent Status</th>
<th>frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>(X^2)</th>
<th>(p)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Children</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>10.453(^a)</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One or more children</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 61. \(^a\) 8 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .69, so the likelihood ratio is indicated.*

There was some qualitative evidence that having their own children allowed some middle school teachers to appreciate recess time. Three out of seven middle school teachers were able to describe how recess affected their children. One of the teachers recounted how recess was beneficial for both her son and daughter:

Well, definitely my son, he needs to get out some energy. He definitely has more difficulty in the afternoon than he does in the morning. So, if he gets to go out during lunch and just run around, get some energy out, it'll help him kind of reset and be able to focus a little bit better for the remainder of the school day. So, I definitely think ... And even my daughter was just saying how in her school the other day, and she's in middle school, they sometimes force all the kids, even if they don't want to go out, they force them outside and make them all go. So, I think that for both of them it's good.
In addition, the guidance counselor noted that both her son and daughter were excited about recess time for different reasons. Her son was looking forward to recess to get outside and play, but her daughter was looking for some quiet time alone:

And I can say, for my son, he's in third grade, he's that student sometimes who needs to stand up. He has trouble. He's one of the youngest in his grade, and he can't sit still, and sometimes he needs to stand, and he needs to get his energy out, where my daughter who's a sixth grader who's twelve, her middle school or the original school she started at, did not have recess, and she needed it. Not so much necessarily for the physical activity, for the break. She is that anxious of a mess type of kid who really needed that unstructured, “I have to find a quiet spot and decompress.” And when she heard that I had recess at my school she said: “Can I go to your school? Can I go to your school? I need a break, Mom. I need a break.”

**Summary of demographic variables.** Overall, middle school teachers’ demographic data analyzed from the survey can be summarized as follows: Sixty-one middle school level teachers responded to the survey instrument. The highest percentage of middle school teachers were women (79%), aged 41-50 (28%). In addition, the highest percentage of level of education for a middle school teacher was post masters at 53%, who had the most contact with $6^{th}$ grade students (39%). Middle school teachers also tend to have dependent children (66%).

The researcher noted that the null hypothesis must be retained, since there was no association between age, gender, level of education, grade level taught, and child dependent responsibilities and a teacher’s view of recess at the middle school level. Qualitatively, some data indicated that having children provided an opportunity to be
reflective of their own beliefs about recess. However, this insight cannot be generalizable because of the sample size.

All the middle school teachers surveyed felt that recess provides benefits, since no one indicated minimal or no benefits on the survey. Even though there was no association between the age, gender, level of education, grade level taught and child dependent responsibilities and teachers’ views of recess at the middle school level, the researcher continued to interpret the data and used SPSS cross tabulations to analyze which specific variables (age, gender, level of education, grade level taught and child dependent responsibilities) noted the most benefits of recess at the middle school level. Results indicated that all variables had the following three benefits: promotes social development, promotes overall health and wellness, promotes students' autonomy or self-direction.

Using all the different independent variables analyze, female middle school teachers, aged 41-50, with a post-master’s degree, teaching 6th graders, and with responsibilities of one or more child dependents noted the most benefits of recess.

**Research Question Three Results**

Research question three asked what the most common factors in middle school teachers’ professional preparation that influence their knowledge of the benefits of recess and their knowledge of recess deprivation. As noted in Table 11, 57.4% of middle school teachers stated that the benefits of recess were not a topic of discussion in their professional preparation, either before or after becoming a teacher. The most common factor that affected teachers’ knowledge of the benefits of recess was in-service meetings, workshops, or conferences (26.2%).
Table 10

*Professional Preparation, Either Before or After Becoming a Teacher, Were Teachers Exposed to Ideas about the Purposes or Benefits of Recess Based on Teachers’ Perspectives of Recess at the Middle School Level Survey Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Preparation on the Purpose or Benefits of Recess</th>
<th>frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In a college course</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations with supervising practitioners</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-service meetings, workshops, or conferences</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty meetings</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not a topic of discussion</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>57.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 61.*

In Table 12, 41% of participants stated that the use of withholding recess as a form of discipline was not a topic of discussion in their professional preparation, either before or after becoming a teacher. The most common factor that affected teachers’ knowledge of withholding recess as a form of discipline was conversations with supervising practitioners (50.8%).
Table 11

Professional Preparation, Either Before or After Becoming a Teacher, Were Teachers Exposed to Ideas about Withholding Recess Based on Teachers’ Perspectives of Recess at the Middle School Level Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Preparation on the Ideas of Withholding Recess</th>
<th>frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In a college course</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations with supervising practitioners</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>50.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-service meetings, workshops, or conferences</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty meetings</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not a topic of discussion</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 61.

The teachers identified a lack of professional preparation about both the benefits of recess and the use of recess deprivation in the following statements. One teacher said, “Even though I’m an elementary teacher, I don’t remember any formal training or exposure to recess.” Another teacher said:

> It’s not something that had come up when I was in school when we were going for education about any of the benefits or concerns about it. I could see things that my own experience has brought up, but there was not anything that I was taught in school about the benefits or concerns.

A third teacher said, “I also agree. I haven’t talked about it much in schooling or meetings or anything about it. So, I’m just here learning about it.” A fourth teacher said:

> In professional preparation, I didn’t really discuss recess. I’ve just been reading more about it now, since I have an elementary-aged son who has a little bit of a hard time sitting still in his class, but I’ve never really seen anything published about the benefits of recess in middle school.

A prominent theme in the qualitative portion of the research was the lack of education regarding the topic of recess. The middle school teachers acknowledged that
they did not have any formal training or continuous education regarding the benefits of recess or the use of recess deprivation as a disciplinary or academic tool.

**Research Question Four Analysis**

Research question four asked to what extent do middle school teachers, use recess deprivation as a form of discipline for behavior or academic issues at the middle school level. The researcher tested the following hypotheses:

\[ H_0 = \text{There is no association between grade level and the use of recess deprivation as a form of discipline for behavior or academic issues at the middle school level.} \]

\[ H_1 = \text{There is an association between grade level and the use of recess deprivation as a form of discipline for behavior or academic issues at the middle school level.} \]

As seen in Table 12, when middle school teachers were asked on the survey if during the current school year, they withheld recess for all or part of a recess period, 77% said they have not and 23% said that they have withheld recess.

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>No (n)</th>
<th>Yes (n)</th>
<th>(X^2)</th>
<th>(p)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sixth</td>
<td>18 (30%)</td>
<td>6 (10%)</td>
<td>.131(^a)</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh</td>
<td>12 (20%)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighth</td>
<td>17 (28%)</td>
<td>5 (8%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 61. \(a\). 1 cell (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.44.*

To analyze to what extent middle school teachers use recess deprivation as a form of discipline, the researcher utilized SPSS cross tabulations. Results indicated that six sixth grade teachers responded that they have withheld recess. This accounts for 10% of
the middle school teachers sampled. In seventh grade, three teachers withheld recess, which accounts for 5%. Lastly, five of the eighth grade teachers responded that they have withheld recess, which accounts for 8% of the participants surveyed. Overall, 77% of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teachers surveyed have not withheld recess.

In addition, the researcher compiled the demographic data and used SPSS cross-tabulations and Chi-Square Test of Independence to note if there was an association between grade level and whether recess deprivation was used. Since 20% of the cells had an expected value lower than 5, the Chi-Squared Test of Independence results are located Table 10. Results indicated that there is no association between grade level and the use of recess deprivation at the middle school level, $X^2 (2, N = 61) = 0.131, p = .94$. Thus, the null hypothesis was retained, since there was no association between grade level and the use of recess deprivation as a form of discipline for behavior or academic issues at the middle school level. Further qualitative data provided insight as to why some teachers chose to use recess deprivation as a discipline or academic tool.

**Recess deprivation as a disciplinary tool.** Using the data from the focus group, most middle school teachers across all three grade levels stated that they have seen the use of recess deprivation as a disciplinary activity. The following comments represent 6th, 7th and 8th grade middle school teachers’ knowledge of recess deprivation. One teacher said, “Well, in my years here, I have seen where people have taken recess away for disciplinary reasons, no doubt.” A second teacher said, “I've seen it used as a disciplinary tool to have a lunch detention.” A third teacher said, “I've seen it used as lunch detentions.” A fourth teacher said, “And even on a building level, we refer a student to administration and a lunch detention is sometimes what they assign.” In addition, a
teacher who educates all grade levels at the middle school stated that in order to provide a safe environment in the cafeteria and during recess, the elimination of recess is used as a form of discipline:

We do use it as a disciplinary tool when the student cannot follow the rules and is maybe a danger to other kids cause they're doing something that is not appropriate. So, we do give them a lunch detention. Like the last thing we want to do sometimes for a child, but when they can't follow the rules, and they are being dangerous from recess outside, that's when we take away the recess, when they're not appropriate.

A sixth-grade teacher agreed with the above statements when she explained why some students do not deserve to go out for recess: “I do agree that they should use it for behavioral issues if they're causing problems for other students, because they shouldn't be allowed to go to lunch and make other kids miserable during their lunch and recess.”

Both a seventh and an eighth grade teacher agreed that they did not want to sacrifice their own personal lunch time for disciplinary issues. “I will not because I'm not giving up my lunch to sit with a kid who caused a problem for me in a previous period. I'll refer them to administration to deal with it.” Figure 5 shows that detention is used many times when talking about recess as a disciplinary tool. This is an insight from the data.
Teachers recognized that recess deprivation is used as a form of detention, as seen in Figure 6. This led to a glaring theme that was discussed by all grade level teachers, which is the lack of available or proper space for detention:

So, they're missing lunch, and we sent them to a special spot where they are having lunch detention and could be for various reasons, such as something that happened during the school day, could have been something in the lunchroom, and it's our administration's way of taking care of some problems, cause we don't really have another source of detention.
A teacher who works with all three grade levels stated that recess is the only time to discipline because the school did not have a dedicated detention space in the building, outside of the regular school day:

And I think as a disciplinary tool, that's the only thing we have in this school.

We're in need of a maybe a detention room before or after school that we used to have and so, we're stuck sometimes with: "What do we do?" If the kid is not learning through other measures.

In addition, an eighth-grade teacher explained that the main lobby is not the best location for a disciplinary action to take place. He stated it is a place for, “hanging out with the security guards and being a clown for everyone in the hallway that walks by.”

None of the middle school teachers from the focus group, in the grades that they represent, have kept a student away from recess for discipline issues. There was a 6th grade teacher who used the beginning of lunch time to discuss with a student appropriate behavior, but lunch and recess was not eliminated. When the teacher offered a ‘talk’ it was not always effective:

Yeah. So, a sixth-grade teacher, again, going back to that elementary. So, keeping them in the class for a little bit to talk to them a little bit about their behavior. They wouldn't miss recess or all their lunch. It's been rare that I've kept someone the whole lunch period, but that's more for the academic, not the discipline tool, but in my experience even that five-minute chat has not made a difference. It hasn't prevented further behavior issues.
Also, a teacher of all three grades said that public reprimand that is accompanied by lunch/ recess detention works for those who need correction of behavior in the lunchroom:

During the lunchroom, a lot of times it works, cause the kids don't want to be the one that got lunch detention more than anything. They're not used to getting in trouble. For the child that is a constant discipline problem, I would have to say, not really. Occasionally it might work, but for the average child who maybe got lunch detention once in their life, yes. It was a quick reminder that they were inappropriate, and they were acting out and trying to be, I call it, the "funny guy" in front of their friends and "funny girl," and it does work in that instance.

In all three grade levels, the teachers agreed that recess is used as a “carrot” to get students to behave appropriately throughout the school day. However, middle school teachers provided fewer details about whether they used recess deprivation as an academic tool.

Recess deprivation as an academic tool. An eighth grade and a seventh-grade middle school teacher explained how they used recess as a time to help students catch up on what they were struggling with, only at the request of the student. As one eighth grade teacher mentioned, “I know I have given extra help instead of recess for some kids that have asked instead of them going out. That's the only thing I could add academically.” This complemented the thoughts of a seventh-grade teacher who explained a situation where she used recess to help a student academically. “I know I have used it (recess), especially this year, for a student who just never came to school and didn’t use recess either. So, I’ve used it to catch him up on work because he was absent.” The guidance
counselor mentioned that students who have social issues will come into her office during recess. She mentioned that these students are her “lunch group.” As a guidance counselor she uses lunch/recess time, with all grade levels, to “mediate and talk through problems, and provide them with social skills.” In summary, middle school teachers were more willing to use recess time for academics and not for discipline.

**Research Question Five Analysis**

The last research question asked if a teacher’s knowledge and/or awareness of state policies, organizations’ and associations’ position papers on the benefits of recess affected their perspective of recess at the middle school level. The survey question asked middle school teachers to identify if they were aware, prior to participating in the survey, that any of these organizations or associations had issued a paper promoting the benefits of recess. Table 13 identifies the results of the participants’ responses, which indicate that the majority (63.9%) were not aware of any organization and associations that have published information about the benefits of recess. However, 26.2% of the middle school teachers identified knowing that the American Academy of Pediatrics noted the benefits of recess.
Table 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizations and Associations</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Academy of Pediatrics</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Association for the Education of Young Children</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Association for Sport and Physical Education</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not aware of any of these organizations and associations</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>63.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 61.*

The last question on the survey asked the middle school teachers to identify if they had knowledge that certain states have adopted policies limiting the withholding of recess. Again, the results of the survey indicated that 98.4% of the middle school teachers did not have any awareness of state policies that limited withholding recess. The results are indicated in Table 14.
Table 14

*Awareness of state adopted policies limiting the withholding of recess based on Teachers’ Perspectives of Recess at the Middle School Level Survey Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Adopted Policies</th>
<th>frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina (State Board of Education Policy Manual, 2005). &quot;Structured/unstructured recess shall not be taken away from students as a form of punishment.&quot;</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont (Nutrition and Fitness Guidelines, 2005). &quot;Recess...shall not be taken away as a form of discipline unless...directly related to a student's behavior during recess.&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan (State Board of Education, Model Policy on Quality Physical Education and Physical Activity in Schools, 2012). &quot;Recess may not be denied or used for disciplinary reasons, or to make up lessons or class. All teachers should be trained in how to integrate physical activity in their classrooms.&quot;</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut (Proposed Connecticut General Assembly H.B. No. 6202). Proposed a bill &quot;to increase that state’s time commitment to 50 minutes of undirected play in order to develop children's social skills, physical development, and emotional well-being.&quot;</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not aware of any of these states’ adopted policies.</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>98.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 61.*

**Summary**

The findings of this research answered five research questions set forth in this study. Even though this case study had a limited sample of participants, the data from the survey and the focus group provided an understanding of the perspectives, practices, and knowledge of recess at the middle school level. For research question one, the results indicated that middle school teachers identified the benefits of recess and were able to articulate valid concerns about recess. For research question two, there was no association between any of the demographic factors and middle school teachers’ view of recess, which indicated that the null hypothesis was retained. The teachers generally stated that the benefits of recess were not even a topic in professional preparation, and the most common professional preparation about recess deprivation was conversations with supervising practitioners. For research question four, there was no association between
grade level and the use of recess deprivation as a form of discipline for behavior or academic issues, which indicated that the null hypothesis was retained. Lastly, most of the middle school teachers (63.9%) had limited awareness of any organization and associations that have published information about the benefits of recess, and 98.4% of the teachers did not have any awareness of state policies that limited the withholding of recess.
CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Introduction

This chapter summarizes the findings related to each research question, provides implications and relationships of findings to prior research, states the limitations of the study, and provides recommendations for future research. The following research questions were addressed in this mixed method, singular, case study. It took place in one suburban middle school on the eastern coast of the United States.

The researcher used an explanatory sequential design. The quantitative data was collected first by an online survey. Then the qualitative data was gathered through a focus group discussion. Both data sources were necessary to provide a clear understanding of middle school teachers’ perspectives, practices, and knowledge of recess at the middle school level.

Research Questions

Research Question 1. How do middle school teachers perceive recess in their current educational school setting?

Subquestion 1. What do middle school teachers perceive as the benefits of recess at the middle school level?

Subquestion 2. What do middle school teachers perceive as the concerns of recess at the middle school level?

Research Question 2. To what extent do age, gender, level of education, grade level taught, and child dependent responsibilities affect middle school teachers’ views of recess?
Research Question 3. In middle school teachers’ professional preparation, what are the most common factors that influence their knowledge of the benefits of recess? In middle school teachers’ professional preparation, what are the most common factors that influence their knowledge of recess deprivation?

Research Question 4. To what extent do middle school teachers use recess deprivation as a form of discipline for behavior or academic issues?

Research Question 5. To what extent are middle school teachers knowledgeable of state policies, organizations’ and associations’ position papers on the benefits of recess?

Implications of Findings

The implications of the findings are organized by each research question. In the following section, the researcher summarized the results of each question and related them to the theoretical framework, conceptual framework, and empirical evidence presented in Chapter 2.

Research Question 1. The first research question targeted how middle school teachers perceive recess, which included both the benefits and concerns. The quantitative data confirmed that middle school teachers believe that recess provides benefits to middle school students. The three benefits that recurred most often were promoting social development, promoting overall health and wellness, and promoting students’ autonomy or self-direction. Specifically, Albert Bandura’s Social Theory demonstrates the importance of middle school students learning through social interactions, which occur during recess. Bandura (1971) explains that humans learn in social settings by observation. There are four parts that directly link to recess as a place for social learning
to occur: attentional processes, retention processes, motoric reproduction processes, and reinforcement and motivational processes. Bandura explains, “A person cannot learn much by observation if he does not attend to, or recognize, the essential features of the model’s behavior” (p. 6). Once the person is focused then it is important to make a representative model of the appropriate behaviors. However, the skills must be learned and applied. Lastly, reinforcement of positive behavior must be continuous. Albert Bandura (1971) states, “It may require 1, 10, or 100 demonstrations trials, but if one persists, the desired behavior will eventually be evoked” (p. 8). During recess, students may unknowingly apply social learning through observation.

In addition, Herbert Spencer’s Surplus Energy Theory explains the need for students to release stored energy. When this occurs, students can concentrate more on their academics because the body has released energy. This conceptual framework also supports the results of research question one because middle school teachers identified recess as beneficial. This will encourage the rethinking of recess policies beneficial to all middle level students.

These findings correspond with current research suggesting that recess is beneficial, including Pellegrini (2008), Bryd (2008) and. Pellegrini and Bohn (2005). Pellegrini (2008) claims when students interact during recess, they are using critical social skills. Byrd (2007) suggests that there is a relationship between students’ BMI (Body Mass Index), physical activity, and their academic levels. Higher levels of physical activity had a relationship with both improved grades and a faster learning rate. Pellegrini and Bohn (2005) explained that students feel closer and more of a connection to their school because of recess. Students choose what they enjoy and who they want to spend
their time with. These three benefits were also consistent with the recent results of Ramstetter and Fink’s (2019) qualitative study examining elementary school teachers’ perspectives of recess.

In addition, middle school teachers expressed some particular concerns about recess. Some revolved around the safety issues, which was also noted in the work of Jarrett and Waite (2009). However, research indicates that social interventions can positively affect problematic behavior reduction and recess can prove to be a valuable area for learning opportunities (Anderson-Butcher, Newsome and Nay, 2003). Teachers also indicated another concern at recess which was an issue with lack of supervision. This was also noted in Anderson-Butcher et al. (2003): “teachers feel as recess duty is an unwelcome task” (p.1). Overall, research question one was supported by all three components discussed in Chapter two: the theoretical framework, conceptual framework and prior empirical research.

**Research Question 2.** The second research question examined to what extent does age, gender, level of education, grade level taught, and child dependent responsibilities affect a teacher’s view of recess. The researcher gathered data that identified no significant association between the suggested variables with a teacher’s view of recess. The null hypothesis was retained. However, the focus group provided an opportunity for further investigation to whether having child dependents changed teachers’ view of recess. A few participants stated that having children had changed their mind set about recess. For example, “Seventeen years of teaching, but the benefits of recess in my mind changed once I had my own children.” Also noted in the conceptual framework, a teachers’ perspective is important one teacher stated specifically, when
understanding how recess is seen at the middle school level. Understanding perspectives is an important component to rethinking recess for the middle level student. Pajares (1992) argued that a teacher’s belief is the framework for decision making and not through the knowledge gained through education. Since age, gender, level of education, grade level taught, and child dependent responsibilities did not provide significant results, the researcher examined if middle school teachers’ professional preparation influenced their knowledge of recess deprivation, either for disciplinary or academic reasons.

**Research Question 3.** The third research question examined the common factors that influence middle school teachers’ knowledge of recess and recess deprivation. Analysis of the responses to the online survey suggested that the most common professional preparation factor that influenced a middle school teachers’ knowledge of the benefits of recess was not even a topic of discussion. This was echoed in the focus group when one teacher mentioned specifically, “I’ve never been exposed to anything in preparation of being a teacher with regard to recess.” The most common professional preparation factor that influenced a middle school teachers’ knowledge of recess deprivation was conversations with supervising practitioners. The results of this research question indicate a need for professional development in the area of recess, which is highlighted in the conceptual framework. Since middle school teachers identified that they have not received formal educational classes about recess, they rely on supervisors for assistance in making decisions about recess deprivation. Williams, Pickett & McGill (2019) stated in their research that “Early childhood teachers have exhibited less understanding of play and preservice teachers’ attitudes tend to be moving away from valuing active play as part of educational experiences” (Bennett et al., 1997; Sandberg &
Samuelsson, 2003; Sherwood & Reifel, 2013, p. 4). This is a call for more professional development for all teachers, which will encourage a rethinking of recess with empirical evidence in mind when making decisions about the use of recess deprivation for discipline and academic reasons.

**Research Question 4.** The fourth research question examined to what extent do middle school teachers, use recess deprivation as a form of discipline for behavior or academic issues at the middle school level. Results indicated that there is no association between grade level and the use of recess deprivation as a form of discipline for behavior or academic issues at the middle school level. While there is no association between grade level and the use of recess deprivation for behavioral or academic reasons, recess is still being taken away from middle school students. While there was no association between grade level and recess deprivation for behavioral or academic reasons it was witnessed by some focus group members. As stated by one teacher, “I have seen where people have taken recess away for disciplinary reasons, no doubt.”

The work of Pellegrini and Bohn (2005) noted that students are faced with an increase of academic rigor, which could result in increase of academic remediation. Teachers in the focus group did discuss that recess should be removed from a student’s schedule if they pose a safety issue to themselves and others. This mirrors the 2010 Gallup survey, noted in Ramstetter and Fink (2019) stating that “77 percent of principals or other building administrators said that some or all of their teachers used withholding of recess as punishment” (p. 34). Unfortunately, these results are the opposite of what theory and empirical evidence support, which is that recess should not be removed from a middle level student’s day.
**Research Question 5.** The last research question identified to what extent middle school teachers are knowledgeable of state policies, organizations’ and associations’ position papers on the benefits of recess. Data gleaned that in this case study, middle school teachers (63.9%) had limited awareness of any organization or associations that published information about the benefits of recess even though the following organizations and associations represents pro-recess sentiments:

- National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education, National Associations of Elementary Principals,
- American Academy of Pediatrics, Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE), National Association for Education of young Children (NAEYC),
- National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE), National Parent Teacher Association, American Heart Association,
- American Diabetes Association, American Stoke Association,
- American Federation of Teachers and National Education Association.

Ninety-eight percent of the middle school teachers in this case study did not have any awareness of recent state policies that limited or removed a school’s ability to withhold recess. Since more states are moving toward making policies about recess, discipline and academic issues must be achieved by other methods. For example, during the focus group one teacher said, “I think I’ve learned a lot more about recess just from this little round table.” Because of this research teachers’ knowledge changed about recess.

**Limitations of the Study**

Two limitations for this study was sample size and familiarity to the research site. The sample size researched for this study was small, offering a limited scope of
reference. A single site study precludes any generalization of the findings, but the researcher hoped to indicate the importance of recess in the overall well-being of a middle school student. Studying a larger population of teachers might indicate a need for a state or national change in recess policies. The researcher’s familiarity with the site created an additional limitation. The researcher is a teacher in the district where the study took place with a passion for allowing students to participate in recess. However, being employed by the school district allowed the researcher to share and provide professional development in areas that were noted within the research, such as the empirical evidence surrounding the benefits of recess.

**Quantitative limitations.** One possible threat to statistical validity was low statistical power, as described by Kirk (1982). The researcher obtained 61 participants from one middle school. A recommendation for further research would be examine other middle school teachers in different districts to provide a variety of respondents, so that a generalization about the population can occur. However, it is important to note that the researcher received more than 76% of the population from a suburban middle school outside of a major metropolitan city.

An internal threat to validity was testing, as described by Kirk (1982). Since the sample group was exposed to questions about recess for a mini-study, familiarity to the topic must be considered. Also, participants may be inclined to provide socially acceptable answers or answers that they feel that that researcher is looking for, which could affect the dependent variable. In this case that would be a teachers’ perspective of recess. A threat to external validity was interaction of history and treatment, as defined by Kirk (1982). The researcher sent a previous survey via email to the middle school
teaching staff for a mini study. This event could have influenced a volunteer’s answers and increase the potential of answering differently.

**Qualitative limitations.** As explained by Paul Galdas (2017), one threat to trustworthiness is bias. Galdas (2017) defines bias according to (Polit & Beck, 2014) “bias commonly understood … as a distortion in the results of a study” (p. 1). The researcher used a semi-structured focus group to gain additional insight into middle school teachers’ perspectives, practices and knowledge of recess. Some may argue that probing questions may indicate bias. However, Galdas (2017) explains that the researcher is an indispensable part of the procedure to complete research. Instead Galdas (2017) argues “the concern instead should be whether the researcher has been transparent and reflective” (p. 2). The researcher provided participants with clear and precise procedures for the semi-structured focus group discussion. Also, the researcher did not indicate any personal reason for this research, which could have created bias for interpretation of data.

**Recommendations for Future Practice**

While the results of the study may lead to changes in the school district where research took place, there are ongoing issues surrounding recess policies across the United States. Since each state establishes their own recess policies, local discretion fosters the problem is a problem of consistency across the United States the middle school. National and state policy makers should create a universal law about the need for recess to be preserved in the schools. Specific language about recess policies should include time, requirements, suggestions for appropriate resources, supervision instructions, and articulated statement that recess should not be used for discipline or academic reasons. Recess time should be preserved for all students. While it may take
time to achieve a universal policy or law pertaining to recess across the United States. Some states are moving in the right direction already.

Individual school districts can begin to rethink their own policies of recess. As outlined by Ramstetter, C. L., & Fink, D. B. (2019) schools can begin to examine their individual policies pertaining to recess. Since teachers are using recess deprivation for discipline or academic reasons it is paramount that teachers be included in rethinking recess polices at the middle school. “Connecting recess with these whole school initiatives requires teachers to be included in preparation and adoption” (Ramstetter & Fink, 2019, p. 36) This idea is consistent with the work of change theorist Michael Fullan (2006).

Fullan (2006) states, “As always the route to achieving such a mass is not to wait for it to happen but to be among those promoting its use, even if those around us seem disinterested or against it” (p. 14). If individual schools are waiting for national and state polices to be implemented, they should not be. As noted by Fullan (2006), an individual must include a moral purpose in order to encourage change: “if teachers are going to help students to develop the skills and competencies of knowledge-creation, teachers need experience themselves in building professional knowledge” (p. 4). In order to achieve change within the district, professional development about recess must take place using empirical data to substantiate change. Once a culture shift has occurred, then policies should be created to reflect this shared vision incorporating all stake holders in the process, administrators, teachers, and students.
**Recommendation for Future Research**

This dissertation provides implications for future research on the topic of recess. While recess has not been discussed extensively at the middle school level, future studies might include how recess provides learning opportunities even in the middle grades. Also, future researchers should focus attention on structure, efficacy and role of recess at the middle school level. Such data collection should include interviews with school leaders and observations of recess practices all leading to discover an effective research model of recess.

In addition, researchers should further explore recess with an examination of whether the socioeconomic status (SES) of the school district affects middle school teachers’ perceptions of the benefits of recess. School districts with lower SES profiles may not have the resources to provide an adequate, enjoyable, and safe opportunity for middle school students to enjoy unstructured time. In contrast, school district with higher SES may have the resources to provide full access to recess to allow for an enjoyable and safe unstructured experience at the middle school level.

A further suggestion would be to explore how teachers perceive the state mandated policies that eliminate the denial of recess for disciplinary reasons. Ten states prohibit withholding physical activity including recess as a disciplinary measure from students (National Association of Sport and Physical Education, 2012). A quantitative survey might be useful in gaining a great variety of states to provide more reliability and validity to the findings.
Conclusion

Recess is a benefit to all students. It is time to reconceive recess as an important part of a middle school student’s day that will assist in development of educating the whole child. While the country continues to place higher academic demands on students, coupled with an increase of testing, students rarely have the time to be kids. An increase of structured play at the middle school level, such as organized sports teams, students are rarely seen gathering for a “pick up” game at a local playground. However, during recess time, this is an action that can be seen and encouraged by teachers and administrators. Teachers play an important role in shaping the school culture. While many teachers recognize that recess is beneficial in many areas, recess deprivation is still used for behavioral and academic reasons. These beliefs were not affected by age, gender, level of education, grade level taught, and child dependent responsibilities affect a teacher’s view of recess. Unfortunately, teachers state that they have not received professional development about recess, and they do not have knowledge of the position papers or statements made by scholars. They also do not know of the changes to state policies on the availability of recess, which may potentially change their perspective and practices.

Perhaps middle school teachers should observe what happens at recess on any given day. This will provide insight to the benefits of recess. It will also be a unique opportunity to witness how students appreciate and need their unstructured free time. The researcher noted that approximately 70% of seventh graders went outside on the day she observed them. These students played soccer, basketball, and tag. They were talking to one another, laughing and running around. A few students even approached the researcher and asked what she was doing out at recess and invited her to play soccer with
them. The researcher declined but promised that on the next day she would come out and play when she was dressed more appropriately for soccer. Ten percent of the students went to the library. In the library some read, some played with the library’s creation station, and others worked on a community puzzle. Approximately one percent of the seventh-grade students went to the guidance office and sat at the table and chairs. Some just went to sit and relax in a quiet place. Others waited to speak with a guidance counselor. At the sound of the bell to go to their next class, students continued to talk, laugh and smile as they left their chosen place. As they walked down the hall, it was evident that their time spent doing what they wanted to do at that moment was exactly what they needed, an unstructured break from their day. Recess should be preserved and encouraged for the next generation of middle school students.

**Epilogue**

Recess should be preserved to allow middle school students to have a balance between academic growth and developmental needs. While teachers are extremely aware of the need to prepare students for high stakes testing, and to provide academic rigor within their classrooms, this research has shown that teachers are also aware of the benefits of recess even without having formal training or general awareness to national, state and associations’ views on the topic of recess. With formal training and an increased awareness of new guidelines and position papers related to recess, teachers can begin to recognize the need for unstructured free time and change policies within their own classrooms that relate to recess deprivation.

The researcher has found new learning and insight about the topic of recess. While the researcher can draw upon her own previous experiences with recess it was not
until her own children were denied the right to attend recess that this topic became a passion. An inquiry through empirical studies began and quickly it became evident that recess has many benefits, which needed to be articulated to other middle school teachers. As promised to the Superintendent of Schools, the researcher provided results of the study and was given the opportunity to teach the middle school faculty about the importance of recess. The researcher noticed that providing research-based reasons for change that stressed the importance of unstructured free time it encouraged reform to occur at the middle school where this study took place.

Recently, a new recreation room was created for students to enjoy some unstructured time during the school day. The recreation room is located above the gymnasium and spans the length of the cafeteria. It can be utilized by students during their lunch/recess time. Students can choose the recreation room as one option for their unstructured free time. Also, teachers can sign up for the recreation room throughout the day to bring their individual classes when they want to utilize the space. The space is open but there are creation stations that can be moved around the room. Chairs and tables can be pushed together to make smaller or larger spaces for table or floor activities. Some of the activities in the recreation room are three arcade basketball games, a Lego wall, many different board games, a giant Connect Four game, a marble magnetic maze, knock hockey, pool tables, corn hole, and a class set of yoga mats for meditation. Already, teachers have utilized this time as a reward for work completed in class, a break after testing, and an opportunity to teach some mindfulness activities like mediation.

Due to this research study’s results, the middle school made a change that demonstrates a new appreciation for the importance of recess and unstructured free time
in middle school students’ day. As teachers need and appreciate their unstructured free
time, the same is true for students of all ages.
Appendix A
Letter to Timothy Eagen

Dr. Timothy Eagen, Ed. D
Superintendent of Schools
Kings Park Central School District
100 Lawrence Road
Kings Park, New York 11754

Dear Dr. Eagen,

I am writing to request permission to conduct a study regarding teachers’ perceptions of recess at the middle school level. This study is in partial fulfillment of my doctoral degree in Educational Administration and Supervision through St. John’s University. In light of the whole child, recess is an important topic to examine. Recess, unstructured free time, may be an avenue to explore with developing our ‘whole child’ philosophy here in Kings Park.

In surveying the William T. Rogers teachers and staff (guidance counselors, social worker and school psychologist), I hope to gain insight into the perception of recess. The survey I plan to administer follows a four-point Likert Scale model and encompasses four main questions with several sub-components. With your permission, this survey will be administered within the next several months via email to the William T. Rogers faculty.

My hopes are that the findings of the survey, coupled with focus-group questions, will offer our middle school building insight into the their perceptions of recess and provide time to explore empirical evidence that unstructured free time for middle school students during the school day provides social, emotional, cognitive, and physical benefits.

I look forward to hearing from you. I need to have your permission in writing to continue with my dissertation study. Please confirm with me by either writing a letter or email stating your permission. Thank you for your time in this matter.

Respectfully,

Suzanne Servidio
Appendix B
E-mail From Timothy Eagen

RE: Dissertation Letter
Eagen, Timothy
Sent: Thursday, February 28, 2019 8:18 AM
To: Servidio, Suzanne Cc: Moreno, Lauren

Hi Mrs. Servidio.

Please let this email response serve as my approval for you to continue with this study in the Kings Park Central School District. My only request is that you share what you learn with me and your school when you are done. I look forward to learning from you!

Good luck.

Timothy T. Eagen, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Kings Park Central School District
180 Lawrence Road
Kings Park, NY 11754
(631)269-3310

From: Servidio, Suzanne
Sent: Wednesday, February 27, 2019 12:15 PM
To: Eagen, Timothy
Subject: Dissertation Letter

Hello Dr. Eagen!

I have attached my letter requesting permission to further my dissertation study. Thank you so much for your support in this endeavor. Looking forward to hearing from you.

Thank you,

Suzanne Servidio
Kings Park CSD
Social Studies
Lead Teacher
Appendix C
Letter of Consent

**Researcher:** Suzanne L. Servidio

**Institution:** St. John’s University

**Title:** Focus Group Teachers

**Introduction:**
As a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership program at St. John’s University, I am conducting a dissertation study on middle school teachers - specifically the perspectives, practices and knowledge of recess at the middle school level. As part of this study, I have decided to choose a range of participants who are associated with middle level students and the recess program in which they participate; accordingly, your contribution is an essential element in my study.

**Procedure:**
For this study, I will be asking you questions that will be centered on your perspectives, practices and knowledge about the middle level. This process will include one obligation, which will take place at a mutually agreed upon location for participation in a focus group for approximately 45 minutes. With your permission, the focus group will be recorded digitally. Upon request, you may review these recordings, and at any time call for destruction of your portion of the interview.

**Possible risks or benefits:**
Participation in this study is strictly voluntary and, at any time, you may withdraw as a participant. This study involves no risk on your part; however, time is a valuable commodity and your participation will involve approximately 45 minutes of your time. Benefits from your participation include personal reflection upon middle school practices and knowledge of their teachers in regard to recess, so as to more successfully meet the social, emotional physical and academic needs of middle level students. Please keep in mind that you are an integral part of this study, so do not hesitate to ask questions about the study. In addition, once the research is complete, findings will be shared upon your request.

**Confidentiality:**
Please be assured that your participation in this singular, case study will be kept confidential; neither your name nor personal information provided will be disclosed. Consent forms and focus group data will be kept separate so that there is no way to link your name with any of the information you provide. Should you have any questions in regard to this study, I can be reached via email at suzanne.servidio17@my.stjohns.edu. In addition, my dissertation chair Dr. Anthony Annunziato, can be reached at 718-990-7781.
____ I agree to participate in the dissertation study described above.
____ I have received a copy of this consent form.

____________________________________       ______________________
Signature of Participant                  Date

____________________________________       ______________________
Signature of Researcher                   Date

Modified and used with permission by Dr. Gerald Cozine.
Appendix D
Focus Group Interview Protocol—Teachers

Title: Focus Group Interview Protocol – Teachers

Thank you for taking the time to sit down with me today. We should be spending about 45 minutes together having a discussion about being a middle school teacher, middle school students, and the practices and knowledge of recess at the middle school level. As explained in the letter of consent that you signed, if at any time you would like to stop this interview or withdraw from this study, please just let me know. As a reminder, with your permission, I will be using a digital, recording device (iPad) for today’s interview.

I want to go over some ground rules for today’s discussion.

- I hope that we can have this conversation in a polite and orderly fashion.
- Please remember that we are all individuals with many different perspectives and opinions, and all of these are important to my study. Therefore, it is important that we listen to and respect each other.
- Your identities will be kept confidential, and as such, it is important that the conversation we have here today will not be shared outside of the group.
- Some of my questions will be open to all, so please feel free to jump in with responses.
- At other times, I will ask you each to respond to a question before opening it up to the group.

Before we begin, do you have any questions for me?

1. I want to thank you all for joining me today. Perhaps you can take a minute or two to introduce yourself and tell the other members your age bracket, level of education, years taught at the middle school level, grade you have the most contact with middle school students, approximately how many middle school students you have contact with within the school year, and your child dependent status.

2. That’s great! Here’s a question for the group, what makes a middle school student unique?

3. Tell me about what you know about recess at your school? Who is involved? When does it happen?

4. In your professional preparation either before or after becoming a teacher have you been exposed to ideas about the purposes, benefits or concerns about recess?

5. What do you see as the benefits of recess at the middle school level?
6. Excellent! What are some of the things that concern you about middle level recess?

7. In your professional preparation either before or after becoming a teacher have you been exposed to ideas about recess as an academic tool? A disciplinary tool?

8. Some schools use recess as a carrot – how do you feel about that? Should students lose their recess as a consequence for behavioral issues? Should students lose their recess as a consequence for academic issues? Should students lose their recess for extra help?

9. Have you ever kept a student from recess because of his or her behavior? Why? Did it help prevent the behavior from happening again?

10. Have you ever kept a student from recess for missing an assignment for class? Why? Did it stop or help the student from missing an assignment again?

11. Have you ever kept a student from recess for extra help? Why?

12. If you have not been exposed to any professional preparation, how did you come to create your perspective about recess?

13. Do you feel that your age bracket, level of education, years taught at the middle school level, grade you have the most contact with middle school students, approximately how many middle school students you have contact with within the school year, and your child dependent status influence your perspectives on recess?

14. We’ve touched upon a lot about recess at the middle level. Is there a component of recess we haven’t talked about that you’d like to add to help me better understand your perspective?

Thank you so much for being part of this study – please remember that you are an essential component of this study, and should feel free to ask any questions that you may have.

Modified and used with permission by Dr. Gerald Cozine.
Appendix E

Teachers’ Perspectives of Recess at the Middle School Level Survey Introduction

Hello! My name is Suzanne Servidio. I am a graduate student at St. John's University, working on my dissertation for research. I am asking you to fill out a survey about recess.

This survey is being distributed to middle school teachers. Studies about recess in recent years have rarely included the perspectives of teachers, especially at the middle school level. I am interested in the views of teachers, and especially why recess is withheld from students under certain circumstances. The working title of this study is: "Teachers' Perspectives of Recess at the Middle School Level: A Case Study."

Responding to this survey is entirely voluntary. My hope is that you would take 5 to 10 minutes to complete the survey so that my findings will include your perspectives and experiences. This study has the potential to benefit students, teachers, school administrators, and the general public by deepening our understanding of the role that recess (and withholding of recess) plays within the day-to-day activities of a middle school classroom.

The survey is anonymous and there are no risks involved in completing it. By answering any or all of the questions, you will be granting consent to have your answers become part of my research findings.

Thanks in advance for your time and thoughts. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

Suzanne Servidio
suzanne.servidio17@my.stjohns.edu

Used with permission by Dale Borman Fink, PhD, Professor, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, and Catherine L. Ramstetter, PhD, CHES School Health Consultant, Successful Healthy Children.
Appendix F
Teachers’ Perspectives of Recess at the Middle School Level Survey Questions

1. Identify your age bracket.
   21-30
   31-40
   41-50
   51-60
   61 and older

2. Identify your gender.
   Female
   Male
   Prefer not to say

3. Identify your level of education.
   Bachelors
   Masters
   Post Masters
   Doctorate

4. Identify the number of years taught at the middle school level.
   1-10 years
   11-20 years
   21 or more years

5. In which grade do you have the most contact with middle school students?
   6th grade
   7th grade
   8th grade

6. Identify your child dependent status.
   No children
   One or more children

7. In what ways do you think recess benefits middle school students?
   Minimal or no benefits
   Promotes social development
   Promotes overall health and wellness
   Promotes students' autonomy or self-direction
   Provides learning experiences related to the general curriculum

8. Please check off any part of your professional preparation either before or after becoming a teacher where you were or have been exposed to ideas about the purposes or benefits of recess.
   In a college course
Conversations with supervising practitioners
In-service meetings, workshops or conferences
Faculty meetings
Not a topic of discussion

9. Please check off any part of your professional preparation either before or after becoming a teacher where you were or have been exposed to ideas about withholding recess as a consequence for students' misbehavior or academic shortcomings, etc.
   - In a college course
   - Conversations with supervising practitioners
   - In-service meetings, workshops or conferences
   - Faculty meetings
   - Not a topic of discussion

10. Since the current academic year began, have you withheld all or part of a recess period from at least one student, individually, which was not as part of a class-wide loss of recess?
    - Yes
    - No

11. Related to the previous question, what was the reason you withheld all or part of a recess period from that individual student?
    - I have not withheld recess.
    - Student did not use class time to complete academic work, so I had to use all or part of recess time to do so.
    - Student did not complete homework, so I had to use all or part of recess to complete it.
    - Student's words or actions violated behavioral expectations.
    - Student's attendance issues affecting academics.

12. When you withheld a student's recess time during the current year, what were your expectations for how s/he was to spend the missed portion of the recess period?
    - I have not withheld recess.
    - Student was to attend to academic tasks.
    - Student could read, draw, or engage in other tasks of her/his choice.
    - Student was to engage in a task designed as a consequence, for example, write about misconduct or write an apology.
    - Student was restricted from any activity.

13. Which of the following do you believe to be true based on observations of your students during the current academic year?
    - I have not withheld recess.
Among one or more students who lost all or part of some recess, this consequence has led to improved outcomes (behavioral or academic).

Among one or more students who lost all or part of some recess, this consequence has NOT led to improved outcomes (behavioral or academic).

The fear of losing recess has been an effective motivator for some students even though they have never had their own recess withheld.

The fear of losing recess, or seeing their peers lose recess, has affected some students in ways that seem counter-productive.

14. Listed below are four national organizations that have adopted position papers emphasizing the importance of recess and identifying its benefits to students. If you were aware, PRIOR to participating in this survey, that any of these organizations or associations had issued a paper promoting recess, please check off the organization or association.

I am not aware of any of the listed organizations or associations.

American Academy of Pediatrics
National Association for Sport and Physical Education
National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education
National Association for the Education of Young Children

15. Some states have adopted policies limiting the withholding of recess. Check off any of these that you were aware of prior to taking this survey.

I am not aware of any of these state adopted policies.

North Carolina (State Board of Education Policy Manual, 2005). "Structured/unstructured recess shall not be taken away from students as a form of punishment."

Vermont (Nutrition and Fitness Guidelines, 2005). "Recess...shall not be taken away as a form of discipline unless...directly related to a student's behavior during recess."

Michigan (State Board of Education, Model Policy on Quality Physical Education and Physical Activity in Schools, 2012). "Recess may not be denied or used for disciplinary reasons, or to make up lessons or class. All teachers should be trained in how to integrate physical activity in their classrooms."

Connecticut (Proposed Connecticut General Assembly H.B. No. 6202). Proposed a bill "to increase that state’s time commitment to 50 minutes of undirected play in order to develop children's social skills, physical development, and emotional well-being."

Used with permission by Dale Borman Fink, PhD, Professor, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, and Catherine L. Ramstetter, PhD, CHES School Health Consultant, Successful Healthy Children.
Appendix G
E-mail from Hunter Railey

From: Hunter Railey [mailto:hrailey@ecs.org]
Sent: Friday, October 13, 2017 1:02 PM
To: Servidio, Suzanne
Subject: RE: Recess

Ms. Servidio,

Thank you for reaching out.

The most recent update I was able to find on recess policies is an ECS blog from earlier this year. According to our analysis, 13 states have a statewide policy for physical activity at school and at least four states have proposed legislation in the past several years. We are not aware of a statewide recess policy in New York, however, the state department of education encourages at least 20 minutes of supervised recess a day for elementary school students.

I hope you find this information helpful. If you are interested in looking at recent state legislation in this area, please refer to our state policy tracking database for current updates. Please let me know if you have additional questions or require further assistance.

Thanks,

Hunter Railey
Policy Researcher, K-12 Institute
Education Commission of the States
303.299.3698 lhrailey@ecs.org
Twitter @edcommission
Facebook edcommission

From: Servidio, Suzanne [mailto:servidios@kpcsd.org]
Sent: Thursday, October 12, 2017 9:28 AM
To: Hunter Railey <hrailey@ecs.org>
Subject: Recess

Hi

I saw your article in response to different states’ recess policies. I was wondering if there is an updated number of schools that have changed policies toward recess and more specifically what is New York’s policy?

Thank you,

Suzanne Servidio
William T. Rogers Middle School
Kings Park, New York
Lead Teacher Social Studies
631-269-3369
Appendix H
E-mail from Catherine Ramstetter

From: Catherine Ramstetter <catherine.ramstetter@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, February 8, 2019 5:49:48 PM
To: Suzanne L. Servidio
Cc: Dale Fink
Subject: Re: Recess Materials

Hi Suzanne,

I’m glad we were able to talk more about your study on Wednesday. As I told you, this research was begun by Dale, and I was fortunate he found me to work with him—but only after he’d designed the study and was about mid-way through data collection/observations. His research was/is, as far as I know, the only study of its kind that surveyed and interviewed teachers, interviewed students and included direct observations in the classrooms, the cafeterias and at recess. I was able to add to his work by surveying Ohio teachers, and doing some informal interviews for my own understanding (which are not part of our data analysis).

Attached here are the surveys Dale used (remember, he used paper-pencil) and I used (SurveyMonkey). Both surveys have been approved by the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts; they have been validated on face and content. Please reference them in this way:

Used with permission by Dale Borman Fink, PhD, Associate Professor, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, and Catherine L. Ramstetter, PhD, CHES, School Health Consultant, Successful Healthy Children.

(If you have specific citation requirements, please contact us for approval of the content.)

Also attached are 3 files with our published or presented work from our research together: 1) a presentation for American School Health Association (2017); 2) the American Educator article (which you referenced) and 3) an article from the November 2018 issue of Journal of School Health. I also include a piece from the American Educator that was penned by my colleague in the American Academy of Pediatrics, from 2017.

Finally, we are both interested in what you find with your research with middle school teachers. The environment in which you are conducting the research is also different than our sites in that the district is smaller, and more affluent. Do keep us posted! and feel free to reach out with further questions along your dissertation journey.

PJLD,
Cathy

CAUTION - External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Catherine L. Ramstetter, PhD, CHES
School Health Consultant, Successful Healthy Children
513-515-8402
catherine.ramstetter@gmail.com
DrR@SuccessfulHealthyChildren.org
www.SuccessfulHealthyChildren.org

PJLD—in my brother’s memory (Peter James Louis Deitschel) to remind us all to follow my brother’s example and Practice Joyful Living Daily
Appendix I
Permission for Interview Protocol Instrument

From: COZINE, GERALD [GCOZINE@GREATNECK.K12.NY.US]
Sent: Wednesday, September 26, 2018 1:11 PM
To: Servidio, Suzanne
Subject: RE: Recess Survey

Suzanne – Of course. Whatever you need. BTW – my nieces and nephews went through KP schools – the Nortons.

Please let me know how I can help.

Jerry

From: Servidio, Suzanne [mailto:servidios@kpcsd.org]
Sent: Wednesday, September 26, 2018 1:10 PM
To: COZINE, GERALD
Subject: Recess Survey

Hello!

My name is Suzanne Servidio and I am doctoral student at St. John's University in New York. I am interested in studying teacher's perceptions of recess at the middle school level. I came across your work and was wondering if I could use part of your survey to further study the topic of recess.

Thank you,
Suzanne Servidio

Thank you,

Suzanne Servidio
William T. Rogers Middle School
Kings Park, New York
Lead Teacher Social Studies
631-269-3369
Appendix J
Teacher Thank You

Hello Kings Park Middle School Teachers,

Thank you for taking your time to complete my survey on recess. Enjoy a sweet kiss from me and know that you helped a colleague out today.

If you have not taken the survey for me yet, please consider doing so. Your input is essential to the study. The link is in your email and it takes less than five minutes.

Thanks,
Suzanne Servidio
Appendix K
IRB Approval Letter

Federal Wide Assurance: FWA00009066

Dec 2, 2019 2:25 PM EST

Suzanne Servidio
Ed Admin & Instruct Leadership

Re: Expedited Review - Initial - IRB-FY2020-211 Teachers' Perspectives, Practices and Knowledge of Recess at the Middle School Level: A Mixed Method, Singular, Case Study

Dear Suzanne Servidio:

The St John's University Institutional Review Board has rendered the decision below for Teachers' Perspectives, Practices and Knowledge of Recess at the Middle School Level: A Mixed Method, Singular, Case Study. The approval is effective from December 2, 2019 through November 30, 2020

Decision: Approved

PLEASE NOTE: If you have collected any data prior to this approval date, the data needs to be discarded.

Selected Category: 7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Sincerely,

Raymond DiGiuseppe, PhD, ABPP
Chair, Institutional Review Board
Professor of Psychology

Marie Nitopi, Ed.D.
IRB Coordinator
References


Guarjardo, E. M. (2018, August 23). We still can’t afford to lose recess. ASCD.org.


Wiebelhaus, S. E., & Hanson, M. F. (2016). Effects of classroom-based physical activities on off-task behaviors and attention: Kindergarten case study. *The Qualitative Report, 21*(8), 1380-1393.


Vita

Name
Suzanne L. Servidio

Certifications
School District Administrator
(Permanent)
Secondary Education (Permanent)

Education
Post Masters Certificate in School District Administration
Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, New York, December, 2003

Masters of Arts in Liberal Studies
Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, New York, August, 2001

Bachelor of Arts in Education
Plattsburgh University, Plattsburgh, New York, May, 1999

Awards
Long Island Council for Social Studies
Outstanding Middle/High School Social Studies Teacher, 2013

New York State Council for the Social Studies
Outstanding Middle School Social Studies Teacher, 2013-2014