

Part 2

Argument

Directions: Closely read each of the *four* texts provided on pages 11 through 17 and write a source-based argument on the topic below. You may use the margins to take notes as you read and scrap paper to plan your response. Write your argument beginning on page 1 of your essay booklet.

Topic: Should school recess be structured play?

Your Task: Carefully read each of the *four* texts provided. Then, using evidence from at least *three* of the texts, write a well-developed argument regarding whether or not school recess should be structured play. Clearly establish your claim, distinguish your claim from alternate or opposing claims, and use specific, relevant, and sufficient evidence from at least *three* of the texts to develop your argument. Do *not* simply summarize each text.

Guidelines:

Be sure to:

- Establish your claim regarding whether or not school recess should be structured play
- Distinguish your claim from alternate or opposing claims
- Use specific, relevant, and sufficient evidence from at least *three* of the texts to develop your argument
- Identify each source that you reference by text number and line number(s) or graphic (for example: Text 1, line 4 or Text 2, graphic)
- Organize your ideas in a cohesive and coherent manner
- Maintain a formal style of writing
- Follow the conventions of standard written English

Texts:

Text 1 – The Crucial Role of Recess in School

Text 2 – Why Children Need More Unstructured Play

Text 3 – Study Weighs Benefits of Organizing Recess

Text 4 – Forget Goofing Around: Recess Has a New Boss

Text 1

The Crucial Role of Recess in School

...Structured recess is a recess based on structured play, during which games and physical activities are taught and led by a trained adult (teachers, school staff, or volunteers). Proponents¹ for structured recess note that children often need help in developing games and require suggestions and encouragement to participate in physical activities. Recently, policy makers and funding organizations have called for more opportunities for daily activity as a means to address childhood obesity. These statements have strengthened the argument to maintain or reinstate recess as an integral component of the school day. Although this new dimension to the recess debate has increased attention on its role, it also has created tension. Some have promoted recess time as a solution for increasing children's physical activity and combating obesity. If recess assumes such a role, then, like physical education, it will need to be planned and directed to ensure that all children are participating in moderately vigorous physical activity. Pediatric health care providers, parents, and school officials should be cognizant,² however, that in designing a structured recess, they will sacrifice the notion of recess as an unstructured but supervised break that belongs to the child; that is, a time for the child to make a personal choice between sedentary, physical, creative, or social options. However, there are many cited benefits of structured recess to consider, including:

- Older elementary children may benefit from game instruction and encouragement for total class inclusion.
- Children can be coached to develop interpersonal skills for appropriate conflict resolution.
- More children can actively participate in regular activity, irrespective of skill level.
- Anecdotally,³ teachers have reported improved behavior and attention in the classroom after vigorous structured recess.

To be effective, structured recess requires that school personnel (or volunteers) receive adequate training so that they are able to address and encourage the diverse needs of all students. One aspect of supervision should be to facilitate social relationships among children by encouraging inclusiveness in games. A problem arises when the structured activities of recess are promoted as a replacement for the child's physical education requirement. The replacement of physical education by recess threatens students' instruction in and acquisition of new motor skills, exploration of sports and rules, and a concept of lifelong physical fitness.

There are ways to encourage a physically active recess without necessarily adding structured, planned, adult-led games, such as offering attractive, safe playground equipment to stimulate free play; establishing games/boundaries painted on the playground; or instructing children in games, such as four square or hop-scotch. These types of activities can range from fully structured (with the adult directing and requiring participation) to partly unstructured (with adults providing supervision and initial instruction) to fully unstructured (supervision and social guidance). In structured, partly structured, or unstructured environments, activity levels vary widely on the basis of school policy, equipment provided, encouragement, age group, gender, and race. Consequently, the potential benefits of

¹proponents — those who support

²cognizant — aware

³anecdotally — based on casual observation

40 mandatory participation of all children in a purely structured recess must be weighed against the potential social and emotional trade-off of limiting acquisition of important developmental skills. Whichever style is chosen, recess should be viewed as a supplement to motor skill acquisition in physical education class. . . .

—Council on School Health
excerpted from “The Crucial Role of Recess in School,” December 31, 2012
<http://pediatrics.aapublications.org/>

Text 2

Why Children Need More Unstructured Play

The nature of an average child's free time has changed. For the past 25 years kids have been spending decreasing amounts of time outdoors. The time that our kids do spend outdoors is frequently a part of an organized sports activity. Other activities taking up our children's time include indoor lessons and organized events such as music, art and dance lessons. Another big indoor activity, taking up to 7.5 hours a day of our children's time according to a Kaiser Family Foundation study, is electronic entertainment. Of course some of these activities bring joy and fulfillment to our kids, but, in return, time for unstructured play has decreased.

Unstructured play is that set of activities that children create on their own without adult guidance. Children naturally, when left to their own devices, will take initiative and create activities and stories in the world around them. Sometimes, especially with children past the toddler stage, the most creative play takes place outside of direct adult supervision. Unstructured free play can happen in many different environments, however, the outdoors may provide more opportunities for free play due to the many movable parts, such as sticks, dirt, leaves and rocks which lend themselves to exploration and creation.

Some parents find it challenging to provide unstructured play time for their kids. Letting our kids play without constant supervision, especially outside, can be even more difficult. It feels hard to balance reasonable concern, over-vigilance, and the desire to let our kids experience freedom and learn from their own mistakes and experiences. ...

Why might we need to loosen up and get over some of our fears in order to get our kids outdoor unstructured play time? In the January 2005 *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, Burdette and Whitaker wrote on the importance of free play. They argue that free play promotes intellectual and cognitive growth, emotional intelligence, and benefits social interactions. They describe how play involves problem solving which is one of the highest executive functions. ["Children plan, organize, sequence, and make decisions,"] they explain. In addition, play requires attention to the game and, especially in the case of very young children, frequent physical activity. Unstructured play frequently comes from or results in exposure to the outdoors. Surveys of parents and teachers report that children's focus and attention are improved after outdoor physical activity and free play and some small studies suggest that time spent outdoors improves focus in children with ADHD [Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder].

Socialization and emotional intelligence benefit through shared interactions and physical movement that take place during play. Children must work together to decide which game to play, what agreeable rules are, and how to manage scenarios that invariably involve their differing perspectives. This "work" builds the social qualities that we all wish for our children: empathy, self-awareness, self-regulation, and flexibility. Emotional development is promoted along with physical health when people spend time moving. In adults and older children physical activity has been well documented to decrease stress, anxiety, and depression, and to improve overall mood. Though the research is sparse in younger children, it seems likely that our youngest children benefit as well. Free play in toddlers and young children most frequently involves spurts of gross motor activity over a period of time with multiple episodes of rest in between. Most children are smiling and laughing when they engage in play, and it is reasonable to assume that their mood is improved during and after play. ...

—Avril Swan, MD

excerpted and adapted from "Why Children Need More Unstructured Play"
www.kevinmd.com, July 21, 2011

Text 3

Study Weighs Benefits of Organizing Recess

While an overwhelming number of elementary school principals believe in the power of recess to improve academic achievement and make students more focused in class, most discipline-related problems happen at school when kids cut loose at recess and lunch, according to surveys.

5 One of the solutions, according to a study released this week [2012] by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: more, and well-trained, staff on the playground.

The study examines an approach to creating more-structured recess time that is provided by Playworks, based in Oakland, Calif. It finds that the nonprofit organization’s program can smooth the transition between recess and class time—giving teachers more time to spend on instruction—and can cut back on bullying in the schoolyard. Teachers in participating schools
10 also reported that their students felt safer and more included at recess, compared with those at schools without the program. . . .

The most significant finding shows students who participate in a Playworks-structured recess transition from that to schoolwork more quickly than students in traditional recess,
15 said Susanne James-Burdumy, an associate director of research at Mathematica Policy Research.

“I think it is an exciting set of findings,” Ms. James-Burdumy said. “This is one area where Playworks is aiming to have an impact: specifically trying to improve students’ ability to focus on class activities.”

20 The study found that, on average, teachers at participating schools needed about 2.5 fewer minutes of transition time between recess and learning time—a difference that researchers termed statistically significant. Over the course of a school year, that can add up to about a day of class time.

Scaling Up

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, also based in Princeton, has been funding
25 Playworks since 2005. It helped the program expand from a few schools in Oakland to more than 300 schools in 23 cities, said Nancy Barrand, the foundation’s senior adviser for program development. The goal is to expand into 27 cities and 750 schools.

“We’re using a process of scaling where we’ve identified a successful, evidence-based model,” Ms. Barrand said. Playworks “is a pretty common-sense approach. It’s really about
30 the school environment and how you create a healthy school environment for the children,” she continued. “If children are healthy and happy, they learn better.”

Playworks founder and chief executive officer, Jill Violet, said the idea came from a frustrated principal 15 years ago. The principal had been dealing with the same three students daily because of scuffles and mischief at recess that spilled over into their classes.

35 Ms. Violet wondered whether creating a little structure at recess could quell some of those ongoing woes. She recalled her own days as a child when a municipal parks and recreation worker named Clarence made sure she—one of the few girls there—was included in the games at a District of Columbia park.

“I wanted to make sure every kid had a Clarence,” she said. . . .

40 The coaches map the area where students spend recess, setting boundaries for different activities, such as kickball. They help children pick teams using random measures, such as students’ birth months, to circumvent emotionally scarring episodes of being chosen based on skill or popularity. If conflicts arise, coaches teach simple ways to settle disputes and preempt some quibbles by teaching games including rock-paper-scissors.

45 Forty percent of the surveyed teachers said students used the rock-paper-scissors game to resolve conflicts or make decisions when they were back in class.

Coaches get involved in the activities, which “makes it possible for kids who don’t see themselves as super-sporty to get into the games themselves,” Ms. Violet said. “There’s just enough structure for the kids to be successful.”

Solving Own Problems

50 While adults need to be present and ready to intervene at recess if necessary, said Edward Miller, one of the founding partners of the New York City-based Alliance for Childhood, and Playworks provides that service, children should also have the opportunity for individual and small-group play. ...

55 The Mathematica study found Playworks has a mixed effect on behaviors related to bullying: Teachers at schools with the program found that there was significantly less bullying and exclusionary behavior during recess than teachers at schools without it, but not a reduction in more general aggressive behavior. Playworks has no formal curriculum that addresses the problem, Ms. Violet noted.

60 “Our coaches are functioning like the older kids in the play yard used to: teaching kids rules to games, intervening if there is conflict, norming¹ behaviors around inclusion,” she said.

However, researchers also found that teachers’ and students’ perception of aggression and bullying on the playground differed. While teachers observed that there was less name-calling, shoving of classmates, and excluding of some students from games because of Playworks, students didn’t, Mathematica’s Ms. James-Burdumy said. ...

—Nirvi Shah

excerpted and adapted from “Study Weighs Benefits of Organizing Recess”
www.edweek.org, April 17, 2012

¹norming — setting a standard

Text 4

Forget Goofing Around: Recess Has a New Boss

Newark — At Broadway Elementary School here, there is no more sitting around after lunch. No more goofing off with friends. No more doing nothing.

Instead there is Brandi Parker, a \$14-an-hour recess coach with a whistle around her neck, corralling children behind bright orange cones to play organized games. There she was the other day, breaking up a renegade game of hopscotch and overruling stragglers' lame excuses.

They were bored. They had tired feet. They were no good at running.

"I don't like to play," protested Esmeilyn Almendarez, 11.

"Why do I have to go through this every day with you?" replied Ms. Parker, waving her back in line. "There's no choice."

Broadway Elementary brought in Ms. Parker in January out of exasperation with students who, left to their own devices, used to run into one another, squabble over balls and jump-ropes or monopolize the blacktop while exiling their classmates to the sidelines. Since she started, disciplinary referrals at recess have dropped by three-quarters, to an average of three a week. And injuries are no longer a daily occurrence.

"Before, I was seeing nosebleeds, busted lips, and students being a danger to themselves and others," said Alejandro Echevarria, the principal. "Now, Coach Brandi does miracles with 20 cones and three handballs."

The school is one of a growing number across the country that are reining in recess to curb bullying and behavior problems, foster social skills and address concerns over obesity. They also hope to show children that there is good old-fashioned fun to be had without iPods and video games. ...

Although many school officials and parents like the organized activity, its critics say it takes away the only time that children have to unwind. ...

Dr. Romina M. Barros, an assistant clinical professor at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx who was an author of a widely cited study on the benefits of recess, published last year [2009] in the journal *Pediatrics*, says that children still benefit most from recess when they are let alone to daydream, solve problems, use their imagination to invent their own games and "be free to do what they choose to do."

Structured recess, Dr. Barros said, simply transplants the rules of the classroom to the playground.

"You still have to pay attention," she said. "You still have to follow rules. You don't have that time for your brain to relax." ...

Ms. Parker, 28, the coach at Broadway Elementary, had worked as a counselor for troubled teenagers in a group home in Burlington, N.C. Besides her work at recess, she visits each class once a week to play games that teach lessons about cooperation, sportsmanship and respect.

"These are the things that matter in life: who you are as a human being at the core," she said. ...

There are three 15-minute recesses, with more than 100 children at a time packed into a fenced-in basketball court equipped with nothing more than a pair of netless hoops.

On a chilly morning, Ms. Parker shoveled snow off the blacktop so that the students could go outside after being cooped up in the cafeteria during recess in the previous week.

45 She drew squares in blue and green chalk for a game called switch, a fast-paced version of musical chairs — without the chairs. (She goes through a box of chalk a week.)

Ms. Parker, who greets students with hugs and a cheerful “hello-hello,” keeps the rules simple so that they can focus on playing rather than on following directions. “We’re trying to get them to exert energy, to get it all out,” she said. “They can be as loud as they want. I never tell them to be quiet unless I’m telling them something.” ...

—Winnie Hu
excerpted and adapted from “Forget Goofing Around: Recess Has a New Boss”
www.nytimes.com, March 14, 2010

Recess plays a vital role in the lives of young students across the nation. In order to make recess as beneficial as possible, schools should establish structured play programs. These programs provide additional access to physical activity, increased participation of students, potential to improve behavior, and reinforcement of skills and values. While some may argue that a decrease in unstructured play time takes away from students' abilities to learn to solve problems amongst themselves, structured recess promotes inclusiveness and teamwork, teaching students ways to stay healthy and have fun together.

quick
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explicit
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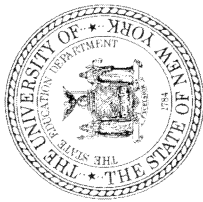
Good,
general
argue

Structured play should be set up in more schools because it helps foster the development of students' motor skills and fitness by providing "more opportunities for daily activity as a means to address childhood obesity" (Text 1, lines 5-6). Although people may argue that any type of recess can offer that mandatory participation in structured play ensures that all students have the exercise and an outlet for their energy. Even though some students may not view themselves as athletic, "total class inclusion" (Text 1, line 18) has the additional benefit of preventing potential isolation of some students on the playground. Since recess coaches teach children random ways to pick teams they "circumvent emotionally scarring episodes of being chosen based on skill or popularity" (Text 3, lines 41-43). Therefore, a self-conscious student may be less reluctant to take part in a structured recess activity.

Proponents of unstructured recess contend that "children still benefit most from recess when they are let alone to... solve problems" (Text 4, lines 27-29). Conflict resolution is an important skill ~~to go experience~~ that should be addressed in the formative years of childhood, but it can be most effectively

taught and practiced ~~within~~ ^{within} the context of a structured recess program. Many students will need suggestions about how to solve the conflicts that arise. Fortunately, "coaches teach simple ways to settle disputes and preempt some quibbles by teaching games including rock-paper-scissors (Text 3, lines 43-44). These skills help make structured recess beneficial not just physically and emotionally, but also behaviorally. At one school with a recess coach, "disciplinary referrals at recess have dropped by three-quarters ... And injuries are no longer a daily occurrence" (Text 4, lines 14-15). The positive changes in behavior can carry over to the classroom as well. This is demonstrated on how "teachers have reported improved behavior and attention in the classroom after vigorous structured recess" (Text 1, lines 22-23).

People recognize that recess is a significant part of a child's school day. That is why structured play programs try to make the most of that time each day. While some argue that the implementation of these programs hinders the development of conflict resolution and stunts social development, it actually promotes these skills. Students are given the tools they need to ^{not only} improve their physical and emotional well-being, ~~but~~ ^{but} also create a more harmonious school culture. To reap these benefits and encourage the overall wellness of their students, more schools should establish structured play programs for recess.



**New York State Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core)
Part 2 Rubric**

Writing From Sources: Argument

Criteria	6 Essays at this Level:	5 Essays at this Level:	4 Essays at this Level:	3 Essays at this Level:	2 Essays at this Level:	1 Essays at this Level:
Content and Analysis: the extent to which the essay conveys complex ideas and information clearly and accurately in order to support claims in an analysis of the texts	-introduce a precise and insightful claim, as directed by the task -demonstrate in-depth and insightful analysis of the texts, as necessary to support the claim and to distinguish the claim from alternate or opposing claims	-introduce a precise and thoughtful claim, as directed by the task -demonstrate thorough analysis of the texts, as necessary to support the claim and to distinguish the claim from alternate or opposing claims	-introduce a precise claim, as directed by the task -demonstrate appropriate and accurate analysis of the texts, as necessary to support the claim and to distinguish the claim from alternate or opposing claims	-introduce a reasonable claim, as directed by the task -demonstrate some analysis of the texts, but insufficiently distinguish the claim from alternate or opposing claims	-introduce a claim -demonstrate confused or unclear analysis of the texts, failing to distinguish the claim from alternate or opposing claims	-do not introduce a claim -do not demonstrate analysis of the texts
Command of Evidence: the extent to which the essay presents evidence from the provided texts to support analysis	-present ideas fully and thoughtfully, making highly effective use of a wide range of specific and relevant evidence to support analysis -demonstrate proper citation of sources to avoid plagiarism when dealing with direct quotes and paraphrased material	-present ideas clearly and accurately, making effective use of specific and relevant evidence to support analysis -demonstrate proper citation of sources to avoid plagiarism when dealing with direct quotes and paraphrased material	-present ideas sufficiently, making adequate use of specific and relevant evidence to support analysis -demonstrate proper citation of sources to avoid plagiarism when dealing with direct quotes and paraphrased material	-present ideas briefly, making use of some specific and relevant evidence to support analysis -demonstrate inconsistent citation of sources to avoid plagiarism when dealing with direct quotes and paraphrased material	-present ideas inconsistently and/or inaccurately, in an attempt to support analysis, making use of some evidence that may be irrelevant -demonstrate little use of citations to avoid plagiarism when dealing with direct quotes and paraphrased material	-present little or no evidence from the texts -do not make use of citations
Coherence, Organization, and Style: the extent to which the essay logically organizes complex ideas, concepts, and information using formal style and precise language	-exhibit skillful organization of ideas and information to create a cohesive and coherent essay -establish and maintain a formal style, using sophisticated language and structure	-exhibit logical organization of ideas and information to create a cohesive and coherent essay -establish and maintain a formal style, using fluent and precise language and sound structure	-exhibit acceptable organization of ideas and information to create a coherent essay -establish and maintain a formal style, using precise and appropriate language and structure	-exhibit some organization of ideas and information to create a mostly coherent essay -establish but fail to maintain a formal style, using primarily basic language and structure	-exhibit inconsistent organization of ideas and information, failing to create a coherent essay -lack a formal style, using some language that is inappropriate or imprecise	-exhibit little organization of ideas and information -are minimal, making assessment unreliable -use language that is predominantly incoherent, inappropriate, or copied directly from the task or texts
Control of Conventions: the extent to which the essay demonstrates command of conventions of standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling	-demonstrate control of conventions with essentially no errors, even with sophisticated language	-demonstrate control of the conventions, exhibiting occasional errors only when using sophisticated language	-demonstrate partial control, exhibiting occasional errors that do not hinder comprehension	-demonstrate emerging control, exhibiting occasional errors that hinder comprehension	-demonstrate a lack of control, exhibiting frequent errors that make comprehension difficult	-are minimal, making assessment of conventions unreliable

- An essay that addresses fewer texts than required by the task can be scored no higher than a 3.
- An essay that is a personal response and makes little or no reference to the task or texts can be scored no higher than a 1.
- An essay that is totally copied from the task and/or texts with no original student writing must be scored a 0.
- An essay that is totally unrelated to the task, illegible, incoherent, blank, or unrecognizable as English must be scored as a 0.