

## Playworks 2021-2022 School Year Media Fact Sheet

**WHAT:** Playworks is the leading national nonprofit leveraging the power of play to transform children's social and emotional health. Through direct-service coaching of kids and training for school staff, Playworks partners with elementary schools, districts, and after-school programs to integrate games into recess to create a welcoming place for every child on the playground. With an emphasis on social-emotional learning and skill-building, students feel included while being active and developing valuable skills needed to thrive in the classroom and beyond. Playworks is ensuring that kids experience safe and healthy play every day.

**WHY:** Many educators report recess as being the most challenging point of the school day during which conflicts arise that can carry into the classroom. Recess is often undervalued and many kids end up on the sidelines. In the last decade, nearly half of all school districts nationwide have either completely eliminated or reduced specified time for recess. Playworks is working to ensure that play is an integral and necessary part of the school day. What happens on the playground affects an entire school culture. Research as reported by *The Atlantic* suggests that students who play develop healthier lifestyles, are more attentive in class, and achieve greater academic, social, and emotional success. Playworks offers an externally-validated program that has a positive impact on kids, school staff, and school culture.

**IMPACT:** Playworks programming is designed to get kids in the game and to help schools build a community of playing together to make recess safe, inclusive, and fun for everyone. A 2013 evaluation of the implementation and impact of Playworks programming, conducted by Stanford University's Mathematica Policy Research, revealed that compared to non-Playworks schools, Playworks schools see:

- a 43 percent difference in the way teachers rated bullying and discipline issues
- a 20 percent difference in the way teachers rated students feelings of safety on the playground
- a 43 percent difference in the amount of time spent in vigorous physical activity during recess
- a 34 percent difference in time spent transitioning from recess to the classroom

**HOW:** A thoughtful approach to recess can improve children's physical health and social-emotional learning. Playworks schools make the most of recess by implementing Playworks curriculum on the playground. The nonprofit also offers after-school developmental sports leagues that give youth an equal opportunity, regardless of athletic ability, academic standing and finances, to participate in organized sports and learn components of teamwork. The four primary ways Playworks serves elementary schools include:

- **Playworks Coach:** A full-time Playworks staff member works onsite at one school year-round to run all Playworks programs during and after-school and serves as an engaged adult role model for youth. Playworks coaches are placed in schools where 50 percent of the student population qualifies for free and reduced lunch.
- **Playworks TeamUp or Relay:** One Playworks staff member oversees Playworks programming in multiple schools, providing faculty and staff the training, tools, and consulting needed to empower a sustainable recess playground team.
- **Playworks Pro:** Playworks provides school staff members with hands-on professional development workshops and collaborative consultation to facilitate Playworks programming without a Playworks staff member onsite.
- **Digital Services:** PlayworksU is an online learning platform for school staff to foster the skills to support play through on-demand content such as video demos, printable game guides, recess assessment tools, and strategic support calls with Playworks experts. Keep Playing provides curated, weekly resources that adults can utilize to play with kids and promote social emotional learning.

A recent [review](#) conducted by the RAND Corporation and commissioned by The Wallace Foundation found that Playworks offers one of the few social and emotional learning interventions for elementary schools that meet the highest criteria for evidence of impact under the Every Student Succeeds Act. The review examined outcomes of the Playworks Coach model, which includes classroom, outside of classroom and out of school time components. Qualifiers show how Playworks' school programming is designed to help students build valuable intrapersonal

skills and to help schools build positive school climates to get kids in the game and to help schools build stronger communities.

Over the past decade, much attention has been paid to school-based recess and the implications of recess on child development. The United States (U.S.) Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that elementary aged children participate in a minimum of 20 minutes of recess per day ([CDC 2017](#)). While providing recess every day to students is of vital importance, many other relevant contextual factors, such as the safety of the play space, level of student activity and engagement, peer conflict resolution and the quality of student-adult interactions, remain unexamined.

Based on 25 years of professional experience, Playworks developed the Great Recess Framework, an observational tool that can support schools to create consistent, appropriate and engaging school recess experiences that positively impact student's physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. Evidence from this study supports the Great Recess Framework as a valid and reliable assessment tool to observationally measure the quality of the recess environment.

**WHERE:** Currently, the Playworks Pro model is implemented in elementary schools in all 50 states. Playworks Coach and TeamUp serve elementary schools and youth serving organizations in 15 geographic territories.

**CONNECT:** Find Playworks on social media: Facebook ([@MakeRecessCount](#)), Twitter ([@Playworks](#)), Instagram ([@PlayworksRecess](#)). For more information, visit: [www.playworks.org](http://www.playworks.org).

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