

Creative Playground Equipment

Recess is a popular time of day for elementary students to spend time outside and be physically active. One way to encourage students to be more physically active and creative during recess is to incorporate moveable play equipment, such as hoola hoops, jump ropes, tires, pool noodles, buckets and crates (Hyndman et al., 2018). Researchers at multiple universities in Australia have been studying the use of unconventional recess materials on child physical and social activity as part of the Sydney Playground Project (n.d.). The use of moveable playground equipment and everyday materials allows children to adapt their play to meet their needs, rather than just being limited to fixed, traditional playground equipment which can often be overcrowded and provide limited play options (Hyndman et al., 2018). Research has found that students are actually more physically active when provided with moveable play equipment using everyday materials rather than just being restricted to traditional, stationary playground equipment (Bundy et al., 2017). Hyndman and colleagues (2018) also recommended changing up the materials on a daily or weekly basis to encourage student creativity. Additional examples of materials to use as well as how to incorporate this activity at your school can be found by visiting the resources in the reference section below.

Grade Level: Pre-K - 6th

Materials: Moveable playground equipment such as hoola hoops, jump ropes, cardboard boxes, crates, milk jugs, pool noodles, etc.

Duration: Varies

Implementation:

1. Acquire unconventional, recyclable or moveable materials to use on your playground such as hoola hoops, PVC pipes, car tires, crates, buckets, cardboard boxes, pool noodles, assorted balls, etc. You may request community donations to help with the cost.
2. Set student rules for using the equipment (make sure it is put away in a designated spot after recess, share with other students, don't damage the materials, etc.)
3. Place some of the materials in an open field or gymnasium during recess for students to use for free play. Have recess supervisors and teachers encourage students to use the materials.
4. Have students and recess supervisors help clean up the materials following recess time.
5. Rotate different materials throughout the week to foster student creativity.

Does it work?

In a study of two elementary schools, Hyndman & Mahony (2018) found that providing students with moveable playground equipment helped increase students' creativity during recess. The moveable equipment challenged students to repurpose, redesign, and plan for their play needs. Additionally, students' interactions and communications became more sophisticated. They fostered alternative and divergent forms of movement, which helped students' physical development and physical activity levels (Hyndman & Mahony, 2018). Bundy and colleagues (2017) completed a randomized control trial assessing the impact of unconventional playground materials on students' level of play, creativity and physical activity. Twelve schools were randomly assigned to either include recyclable, non-conventional materials such as milk jugs, pool noodles and car tires on the playground during recess, or to act as a control group with traditional recess equipment. Among children in the intervention schools, physical activity during school increased, and sedentary time decreased, over the 13-week study. However, in control schools that did not participate in the intervention, physical activity actually decreased over the course of the study (Bundy et al., 2017).

References:

- Bundy, A., Engelen, L., Wyver, S., Tranter, P., Ragen, J., Bauman, A., Naughton, G. (2017). Sydney Playground Project: A Cluster-Randomized Trial to Increase Physical Activity, Play, and Social Skills. *Journal of School Health*, 87(10), 751-759.
<https://edtechbooks.org/JFdP>
- Hyndman, B. & Mahony, L. (2018). Developing creativity through outdoor physical activities: A qualitative exploration of contrasting school equipment provision. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, 18(3), 242-256.

<https://edtechbooks.org/-TxVu>

Sydney Playground Project (n.d.) *Home page.*

<https://www.sydneyplaygroundproject.com/>

ADDRESSING
WELLBEING
IN SCHOOLS

*An Educator's Practical Guide to Improving
Wellbeing*

SYDNI FAWSON, MEGAN BATES AND
DAVID BOREN



Fawson, S., Bates, M., & Boren, D. M. (n.d.). *Addressing Wellbeing In Schools*. EdTech Books.
https://edtechbooks.org/addressing_wellbeing