

Mar 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for HF 3402

Dear Chairperson Richardson and Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of HF3402 regarding withholding recess as a form of punishment in schools.

Children need play as a natural part of their development. Withholding play is damaging.

Mary Starke
Brooklyn Park, MN 55445

Mar 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for HF 3402

Dear Chairperson Richardson and Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of HF3402 regarding withholding recess as a form of punishment in schools.

I am a parent of an autistic child who experienced the threat of taking my child's recess away.

This, among many other inappropriate responses to his issues, is why he no longer attends public school.

Sarah Winkler
Silver Bay, MN 55614

Mar 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for HF 3402

Dear Chairperson Richardson and Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of HF3402 regarding withholding recess as a form of punishment in schools.

The lack of recess causes a build up of energy creating an elevated state that sets the child up for continued and more extreme behavior. The child is being set up to fail.

Steven Johnson,
District 6B, 55792

Mar 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for HF 3402

Dear Chairperson Richardson and Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of HF3402 regarding withholding recess as a form of punishment in schools.

Withholding recess is developmental inappropriate and harmful to elementary age children.

Movement and breaks are a physical need. Taking away recess is akin to taking away lunch or bathroom breaks. The only way this is an appropriate response to behavior is if the child's behavior would cause injury to self or others.

Nahleah Mehr
Avon, MN 56310

Mar 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for HF 3402

Dear Chairperson Richardson and Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of HF3402 regarding withholding recess as a form of punishment in schools.

Developmentally, withholding recess is not an effective intervention for classroom issues. Labor laws require breaks for employees - students minimally need the same protection. It is not fair to withhold recess from children.

Jay Wilson

Mar 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for HF 3402

Dear Chairperson Richardson and Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of HF3402 regarding withholding recess as a form of punishment in schools.

My daughter is in a French immersion public school. No special needs. General education classroom. It is common for kindergarten, first grade and second grade teachers to withhold recess for the entire class as a punishment for disrupting class or not following directions. Her third grade teacher did the same thing. The school also rewarded kids with an extra recess.

They used recess as a system of reward and punishment instead of what it is intended to be: an essential break for children that helps their bodies and minds self-regulate.

Sincerely,

Feroza Mehta
Edina, MN
District 49A

Mar 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for HF 3402

Dear Chairperson Richardson and Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of HF3402 regarding withholding recess as a form of punishment in schools.

I am a 9th grade student and have experienced Recess being withheld, I can safely say that it sucks.

At least with lunch detention you can still eat, but with recess detention any sort of positive benefits such as exercise, fresh air, and socialization are pretty much nonexistent.

Sincerely,

Remy
9th grader
Minneapolis, MN

Mar 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for HF 3402

Dear Chairperson Richardson and Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of HF3402 regarding withholding recess as a form of punishment in schools.

My son is autistic and has ADHD, epilepsy and sensory processing challenges. Especially in elementary school, he had a very difficult time sitting still, and found the school building to be an overwhelming environment sensory-wise.

There were a few times recess was withheld as “discipline,” and it was totally counterproductive. How can a kid who is dysregulated recover and continue his day without the opportunity for some fresh air and a chance to move? Eventually I had it written into his IEP that recess cannot be taken away as a consequence for behavior. His current IEP encourages outdoor time (a walk around the block with staff, for example) as a recommended intervention if he is escalated.

Withholding recess as punishment is like turning up the heat under a pot that’s already boiling over.

Sincerely,

Nikki Fortuin
Minneapolis, MN

Mar 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for HF 3402

Dear Chairperson Richardson and Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of HF3402 regarding withholding recess as a form of punishment in schools.

My child needed recess more than anything. To have recess taken away because he wasn't able to sit still at a desk, follow verbal directions, or because he talked too much during class was completely counterintuitive. We talked with his teachers and the principal. We had it written into his IEP that he needed full recess everyday but some teachers persisted in taking it away. Aside from not getting the physical activity he needed, he felt shamed, singled out, and excluded. I think a clear policy may help so that doesn't happen to other kids.

Sincerely,

Amy Brugh
Minneapolis, MN
District 63B

Mar 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for HF 3402

Dear Chairperson Richardson and Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of HF3402 regarding withholding recess as a form of punishment in schools.

My child has sensory processing disorder. They need to physically move their body in order to be able to focus and learn. When recess is used as punishment it makes the rest of the day harder for my child to learn and behave and focus.

Melissa Pohlman
Minneapolis, MN
District 59A

Mar 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for HF 3402

Dear Chairperson Richardson and Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of HF3402 regarding withholding recess as a form of punishment in schools.

I am a parent of 2 kids-1 diagnosed with ASD but not in school yet, the other undiagnosed but suspected who is in kindergarten. Removing recess should be outlawed, regardless of neurotype. Children need that movement time. Taking away that break time (which is also vastly too short) as a punishment is going to have detrimental consequences and will have the opposite effect of what you want behavior-wise.

Sarah Mueller
Minneapolis, MN 55117

Mar 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for HF 3402

Dear Chairperson Richardson and Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of HF3402 regarding withholding recess as a form of punishment in schools.

I work as an Early Literacy and Math Tutor with AmeriCorps in Minneapolis Public Schools. In the High Five classroom where I currently serve, recess is regularly withheld from 4- and 5-year-olds as a consequence for negative behavior. It's so frustrating to see that these little kids who most likely need a sensory break or other SEL intervention--and who BARELY know how to be in school anyway--are having their physical exercise and play/movement time taken from them. They rarely understand the connection between not staying with the class in line in the hallway in the morning and losing out on recess a few hours later after lunch. It just doesn't work.

Sincerely,

Catharine
District 61A
Minneapolis, MN

Mar 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for HF 3402

Dear Chairperson Richardson and Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of HF3402 regarding withholding recess as a form of punishment in schools.

Students need to have recess time available in order to let off steam from having to sit still and be quiet during their classes. It's nearly impossible for even my 13 year old to be polite and respectful to his teachers and classmates for a whole school day WITHOUT a break. (I can't even do that at my job.) Please do not punish our kids by taking away their recess time. Punishment does not work. Especially with autistic people. Explanation of why something is inappropriate or dangerous is a far better tactic in the long run. These conversations may be verbal, on AAC devices, ASL, storyboards, or any other way a student communicates. Taking recess away sets the child up for more outbursts because they don't have a physical outlet for their emotions. It also isolates the child and makes them a target for bullying by their peers. This practice must end, for ALL children.

Lisa Horner
Moorhead MN

Mar 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for HF 3402

Dear Chairperson Richardson and Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of HF3402 regarding withholding recess as a form of punishment in schools.

I am the parent of an Autistic child. Recess is crucial for them to maintain regulation necessary for them to learn. Withholding recess would directly impact their ability to participate in education. It is gratuitously punitive and ignores all scientific knowledge about how children learn.

Sincerely,

Leah Harp
Minneapolis MN
District 61

Mar 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for HF 3402

Dear Chairperson Richardson and Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of HF3402 regarding withholding recess as a form of punishment in schools.

I am a licensed mental health professional who is a registered play therapist. Much of my work has been with children and families. I am also a parent to two children, one of whom is neurodivergent. Research shows the need for movement, play, and downtime. However, sometimes that is misleading because learning is always happening and therefore while some tend to think that recess is a waste of time, play is the language of children and creatures of all ages need play in order to thrive. One thing that seems to be lost in the world of administrators, policy makers, and others making the decisions in education is that relationships are key. That is where others can find themselves able to regulate - through co-regulation. So, punishments literally make no sense as they are externally imposed and not focused on the best interest of the child or the relationship. Therefore, taking away recess causes damage in multiple ways.

The practice must end.

Sincerely,

Jessica Voerding
New Brighton, MN 55112
District 41Aa

Mar 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for HF 3402

Dear Chairperson Richardson and Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of HF3402 regarding withholding recess as a form of punishment in schools.

Kids need recess to relax, play with friends, move around to get exercise and have fun

Sy Vang
Oakdale, MN

Mar 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for HF 3402

Dear Chairperson Richardson and Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of HF 3402 which prohibits schools from withholding recess as a form of punishment.

It's completely counterproductive to eliminate a physical outlet for energy or stress as a way to address issues with behavior. It also causes feelings of anger, further exacerbating the negative situation. It impacts concentration for the rest of the day and likely into the next.

Carey Sinykin, Parent
District 44A
Plymouth, MN

Mar 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for HF 3402

Dear Chairperson Richardson and Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of HF 3402 which prohibits schools from withholding recess as a form of punishment.

Withholding physical activity is the last thing kids who are dysregulated or struggling need. Many disabled children struggle with emotional regulation (as do their non disabled peers, and many adults).

Being unable to exert energy makes any pent up emotions become even bigger. It is a punishment that punishes *everyone* AND is completely ineffective at helping anyone do anything better (schoolwork) or feel any better (struggling with emotional or physical regulation).

Aside from all the above, pretty much everyone in America needs or benefits from more exercise and/or outside time. Additionally, kids (and all people) learn better when they have breaks. The practice of punishing children by withholding an opportunity for recess should absolutely be outlawed by our elected officials in Minnesota. (And nationwide, as well.)"

Kate Stabnow, RN, VSN, PHN
Saint Paul, M 65506
District 67

Mar 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for HF 3402

Dear Chairperson Richardson and Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of HF 3402 which prohibits schools from withholding recess as a form of punishment.

Children need to move as a means of development and regulation. While "taking away fun" seems appealing as a punishment, it is harmful and inappropriate. Children with behavioral concerns need support, not punishment. Behavior is 100% communication, and it's about time our educational institutions not only acknowledge this, but operate in this truth.

Children have been through a lot the last two years, they need MORE support. They survived the collective trauma of the pandemic right alongside us, and their lives have moved forward, traumas and all. Children are our future, and we need to start treating them as such. If we want to raise compassionate and thoughtful human beings into our future, then we need to model being compassionate and thoughtful towards them. I think we've seen very publicly what happens when we fail to do that. We can stop the cycle, though. We can stand up and support children in a compassionate and evidence-based way.

Chantale Oechsle
Saint Cloud, MN 56303
District 14B

Mar 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for HF 3402

Dear Chairperson Richardson and Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of HF3402 regarding withholding recess as a form of punishment in schools.

It seems that a lot of the Administration (and really adults who are not in the thick of it with children all day long) forget that movement, and freedom of movement are key to body regulation and learning in people.

Studies have shown over and over again that when people are allowed to move they are more apt to retain information, their bodies are calmer, and their brains more settled and ready to process information.

What do we tell kids on the weekend? 'Go burn off some energy.' 'Go outside.' 'Go run around.' And we tell adults the same thing when they encounter and have to process: 'Go take a walk to blow off steam.' 'Running helps clear the mind.' 'Being outside for ten minutes can improve your mental state.'"

When restricted and contained not by choice it is harmful and perpetuates a state of dysregulation. You know this because you feel it, you apply this concept to your daily life. By taking away what little opportunities children have to move freely because of 'bad behavior'-- we're actually feeding that behavior and doing nothing to help the person.

ALL Behavior is communication, anyone who spends days with children will tell you this. Taking away what little opportunity there is to physically move about freely is the wrong choice and shows a blatant lack of understanding of child and human development.

Sincerely,

Kristina Jager
Saint Paul, MN 55106
District 67A

Mar 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for HF 3402

Dear Chairperson Richardson and Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of HF3402 regarding withholding recess as a form of punishment in schools.

My child experienced a group punishment (loss of recess) for the action of a few students. The entire class was held inside and not allowed to go out for recess. I argued that recess should never be taken away as a punishment for behaviors as recess actually is known to reduce high energy levels for children and reduces problem behaviors. Recess is essential for children to have unstructured play. We know that recess is vital for mental health and brain development.

Sincerely,

Therese Flinck
St. Cloud, MN

Mar 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for HF 3402

Dear Chairperson Richardson and Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of HF3402 regarding withholding recess as a form of punishment in schools.

As a school principal, I have many teachers and my assistant principal who choose to withhold recess as a form of punishment. As an educator and parent, it is against my philosophy of education. I believe in a restorative approach to managing student behavior, and using the moments when students have acceptable behavior as a way to learn from it and restore the harm that has been built.

Sincerely,

Dr. Gwen Anderson
St. Cloud, MN 56301
District 14A

Mar 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for HF 3402

Dear Chairperson Richardson and Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of HF3402 regarding withholding recess as a form of punishment in schools.

My elementary aged child has severe neurological and mental health issues that result in emotional and behavioral struggles. There are times that he is simply unable to “do the right thing” or what is asked/expected of him at school. A common default practice in many schools is to withhold recess as a form of punishment, as a way to ensure a child completes academic work, etc.

Because my son’s ability to complete work at the rate and the consistency of typical children is beyond his control, as are his mental health issues, it is unfair and cruel to withhold recess. It sends a message that even when he is trying his best to do what is expected, it is still not enough. Furthermore, it hinders his progress.

Research has clearly shown the psychological, emotional, and behavioral benefits of recess. Why schools continue to withhold recess, even for typical children, is beyond me and speaks to a failure to understand how children and the brain/body connection at best, and is indicative of laziness in choice of intervention strategies at worst.

Sincerely,

Traci Anderson
St. Michael, MN
District 30B

Mar 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for HF 3402

Dear Chairperson Richardson and Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of HF3402 regarding withholding recess as a form of punishment in schools.

I'm a pediatric Occupational Therapist. All evidence shows children need play--to learn, for development, and for regulation. Punishment offers a temporary and ineffective solution to an unmet expectation. Children do well if they can, and deserve educators who see the best in them and help determine the underlying factors that are preventing the child from meeting expectations. Even determining whether or not the expectation is appropriate for the child. Eliminating recess exacerbates the underlying factors and will cause further harm to the child.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Duffy
White Bear Lake, MN

Mar 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for HF 3402

Dear Chairperson Richardson and Committee Members,

Withholding recess was a punishment that was given to my child on many occasions, and it did nothing but make the situation worse. Our embrace of exercise has to increase if we want to be a happier, healthier society. Maybe our children will behave better if we nourish their bodies and their brains by giving them extra recess instead of taking it away.

Sincerely,

Danielle Werbick
District 23

Comments Submitted Anonymously

I have two neurodivergent adult disabled kids who had very difficult public school experiences because of the reward/consequences systems used to control behavior and while they weren't, as far as I know, subjected to withholding of recess as a punishment, I know that at times it was their only time to relax and have bodily freedom during the school day and that if that had been taken away it would have made school much much worse, both academically, mentally and physically.

###

Children are already growing up in a world without sufficient communication access. We are raising kids who are on screens all day long, and school should be a time where kids are taken outside. Being in nature is a right not a privilege and it is not something that can be withheld.

###

My child was often punished for manifestations of his disability, such as being too slow at completing work, being impulsive and talking too much or fidgeting too much or having difficulty initiating tasks and knowing what he was supposed to do, so some teachers would punish him by taking away his recess. But a kid who has so much energy and has trouble focusing and sitting still needs more breaks, not less.

###

One reason some children can't concentrate is that they aren't getting enough activity breaks during the day. Taking away their one approved time to move and run and play is detrimental to their mental, social, and physical health.

###

Recess should never be withheld or limited as a form of punishment.

###

Keeping kids out of recess exacerbates problems. It does not solve them. Kids need exercise and socialization, especially autistic children.

###

Stop punishing children and focus on meeting their needs to prevent difficult behaviors. Behavior is communication. For some children it is the only way they can tell you whatever is happening in class/school isn't working for them. Instead of focusing on compliance, focus on meeting underlying needs to help children understand and meet expectations for helping create a safe supportive environment in school. Withholding recess for behavior or not completely working unfairly targets children and youth with disabilities who often need that time for a movement break and an opportunity to be with peers denying them FAPE.

###

If anything, children should be getting more recess. Unstructured play time is critical to child development. Acting out in class is often the result of children being forced to sit still and quiet for too long a period of time. More opportunities for children to move their bodies will help them stay focused and listen during critical times.

###

It is important for children to have recess as an outlet and regulating tool as well as for social interactions with peers. It benefits nobody to take away recess as a punishment.

It doesn't improve behaviors. In fact it may make them worse.

###

My son is a special needs student and has behavior issues. These behaviors happen when he is not getting what he needs. I have had the school take away recess as a punishment. I feel this is unacceptable because my son needs that movement and that release of energy.

###

Children need to let loose and run around to get their energy out so they can concentrate on the rest of their school day!

###

Children *need* recess. They need time to get up and move around. Studies show that recess helps kids focus better in school. Taking away recess will not help problems but may make them worse.

###

This punishment does not help students change their behavior and has significant negative consequences, including reducing access to self regulation strategies that are needed most by the students who are often punished this way.

###

Recess is a needed time for physical movement, a brain break and a social opportunity that should never be withheld from a grade-school child.

###

Withholding recess made me miserable in school. Please don't do it. I don't want any kid to have to go through what I went through.

###

Shame never works to teach anyone anything positive.

###

When in elementary school our now adult daughter was regularly not permitted to go out for recess at Oak Hill because she was not done with her math worksheets. We repeatedly asked the teacher to send the worksheets home but she wouldn't, saying there were other worksheets

for homework. Our daughter just happened to work more slowly. There was nothing wrong with her comprehension or assessments. They were often those math worksheets where they had to color by number after completing an answer, and she had the math itself done, but not all the coloring. She took particular care with coloring, and was slowest with that part of the worksheets. We again asked the teacher whether it was really necessary to do the coloring, since it was for math class and she'd done the math. Her only 'behavior' issue was a bit of perfectionism. And the teacher treated this as a blanket policy that students had to complete their work in the school day. Our daughter was 8. It was the most ridiculous thing I've ever experienced with schools. We made sure our youngest daughter went to a different school in the district with an accessible principal, teachers who gave little homework in the early grades (studies show homework in early elementary is not useful or productive), and teachers who never made her miss recess. And if she was behind on learning, send the work home at our request.

###

It's ridiculous. Recess is the time of day to allow students to use excess energy that isn't constructive to the learning environment. Take that away as punishment and you run the risk of more student disruptions.

###

I've seen in many online groups people mentioning their children losing recess over "behavior issues". Recess is not something that should be taken away from a child, and I don't think withholding things like that is going to change anything anyway.

###

There is not enough recess already. Withholding the very thing that children need the most is cruel and backfires creating an escalating circle of behavior. Children need to move. They need to practice social skills. They need to play and regulate. Studies have been done where recess was doubled. The kids did better. Increase recess and don't use it as a threat or punishment

###

This happened at a private school. My son had recess withheld for two weeks for playing tag with friends.

###

I was disappointed to have my son tell me that he was forced out of recess (or never let out to attend) because he arrived 2 mins later because he went to his locker to grab his coat. He told me there is one specific teacher/ para that has that rule and the others don't. He got 'the one'.

###

How important it is for my child to have active time. Withholding recess only makes his lack of attention worse.

###

Withholding recess will NOT change behavior for an FASD kid.

###

Recess is an integral part of a child's day. It allows them the opportunity to release energy as well as give children some time where they can make decisions (do I swing or do the monkey bars). When recess is withheld as punishment, it hurts everyone. Children miss out on that beneficial time to release energy thus making it harder to focus and behave in class. In turn, this can cause more time the teacher has to take with the child and the child may even have issues escalated to the principal's office. Withholding recess also hurts the teacher because they then have to spend time with potential additional behavior issues because children didn't have the opportunity to release energy in a healthy way. Recess also helps children develop healthy socialization skills and problem solving. If there's an issue on the playground, they can work on how to resolve it. Recess is an integral part of a child's learning day and should be a little longer, in my opinion.

###

It is ridiculous to take a period of activity away from FASD children as a form of punishment! They need the activity even more than a neurotypical child.

###

Bodies need to be cared for in all aspects in order for learning and growth to occur. Recess provides access to the human right to recharge, relieve stress, and refuel. Denying access to these essentials is cruel and counter productive. The administration needs to provide education and resources to teachers and support staff that offer more developmentally appropriate responses to students. Meeting needs is much more productive than punishment.

###

Play is essential to the development of children. Please do not take recess away as a form of punishment.

###