

# Building a Better Recess Through Play

Wellness Committee  
02/12/2025

Madera Unified School District

## MUSD - Department of Culture and Climate



Karen DeOrian,  
Director School Culture & Climate  
[KarenDeOrian@maderausd.org](mailto:KarenDeOrian@maderausd.org)



Carsten Christiansen,  
CCSPP Grant Coordinator  
[CarstenChristiansen@maderausd.org](mailto:CarstenChristiansen@maderausd.org)



Sean Kelly,  
Recess Engagement Trainer  
[SeanKelly@maderausd.org](mailto:SeanKelly@maderausd.org)

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# Background

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## 2021/22 - CDE Community School Grant Opportunity

When building the grant, stakeholder input overwhelmingly requested more supports for behavior and social-emotional needs of students (students, staff, parents).

- Build school and district capacity to improve MTSS and PBIS fidelity of implementation.
- Expand social and emotional learning strategies across all participating school

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## California Community School Participation Grants

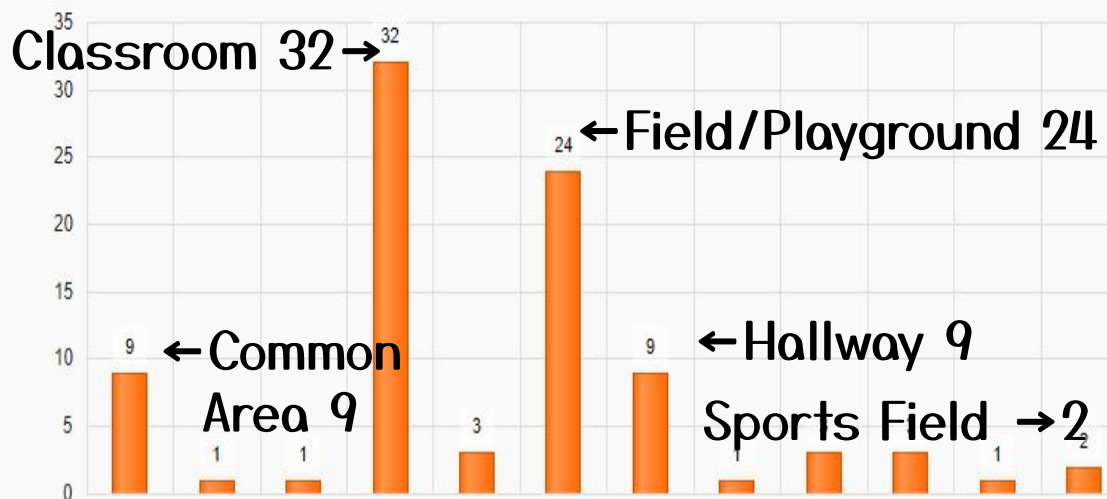
- **Cohort 1** - 2022/23-2026/27
  - 8 schools awarded - 5 elementary
- **Cohort 2** - 2023/24-2027/28
  - 9 schools awarded - 7 elementary
- **Cohort 3** - 2024/25-2028/29
  - 8 schools awarded - 5 elementary

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**MADERA UNIFIED**



## Identify a concern (Random Elem School Data)

Total Number of Incidents by Location



## Research solutions

Studies show that recess matters: a thoughtful approach to recess improves children's **physical health and social and emotional learning**.

*Playworks*



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## Research solutions

*Playworks:*



...helps schools and districts make the most of recess through on-site staffing, consultative support, professional development, free resources, and more.

...has helped schools for 25 years figure out what works well on their playgrounds. Reinforcing school culture, safety, engagement, and empowerment.

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## Year 1 Implementation

Playworks - traditional consultant package:

2-day staff overview of PW philosophy  
(~\$19,000 for initial training)

4-day visit to the site (\$13,500 per site)

2 follow-up 1-day visits (\$2,000 per day)

**\$106,500 year 1 for 5 schools**

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## Year 1 Implementation - Review

**Our question: This is great, but how do we ensure implementation and sustainability?**

What concerns did we have?

What holes did we see?

How can we make this sustainable?

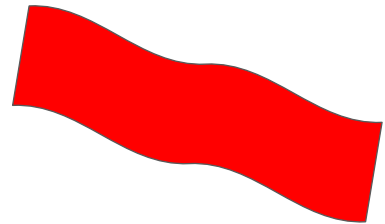
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## Adopt, Adapt, Abandon

Hire our own Recess Engagement Trainer (RET)  
Work more closely with noon aides

The reality of Red Tape

- Job description & Hiring
- Permission to add hours



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## Implementation...Year 2

Recess Engagement Trainer (Sean) is hired.  
Playworks contract

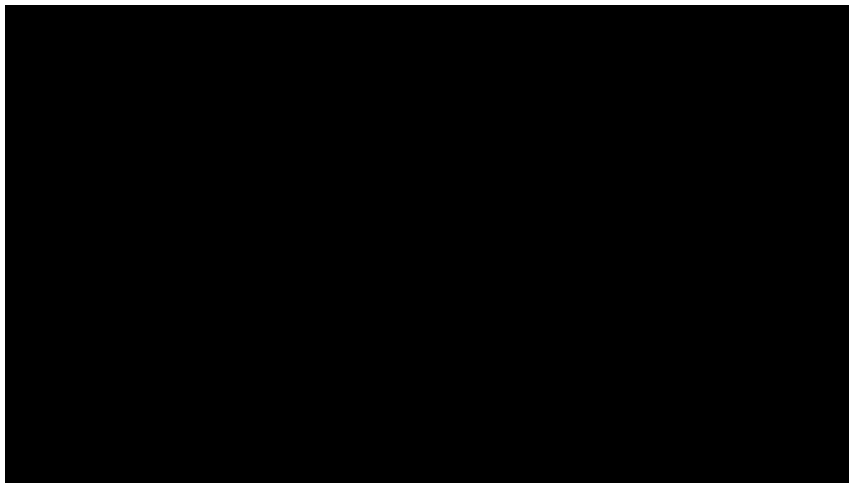
- 2 day training for noon aides
- Sean trained at PW in Oakland (\$5,000)
- Sean trained in a 4-day Recess Reboot with Playworks staff at a Madera USD elementary site.

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# Positive Recess Engagement Program (PREP)



Video



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## Our Two Week Cycle on the Site

Modeling relationship building and energy generating behaviors (EGBs).

Teaching 1-on-1 Classes to individual classes.

Meeting with noon aides.

Days 1-3 "I Do"

Teaching and leading games at recess.

Try new ideas.



## Our Two Week Cycle on the Site - Recess

**time** Game area set up where we start to engage the students.

Start with one game

Build excitement

Model play and EGBs

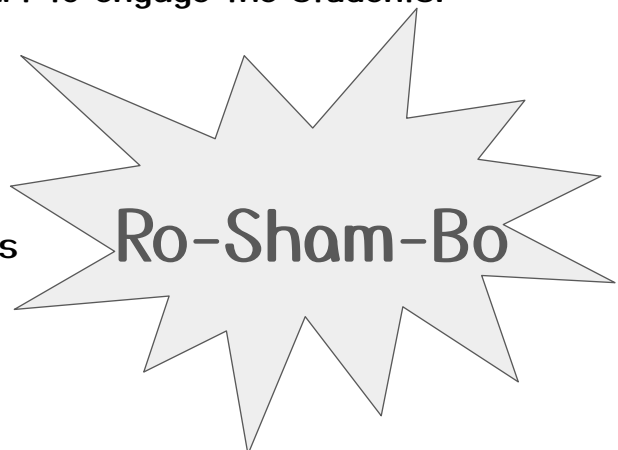
High Five

Good Job - Nice Try

Teach rules and expectations

Try new ideas

Teach Conflict Resolution



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## Our Two Week Cycle on the Site - Recess

time

Important Point:

Noon aides have a job. They are paid to supervise students to make sure that everyone is safe during the lunch recess time.

Investing in staff with CS funds.  
Paying noon aides to play games  
and build relationships during  
morning recess.



## Research

“...recess supervision has been shifting from certified staff to classified staff and parent volunteers, who have less formal training in managing student behavior (J. R. Nelson, Smith, & Colvin, 1995). Tired teachers, inadequately trained volunteers, and inexperienced classified staff weaken recess supervision, structure, and safety (Lewis et al., 2000).”

Old study...same situation today.



## Our Two Week Cycle on the Site

### Days 4-6 "We Do"

Sharing responsibility with noon aides and Student Advocate for recess activities and 1-on-1 Classes.

### Days 7-10 "You Do"

Noon aides and Student Advocate take responsibility for all recess activities and 1-on-1 Classes...with lots of feedback provided.



## Noon Aide Training Focus

Meet 30 min prior to recess:

- Intro PBIS
- Discuss importance of relationship building and active supervision
- Plan for games



## Noon Aide Training Focus

Meet 30 min after recess:

- Debrief
- Feedback
- Zones and

Expectations page  
(Developed Cooperatively)

### Zone One Responsibilities (Cafeteria)

- ☐ Interact with students in a positive way. Use positive reinforcement, not negative.
- ☐ Use the microphone.
- ☐ When students enter, move around the room from the entrance door to tables.
- ☐ Make statements like, "I like how this group is walking/sitting. You came in nicely...Thank you. Going to walk out nicely, in two lines, so you get a lot of time to play."
- ☐ Students: Raise hand...get seen...hand signal to water or restroom...get a yes or no.
- ☐ Say, "Please stand" when releasing students from a seated position.
- ☐ 5/6 Recess: Supervise recess (Rover/as assigned)

### Zone Two Responsibilities (Hallway)

- ☐ Interact with students in a positive way. Use positive reinforcement, not negative.
- ☐ Keep students moving in the hallway - no playing around.
- ☐ Bounce out and check the other side of the restrooms on the playground side - no students should be hanging out there.
- ☐ Students should not be on the benches by the north entrance.
- ☒ Students should not go to portables or to the playground through the north entrance. (If they come the wrong way...send them back to walk around.)
- ☐ Walk to Cafeteria between lunches to help monitor students walking to the playground.

### Zone Three Responsibilities (Playground)

- ☐ Interact with students in a positive way. Use positive reinforcement, not negative.
- ☐ Encourage students who are playing. Say 'good shot', nice try, etc. High five or fist bump.
- ☐ Enforce rules of the playground: walk on the blacktop, no gum, no cell phones, no bad language, no food on the playground.
- ☐ Make sure PW equipment is only used for PW games.
- ☐ Help to make sure students Freeze...and quickly blow the whistle to walk to lines.
- ☐ Walk to Cafeteria between lunches to help monitor students walking to the playground.

## Additional noon aide support

This group of staff members doesn't traditionally get much training.

- Trauma Informed Practices training
- CPI De-escalation
- Positive Recess
- Engagement training



## What is the outcome of this work?

- 1- We bring formality to the informal setting of recess by using Tier 1 strategies to reduce chaos, improve safety, and promote positive behaviors.
- 2- We establish clear rules, expectations, and structured activities.

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## What is the outcome of this work?

- 3- Play is used to build the social emotional competencies of our students.
- 4- Recess & School culture is improved.
- 5- Noon aides capacity has been increased, thus empowering them.

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## Feedback from the field...

"This student is always having trouble after recess...but not this week."

"Recess is so loud we can't do state testing."



## Feedback from the field...

"We have introduced new structured and engaging games during recess to encourage increased student participation...while developing important social and physical skills. During the last two weeks we have had zero behavior referrals during lunch recess!"



# Future of PREP

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## Thoughts for the future of PREP

In progress...

- TK/Kindergarten

- Common agendas for weekly noon aide

- PREP meetings

- PBIS team integration with PREP

- Noon aide training before school starts

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## Thoughts for the future of PREP

On the horizon...[SB291](#)

Starting with the 2024-2025 school year, all K-8 students in California public schools will receive at least 30 minutes of daily outdoor recess (air quality and weather permitting). The law also bans the harmful practice of withholding recess for disciplinary reasons.

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## Thoughts for the future of PREP

On the horizon...

Student Coaches (build capacity)

Middle School support

High School support

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# Q & A

