

ONTEORA CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

BOARD OF EDUCATION
BOICEVILLE, NEW YORK 12412

RECESS FORUM

6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2015

Middle School/High School

Rob Kurnit welcomed everyone to the forum

- Great deal of input at the beginning of this calendar year
 - Had Discussions about how recess was used
 - Health & Wellness Committee wrote a draft policy for recess
- Last forum was at 4pm and discussion was that it was not a good time for everyone
 - Not everyone can come in the afternoon
- Waited until Board meeting was in a building central to the District
- Hear from as many as we can - hold comments to 3 min or less
- If your comment was made, please don't repeat what has been said by others
- Sitting as a group of people having discussion
- Parents and PTA felt recess was not happening the way they wanted – other activities during recess and a lot of information about what is beneficial for students during the school day
 - Recommendations from the Federal government say that 20 minutes of recess should be required
- Discuss if it is equitable to have other activities during recess time

Discussion:

- Grandson that attends Woodstock just found out he was not performing
 - I want my child to stay in - why would that be taken away
- Do we really need a Board to do a policy?
- Teachers, parents – need to figure it out on a 1 on 1 basis
- More of a disciplinary thing – look at it that way
- Not comfortable in Board making policy
- Bennett Student Council feels strongly that kids should have the option to stay inside or go out
 - Kids stay inside for lots of things, have after school activities
 - Need to do homework, or too cold outside
 - When there is snow on the ground play is black top only
 - Most don't bring snow pants and want to stay inside so they don't have to play on the blacktop
 - If Board takes away the option, Student Council would not exist or students would miss class time or lunchtime
 - Recess is their only free time
- Worry about trust for teachers - if my son is kept in because he didn't do homework, will go to teacher
 - Seems to be visiting this again because some people didn't get their way
- Some students need structure, some don't

- Board has other things to worry about – leave it up to parents and teachers – don't parent for me
- Argument that children can get exercise after school – some have 1 hour on bus after school, not all kids have opportunity to play outside, some have to go to workplace, some have parents too busy to take to playdates
 - For example, should they not have library because go to library?
- Children are growing, need to blow off steam and have fun so they can return to school refreshed
- Argument I am hearing is that recess is necessary –don't take it away
 - Children should be able to volunteer to do other things
 - If discipline is needed, use recess
- Children choose to do chorus and band – that is their choice – recess is not defined as playing outside – choice to lose 1 recess a week is their personal choice – signed them up for activities during recess as a parent
 - If you mandate that every child must have recess is telling children that their choice doesn't matter
 - 3rd grade allowed to do chorus and know they will lose 1 recess a week
 - Need the choice – as they get to 6th grade
 - To make a mandate is taking choices away from them
- If mandated that children must have recess, will they lose their choice? Question parental responsibility – my child lost more than 100 days of recess from Kindergarten to 5th grade
 - Goes to school with homework done, plays sports, but between 9 am and recess does not get classwork done
 - Sometimes lost recess for a week or 2 more than once
 - NYS Dept. of Labor says must have 1 hour break if you work more than 7 hours
 - Teachers willing to spend their free time with students is great
 - Kids should have choice
- Doesn't want recess is to be mandated – if board creates policy– are we limiting the choices for kids?
- What is recess? Outside play or free time?
- Free time – taking away recess as punishment takes away the ability to go outside is shame – scars
 - Teachers talk about trust, that is all they have to take away
 - Teachers – what are they losing recess for?
 - How can we get social workers to help with problems?
 - All want same thing- to succeed
 - Taking away recess for impulsive behavior is not effective
 - Kids don't want to be impulsive and are shamed to stay in for recess
 - Maybe look at bigger picture – how to better manage homework time together. If same kids are kept in over and over and doesn't work- not an effective tool

- Chart showing the number of kids why kids are kept
 - Why 37 for 5th grade and 2 for 4th
 - Mostly looks like make up work
- All have great respect for teachers – look at school and structure and the way things are set up so there are changes
- My child needs to be responsible – when will work be made up?
- Maybe discuss the homework policy – need consequence for not doing homework
- Need to hold students accountable – they struggle every night to get homework done
 - Not negative that teachers want to help my child to have less of a struggle at home
 - Some are not capable of helping their child with homework
- More tools for teacher
- In elementary school grades 3-6, if you did not do homework, you would get a 0 or held in for recess and do the work
- Not all kids have chance to do homework at home
 - Maybe an unsafe environment or can't stay homework help – instead of staying in or punish them right away, kids should choose – not an immediate punishment - but have a day late and points off for day late
 - If homework is not in by end of week, then punish - give time to correct mistake
 - Accept a 0 or stay in for recess
- (Teacher) Our homework policy is give points off, if over a week late, 5th and 6th grade team meets
 - Part of the procedure
- Kids know at beginning of year know what procedure is
- No one 5th or 6th grade team gives 0
- Hopefully a parent would feel comfortable enough to go to teacher and discuss
 - How can punishment be effective?
 - Very individual – students that go out after school want to stay in to do homework with an adult present to help
- Everyone would look into it
- Trust teachers will have all students needs in mind what they need
- School Board wishes parents would go to teachers first and follow chain of command. Board of Education is involved because it got to that point and beyond
- Trying to get information
- 7th grade student – homework policy has taught her to be responsible
- Make a choice to participate in student council and jazz band instead of recess 3 or 4 days a week
- If children are made to go outside, they will not learn to be responsible
- MS/HS has a 42 min lunch and they can do anything they want – there are so many options

- If you didn't do homework, can go to a subject teacher
 - If homework is not done more days in a row, lunch detention or another punishment
 - Hopefully realize that you have to make responsible choices
 - Choice is better than mandating children to go outside because they need exercise – have PE 3 days a week
 - MS goes outside for PE every other day
- It is a long school day I choose to do homework tomorrow during recess
- Believe that free time should be choice – if want to go outside to play or stay in, everyone needs mental break from school - everyone is different
 - Some kids behavior might be linked to activity
 - In a perfect world – children can go outside and do chorus
- No one is in favor of withholding recess for punishment
 - Homework is work that should be done at home but not everyone has parent that can help at home
- NYSSBA seminar pointed to Finland as the best educational system in the world and they don't have homework
- Assigning homework creates unequal system for children
 - Not all can do homework or get parent help
 - Need a larger conversation on appropriate amounts of homework - especially for younger students
 - If all work can't be finished in the classroom, need to look at that
- Believe time should belong to students
- Valuable tool for teachers- son had problems in school- went outside to have son evaluated – being worried about being judged because son was not in school with friends, needed a different placement
 - This isn't going to do it - needs a 1 on 1 basis – if my student lost 100 days of recess, I would look at student and parents
 - Never have let it go that far
- Recess is a valuable tool for teachers – teacher are having tools taken away from them everyday – kids who do not have discipline can be out of control – recess controls discipline
- Kids are basic human beings – not humane to not let them run around.
- When people are saying its discipline to keep a child in but it may be to help them with their work - it's not discipline - it's teaching child responsibility, life lessons in school is a great thing
- Has to get homework done is a life lesson, not just discipline.
 - Teaching child to learn more than subjects - bigger than all subjects and for the rest of your life
- It is reinforcement – miss recess not because of homework – because of classwork time – needs time management - kept in for recess is working well for my child

- When teachers keep kids in for homework and grades –that they do care about students
 - Kids sacrifice a few minutes rather than not fail
- It is not sudden outbursts and you lose recess – there are many warnings – it is the children's choice
 - Disruptive kids disrupt kids that want to learn
- Need a deeper discussion of homework and value of homework
- Finland has a 15 minute break every hour
- Drifting off because can't stay focused that long
- Taking away free time makes it worse – there is a lot to learn from other societies
- Like the idea of kids having choice – would love to talk about capping homework and if homework is beneficial
- Taking breaks are helpful to focus throughout the day
- Other discussions can come out of this discussion – Finland does not test kids until 17
- Interesting to hear different viewpoints – homework policy for everyone to see
 - Need to talk about with teacher or principal - geared toward individual
- Common core math is hard to understand, - kids don't finish work because they don't get help on it and have other homework to get to
 - Parents don't understand and don't have siblings that know how to do it
- Can't talk about one group – all different for all students and families
- Report after report stresses how important physical activity is for brain function
- Kid that might be most disruptive in class needs the physical time during a long school day that is mostly sitting down - not natural
- Teachers have good intentions but shame has to be in that time frame.
- How important is this amount of homework?
- That students can't get it done day after day and miss recess is not good
 - Modify homework or do not have homework with length of school day we have
- Make responsible choices – kids don't always make right choices – not healthy to sit in front of computer if that's what they choose during recess
- Some kids have to have breaks
- TA in special education and regular education over the years, work in 5th grade now – organize students in the morning, work for 1 hour, break, 1 hour, special, 40 min, lunch, recess, a special in afternoon then home
- Institute stretch breaks, walk around loop if necessary – as a team we incorporate healthy situations for kids
- Modification of homework, never once had a student that stayed in excessively – always give children what they need
 - Modify homework, classwork, break, as child needs
- Schedules are not as rigid as you think – self contained or regular education- whatever a student needs they get

- Have a special needs child – needs change – every teacher dealt with is willing to make sacrifices and change plans – reduce homework, accommodate needs as they change
- He does miss recess, teacher is doing most appropriate thing at the time
- Teacher feels is best at the time - maybe parent can't explain it – I never complained that teacher kept him in for 15 min or the whole recess
- Teachers are very accommodating even without a 504 or IEP – teachers really care about them
- Maybe some teachers do overuse recess, but teachers will work with parents – need to work with teacher and come up with different solutions
- Current climate of education and how teachers are viewed – never been more mistrust, because of society – nothing more mistrusting than saying let's make a board policy
 - If kids need to miss recess, ok, great consequence for my child, trust my teacher- don't undermine teachers
- School is not supposed be torture, but to prepare kids for life – in life there are consequences – if people don't do what they should, have consequences
- In the study that past Board president gave said it is important for students to have 20 min everyday – have 30 min everyday – so have 10 min leeway
 - Students are not kept in for whole time – always have some time to have play
- Important thing is that the teachers have the ability to use that 30 min – and give time to play as a balance - if there is a policy, it is tying the teachers' hands

Board will discuss whether to have a more involved policy at a future Board meeting

Minutes Recorded by Fern Amster,
District Clerk



Board of Education: Bobbi Schnell, Rob Kurnit, Laurie Osmond, Ann McGillicuddy, Tanya Davis, Valerie Storey, Kevin Salem