

The Recess Controversy

All work and no play can lead to an ADHD diagnosis and powerful drugs for little children.

The March 2015 issue of *Pure Facts* described the differences between the way young children in France and Finland are taught, compared to the approach used in the United States. In both France and Finland, children are not taught to read until they are seven years old, and unlike many U.S. classrooms, students in kindergarten and first grade do not spend hours sitting at their desks. The school day is only 4 hours long for Finnish children, and fifteen minutes of every hour is free time when they can play. Despite the reduced time children spend on academics, students in Finland rank much higher in reading, science and math than their American counterparts.

There's also a big difference in the food given to their children. Finland provides a free healthy lunch to all the students. France is very careful to feed them healthy food, serving the same type of dishes adults eat.

There's another difference between the countries: while the number of children in the US who are on stimulant drugs rises each year, only about 1% of French children take them, and the number in Finland is a tiny 0.1%. But by the time they reach high school, nearly 20 percent of all American boys will be diagnosed with ADHD, and millions will be taking drugs.

Initiatives like "No Child Left Behind" and "Common Core" pressure schools to increase student performance, and the approach many schools take is to cut back on non-academic activities (recess, PE, music, art) in order to devote more time for instruction. But this has been found to be counter-productive, especially with young children. Research shows that these children do better academically, socially, and behaviorally when they are given unstructured play time each day.



At the same time, children are being restricted from physical activity, the rates of obesity have risen and now an estimated 18% of US kids are considered obese. [Editor's note: No doubt factory food school lunches play a part as well.]

A patchwork quilt of policies

There are enormous variations among states and among schools within a state. Parents who see their young children stress from the pressures of school, dubbed "Recess Moms," look to their principals and superintendents for reform, but when that fails, they turn to state legislators. As a result, there are bills in many states that seek to mandate free time for school children, especially young ones. But some states use legislation to block these initiatives. New Jersey's Governor Christie recently vetoed a proposed law to require a minimum of 20 minutes of recess each day.

Kindergarten children in Gadsden City, Alabama, have even lost their nap time; it has been cancelled in order to devote more time to prepare for standardized tests.

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Can the Feingold Diet help a child who is not hyperactive?

Many things can result in a child having problems in school, including too much focus on academics and too little time to just be a child. But food additives are usually a big factor.

Q Most of what I have read about the Feingold program references hyperactivity. I don't feel my child is "hyperactive" (nor do the teachers), but I see signs of inattentiveness and focus issues. There are also issues of enuresis (bed wetting).

His teacher asked that we see a doctor (one who has experience dealing with ADHD). We filled out the evaluation forms and took it to the doctor's office. But even before reviewing the form or seeing the doctor, the nurse said he would probably prescribe medication.

I do not feel my child is in need of medication and will not be putting him on any. However, I am concerned about the challenges he seems to be facing at school (and at home) and have been researching the Feingold Program for a few weeks.

Have there been cases similar to this that have worked with this program?

A I can understand why you would ask this. When Dr. Feingold wrote his book "Why Your Child Is Hyperactive" in the mid 1970s, this was the term generally used, but his work covered many symptoms other than over-activity, so this has generated much confusion.

He knew that powerful chemicals can affect any system of the body, depending on where a person is most sensitive. For one person, it might be the skin that is affected, causing hives or eczema, for another, it's the lungs, leading to asthma, and for others, it is the brain, leading to problems focusing.

The answer is "yes," we have seen countless cases where removing harmful additives has reduced or eliminated numerous unwanted issues. You will see our Symptom Checklist covers many of them.

Humans are very complicated, and when they consume petrochemicals, bad things happen!