



Unstructured Break Time

Definitions

Unstructured break time (UBT): Commonly known as “recess,” UBT is a supervised time during which students have the opportunity to engage in physical activity, play with friends, sit quietly, or engage in other appropriate activities that the student wishes to engage in.

Expectation

Principals will provide a minimum of 20 minutes per day of unstructured break time (UBT), on average, for each student in grades K through 5. In general, time will not be withheld for academic or disciplinary reasons. However, a principal is expected to use his/her professional judgment in determining if withholding UBT is appropriate to a given situation. The following examples are provided as illustrations of when it MAY or may NOT be appropriate to withhold UBT. These are not exhaustive lists of all possible situations and the examples provided would be heavily influenced by the context of all factors surrounding the situation.

Examples of situations when it MAY be appropriate to withhold UBT related to academics or discipline:

- A student causes difficulties on the playground and is asked to sit by the teacher for 5 minutes during recess
- Two students fight during recess and are sent to the office while recess continues for the rest of the class
- A student’s Section 504 Plan, Individual Education Plan (IEP), or Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) specifies removing unstructured break time as an appropriate consequence for some antecedent behavior
- Student runs away from the playground (off campus)
- Actual or threatened student misbehavior proximate to break time – e.g. right before break or related to break – prompts an administrative investigation
- Administrator is investigating an ongoing discipline situation involving a student(s) during the time recess is scheduled
- Student refuses to use playground structures or equipment safely and is repeatedly endangering him/herself or others
- Student misuses time in connection with recess, such as not coming in from the playground at the conclusion of recess, so teacher takes an age appropriate amount of time away from a subsequent recess (2-3 minutes in lower elementary, for example)
- Student is serving in-school suspension
- The teacher or administrator deems it is unsafe or unwise for student to participate



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Examples of situations when it would NOT be appropriate to withhold UBT related to academics or discipline:

- A class is too talkative one day so the teacher keeps the class from getting recess the following day
- A student fails to complete required homework on time and is required to stay in from recess to complete the assignment
- A student is disruptive in a way that is not proximate to break – e.g. the misbehavior isn't connected to break time, or the investigation doesn't need to happen so rapidly as to require the student to miss out
- Punishing the entire class for the behavior of a small group of students
- A concern by school officials that a student *may* demonstrate dangerous or inappropriate behaviors during UBT, such as elopement (a better solution would be to develop a safety plan for the student which may include positive reinforcements, appropriate interventions, or increase supervisory support of that student or class.)

Principals will develop school-level procedures to ensure they are made aware of any UBT withheld, and will address inappropriate withholding of UBT accordingly.

Unrelated to academics or discipline, there are other situations for which UBT may not be offered. For example:

- A hazardous spill, police search, wild animal, or inclement weather necessitates a lockdown, shelter-in-place, or some other protocol that precludes UBT
- If weather conditions deem it unhealthy for a student to be outside (e.g. asthma) that student may stay inside supervised by another adult
- A student volunteers to help teacher/staff member with school-related tasks (e.g. displaying student work)
- A student meeting with a counselor or social worker for a social/emotional issue during time recess is scheduled
- Outside agency (DFACS, police, parole officer, therapist, etc.) comes to school to interview student and it happens to occur during recess
- Student protests that he/she would rather not participate in recess for emotional, safety or other reasonable reason

Questions about this regulation should be directed to the Executive Director of Schools.

Related Board Policy: IEDA

Approved by Cabinet: 9/10/18