



Protect Play. Learning Thrives.

30 minutes is progress. It's not enough.

## THE REALITY

Kids are struggling to feel connected at school

- 1 in 3 LAUSD students are chronically absent
- Only 58% of elementary students feel safe at school
- Student mental health needs are increasing across schools

These aren't separate issues - they're connected.



## WHAT SCHOOL LOOKS LIKE TODAY

- One short recess (~15 minutes)
  - Limited or unprotected play during lunch
  - Long stretches (90 - 120+ minutes) without meaningful movement or play
- In practice, many students get less than 30 minutes of real play

## WHAT'S CHANGED

Kids have less time to play than ever before

- Free play time has dropped significantly - by some estimates, over 30% compared to previous generations
- More time is spent in structured, sedentary environments
- School days are dominated by long instructional blocks

## WHY IT MATTERS

Play directly supports:

- Mental health and learning
- Emotional regulation
- Peer connection
- Focus and engagement
- Learning readiness

Play isn't extra - it's how kids learn.

## THE POLICY GAP

California now requires 30 minutes of recess

That's progress, but:

- It doesn't account for lost time
- (lining up, transitions)
- It doesn't include lunch play
- It doesn't ensure play is distributed across the day

In practice, it's still not enough

## THE OPPORTUNITY

We can do better, without taking away from learning

- Expand play time beyond the minimum
- Protect meaningful, uninterrupted play
- Build movement and connection into the school day



Play is how kids learn, connect, and regulate.

### Sources:

California Department of Education. California School Dashboard (2024-2025)

California Senate Bill 291 (2023)

Los Angeles Unified School District. School Experience Survey and Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP)

Data reflect publicly available reporting from LAUSD and the California Department of Education.



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