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Piloting a Recess Program to Promote School Wide Mental Health

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INTRODUCTION

We consulted with Southern Heights Elementary School's Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) team to explore and pilot a recess program that promotes mental health for the entire student population. The underlying theme of PBIS is to teach behavioral expectations explicitly, in the same manner as any core curriculum subject. ¹ Implementing social emotional learning (SEL) in schools helps ensure that every student is given access to the tools needed to engage with the social and academic world around them. ² Occupational Therapy (OT) practitioners play a critical role on the PBIS teams to provide Tier 1 interventions. ³ Recess is an opportune time to implement a Tier 1 intervention as students are naturally experiencing social and emotional situations. OTs can implement recess programs by providing their unique perspectives on individual and environmental factors that influence the development of mental health in children. ³

WEEKLY THEMES AND ACTIVITIES⁴

Week 1: Including Everyone

- ❖ Activity: Magic Tag
- ❖ Emphasis: empathy and helping each other
- ❖ Goal: to seek out and 'unfreeze' other students

Week 3: Working Together

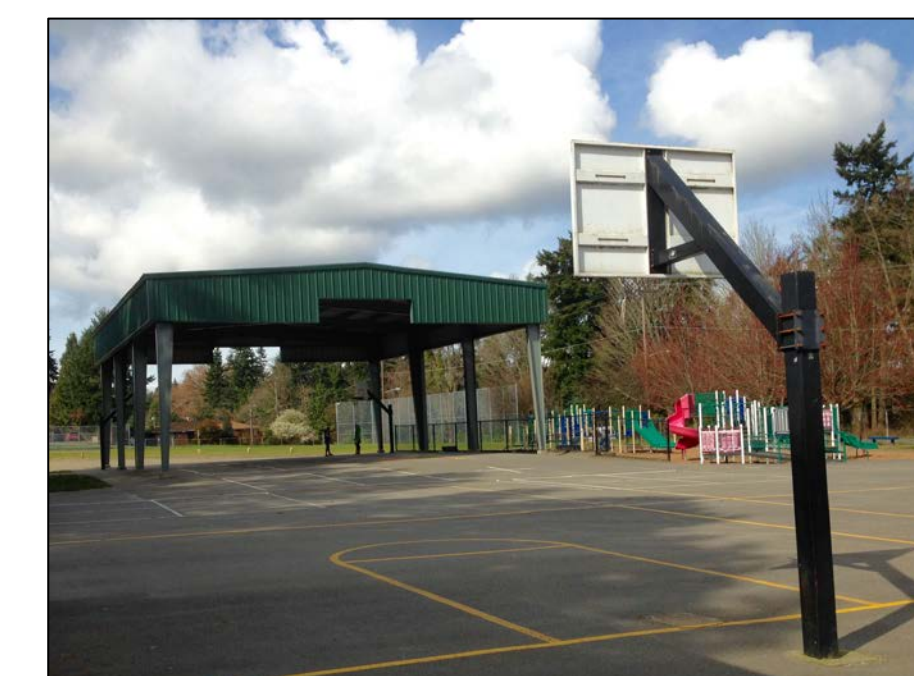
- ❖ Activity: create creatures out of recycled materials
- ❖ Emphasis: working as a team
- ❖ Goal: share ideas, listen to each other, and compromise to complete a craft

Week 2: Making Friends

- ❖ Activity: friendship scavenger hunt
- ❖ Emphasis: making new friends
- ❖ Goal: learning new things about friends through scavenger hunt questions

Week 4: Problem Solving

- ❖ Activity: hula-hoop challenge
- ❖ Emphasis: working together cooperatively to solve a problem
- ❖ Goal: brainstorm ideas and test out solutions



FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ Involve parent volunteers and/or OT student volunteers during implementation.
- ❖ Use all Refreshing Recess web-based resources for further supervisor training and student learning.
- ❖ Bring SEL lessons into the classroom; teachers can be involved in incorporating topics emphasized during recess into the rest of the school day.
- ❖ Adapt activities to accommodate older groups of kids (grades 2 and up).
- ❖ Begin implementation in the fall to introduce topics and prepare the students for the rest of the year.



METHODS

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- Behavioral and data analysis
- PBIS team meeting
- Recess observation
- Supervisor surveys
- Recess program appraisal

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Importance of recess
- PBIS
- SEL in the schools
- OTs role during recess
- Recess program evidence

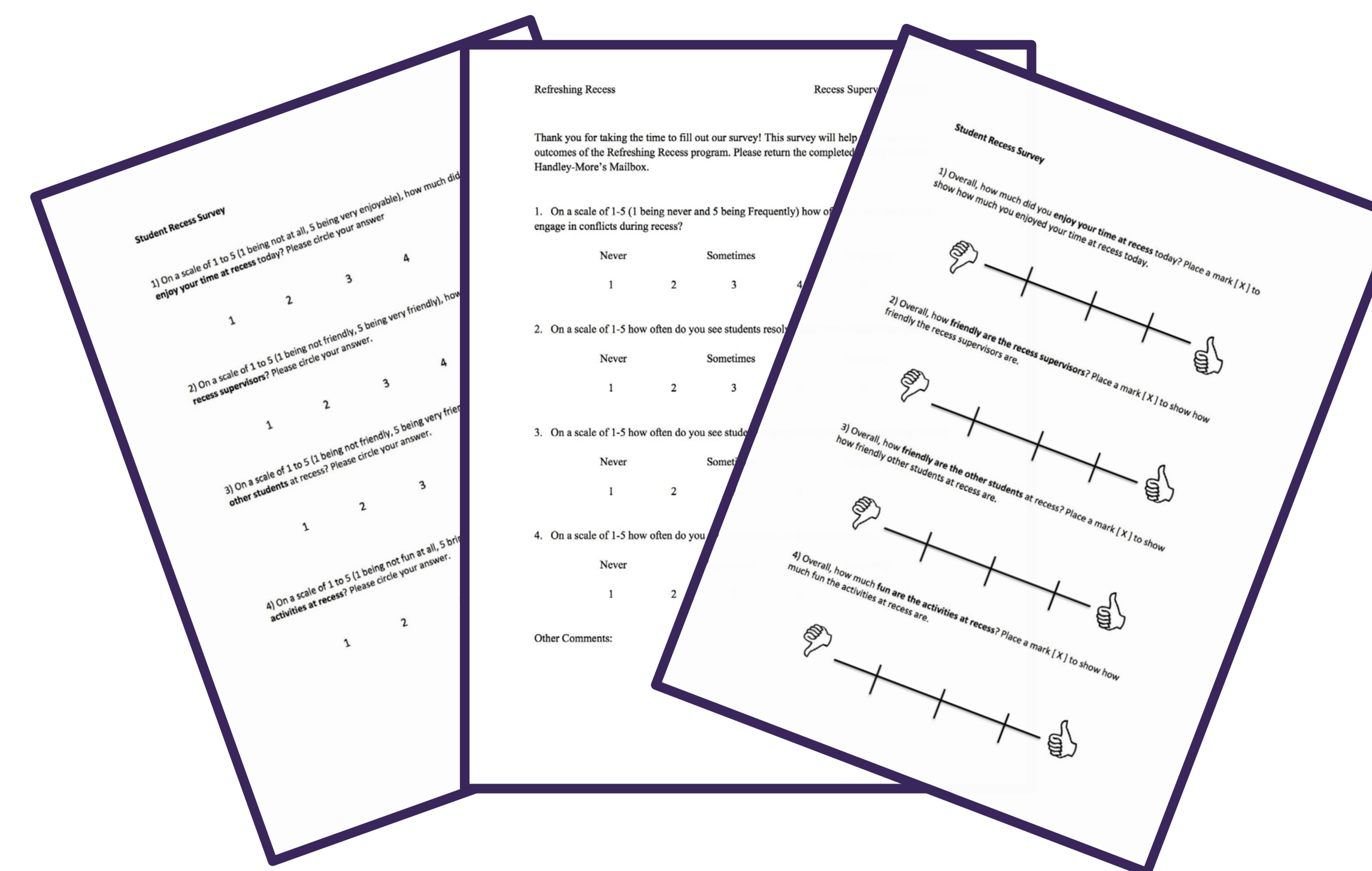
IMPLEMENTATION

- Student/Supervisor pre-surveys
- Refreshing Recess (Grades K-1)
- Student/Supervisor post-surveys

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS TO PBIS TEAM

PROVISION OF RESOURCES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

PROGRAM EVALUATION



We evaluated the program through child observation and pre and post-surveys given to the participating classes and recess supervisors. Implementation was successful as observed by student participation, observation of student enjoyment, and interest for future implementation by the school.

CONCLUSION

- ❖ Refreshing Recess is one recess program that provided a useful framework for Southern Heights Elementary School to explore alternative ways to improve student's social-emotional well-being at school.
- ❖ The program provides an opportunity for teachers, recess staff, occupational therapists, and students to engage as a community to promote school-wide mental health.
- ❖ The PBIS team gained insight and expressed interest in implementing this and other Tier I program interventions from the Every Moment Counts Initiative.⁴

REFERENCES

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2. Low, S., Cook, C.R., Smolkowski, K., & Buntain-Ricklefs, J. (2015). Promoting social-emotional competence: An evaluation of the elementary version of Second Step. *Journal of School Psychology*, 53(6), 463-477.
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4. Every Moment Counts. (n.d.). Retrieved April 08, 2016, from http://www.everymomentcounts.org/view.php?nav_id=62