

## INFORMED SOURCES SAMPLE STORY FEBRUARY 2018

### Why are we focusing on our outdoor play areas?

**It is important that, as a school community, we focus on improving our outside play areas.**

Australian children can experience more than 4,000 recess and lunch periods during their primary schooling, presenting a large period that could be used to influence behaviour, recreational preferences and habits into secondary schooling and beyond.

Having interesting and appealing outdoor spaces encourages children to get out and explore the outdoors, which doesn't just benefit their physical outcomes, but also helps them in the classroom.

Recent research shows that students who use their lunch and recess breaks to get outside and play are less likely to misbehave or push boundaries. Conversely, boring play equipment can cause children to become reckless to the point of injuring themselves or others.

Southern Cross University physical education and health expert Dr Brendon Hyndman's research also found that secondary students have voiced a desire for more challenging physical experiences.

In a book released to coincide with National Health and Physical Education Day 2017, [\*Contemporary School Playground Strategies for Healthy Students\*](#), Dr Hyndman suggests that strategies as simple as making available weather-appropriate uniforms, and providing inexpensive mobile equipment such as hay bales and blocks, could motivate students to venture into their school playgrounds, and reap the resulting health benefits.

However, Dr Hyndman said, students should be consulted about the features to be included in their playgrounds so the areas are developed in the best way to improve their health, wellbeing and outdoor learning.

Girls, in particular, enjoy creative, imaginative and social play opportunities that can't be fulfilled in tired, old-fashioned facilities. Innovative suggestions such as dog walking or dance programs give them opportunities to exercise and socialise, says Dr Hyndman.

Thinking of opportunities in outdoor spaces for learning and engagement is the key, rather than considering playgrounds as a venue for letting off steam.

If you are interested in learning more, see Dr Brendon Hyndman (ed.), [\*Contemporary School Playground Strategies for Healthy Students\*](#), Springer Nature Singapore, 2017 (DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-4738-1\_16)

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