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August 27, 2026,

Hello, Eagle Community,

Recent discussion regarding recess at BCS elementary schools spurred me to contact the PED to determine if my knowledge about what activities are allowed to be counted as part of the instructional day was correct.

I was informed by the PED that I was incorrect in my beliefs. It is only lunch recess that cannot be counted as a part of the instructional day. Any other scheduled recess during the school day can be counted as a part of the instructional day as long as the recess time does not exceed 30 minutes. I apologize for my error and for any consternation this may have caused for families and students.

It is important to remember that the goal of the district remains the same. That is student academic growth.

With that goal in mind, we must determine what is the appropriate amount of time that should be scheduled for recess, which also includes the amount of time it takes to go to the playground and return to the classroom.

Now that we know that recess time outside of lunch recess can be counted towards instructional time, I am asking each site principal to work with their staff and community to determine how recess will be scheduled into the instructional day. The BCS Board of Education has asked that the following topics be discussed with parents, guardians, and staff.

1. Length of recess time.

While schools are allowed to have 30 minutes of recess time does not mean that sites should automatically schedule 30 minutes of recess time. The district's recommendation is that any recess time that is scheduled should not exceed 20 minutes, which includes the time it takes for the students to go to and from the playground.

2. How will the recess time be incorporated into the master schedule? What subject area(s) will have time removed to create the time necessary for recess?

3. What are the processes that will be in place to ensure that adding recess to the instructional day does not lead to further loss of instructional time in preparing for recess or returning from recess?

4. What processes will be in place to ensure that playgrounds are staffed appropriately to ensure student safety when students are at recess?

5. Should recess occur on early release Wednesdays or half days?

Once principals have collaborated with staff and parents to determine the answers to these questions, a formal plan will be developed and presented to the Superintendent who will share the plans with board members to determine if the site plan is approved for implementation. To be clear, recess time at sites cannot be implemented until the site plan is approved by the Superintendent and the board.

Parents and guardians, principals will be contacting you to gather your opinion about what should be included in their site recess plan. We appreciate you taking the time to participate in the process.

In closing, I apologize for my error and your patience in allowing us to correct this error to ensure all necessary procedures are in place.

Sincerely,

Lawrence A. Sanchez
Superintendent Belen Consolidated Schools