



*Readin', Writin'
or Recess?*

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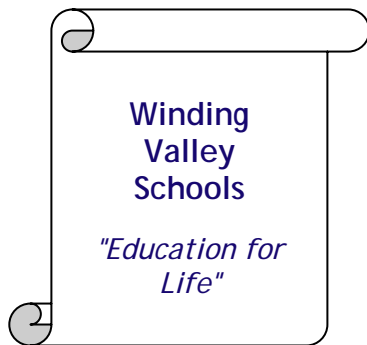
Readin', Writin' or Recess? Part I

Ahhhhh...Lunchtime! As a 3rd grade teacher at Winding Valley Elementary School, you find yourself looking forward to this time of the day almost as much as the children do! That holiday break seemed to fly by. After taking your class to the cafeteria, you head for the teacher's lounge. Just as you enter, Carol Wallace, the 5th grade science teacher, is shrieking, "I can't *believe* this!"

In that Carol is known for her rather melodramatic personality, you barely notice her reaction as you drop into the seat across the table from her. While struggling to remove the plastic from your yogurt container, Carol thrusts the two letters she has been reading in front of your face. "Here! You've *got* to read these immediately! I just found them in my mailbox!"

Setting your yogurt cup on the table, you take the letter. "What non-crisis has her so upset now?" you think to yourself.

And then...you begin to read.



Carson L. Barkley, Ph.D.
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January 11, 2005

To: Faculty, Parents and Staff of Winding Valley Elementary School

From: Dr. Carson Barkley, Superintendent

Re: Upcoming Inquiry Meeting

I would first like to take this opportunity to welcome you back to the winter term. I hope you have all enjoyed your holiday break and are ready for an exciting new quarter.

Second, I would like to make you aware of a very important issue that has arisen within our school district that will require study, cooperation, and collaboration from administrators, teachers and parents.

I have received a request from a group of district parents to consider eliminating the afternoon recess and reducing the number of physical education classes to one per week for grades K - 6. Members of this parent group have clearly spent considerable time thinking about this issue. With their permission, I have enclosed a copy of their proposal.

In order to make a decision which best meets the needs of parents, teachers, and students, the school board has asked that we conduct an inquiry meeting on January 20th at 7:00 p.m. in the high school auditorium during which interested parties may present their cases regarding the proposal. We will provide 4-minute blocks of time for individuals and 8-minute blocks for groups. We are asking that all interested parties call the Board of Education office by next Tuesday to reserve a time. Additionally, we ask that all provide a written transcript of their statements including any references that might be cited.

We hope that you will choose to make your thoughts known on this important issue!

Academics First Committee
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Cincinnati, OH 45200

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(513) 134-0000

Dr. Carson L. Barkley, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Winding Valley School District
4062 Bellingham Drive
Cincinnati, OH 45200

December 10, 2004

Dear Dr. Barkley:

I am writing to you on behalf of a group of concerned parents in the Winding Valley School District. We have been meeting to discuss some of the problems we see with current recess and physical education scheduling in our district. We are proposing the elimination of the afternoon recess as well as reducing to one the number of gym classes per week for grades K - 6. We believe that one recess per day, in addition to the brief period provided following lunch, is more than sufficient to meet the needs of our students.

Adopting this proposal would significantly reduce or eradicate a number of problems currently facing our school district. These include:

- The growing need for additional instructional time. With the trend toward outcomes-based education and increased pressure to produce higher scores on standardized tests, teachers need more time to prepare students for these exams. Additionally, we think the extra time could be used for implementing exciting new curriculum such as a foreign language.
- Defeated school levies. Districts that do not produce higher test scores are finding it more and more difficult to get their school levies passed. We must be accountable to the voters.
- The need for uninterrupted instructional time. We have heard teachers comment that there are many times when students are engrossed in an activity when it comes time for gym class or recess. When the students leave the room, momentum disappears and opportunities for deeper learning disappear.
- The need for additional school funding. There would be reduced cost to the school district for physical education instructors.
- Liability issues related to playgrounds and rising insurance costs.
- Shortage of teachers/volunteers to provide adequate supervision during recess

While we are aware that many would cite the need for physical activity among young people, we would remind them that many of our students play on sports teams and receive plenty of physical activity playing with their friends. In short, we agree with Atlanta Superintendent of Schools Benjamin O. Canada's comment to the New York Times, "We are intent on improving academic performance. You don't do that by having kids hanging on the monkey bars."

We thank you for considering our proposal and would welcome the opportunity to speak with you or members of the board regarding our position.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Lane
Chair, Academics First Committee

"Holy cow!" you exclaim looking across the table at Carol. "What are these people *thinking?*"

"I'm sure I have no clue," Carol responds, "but you can be sure that I have every intention of being at that meeting...and sitting in the front row!"

"I agree, Carol, but don't you think it would be best if we went as part of a group of teachers? You know...strength in numbers and all that."

Just then, James Harris, a particularly charismatic 6th grade history teacher and hiker extraordinaire, strolls into the teachers' lounge. The door barely closes behind him when Carol shoves the letters into his hands and demands that he read them on the spot.

As he drops his lunch bag onto the table, Carol proclaims, "James, you're *just* the person who can rally the troops on this issue. We're ready to join the team!"

As James' eyes scan the papers, he begins to shake his head. Before he even completes reading the letters he looks up and asserts, "*No way* can we let this happen. Let's poll the teachers after school today to see if anyone wants to join us in trying to head this off at the pass!"

After school, the three of you talk with other teachers about the Superintendent's letter. Nearly everyone agrees. The *Winding Valley Elementary School Keep Gym and Recess Committee* is born!

The next morning, you find a memo from James in your mailbox.



WE NEED YOU!

Winding Valley Elementary School
"Keep Gym and Recess Committee" Meeting

WHEN? Tuesday, January 18th
3:00 - 4:30 p.m.

WHERE? The Cafeteria

WHY? To begin planning our presentation

WHAT? Please bring resources/research articles that can be used to provide support for our position!



Tuesday, January 18th—3:00 p.m.
Winding Valley Elementary School Cafeteria

Many of the cafeteria seats are filled with teachers anxious to support "the cause."
At 3:04, James Harris stands and addresses the assembled crowd.

"First, I'd like to thank all of you for agreeing to be here today. We have an extremely important job ahead of us and one that needs to be completed in a short period of time, so we'll need everyone's active involvement!"

Uncapping a black marker, James walks toward one of the sheets of blank chart paper that he has taped to the cafeteria walls. He then turns toward the group and announces, "Now, I think the first order of business is to decide on a clear and forceful position statement that can be used at the beginning of our presentation."

Write your group's position statement on a separate sheet of paper to be handed in at the end of class. (Make sure each group member has a copy as well.)



Readin', Writin' or Recess? Part 2

Tuesday, January 18th—3:37 p.m.
Winding Valley Elementary School Cafeteria

"Terrific!" James exclaims snapping the cap back on his marker. "I really think we have a winner of a position statement.

"OK. Next on our agenda is to begin identifying resources that support our claims. I know that many of you have brought in a variety of resources from newspapers, journals and the Internet that we can use to help build our case. I think for the sake of time that it might be a good idea to work in groups, and because you've spaced yourselves fairly evenly at the tables, we're ready to roll.

"Now, here's the task. On the sheet of paper I've provided, make a list of all the arguments you can identify which support our position. Next to each argument, identify the resources we can use as evidence. We'll include these in a bibliography to submit with our written document.

"Just one final point. As you're thinking about the arguments we can use, I encourage you to think back to your child development courses in college. We need to think about *all* the domains of development—not just the physical. I really think it will strengthen our case if we address the whole child.

"Alright. Let's get moving. We have about 50 minutes to work. We can meet back here Thursday afternoon to plan our next steps. In the meantime, I'll make sure that everyone gets a copy of all of the argument lists."

Group Name: _____

Arguments (Must be written in complete sentences!)	Resources/References (Must be specific—include name of article)



Readin', Writin' or Recess? Part 3

Thursday, January 20th—3:01 p.m.
Winding Valley Elementary School Cafeteria

"Welcome back," James Harris says smiling at the group of teachers filing into the cafeteria. "We have lots to do today so grab a seat, and we'll get moving."

"I am really pleased at the work you all did on Tuesday afternoon," James says. "You certainly were creative in identifying arguments and resources to support our position, and I think we're going to be able to deliver a powerful presentation next week!"

"Today's task is to decide the format we will use to prepare our written statement and to obtain 4 or 5 volunteers who will help me put the statement together using the information you have all collected. OK. Anyone have any ideas?"

"Yes!" replies an emphatic Sarah Abbott, a 6th grade English teacher sitting at the back of the room. She stands and begins to talk as James writes on the taped chart paper.

"It just so happens that I've helped write a couple of position papers for groups that I've belonged to over the years. We need to start, of course, with an introduction thanking the superintendent and board for the opportunity to speak and providing a brief overview of who we are and how we came to the position that we did. At the end of this section, we will need to insert the thesis statement that we developed on Tuesday. The next section is the body of our position paper. We need to discuss each argument, one per paragraph, and provide sources to support each idea."

At this point, James stops writing and turns to the group adding, "Right! And this is where we really need to be sure that we are addressing all the developmental domains."

Sarah nods in agreement and continues. "Yes. You're absolutely right. And the more respectable our resources the stronger our case will be!"

"OK. Just one more section—the conclusion. And this is where we can really 'sock it to 'em! Here we need to bring it all together and remind them of our position and why we are *right!*"

Sarah takes her seat as a smattering of applause breaks out amongst her colleagues.

"Well now," says James smiling broadly. "I think we've just been given a call to action!"

As the sound of excited voices begins to swell, James puts his hand out to quiet the group saying, "Alright. Let's don't lose this momentum. I want to see 4 or 5 hands of folks who would like to work with me to write our statement and give the presentation."

Your hands go up immediately and before you know it, YOU have been chosen, along with members of your group, to write the position paper and to present the statement at the Board Meeting!

Your task is to write the position paper and provide an 8-minute presentation of your statement following the guidelines highlighted in the problem statement as well as those listed below:

- Use quotations whenever information is taken directly from a resource
- Provide a "Works Cited" page identifying the resources you have used as evidence to support your claims
- Paper must be typewritten, double-spaced with 1" margins
- Paper must have a cover page with group and group member names

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- You must also think of at least 2 questions that you would like to ask the other groups when they present!
- *A visual aid is not required.* If you choose to use one, then it *must* be an integral part of your position statement and *must* be referred to during the presentation. Visual aid must also have print that is large enough for everyone to see!