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# PLAYWORKS for every kid

## About Playworks

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### Why Playworks

We believe recess and play can unlock our kids' superpowers

### How Playworks

Our approach connects recess to a positive school experience

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### Recess Rock Stars

Meet the rock stars helping  
ensure kids get healthy,  
active play every day



## PLAYWORKS for every kid.

In 1995, Playworks Founder [Jill Vialet \(/about/jill-vialet\)](/about/jill-vialet) got an earful from a principal she was visiting in Oakland, California. Rather than recess being a happy, playful time for the kids, the principal lamented that it had become the most chaotic period of the school day, with kids getting hurt, getting into trouble, and getting left out. In that moment Jill saw an opportunity to change recess, to make it a positive and productive time for all kids. In 1996, Jill founded Sports4Kids, now Playworks, in two Berkeley, CA elementary schools.

We all know that through play children learn critical skills for getting along with each other, working in teams and resolving disagreements. We also know that the playground is where children have the opportunity to be leaders and live out positive cultural values like including others and demonstrating empathy.

But unfortunately, school principals tell us that nearly all discipline-related problems in school occur during

recess. Instead of going back to class energized and ready to learn, the kids return to class upset and unable to focus.

We can change this. Recess should be fun and energetic and safe and inclusive for everyone. Isn't that what we want for all kids in elementary school today?

When recess becomes a healthy, integral part of the school day, kids carry that positive experience with them beyond the playground.

We are coaches, kids, teachers, parents, and supporters who believe in the power of play to make kids, schools, and communities stronger. On our playgrounds, everyone plays, everyone belongs, everyone has the opportunity to get in the game. Playworks coaches encourage kids to bring out the best in themselves and each other, and kids learn the value of fair play, inclusion, and respect. We are changing school culture by leveraging the power of safe, fun, and healthy play at school every day. We create a place for every kid on the playground to feel included, be active, and build valuable social and emotional skills.

On our playgrounds, kids become leaders. They run their own games and settle their disputes quickly (rock-paper-scissors is our problem solver) because getting along is more fun than fighting.

On our playgrounds, kids play hard, cheer loud, and high-five with joy. Whether through imaginative play or organized games, they carry a feeling of empowerment and belonging with them into their classrooms, back to their neighborhoods, and out into the world.

Playworks's mission is to improve the health and well-being of children by increasing opportunities for physical activity and safe, meaningful play. Today, Playworks is the leading national nonprofit leveraging the power of play to transform children's social and emotional health. Playworks currently serves more than 1,200 schools across the United States and

reaches more than 700,000 students directly and through professional training services.

## PLAYWORKS for teachers and principals

Every year we survey the staff (</about/annual-survey>) at our partner schools around the country to see Playworks through their eyes. Here's what they reported this year:

A decrease in bullying

An improvement in overall school climate

A reduction in disciplinary incidents

More participation in academics

An increase in students' abilities to focus on class activities

In addition, Stanford University (<http://jgc.stanford.edu/>) and Mathematica Policy Research (<http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/education/playworks.asp>) spent time on our playgrounds studying our program. In 2013, they published a randomized control trial, considered the gold standard for research, that found that compared to other schools, schools with Playworks experienced less bullying and exclusionary behavior, an increased perception of safety, more physical activity, better behavior and more attention in class than schools without the program. (</blog/playworks-recess-much-more-break-day>)

**We've gone from kind of dreading teaching the period right after recess to it being a very productive academic time.**

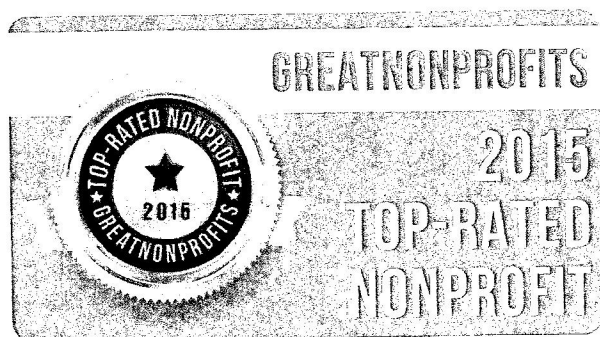
—Audra Philippon, principal

I believe the ‘cliques’ have been served notice. Inclusiveness is the operative word. There seems to be an increased sensitivity to try and draw the fringe students into whatever the activity. They are less content to leave their classmate behind.

—Elaine Newhouse, teacher

By emphasizing responsibility, tolerance, conflict resolution and inclusive play students are better equipped to handle social situations. Moreover, the amount of time spent on discipline has been reduced and instructional time-increased!

—Teacher, Los Angeles



<http://greatnonprofits.org/org/playworks-1>



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