

STUDENTS TAKE ACTION

PROJECT Citizen



Restoring School Recess

Traditionally, students in Madison, Wisconsin, had two recess periods. Then in order to save money—about \$650,000 per year—the Madison Metropolitan School District decided to replace morning recess with a shorter indoor break. The school board did not anticipate students' reactions, however.

Community Connection At one of the schools in the district, a Project Citizen class of 36 students believed that the lack of exercise during the morning made students restless before lunchtime. Some parents and teachers agreed. In order to get recess restored, however, the students needed to convince the school board to change its policy, without losing money.

Taking Action The students contacted members of the media, and several newspapers and television stations came out in favor of the "Recess Rebels." The students also created a public service announcement for radio and put up posters in the community. They surveyed school and community members about the recess cut and graphed the results. After the students appealed to the school board and state officials, the board decided to let the teachers' union vote on the issue. Partly because of the disruption the change would have caused in the middle of the school year, most teachers voted against it. Despite this setback, the students realized that they could make a difference and decided to continue their campaign. One student said, "Before ... I thought a citizen was someone who flew a flag and voted. I now know that I am a citizen and I have a voice."



Students can have a voice and take action to try to change school policies.

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SERVICE LEARNING

1. How did the students go about getting support for their campaign? Were they successful?
2. What do you think the students might do differently next time?