

News Debate: Out of Touch?

Are contact sports too dangerous for recess?

Not all students are allowed to play touch football, soccer, and tag at recess. Schools in at least seven towns and cities throughout the United States have banned those games. More schools nationwide are considering the ban. Check out both sides of the debate to decide whether you think contact sports should be kicked out of recess.

Officials say putting a stop to some popular recess games will make playgrounds safer. Charles Pinckney Elementary School in Charleston, S.C., nixed contact sports after some students suffered broken arms and dislocated fingers while playing touch football.

"Students haven't been taught early on how to start, stop, and touch properly," Donna Thompson, director of the National Program for Playground Safety, told *WR News*. "That's going to lead to injuries with these contact sports."

Thompson argues that schools should provide equipment for their students to play flag football instead of touch football, which would make the game less perilous, or risky. She also points out that touch football, soccer, and tag aren't the only banned games. Many schools have already restricted dodgeball and red rover to cut down on student injuries.

Some people think that the ban on contact sports goes too far. "It's taking away children's rights to choose their own activities," Rhonda Clements, a physical education professor at Manhattanville College, told *WR News*. Clements and other experts think that kids should be able to play the kinds of traditional playground games that their parents and grandparents played.

"There are very few opportunities in a school day where children can choose [whom] they play with and what they play," says Clements. Experts say that touch football and tag are among those opportunities, and playing those games helps kids develop good exercise habits. Research shows that more than 9 million kids ages 6 to 19 are considered overweight. Participating in recess games such as tag and soccer keeps kids active.