

# JOIN THE GAME!

Joining a game can be hard at recess. Here are a few steps both adults and kids can take to make sure that everyone feels welcome and included.

## Adults

Adults can have a big influence on students engaging in play at recess. Simple actions can increase the number of students who enjoy the benefits of safe and healthy play every day at recess.

- ❑ **Have a variety of games available at every recess.** Creating a space for every student on the playground takes a bit of planning. Kids with different skills, interests, and abilities need options. One size doesn't fit all and neither does one game!
- ❑ **Maintain a healthy level of competition in games.** When a game is too competitive it can be unsafe or intimidating for students to jump into the game. Some games can get kids excited and sometimes too revved up. Consider modifying a game so it stays safe and inviting. For example, if a tag game is moving too quickly, change a rule! Instead of 'running' require students to move at a fun, different pace (i.e. "move like a zombie" or "skip instead of run")
- ❑ **Create recess procedures that help students join games easily.** Introduce games where students can simply jump into a line to join, instead of a game that has continuous play and no breaks. Games can be unwelcoming when students have to ask other students to get into the game or when the play doesn't pause for new kids to enter.
- ❑ **Just say "No" to Captains.** Picking teams can be a scary time for your students. Having adult intervention when picking teams can take the anxiety out of joining the game. Rather than having students choose teams by friends and skill levels, adults can help determine teams in a fun way, like picking teams by birthday months or using a method like assigning "apples" and "oranges" to create balanced teams quickly.
- ❑ **Check in with kids not participating.** Asking what game a student wants to play or why a student is unwilling to jump into a game can make a big difference. We don't want to force students to play but asking simple questions can help you and your school break down the barriers and challenges students are having on the playground.
- ❑ **Play games with kids!** Kids are curious and eager to play with their teachers and recess staff. And, it's fun!

## Students

At school, we want to empower students to make their recess safe, inclusive and fun for everyone. Here are some things you can teach that will make recess everything your students want and need.

- ❑ **Have older students engage younger students.** Create a space for your older students to teach the younger students the rules, skills and procedures of the recess. This gives your older students great leadership opportunities and younger students are generally more interested in games if a kind, older student is playing or leading a game for them.

- ❑ **Get students to check in with kids not participating.** When students see others not playing, go grab them and get them into a game. Sometimes, an invitation is all one needs to join the game.
- ❑ **Give students opportunities to pick games at recess.** Allow students to choose the games at recess by providing some guidelines. We suggest the following guidelines for ensuring kids have ownership over games while keeping recess safe and inclusive.
  1. They have to come up with written rules, posted at the game area approved by the school.
  2. Game rules should be respectful and inclusive.