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SteveSongs Recess Rocks Video Filmed at Macdonough

More than students from Middletown's elementary schools took part in the new music video for the Community Health Center's national school-based program to reverse childhood obesity.

By [Cassandra Day](#) [Email the author](#) 11:30 am

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SteveSongs Recess Rocks music video was filmed in Middletown schools. Credit Megan McGory

Recess at most Connecticut elementary schools is 25 minutes long, which may seem lengthy, but when the school day clocks in at six and a half hours, for naturally energetic children ages 4-11, it's not always enough activity.

Enter [Recess Rocks](#), developed by the [Community Health Center](#) in 2004. It's a national program to reverse childhood obesity and to redefine and

redesign how recess is incorporated into the school day: a free, dynamic movement program for elementary school children that can be adapted to any part of the school day. It brings fun, non-competitive aerobic exercise and kinesthetic learning into the classroom and beyond.

"We use Recess Rocks after a long period of kids being inside for recess," says Middletown's North End elementary school Macdonough Principal Jon Romeo. "In a small space, they can take any content and make it physical. If the children are learning about telling time, they can be asked to move their arms to the 3 o'clock position or if they're reading 'Little Red Riding Hood,' movement instructors will tell them to crouch down and hide from the wolf."

"They combine learning with energizers to get the wiggles out," he explains, which is especially important for children who are routinely more active.

Research shows that students' academic performance improves when the brain and body work together. Through a sound foundation of school-based wellness initiatives, like Recess Rocks, teachers will be better equipped to balance kids' recommended physical activity guidelines while enhancing academic progress.

This week, Recess Rocks released a theme song and music video featuring Wesleyan University alumnus Steve Roslonek of PBS Kids' show [SteveSongs](#). It also features musician Anand Nyack, another Wesleyan graduate, and Kim Thibodeau of Middletown, who designed, implemented and nationally launched the children's in-school fitness program for the Community Health Center. She also designed and implemented the Nutrition and Physical Demonstration Activity for the State of Connecticut Department of Health.

Lisa Rozo, program coordinator for Recess Rocks, acknowledges schools are focused on academics more than ever, but administrators have recognized the need for exercise throughout the school day.

"With all the recent statistics about childhood obesity and the growing awareness from health groups and people like Michelle Obama, they have realized that obesity is a huge problem. I think the schools have also realized that since the children spend so much time at school, they have a big responsibility to help the children get healthy."

Middletown schools have participated in the Recess Rocks program the longest (some since 2004). "A big help is that teachers, principals, and aids at these schools are very invested in the health of their students and they participate in the classes when they can which provides a great example for the kids," Rozo says. "I have had kids chanting 'Recess Rocks' as they leave the class. One student who was next to me during the class said, 'I love Recess Rocks,' while he was dancing to the theme song. A lot of the songs are ones kids know and it is always exciting for them when they recognize a song and sign along or say 'my parents listen to this song!' One student said, 'Are we working out? I'm sweating and when my dad works out he gets sweaty!' Rozo said."

Organizers held auditions in all eight Middletown elementary schools from Oct. 11-22 and 257 children showed up — all of which were invited to be in the music video filmed at Macdonough on Oct. 28.

Recess Rocks is now in 16 schools in Connecticut and in late February there will be training for more movement instructors to go out into the schools. Organizers have, according to Rozo, gone to two concerts with SteveSongs in Boston and Wethersfield to promote Recess Rocks and dance with him and the kids in the audience.

The music video, along with the official instructional movement video, and Recess Rocks programming, blend a variety of aerobic movements—like kickboxing, African drumming and yoga — and upbeat, energizing music. The sustained-activity programs can be used at school to get kids fit, sharpen young minds, encourage natural "feel-good" energy, build self-esteem and nurture lifelong healthy habits.

Recess Rocks helps move communities, schools, parents and kids to health with several free components:

- A free online [toolkit](#) that includes detailed classes, activities, guides, sample communications to parents and more.
- Teacher workshops, movement instructor training and customized programs that meet the needs of individuals, school administrations and organizations.
- "[Recess](#)" and "[Active Classroom](#)" programs that provide ample in-school opportunities for teachers to boost academic success and help children get their recommended daily 60 minute dose of vigorous physical activity, recommended by First Lady Michele Obama's "Let's Move!" campaign.

Teachers can get started with Recess Rocks in their classrooms by downloading the free toolkit and signing up for the monthly [Wellness Rocks e-newsletter](#).

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