



Students play “house-hopping” games during a break between classes at a school in Zhejiang Province. — All photos by IC

National Health Commission figures show that outdoor activities are crucial in preventing myopia.

In 2022, China recorded an overall myopia rate of about 54 percent among children and adolescents. Moreover, obesity among those aged between 7 and 18 increased to nearly a quarter in 2019 from 1.2 percent in 1985.

Children who are too stifled can sink into depression — an increasing problem among Chinese youth.

The 2022 National Depression Blue Book of China showed that 15 percent of adolescents face the risk of depression — surpassing the rate among adults. Common symptoms include blue moods, poor concentration, reluctance to study and increased interpersonal conflicts.

The Ministry of Education released a regulation in September 2021 that emphasizes the need for students to have “reasonable and necessary opportunities” for physical activity during breaks.

In a reply to recent complaints, an official of the ministry said schools are required to allocate 30 minutes of extended break time every day, during which time, students should engage in suitable

physical activities and relaxation.

He stated that the ministry will initiate a nationwide review to address the “quiet 10-minute break” trend in nationwide schools.

To address safety concerns, the introduction of commercial insurance is becoming more common. In Shanghai, coverage with comprehensive school liability insurance began in 2001.

Specialized policies covering activities such as sports and campus accidents emerged after 2010, in response to a surging number of students.

Lin Jie, who works at a domestic insurer, said these policies should help alleviate the safety concerns of both parents and schools, to some extent.

Lin said she deals with almost 1,000 student accident reports a month — many involving incidents that occur during breaks — like students colliding in hallways and students suffering eye injuries while running with pencils in hand.

Following the widespread public discussion about class breaks, many schools in Shanghai and the cities of Shenzhen and Guangzhou have launched creative activities for students to fully relax during the 10-minute break. Some schools have even extended



A teacher plays games with students between classes at a school in Beijing.

the breaks to 20 minutes.

In Shenzhen, many schools are providing recreational games, outdoor rock climbing, bonsai cultivation, sports, guitar playing, Frisbee competitions and reading corners during breaks, according to Shenzhenfabu, the city’s official WeChat account.

In Shenzhen, the school affiliated with the Luohu Educational Institute has installed two almost three-story-high slides to give students quick access to playgrounds during breaks.

At the Yongding branch of the Beijing Normal University Affiliated Middle School, students are forced to go outdoors during breaks.

Regular facility-safety checks, improved safety management and teacher patrols are essential to enhance student safety, said Liu Zhihui, deputy dean of the Law School of China University of Political Science and Law.

“Simply sacrificing the 10-minute break between classes to ensure safety is not worth it,” Liu said.