Outdoor Play Spaces
Procedures 322-C

Category: Administration
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1. General

These procedures govern the purchase, installation and ongoing management of creative playgrounds on school board property.

When installing or redeveloping play spaces, schools should incorporate accessibility features in order to create inclusive play spaces that allow children of all abilities to play, learn and grow together.

All UGDSB schools are encouraged to extend the classroom and consider natural outdoor spaces to promote student learning and well-being.

2. Definitions

Creative Playground
Any area of the school grounds that contains playground equipment and/or naturalized playscape elements.

Playground Equipment
Any installed, pre-fabricated playground apparatus on the school grounds, used for creative play. Examples include, but are not limited to, climbing structures, slides, swings, etc.

Naturalized Playscape Elements
Any installed apparatus on the school grounds constructed from natural materials, used for creative play. Examples include, but are not limited to, vertical embedded logs, horizontal embedded logs and armor stones.

Protective Surface
Any material surrounding the playground equipment and/or naturalized playscape elements that is intended to provide fall protection meeting CSA standard requirements for a defined fall height.

3. Playground Design and Planning

All playground requests must be submitted through an Alterations Request in eBase. Although the board accepts design standards of reputable manufacturers of playground equipment, it has restricted certain design aspects. The board reserves the right to restrict other design aspects as deemed appropriate. The school should take into account the following:

Safety Requirements:

3.1 Culverts, tire swings, sewer pipe, teeter-totters, merry go-rounds, pressure treated wood structural members, diggers and track rides shall not be installed.

3.2 Protective surface materials must be approved by the board. All material must conform to the most current CSA standard.

Location Considerations:

3.3 Creative playgrounds must be situated away from fire exits, fire routes, plowing routes, potential portable sites, high traffic areas, underground and overhead services, gullies, waterways, rocky terrain, and, where possible, hard surfaces, and must minimally affect the operations of grass cutting. No trees should overhang the playground area.

3.4 The location must be a well-drained area and not interfere with the intended overland flow of rain water and snow melt.

3.5 The location must take into account any septic system operations including drainage field location(s) in order to ensure performance and ongoing maintenance are not negatively impacted.

3.6 Containment areas are not to be placed within fifteen (15) metres of an existing sand box to avoid cross-contamination of the protective surfacing material. Where a 15-metre separation is not possible, schools are to consult with Facility Services.

Accessibility Considerations:

3.7 Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) applies to newly constructed and redeveloped outdoor play spaces that include play equipment, such as swings, or features such as logs, rocks, sand or water, where the equipment or features are designed and placed to

provide play opportunities and experiences for children and caregivers. To comply with this regulation, all schools in the Upper Grand District School Board shall undertake the following when designing, constructing, or redeveloping their outdoor play spaces:

3.7.1 consult on the needs of children and caregivers with various disabilities

3.7.2 incorporate accessibility features, such as sensory and active play components, for children and caregivers with various disabilities into the design of outdoor play spaces; and

3.7.3 ensure that outdoor play spaces have a ground surface that is firm, stable and has impact attenuating properties for injury prevention and sufficient clearance to provide children and caregivers with various disabilities the ability to move through, in, and around the outdoor play space.

4. Newly Purchased or New Donated Playground Equipment and Playscape Elements

4.1 All donated CSA regulated playground equipment must be new from the manufacturer. No used CSA regulated equipment will be installed on board property.

4.2 All newly purchased or donated playground equipment and naturalized playscape elements must comply with the most current version of the CSA standard, Children's Play Spaces and Equipment. Letters of compliance with this standard from the equipment manufacturer must be retained with all other documents for the equipment.

4.3 The principal is the primary communication with the board and is responsible for defining the needs of the school in considering the purchase of playground equipment.

4.4 All donated or purchased playground equipment and playscape elements become the sole property of the board.

4.5 Schools, through the school council or other means, are responsible for:

4.5.1 Acquiring the funds to purchase new playground equipment.

4.5.2 All costs of the installation including equipment, containment, protective surfacing material, signage, and any excavation and drainage work required.

4.5.3 Ongoing maintenance, repairs, and upgrading of playground equipment or playscape elements.

4.5.4 Establishing a contingency fund of at least ten percent (10%) of the purchase price of creative playgrounds for ongoing maintenance and repairs, including for emergency repairs.

4.5.5 Developing a plan for the replacement of playground equipment and playscape elements based on the life expectancy provided by the manufacturer.

4.6 The principal is responsible for selecting playground equipment from a manufacturer which must meet or exceed design and performance specifications as approved by Facility Services.

4.7 All requests to install playground equipment must be submitted through an Alterations Request in eBase.

4.8 Facility Services is responsible for the final approval regarding standards of design, construction and location of all creative playgrounds prior to purchase. Preference will be given to lower risk and lower maintenance designs.

5. Installation of Creative Playgrounds

5.1 The principal is responsible for choosing a location on the school property for the creative playground subject to approval from Facility Services.

5.2 Volunteer installations will not be permitted. A qualified professional must install, or oversee the installation of, all structures, equipment, materials and containment (as approved by Facility Services). Installations where volunteers are supervised by qualified contractors will be considered only if:

5.2.1 the installer assumes full responsibility for all persons involved in the installation operations, including volunteers. If the installer is assuming full responsibility for the installation, the installer must provide a hold harmless waiver and indemnification, which is satisfactory to the board, or

5.2.2 the volunteers obtain independent insurance acceptable to the board. If the volunteers arrange insurance, each volunteer must provide a hold harmless waiver and indemnification which is satisfactory to the board.

5.3 When the installation is complete, the manufacturer must provide the board with a letter indicating that the equipment and installation conforms to the current CAN/CSA guidelines and standards, and the terms and conditions of the guarantee and warranty.

5.4 Principals shall ensure that all installers hold the required liability insurance and Workplace Safety and Insurance Board certificates.

5.5 The installer is required to barricade equipment on a daily basis until all work is completed (e.g., snow fence).

5.6 All surface and ground preparation for all playground equipment must be provided by qualified personnel in accordance with recommended CSA standards.

5.7 The principal and Facility Services shall ensure that all newly installed equipment and site preparation/ground cover is inspected by a certified playground inspector prior to use. The principal will retain the inspector's checklist for future reference.

5.8 All playground equipment that is specifically designed for a certain age group must have signage to identify the manufacturer's information, the intended age of users (provided by the manufacturer), and the manufacturer's contact number.

5.9 All playgrounds must have signage indicating that they are unsupervised outside of school hours.

6. Inspections for Outdoor Play Spaces

6.1 **Daily and Weekly Inspections**

The principal shall implement a daily visual inspection program to look for safety concerns (e.g., harmful debris, damage to equipment, sufficient surface material). Daily inspections shall be logged and retained by the school. Daily inspections will be switched to weekly inspections during the winter period when the playground is closed.

6.2 **Monthly Inspections**
The principal shall implement a monthly inspection program. This shall entail a more detailed check of the condition of the equipment and surrounding area. Monthly inspections shall be logged and retained by the school.

6.3 **Annual Inspections**
Facility Services shall implement an annual inspection program performed by an external professionally certified playground consultant.

6.3.1 Any deficiencies found during any inspections need to be documented on the inspection form and follow up actions taken must be documented accordingly.

7. On-going Maintenance and Repairs

7.1 The school shall assume responsibility for maintaining creative playgrounds to required standards and will coordinate repairs to equipment and playscape elements as needed. Facility Services will provide a list of approved playground repair contractors, and all repairs will be completed by one of the pre-qualified contractors.

7.2 The school assumes the responsibility for maintaining any naturalized playscapes, inclusive of the ground covering materials such as mulch, stone dust, wood chips or vegetative cover.

7.3 Facility Services shall assume responsibility for maintaining the protective surfaces within a defined containment area, such as EWF, peastone, and metering stone, to required fall height standards.

7.4 If at any point the creative playground becomes unsafe and cannot be immediately addressed, the principal will take the playground out of service until the unsafe condition is rectified. If school funds are not available to repair/replace the unsafe components, the equipment shall be taken out of service and/or removed.

7.5 If Facility Services becomes aware of a maintenance issue which renders the playground unsafe, every effort will be made to contact the principal. In the event the principal and/or school council are not available, Facility Services staff will take action to make the creative playground safe and associated expenses will be charged back to the school.

8. Playground Equipment Removal/Relocation

8.1 Once a school and school council have received an inspection report that designates playground equipment as unsafe and not conforming to the CSA guidelines, the school will immediately close the playground and work to rectify the situation. If a playground remains unsafe for a period of greater than three months, and no plan is in place to rectify, the principal shall work with Facility Services to address the safety concern.

8.2 If at any time the school determines that their play structure is not worth repairing and there are no plans for its replacement, Facility Services can be contacted to remove the structure. Facility Services will be responsible for arranging, managing and funding the safe removal. This may or may not include the removal of the containment area and material.

8.3 Equipment taken out of service shall not be given to the community or staff due to the potential for an unsafe condition (e.g., liability).

8.4 The board reserves the right to remove or relocate any playground equipment in the event of safety, accommodation or other reasonable concerns.

8.5 Any decision to relocate playground equipment shall be made in consultation with Facility Services.

9. Opening/Closing of Creative Playgrounds

9.1 It is the position of the Upper Grand District School Board that all playground equipment cannot be safely operated during the following winter conditions:

- freezing temperatures
- snow build-up
- ice or freezing rain
- frozen ground cover.

9.2 The principal can restrict access at any time if the local site conditions result in a safety concern.

9.3 All playground equipment is off limits from November 1 to March 31. Notice of this will be posted with appropriate signage and communicated to parents (e.g., newsletters).

9.3.1 The closure period can be adjusted, for access during the school day only, at the discretion of the principal, provided none of the conditions outlined in 9.1 exist.

9.4 Playgrounds can only be opened in the spring after the principal completes the monthly inspection checklist and verifies no unsafe conditions exist.

10. Safety Considerations

10.1 Principals are responsible for establishing and communicating the rules and guidelines specific to their creative playground and specific to individual pieces of equipment as necessary. The following should be considerations when developing those rules:

10.1.1 Inappropriate behaviours that may create unsafe conditions.

10.1.2 Accessories and/or toys not part of the original design and/or not a permanent part of the playground equipment.

10.1.2.1 Skipping ropes should not be allowed on or near playground equipment.

10.1.3 Clothing with entanglement or tripping risks.

10.1.4 The maximum number of students and age levels permitted.

10.2 The rules should be reviewed with staff, students and volunteer supervisors at the beginning of the school year with reminders throughout the year as needed.

11. Accident Insurance

11.1 Parents are to be notified by the school that the board does not carry accident insurance for students. Student Accident Insurance is available throughout the year via two sources. Information can be found on the UGDSB website at https://www.ugdsb.ca/page/accident-insurance.