Greater Essex County District School Board

Policy: Play Space – Outdoors

Reference No: P-PL-02

Purpose

The purpose of a play space is to provide an environment to exercise the mind and body, while promoting safe, physical, learning opportunities with a purposeful link to the natural world (outdoors).

The naturalized play space supports creative thinking, exploration, improved quality of play and social interaction.

Effective Date: 2002-09-01
Last Revision Date: 2018-04-16
Review Date: 2021-03-23
Next Review Date: 2025-26

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1.0 PRINCIPLES AND GOALS FOR NATURALIZED PLAY SPACE

1.1 There are a number of key principles to consider when designing a play space with naturalized components in a school environment. These principles include:

a) Connection to nature
b) Social interaction
c) Exercise
d) Choices
e) Accessibility

1.2 There are a number of key goals to consider when designing a play space with naturalized components in a school environment. These goals include:

a) Safe environment
b) Places for exploration and learning
c) Place to have fun
d) Exercise

1.3 The Board will consult with the school community during new school design, and should funding be available, the provision of outdoor classrooms will be prioritized.

1.4 The Board will encourage and support schools in their planning for outdoor classrooms.

2.0 CHARACTERISTICS / COMPONENTS OF A NATURALIZED PLAY SPACE

2.1 The design, construction and installation of a naturalized play space may include trees, boulders~~,~~ pathways, (walking or nature) trails, hills, a grass maze, garden areas (example butterfly), a gazebo, benches, other type seating components, activity playfields, soccer fields, outdoor classrooms, a social centre, sheltered areas from the elements, natural habitats, flexible work areas and gaming activities.

3.0 APPROVAL PROCESS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 The Board allows community / parent groups or school councils to partner and provide funds towards naturalized play space areas. The Board does not financially contribute to the initial cost of the naturalized components but assists, approves and assumes the insurance liability and responsibility for inspections, minor maintenance and normal upkeep. Normal upkeep excludes topping up trail/pathway material or repaving trails/pathways, which would be a school financial responsibility. The Board will ensure, in all new school builds, that preliminary preparation of the grading is completed to support a future play space.

3.2 The Board assumes the liability for the play space and associated components. The type of component and its installation shall meet the Board's standards as detailed in the regulation.

3.3 All upgrades and additions to existing naturalized play areas must be approved by the Board's Facility Services Department prior to any detailed planning.

3.4 The Principal must submit the project for approval as detailed in Administrative Procedure AP-PL-01 – Alterations to School Building, Grounds and/or Change in Use of Space (Approval Process). Once approved, the Principal must coordinate the installation with Facility Services.

3.5 All Schools must follow the eight steps of project approval process outlined in the Board's EcoSchools Ground Greening Process.

3.6 All play areas and components must be installed by an approved contractor and coordinated through Facility Services. On completion, the contractor is to provide the Facilities Services Department with a letter indicating the terms and conditions of the guarantee and warranty.

3.7 All contractors installing naturalized play areas and components on Board property must provide proof of insurance coverage for a minimum of two million ($2,000,000) for vehicle and liability insurance, with the Board named as an additional insured. The contractor must also provide a certificate of good standing from the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board before a purchase order is issued or work commences.

4.0 PROHIBITED PLAY STRUCTURES

4.1 The Board will no longer permit the purchase and use of pre-manufactured Canadian Standards Association (CSA) playground equipment. Prohibited items include but are not limited to the following:

a) Wood structures
b) Platforms

c) Swings
d) Teeter totters/seesaws, merry-go-rounds/roundabouts
e) Dome climbing structures or monkey bars

4.2 The Board reserves the right to restrict other design aspects, equipment and/or components as it deems appropriate.

5.0 EXISTING PLAY STRUCTURES

5.1 Effective on November 6, 2012, the continued use of existing grandfathered CSA playground equipment is contingent upon its meeting all requirements of the current CSA standards for playground equipment. In addition, any equipment or ground surfacing that is identified as needing repairs to meet the standard will be the financial responsibility of the school. Removal of grandfathered CSA playground equipment and ground surfacing will be the responsibility of Facility Services. Such removal will only occur after consultation with the Principal and School Council.

6.0 MAINTENANCE OR REMOVAL OF PLAY SPACE COMPONENTS

6.1 The Board will assume responsibility to inspect and provide minor maintenance and general upkeep to the play space in order to maintain a safe standard and acceptable appearance.

6.2 The School and community will be given the option of funding the repair costs if the play space needs to be upgraded or replaced. If the play space poses a safety hazard or is deemed unmanageable, and the school determines after consultation with Facility Services it is unable or unwilling to finance the repair costs, then the play space components will be removed at Board expense.

7.0 MAINTENANCE OR REMOVAL OF GRANDFATHERED CSA PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT

7.1 The Board will assume responsibility to inspect and provide minor maintenance and general upkeep to grandfathered CSA playground equipment in order to maintain a safe standard and acceptable appearance.

7.2 The School and community will be given the option of funding the repair costs if the grandfathered CSA playground equipment needs to be upgraded or repaired. If the grandfathered CSA playground equipment poses a safety hazard or is deemed unmanageable, and the school determines after consultation with Facility Services it is unable or unwilling to finance the repair costs, then the grandfathered CSA playground equipment will be removed at Board expense.

8.0 SCHOOL CLOSURE

8.1 The Board is not responsible for the relocation of grandfathered CSA playground equipment or play space components when schools are to be closed. Removal and disposal will be done at Board expense.