



Outdoor Playground Equipment and Other Structures #400.07

Adopted:	June 24, 2003
Last Reviewed/Revised:	May 24, 2022
Responsibility:	Superintendent of Business & Treasurer
Next Scheduled Review:	2025-26

Policy Statement

The Board, in principle, supports the purchase and installation of safe playground equipment or other outdoor structures by school communities.

Application and Scope

The purpose of this Policy and Administrative Procedure is to provide stakeholders with information on maintaining, replacing, installing, and removing playground equipment/outdoor structures and applies to all school sites and all school playground equipment and other structures whether provided by the Board as part of a capital project or purchased with funds donated to the Board as part of a local school initiative. School playground equipment includes structural equipment (e.g., shade structure).

References

- [National Standard of Canada CAN/CSA Z614-20 Playground Equipment and Surfacing](#)
- [AODA Regulation 191/11](#)
- [FIN 700.01 - Procurement](#)

Forms

- N/A

Appendices

- OPS 400.07.XA – Playground Equipment and Outdoor Structure Financial Obligations

Definitions

- N/A

Administration Procedures

New Equipment and Playground Areas

The principal shall act as the school's primary resource person for the duration of the project and shall prepare a design and development proposal incorporating the following:

- plan for location of equipment, playground, or other outdoor structures
- type of material to be used
- estimate of costs of equipment or playground (including site preparation and installation)



- timeline for project
- financing plan and operating costs of playground or equipment

The above proposal must be developed in collaboration with the Manager of Facility Services (or delegate from Facility and Construction Services) and the Supervisor of Procurement Services.

The proposal shall adhere to the following guidelines. New equipment and playground areas will:

- be closely related to the existing site.
- not interfere with large open play space areas.
- be designed to elicit a wide variety of responses and appeal to children's sense of creativity.
- have a variable environment in terms of texture, levels, and heights as a means of providing for individual differences.
- provide the opportunities for both individual and group activity.
- be fully accessible in accordance with current AODA requirements.

The design, construction and installation of playground equipment must conform to the standards from the Canadian Standards Association CSA- Z614, Children's Play Spaces and Equipment in effect at the time of installation.

It is strongly recommended that a third party qualified and/or certified person work with school committees during design and installation and, if possible, coordinate site specific concerns with appropriate Board staff. These costs should be incorporated into the costs of the project.

Although the Board accepts design standards of reputable manufacturers, it has restricted certain design aspects:

- wood structural members are not acceptable.
- platform height not to exceed six (6) feet.
- swings not to exceed eight (8) feet.
- wood fibre with a current International Play Equipment Manufacturing Association (IPEMA) certificate is the minimum standard used for the protective surface.
- plastic border material shall be used as the material for the enclosure of the protective surface.

The Board reserves the right to restrict other design aspects as deemed appropriate.

In order to be support students with accessibility issues, installations must reflect:

Minimum accessibility requirements.

- Accessibility specifications for elements with the play space.
- Amount of play spaces within the structure that must be accessible.
- Elevated components as well as ground level components.
- Requirements for accessible routes within and leading to the play structure.

Natural Play Areas

The Board promotes the importance of providing all students with the opportunity to play in the natural world. Loose parts play with natural elements such as sticks, pinecones, logs, stumps, mud kitchens, sound, or water walls, learning gardens etc. provide experiences for further exploration and open-ended play. Natural playscapes provide unlimited opportunities for inclusiveness and creativity, are gender-neutral and accessible to a wide range of ages and abilities.



Careful consideration must be made when offering natural materials to students. Administrators and staff must carefully consider students' competencies and provide due diligence in inspections, supervision and safety when providing loose parts to students.

Any natural materials that are permanently installed must follow the new equipment protocol. This would include loose parts that get frozen into the ground in the winter. Objects higher than 36" tall must be barricaded off if frozen into the ground. The suggestion would be to limit loose parts to under 36" tall to avoid this situation.

Equipment Inspections

Where weather conditions have resulted in an inability to complete adequate inspections, the principal shall place the play and other structures off-limits for use. (See On-going use of Playground Equipment)

- a) **Daily Visual Inspections:** A visual inspection shall be performed on all playground and outdoor equipment used by students by the principal (or designate) at least once one each school day. This inspection is intended to identify obvious safety concerns and needed repairs, such as glass, broken boards, loose or missing handrails, or anything that could cause injury to a student. When a deficiency is identified in the daily inspection, the Administrator shall follow the steps set out in this procedure. A daily maintenance logbook must be kept on file at the school, through eBase.
- b) **Annual Inspections:** are facilitated by Facility Services each year by an inspector who has received appropriate training in the inspection and maintenance of playground equipment. Using these reports, the Administrator through consultation with the Facility Services department and the school council, can prepare recommendations as to whether the equipment is adequate, or should be removed, renovated, or upgraded. In the event the school community cannot provide sufficient funds for the required repairs and maintenance of the playground equipment, the Board will reserve the right to decommission any structure.

The inspection findings and actions shall be recorded and kept on file in the Facility Services Department for two years. Repairs that have been identified will be completed as soon as possible after the report is received.

Maintenance and Repairs

When a staff member identifies a safety concern or an item in need of repair, it shall be reported immediately to the Principal (or designate) who will notify Facility Services immediately. When a defect is reported it shall be repaired as soon as possible, and, in the interim, the Principal shall make the equipment out of bounds to students.

When repairs are made on site, the Facility Services staff are to log the work completed and retain it on file. The work order for repairs completed by the facilities staff will be the record of repair.

Should a repair that involves a safety hazard take more than one day to complete, the children shall be prevented from using the equipment through the use of appropriate fencing and a "keep off" warning sign.

When the cost to repair a piece of playground equipment is excessive, the Manager of Facility Services, after consulting with the school principal, may decide that the equipment should be taken out of service and removed from the school grounds.



Financial Obligations

All schools are responsible for raising funds for the purchase and repair of playground equipment or outdoor structures, and the funds must be in place prior to the commitment to purchase and install of the equipment. School Administrators must establish a play structure fund in their school generated funds account to pay for all play structure repairs and maintenance. Refer to Playground Equipment and Outdoor Structure Financial Obligations (OPS 400.07.XA).

The Principal must notify the Manager of Facility Services and Supervisor of Procurement Services of the school's plans (i.e., type of equipment, cost, fundraising projects, etc.) during the planning stage and submit a plan for review.

When the school is ready to send collected funds to the Board, the Principal shall notify Financial Services.

Procurement of Equipment

The Principal, on behalf of the parent groups, should contact the Supervisor of Procurement Services before requesting information from the manufacturers/suppliers to avoid unnecessary legal issues. For example, when contacting a manufacturer, tender should not be requested, but rather an estimate.

Once the project is ready to proceed, the Supervisor of Procurement Services will ensure that the correct procurement process is used (i.e., quotes, request for proposal, request for tender, etc.)

Installations by volunteers is not permitted.

Ongoing Use of Equipment

Each school should conduct playground and structure safety sessions to reduce the risk of student injury, outlining the playground and/or structure rules applicable to the specific location. This should include discussion of appropriate footwear to be worn while playing on the structures.

These sessions should be held for students and staff at the beginning of each school year. In addition, on an annual basis, the Principal will determine the impact that winter conditions are having on the playground equipment or outdoor structure. The following winter conditions can impact on the ability to complete appropriate inspections and make equipment that is otherwise in compliance with the CSA standard, unsafe for use:

- At temperatures below 0°C, very few types of protective ground surfacing remain resilient enough to offer any degree of protection to a falling child – regardless of depth. If the ground cover is frozen, the play equipment cannot be operated safely.
- Snow build-up can cause two problems on a play structure – play surfaces can become very slippery, and it can create suffocation hazards if the openings at the end of tube slides or similar structures become closed in by drifting snow.
- Ice or freezing rain can make play surfaces, hand grips and stairways very slippery, increasing the risk of slip and fall injuries.

Where weather conditions have resulted in an inability to complete adequate inspections, the principal shall place the play structures off-limits for use.



Responsibilities

Manager of Facility Services (or designate):

- Ensuring a third party qualified and/or certified person is involved during design and installation
- Ensuring all play structures and equipment are installed by an approved manufacturer
- Facilitating the recorded annual inspection for each school every spring of each year
- Ensuring repairs completed by Facilities staff are logged in the record of repair.

Supervisor of Procurement Services:

- Working collaboratively with Administrators to ensure purchasing processes are adhered to.
- Ensuring all manufacturers installing playground equipment on Board property provide proof of insurance coverage for a minimum of two million dollars, liability insurance with the Board named as co-insured, as well as a certificate of good standing from Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

Principals (or designates):

- Performing daily visual inspections.
- Maintaining the daily maintenance log book.
- Reporting safety concerns or items in need of repair to the Manager of Facilities.
- Preventing children from using equipment when repair involves a safety hazard and takes more than one day to complete.
- Notifying the Superintendent of Business and Supervisor of Procurement Services of plans to purchase equipment.
- Conducting playground safety sessions at the beginning of each school year.
- Forwarding collected funds to accounting.
- Ensuring school councils are aware of the details of this administrative procedure.

Staff:

- Reporting safety concerns or items in need of repair to their Principal (or designate).



Playground Equipment and Outdoor Structure Financial Obligations

Board Costs	School Costs
Removal of outdoor playground or structure per direction of Facility Services and/or Health and Safety Officer.	Cost of new/replacement playground or outdoor structure.
Annual inspection by a Certified Play Structure Inspector to ensure all CSA standards are met.	Site preparation which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Installation• Cribbing• Excavation
Periodic top up of protective ground surfacing.	Play structure minor and major repair costs. Each school council will contribute \$500 annually toward play structure repairs in their school generated funds account. These funds will accumulate and be used to offset any repairs as required. Repairs quoted at a cost of \$500 or less will be completed immediately and the schools will be billed. For repairs for greater than \$500, the school will be consulted to determine how they will pay for the repairs or have the play structure removed.
Vandalism – Costs in excess of \$1,000.	Vandalism – School Council will be responsible for the first \$1,000.
	Relocation of existing equipment or structure and landscaping to accommodate playground or outdoor structure.