



Niagara Catholic District School Board

PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT

ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

700 – Buildings and Site

No 702.1

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In keeping with the Mission, Vision and Values of the Niagara Catholic District School Board, the following are Administrative Operational Procedures for Playground Equipment.

PREAMBLE

The Niagara Catholic District School Board recognizes that playground equipment on its school sites has been provided through the participation of school and community groups raising funds for its purchase, installation, inspection and maintenance in accordance, with the guidelines on playground equipment.

The Board also encourages the formation of community partnerships to assist in the purchase, installation and maintenance of playground equipment and surfaces in accordance with the guidelines on playground equipment.

The Board recognizes the appropriate use of playground equipment and adult supervision, as well as the fact that that playground equipment will be utilized by the community outside of the normal school day.

DEFINITION

For the purpose of this document, “Playground Equipment” is defined as a play structure, anchored to the ground, or two or more play structures that are attached or functionally linked that provide one or more play activity, and are for approved use in the play areas of Niagara Catholic elementary schools.

NEW PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT

1. All new installations of playground equipment must be reviewed and approved by the Controller of Facilities Services in accordance with this Administrative Operational Procedures. The Controller of Facilities Services and Facilities Services staff will review items such as the age appropriateness of the proposed play structure, location, drainage, underground utilities (gas, water, telephone, cable, hydro, drainage pipes) and compliance with standards and regulations. As well, the resources allocated to the life-cycle maintenance of the equipment will be reviewed.
2. All equipment must comply with current working Standard: CAN/CSA Z614-(Latest Edition).
3. All playground equipment and installation must be purchased through Niagara Catholic Purchasing Services.
4. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) compels school boards to have their buildings, premises and structures accessible. Playgrounds are included in the Act. All new playground equipment installations must be AODA compliant (site to be accessible and equipment to include ground-level accessible equipment for student enjoyment).
5. All new playground installations, protective ground surfacing must be poured-in-place seamless chemical-binder/rubber-filler synthetic surface to a sufficient depth to achieve critical height protection per CAN/CSA Z614-(Latest Edition). Loose-fill surfacing is not acceptable.

6. Location of the equipment and construction/installation will take place under the direction and supervision of Facilities Services.
7. All installed equipment becomes the property of the Board.
8. No equipment shall be installed without there being sufficient school-generated funds for the ongoing inspection, maintenance, repairs and renovations of the equipment and grounds. (a minimum of \$4,000 should be available every year for maintenance of the equipment or protective surfacing).

EXISTING PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT

1. Equipment that is deemed unsafe shall be put out of bounds to students pending repairs or removal. Equipment is to be removed from a school upon direction of the Controller of Facilities Services, after consultation with the Principal, where repairs to the equipment to make it safe cannot be cost effectively implemented. Where playground equipment is removed or not installed at elementary schools, it will be the responsibility of the Board to provide active playground areas painted on the asphalt playground.
2. It is recommended that whenever possible, preschool play facilities are separated from school-aged play facilities and the entire play area to be contained within a fenced perimeter. The inspection of such fenced play space for small children will be done by a qualified Playground Inspector appointed by the Child Care Provider. Any actions arising from the inspection report, renovations, repairs or replacements of equipment or surfacing material within this area will be the responsibility of the Child Care Provider.
3. Principals shall maintain sufficient funds as determined by the Controller of Facilities Services for the ongoing inspection, maintenance repairs and renovations of the playground equipment and surfacing. (a minimum of \$4,000 should be available every year for maintenance of the equipment or protective surfacing).

PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT NEAR FACILITIES UNDER CONSTRUCTION

1. Equipment that is within the construction site of a renovation or addition to the existing facility shall be put out of bounds to students until the construction is completed
2. The playground equipment shall not be used until any disturbed protective surfacing has been restored according to the requirements of the current Standard and cleared for student use by Facilities Services.

PLAYGROUND SAFETY

Proper supervision is a key component to student safety on the playground.

The following steps, while not all encompassing, will assist staff in supervising students using playground equipment:

- Ensure the equipment is used properly.
- Monitor and control the number of students who have access to the equipment.
- Enforce safety rules and sanction students not following the rules.

WINTER USE

The playground equipment is NOT safe for use if there is/are:

- Freezing temperatures - 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. Snow build-up can cause two problems on a play structure: it can make play surfaces very slippery;

and 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.
- Playground equipment cannot be operated safely under the winter conditions as described above. Schools should place this equipment "off limits" during these conditions.

PLAYGROUND RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

In determining what is the best course of action to maintain playground equipment, a prioritization system will be introduced. The three priority levels that are applied to each piece of equipment are:

- Priority #1 – Hazards which are life threatening or permanently disabling;
- Priority #2 – Hazards which are serious and may cause non-disabling injury;
- Priority #3 – Hazards that may cause slight injury, or equipment not in compliance with CAN/CSA Z614-(Latest Edition).

The Risk Management Strategy shall be completed yearly by a playground inspector appointed by Facilities Services.

MAINTENANCE

Monitoring should consist of retaining documentation of daily/weekly inspection reports by the custodian, with noted deficiencies and copies of completed work orders to validate that the deficiencies have been corrected. Custodians must maintain accurate logs to verify inspections of play equipment.

Daily Inspection

A walk-through inspection must take place, each morning, prior to the students' arrival. The custodian must inspect for overnight vandalism to the structure itself, or harmful debris on and under the structure. This walk-through must be logged, and any action taken documented.

Weekly Inspection

A weekly inspection must be conducted by the custodian to check for loose bolts, wear, and the general security of the structure. Weekly inspections must be logged, and any action taken documented.

If a weakness is identified in a structure and it cannot be immediately repaired, the equipment must be removed from service until repairs can be made.

Yearly Inspections

Every year a comprehensive written report must be prepared by a certified playground inspector appointed by Facilities Services. These reports will be made available to the Principal in order to implement the necessary repairs.

Reported injuries that have occurred on the playground equipment must be recorded and immediately reported to the Principal, Family of Schools Superintendent and the Superintendent of Business & Financial Services with a copy to Facilities Services.

Reference Publications:

- [*CAN/CSA-Z614-\(Latest Edition\) \(Canadian Standard Association for Children's Playspaces and Equipment\)*](#)

- [ASTM F 1292-99 \(American Society for Testing Materials-Standard Test Method for Shock-Absorbing Properties of Playing Surface Systems and Materials\)](#)
- [Ontario School Boards' Insurance Exchange – Advisory Bulletins](#)

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