Northeastern Catholic District School Board

SCHOOL GROUNDS: ENHANCEMENTS AND EQUIPMENT

Administrative Procedure Number: APE014

POLICY STATEMENT

The Northeastern Catholic District School Board (NCDSB) strives to provide school grounds that are safe, inclusive, functional, and designed to enhance educational opportunities for students. The NCDSB is committed to having school grounds that allow for a range of outdoor learning spaces that provide students with active and quiet play, spaces for relaxation, and a range of physical activity. The NCDSB believes that school grounds are an integral and important aspect of the school community, designed to be accessible and responsive to the needs of all learners.

REFERENCES

Education Act
- Section 265 Duties of Principal: Care of Pupils and Property
- Section 286 Duties of Supervisory Officers: Supervise Buildings and Property

Ontario Regulation 298 Operation of Schools
Ontario Regulation 191/11 Integrated Accessibility Standards
Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
National Playground and Safety Standards
Children's Play Spaces and Equipment): CAN/CSA-Z614-98
Ontario School Board Insurance Exchange (OSBIE)
NCDSB Policy
- B-8 Purchasing
- B-16 School Generated Funds
- E-14 School Grounds: Enhancements and Equipment

DEFINITIONS

Outdoor Play and Learning Spaces
May include the use of natural pieces such as trees, boulders, pathways, raised flower beds or garden boxes as well as other items such as benches to create a social center and areas sheltered from the elements on school property or in the early learning play areas.

Playground Equipment
Any installed, pre-fabricated playground apparatus anchored to the ground or having natural stability and not intended to be moved.

School Grounds Enhancement Projects
Initiated by the school and may include but are not limited to, greening initiatives, outdoor classrooms, location of play structures, and other outdoor learning spaces for students and the school community.

PROCEDURES

1.0 GENERAL PROVISIONS

1.1 The implementation of this policy with respect to planning, selection, acquisition and installation shall be the responsibility of the Principal and the Manager of Plant.

1.2 Existing playground structures will be maintained until removal becomes necessary.

1.3 All playground equipment installed on Board property becomes the property of the Board.

1.4 All donated CSA regulated playground equipment must be new from the manufacturer.

2.0 SELECTION STANDARDS

2.1 Equipment selected shall be constructed as approved by CAN/CSA-Z614-98, also keeping in mind the following criteria:
- i) safety as per OSBIE guidelines;
- ii) maintenance costs; and
- iii) durability.

2.2 No equipment, regardless of the source of funding, shall be installed on Board property without proper authorization.

2.3 All school ground enhancement projects and equipment installation plans must be reviewed by the NCDSB Accessibility Committee, in accordance with the legislative requirements.

3.0 ACQUISITION PROCESS

3.1 All playground equipment must be approved and requisitioned through the Manager of Plant to ensure proper responsibility for records, maintenance, ownership, installation standards and approvals.

3.2 All requests for the purchase of playground equipment or school ground enhancement projects must be accompanied by:
- i) a school site diagram showing the proposed location;
- ii) equipment specifications including pictures, drawings, installation and maintenance instructions.

4.0 INSTALLATION STANDARDS

4.1 Playground equipment must be installed by the manufacturer or an installer authorized by the Manager of Plant.

4.2 The location for the installation of playground equipment must take into consideration:

i) Existing traffic patterns on the playground;
ii) The location of the playing fields;
iii) Separation from other structures;
iv) Future additions to buildings;
v) Fire routes;
vi) Snow removal;
vii) Buried services.

4.3 The location will be determined by the Principal in consultation with the Manager of Plant.

5.0 INSPECTIONS

5.1 Daily routine visual inspection shall be the responsibility of the staff who should report any defective or faulty equipment to the Principal and record the report.

5.2 The Custodian, under supervision of the Principal, shall inspect daily and report any defect or problem to the Manager of Plant on a monthly basis, where the Custodian is unable to repair the defect or problem.

5.3 Any unsafe equipment shall be reported, in writing, by the Principal to the Manager of Plant.

5.4 Certified inspections will be carried out by an authorized professional annually, as coordinated by the Plant Department.

5.5 Annual certification inspection reports will be kept within the Plant Department and a copy provided to the respective Principal.

6.0 MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR

6.1 The Principal and the Manager of Plant will coordinate responsibility for maintaining outdoor / creative learning spaces, as required.

6.2 If at any point the outdoor play spaces become unsafe and cannot be immediately addressed, the Principal will take the playground out of service until the unsafe condition is rectified.

6.3 If the Plant Department becomes aware of a maintenance or safety issue which renders the playground unsafe, every effort will be made to contact the Principal. In the event that the Principal is not available, the Plant Department will close the playground and take action to make the space safe as soon as possible.

6.4 Maintenance and repair will be coordinated by the Manager of Plant, and addressed as reasonably as possible and determined on a case-by-case basis.

7.0 SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 Principals are responsible for establishing and communicating the rules and guidelines specific to their outdoor play spaces and playground equipment. The following should be considerations when developing those rules:

i) Inappropriate behaviours that may create unsafe conditions;
ii) Accessories and/or toys not part of the original design and/or not a permanent part of the playground equipment;
iii) Skipping ropes should not be allowed on or near playground equipment;
iv) Clothing with entanglements or tripping risks should not be permitted;
v) The maximum number of students and age levels permitted.

7.2 The rules and expectations should be reviewed with all staff and school ground supervisors at the beginning of the school year, with reminders throughout the year as needed.

7.3 Due to the compromised conditions of safety surfacing in the winter months, playground equipment will be prohibited for use during the school day. The dates of closure and re-opening of playground equipment will be at the discretion of the Principal, as the school site manager.

7.4 The Plant Department will provide signage for all schools indicating the following:

i) that grounds and equipment are unsupervised outside of school hours;
ii) that users assume risk when using the equipment;
iii) that all equipment is owned by the NCDSB.

8.0 REMOVAL OF EQUIPMENT

8.1 Equipment will be removed when:

i) Equipment cannot be retrofitted to meet CSA compliance; or
ii) Equipment cannot be repaired in a cost effective manner; or
iii) Equipment has been recommended for removal or replacement by an authorized professional Certified Playground Inspector; or
iv) Equipment is at any time, deemed dangerous or unsafe.

8.2 The Manager of Plant will coordinate the removal of equipment as needed, in collaboration with the Principal.

9.0 SCHOOL YARD ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS

9.1 The Principal will coordinate, research, and consult with the school community, staff, and students as necessary, to identify the components of a school grounds enhancement project.

9.2 The Principal will consult with the Manager of Plant of any proposed or planned projects, prior to beginning of any purchasing or work.

9.3 The Principal and Manager of Plant will review school site plans to ensure the most suitable locations for outdoor play spaces and/or playground equipment.

9.4 The Principal will assign the appropriate financial considerations for all enhancement projects, and include a 10% contingency fund to address any issues that arise.

9.5 The Principal and Manager of Plant will *complete Playground and Equipment Structure Checklist* form and submit to the Superintendent of Business accordingly.

10.0 RELATED FORMS AND LETTERS

FORM: Playground and Equipment Structure Checklist

Chief Executive Officer: *Tricia Stefanic Weltz*
Date: May 2026