PLAYGROUND SAFETY | 8001.4

Recess supports healthy lifestyles by strengthening and enhancing physical fitness and mental, social and emotional well-being. Exercise has been shown to improve academic performance and reduce risk of several chronic diseases. It is expected that all elementary school students will participate in recess. Recess is not to be used as a regular intervention to address student behavioral issues.

Scheduling

Schools are encouraged to schedule recess to take place before lunch in order to promote adequate nutrient intake. Recess should end at least one hour prior to dismissal, so that school nurses have ample time to properly triage, assess and treat any injuries that may occur during recess.

Playground Equipment and Surfacing

Playground equipment including the surrounding play area must be thoroughly inspected on a routine basis to identify and correct any actual or potential hazards. Custodial staff must complete a weekly playground inspection using a playground safety checklist. The playground safety checklist must be submitted to the Office of Maintenance and Facilities upon completion.

Supervision

Schools must divide their playground into four zones, with at least one staff member supervising each zone based on the age of students, the number of students, the mental and physical abilities of students, and discipline issues. As a general rule, for maximum safety, playground supervision rates should equal classroom teacher-student ratios (approximately 1:28).

While on duty, playground supervisors must stand in locations where they have straight-line visibility and must have a communication device (e.g., radio, phone) and whistle. Playground supervisors must move around their zone in order to monitor the area thoroughly.

In the event of an injury the playground supervisor must contact the school nurse via the communication device to report the injury and either send the child to the school nurse's office with an escort or stay with the child until the school nurse arrives in the area. Minor playground injuries should not be overlooked as these injuries provide valuable assistance in determining actual and potential hazards on the playground. For documentation purposes, playground supervisors should report all injuries to the school

nurse. A school administrator should monitor recess on a weekly basis to ensure that playground supervisors are fulfilling their duties.

Playground Rules

To ensure the safety of students, students should be instructed on how to properly play on the playground equipment. Written playground safety rules will be established in the beginning of the school year in collaboration with staff and students. The rules should include topics such as general safety rules, expectations for student behavior, consequences for infractions, equipment use detailed by each piece of equipment, playground games, and special circumstances.

Playground rules should be taught to all students at the beginning of the school year and reviewed with them throughout the school year, reviewed with parents, and consistently enforced.

A copy of playground rules should be posted in the classroom and, if possible, on/near the playground for easy reference. In addition, a copy of playground rules should be provided to parents and students. Playground rules will be published in school or student handbooks.

Weather Conditions

In cold weather, children should be encouraged to dress in layers. They should wear a warm coat, hat, and gloves to go outside.

There are times when, because of the temperature, it is unsafe to be outside for any length of time, especially if not dressed appropriately. If the outdoor temperature is 20 degrees or less, or feels like 20 degrees or less because of the wind chill factor, recess must be held indoors. If the air quality index or heat index is determined to be unhealthy according to EPA standards, students should have limited outdoor physical activity.

Staff Training

All school staff must complete a semi-annual review of playground safety including the benefits of recess on student learning. School staff are expected to review the playground safety administrative memorandum at the beginning of the school year and then again by early spring when outdoor play resumes.

Playground Safety-Acknowledgement

Questions about the information contained in this administrative memorandum should be directed to the Deputy Superintendent.