

PLAYGROUND GUIDELINES

Middleton S. Elliott Elementary

June 2011



PURPOSE: This publication provides policy and guidance for Elliott Elementary School playground management and standards in accordance with DoDEA Regulation 4210.01 (04/21/10), DSO School Playground Safety Guidelines (04/26/11), Custodial Service Plan (1/1/2009) and U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission Public Playground Safety Handbook.

APPLICABILITY: The publication applies to all students, teachers, support staff, volunteers and others who use the designated playgrounds on the Elliott campus.

POLICY: It is Elliott Elementary School policy to promote student physical activity by providing safe, secure, stimulating and accessible playground environments. As such, Elliott is committed to establishing uniform playground management controls and practices in order to eliminate hazards, while providing challenging and enjoyable playground conditions to promote the motor skill, physical fitness and personal and social development of all students.

EFFECTIVE DATE: These guidelines are effective on the date they are adopted and published.

DEFINITIONS:

Playground Supervisor - Any adult, paid or volunteer, charged with supervising students on a school playground.

AIR - Accident/Injury Report

CPSC - Consumer Product Safety Commission. An independent agency of the United States federal government created to protect against unreasonable risks of injuries associated with consumer products

PWG - Playground Working Group

SIR - Serious Incident Report

COMPONENTS OF PLAYGROUND SAFETY: Safety on the playground, and helping to protect students from injury, require planning, thought, training, and deliberate action. Proper selection, placement, and maintenance of playground equipment, along with effective supervision of playground activities, can help prevent accidents or reduce their severity. To practice due care for the safety of playground users in all phases of playground administration we must consider the following areas of playground safety:

Adequate, trained, equipped, and attentive playground supervision

Students instructed on how to properly play on the playground equipment

Copies of the written playground safety rules were provided and have been taught to all students and staff.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Principal shall:

1. Develop and implement a school Playground Management Program in accordance with DoDEA Regulations.
2. Ensure that playground injury prevention strategies are established, including the prompt removal from service of broken or dysfunctional equipment and subsequent submission of a request for repairs.
3. Ensure all Playground Supervisors maintain a copy of the Elliott Playground Guidelines and receive playground supervisory training at the beginning of each school year.
4. Ensure adequate adult monitoring and supervision of students during all periods of scheduled playground activities throughout the school day.
5. Ensure that all playground injuries are reported to DoDEA Headquarters via the AIRs online reporting process.
6. Develop and implement a medical emergency plan for the playground.

7. Provide direction and guidance to the school-based Supervisory Management Services Specialist (SMSS), where assigned. Principals may delegate playground management duties to the SMSS. If school size does not warrant assignment of an SMSS, playground management duties must be performed by the principal or a qualified designee. In all cases, the principal remains responsible for the proper performance of these duties.

The P.E. teacher shall:

1. The first P.E. classes of the year, the P.E. teacher will address safety issues with the students when using the playground equipment. This training will consist of hands on use of the equipment and identifying potential hazards.

The school nurse shall:

1. Meet with all staff and offer suggestions and ways to minimize injuries while ensuring students enjoy using the playground equipment.

The maintenance workers shall:

1. The maintenance workers will perform daily and Quarterly Preventive Maintenance Inspections and Annual/Routine Maintenance of play equipment. These workers should be familiar with CPSC/ASTM playground safety guidelines.

The custodians shall:

1. Clear debris and trash from playgrounds daily.
2. Clean and wipe down equipment as needed.

WEATHER FACTORS PERTAINING TO OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES:

1. Administration will make the determination on playground usage during inclement weather. In the case of extreme heat or cold, rain or other threatening weather conditions, students may participate in "indoor recess" activities.

PLAYGROUND SUPERVISION:

One of the duties owed to students on the school playground is proper supervision. The main purpose of supervision on the playground is to help protect students from injury or reduce the risk of student injury. Proper supervision has four basic components:

1. Presence and attentiveness:
 - Being on the playground before students start playing.
 - Staying in a reasonable proximity to the areas of activity.
 - Keeping all students easily in sight.
 - Not becoming distracted from duties.

2. Student behavior monitoring and intervention:

- Being knowledgeable of and consistently enforcing school rules and policies.
- Restricting students from roughhousing, horseplay or other inappropriate behavior on or near any apparatus.
- Controlling the play environment.

3. Hazard surveillance and intervention:

- Being risk-conscious (prioritizing attention into the areas where accidents are most likely to occur).
- Checking the playground daily, and appropriately addressing ground and equipment hazards.

4. Responding appropriately to emergencies: Handling emergencies that occur on the playground properly to reduce potential injury and damage. This involves being CPR/first aid certified, or having such a staff member readily accessible.

Playground supervisor competency is an important factor to ensure good supervision. Playground supervisors, including volunteers, should meet selection criteria and be trained for their duties.

1. Selection criteria - The playground supervisor should:

- Be physically able to do the job (walk around and see the whole playground, climb, free a trapped child, intervene to stop a fight, etc.)
- Have favorable standardized background check as specified in DoDEA Administrative Instruction 4700.3
- Be able to work well with students.

2. Initial Training - Adults do not automatically have the skills necessary to appropriately supervise students at play on a school playground. In playground supervisor training, include general playground supervision information, and information specific to the school at which they will supervise. Teach playground supervisors applicable school district policies and procedures and their duties and responsibilities. Include the following basic information in the initial training session(s):

- General playground information should include: - The causes of injuries on school playgrounds
 - The requirements of the *CPSC Handbook* for playground equipment
 - The basics of how to inspect playground equipment
 - How to identify, report, and help protect students from hazards on the playground
 - How students should safely use play equipment

- General supervision information: - Understand the importance of playground supervision
 - Be familiar with the school's method of playground discipline
 - Understand the difference between discipline and punishment
 - Be able to enforce rules
 - Know how to alter students' behavior positively
 - Understand that constant diligence in monitoring the playground is essential
 - Understand that the location of the supervisor on the playground is very important. Supervisors should have an unobstructed view of the entire play area, and should avoid standing together and chatting

- School specific information should help the playground supervisor:
 - Know the established playground rules
 - Know what playground equipment is designed for younger students
 - Know the importance of and appropriate ways to respond to various emergencies on the playground
 - Know how to handle injuries on the playground
 - Know procedures for visitors at the school
 - Know the layout of the entire school grounds, all playground apparatus, and out-of-bounds areas
 - Be familiar with games used on the playgrounds and their rules
 - Know the locations of first aid kits, telephones, fire extinguishers, and the school nurse or designated emergency aide
 - Know how to handle discipline problems
 - Understand what his/her role is in a crisis (earthquake or other school emergency)
 - Be able to correctly complete an incident report for a playground accident

- Follow up training - Conduct annual training with all playground supervisors. Design annual training to reinforce the initial training, update the supervisors as to any changes, and address specific playground problems and issues at the school

- Supplies and equipment -Equip playground supervisors to do their job. Appropriate supplies and equipment may include:
 - A whistle or other means of communicating with students quickly - A clipboard, paper and pen
 - A means of emergency communication with the office (a two-way radio system is often chosen because it is fairly reliable and inexpensive)
 - Minor first aid supplies, including protective gloves

- Supervision of the playground supervisors - Charge a knowledgeable administrator with training and overseeing playground supervisors. Administrators should evaluate playground supervisors periodically and analyze their effectiveness in that position

- The administrator charged with the management of the playground supervisors should periodically (quarterly is suggested) review student playground accident reports to look for patterns of causes and initiate or ensure corrective action

PLAYGROUND INSPECTION AND MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

A. Daily Safety Inspection. School maintenance personnel shall perform a daily safety inspection for all playground equipment and play areas on days in which school is in session.

1. The primary focus of the daily inspection is to visually check for surfacing problems, vandalism, trash and debris, and obvious hazards.
2. A completed Daily Playground Inspection Form will be forwarded to the school principal for review and follow-up action.

B. Quarterly Preventive Maintenance Inspection. Quarterly preventive maintenance inspections shall be performed by qualified maintenance staff to check for potential problems due to age, usage, and environmental impacts.

1. This inspection is more detailed than the daily inspection and requires a physical examination of system components.
2. A site-specific inspection form shall be developed for each playground. The form shall be annotated by maintenance staff and forwarded to the school principal for review and follow-up action, if required.

C. Annual Inspection/Routine Maintenance. On an annual basis, qualified maintenance staff shall thoroughly inspect all playground components for damage or wear. Routine maintenance services should also be performed at this time.

1. This inspection addresses the structural integrity of the playground and must be performed by experienced personnel. Items that should be addressed at this time include excessive wear, deterioration, and potential hazards. Problems requiring remedial work shall be identified during the inspection and repaired as soon as possible.
2. All follow-up actions on repairs and equipment replacement shall be completed in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. An annual inspection may be substituted for one quarterly preventative maintenance inspection during which this inspection was conducted.
3. A customized inspection form shall be developed for each specific playground, based on specific playground components. The form shall be annotated by the supporting maintenance personnel and results provided to the principal for review and follow-up action, if required.

D. Triennial Safety Audit. On a three year cycle, each DoDEA playground facility will undergo an in-depth safety audit by a certified playground safety inspector, via a DoDEA Headquarters funded and managed contract. The audit will assess existing conditions in order to determine compliance with current playground standards. Recommended improvements, including cost projections, will also be developed for capital planning purposes.

E. Safety Spot Checks. The school playgrounds are subject to Area and/or district facilities staff member safety spots checks on a random basis to ensure compliance with the DoDEA policies.

PLAYGROUND PROCEDURES:

Bathrooms - are assigned for use by the monitors on duty. Students are not to use any other bathrooms.

Boundaries - Students must stay within the boundaries of the playground area, and never out of the sight of a monitor. Students are not allowed to go behind the portable buildings or gather in the roadways near the flagpole.

Jump ropes - are to be used for jump rope only. Circle rope is permitted, but the rope must be kept on the ground.

Kickball, Soccer, and Nerf Football - are permitted in large open areas only. Nerf footballs may be used for passing and tag football only. **No tackle** or takedown is allowed at any time. Balls that are thrown or kicked over the fence may not be retrieved without adult supervision. No footballs, kickballs or soccer balls are permitted within close proximity to school windows.

Monitors - are to be respected and listened to without argument. Be respectful and follow their instructions. They are there for student safety.

Nurse - Students must have a pass to go to the nurse. The best practice is to send a “buddy” from the same class to accompany the injured or sick child so he/she can tell the teacher where the child is when the students return to the classroom.

Playing tag or keep-away - are not permitted on or around the playground equipment or soft tile. This is especially dangerous on the slides.

Returning to Class or using the Media Center - is only permitted if the student has a pass from a teacher or monitor.

Slide - One person at a time seated facing forward. No standing on, or climbing up, the slide.

The Suspended Bridges – are for walking across only. No jumping, swinging, sitting, or climbing up over the rails is permitted.

Swings – One person at a time on the swings and ALWAYS seated. An initial push to get going is OK. However, repeated pushing or dodging in and out of the swing area is dangerous and not allowed.

Uneven Bars – The uneven bars are for pull-ups or simple exercising. No standing or balancing on top is permitted.

CONDUCT ENFORCEMENT:

1. WARNING - A warning will be given to students for inappropriate, but less serious, behavior.
2. TIMEOUT - Arguing, shoving, “roughhousing” or repeated behaviors of a less serious nature will result in a timeout for 5 minutes or more. Playground clean up is an option that can be offered to students but is never mandatory.
3. PLAYGROUND REFERRALS - If a student is consistently argumentative or disruptive, or continually disturbing others, he/she should be referred to a counselor or administrator on duty.
4. OFFICE REFERRALS - Any student sent to the office for inappropriate behavior should be accompanied by an adult and sent with a note describing, in sufficient detail, the nature of the problem and unsuccessful interventions.
5. DISCIPLINE SLIP - A discipline slip is given only as a last resort for bringing attention to any inappropriate behavior to a wider audience. Parents are contacted when a discipline slip is issued from the school. It is important that details surrounding the event are written on the discipline slip as well as possible interventions, i.e.:
 - *“After repeated warnings and a time out, Johnny continued to throw sand at other students. When I brought it to his attention a third time, he ran away and began yelling at me.” Student referred to the administration.*

All students receiving a discipline slip during recess should be sent to the office or remain in time out until they can be escorted to the office by an adult. The classroom teacher should be informed by one of the monitors when students line up.

REWARDS:

- ❖ Super Citizen Coupon
- ❖ Appreciation from friends and teachers
- ❖ A school that is fun and safe!

HANDLING MEDICAL EMERGENCIES ON THE PLAYGROUND:

One of our responsibilities to students on the school playground is prompt and appropriate medical care. Medical emergencies may include but not limited to the following:

unconsciousness, difficulty breathing, profuse bleeding, altered mental status, allergic reactions, suspected broken bones, and falls from a significant height.

Be sure to follow school district policies and procedures and document all playground injuries other than minor scrapes and bruises.

Summon assistance by walkie-talkie or student runners for the nurse and/or the office staff in the absence of the nurse.

Emergency medical care:

- Make sure the injured child is always attended by an adult.
- Never fail to give aid (err on the side of caution)
- Administer first aid as trained until the nurse or medical professionals arrive
- Do not move the child (due to the possibility of neck and spinal injury)
- Injured child will be assessed by the school nurse
- Notify the principal when requiring emergency medical assistance in the absence of the school nurse
- Report the accident to the school office via walkie talkie (nurse)
- Contact parents as soon as possible (nurse and/or principal)
- Complete an accident / incident reports (AIR's) report promptly (nurse)