



## Playground Standards Ad Hoc Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes #3  
April 27, 2021

**Co-Chairs:** Curtis Lawyer, director, capital projects and Jessica Sankey, executive director, operations

**Members present:** Kristi Dominguez, Mylo Allen, Amy Berreth, Micah Smith, Margaret Gude, Ali Bonner, Nic Castona, Rodolfo Riviere, Meredith Gant, Sarah Catudio, Jenny Brice, Cindy Pearson, Corbin Anderson, Jen Mallet, Debbie Haney, Trevor Aeschliman, Corey Ayers, Brian Smart, Kristine Wilson, Patty Yunge, Kristi Wyandt-Varela, Gina Austin, Jonathan Schilk Joshua Cloud

### Introductions & Welcome

1. Committee Co-Chair Jessica Sankey welcomed the committee members, introduced the agenda topics, reviewed the One Note link, and discussed the group webpage.
2. Ali Bonner led the team through an Ice Breaker/Introductory activity.

### Playground Surfacing

1. Joshua Cloud summarized the conversation on Surfacing from the previous week, going over the pros and cons of the various products. Two material types seem to stand out above the others for Playground Surfaces: Rubber Tiles and Synthetic Turf.
  - a. Question: What else does the committee need to know i to make an informed recommendation on playground surfacing? Are there more questions on Surfaces?
    - i. A hybrid option? Rubber Tiles and Synthetic Turf?
      1. This has been done in Hillsboro OR on a project by NW Playgrounds. Transition from one material to another is a little bit problematic. A bit of a 'bump' between the two. According to vendors this is not done a lot.
        - a. Perhaps the best 'hybrid' application is Synthetic Turf for Pre-K play areas and Rubber Tiles for K-5 play areas.
        - b. All sites are different. Perhaps the best course of action is to remain flexible to choose between Synthetic Turf and Rubber Tiles at each site dependent on the unique conditions found at each school.
      - ii. Concern raised: gravel & woodchips are traditional & problematic to some degree. Woodchips are low cost BUT are hard for wheelchairs, mobility, and their upkeep is extremely hard. Are there any benefits to sticking with gravel & woodchips?
        1. The consensus from the vendors, is no. The only benefit is that the first costs are more affordable. But they create accessibility issues and maintenance issues over time.
        2. Gina Austin brought Jonathan Schilk's perspective regarding surfacing—if cost were no object, would recommend tiles and/or poured in place. But if budget is a consideration, then woodchips must be considered to afford quality play equipment.

- iii. Jen Mallett shared that she would prefer to see installed accessible play equipment for preschool, not just equipment that sits on the surface.
- iv. What is the balance when looking at a budget between equipment and surfacing? Can we ask for quality high end surfacing and quality high end equipment?
  - 1. Curtis's response about budget: for 3 elementary schools right now (Parkview, Alderwood, Sunnyland) We have preserved enough budget to install new surfacing AND equipment. Understand that as we make selections, there are capital costs and ongoing maintenance costs. We are willing to spend more in capital costs to increase accessibility and decrease ongoing costs.
    - a. So yes, we can get high quality surfaces and high quality Equipment.
- v. Equipment question: do we have to go with a single vendor, or can we mix and match?
  - 1. Typically, one vendor per school on equipment. But we can get creative if budget and time allows at each site.
  - 2. While equipment manufacturer can vary from school to school, we might consider picking one vendor for surfaces. This will make maintenance easier and more affordable over time if dealing with rubber tiles and synthetic turf.

### Presentation:

- 1. Weisman Group, landscape architect group for Parkview & Alderwood Elementary Schools presented [this PowerPoint](#) describing playground surfaces and equipment.

### Recess

- 1. Ali Bonner shared the take-aways from the Recess Teacher Playworks meetings:
  - a. More swings and spinners are wanted.
  - b. Cement walls and levels create barriers. Eliminate or minimize.
    - i. Usable Grass fields are great, but when they are muddy, not maintained, or if they have uneven surfaces, they are not usable.
  - c. Varied heights of basketball hoops would be better for more kids.
  - d. Black top is not safe to play on.
  - e. There are not enough slides.
  - f. Synthetic turf and rubber tile seem like great surfaces for more kids.
  - g. Ramps are better than steps or stairs.
  - h. The ideal playground would have no wood chips or gravel, lots of swings and spinners, synthetic turf and rubber tile surfaces, quiet 'Eddy Out' areas, boulders to climb on and climbing areas. The playground should be accessible to kids of all abilities and stage for imaginative play.
- 2. Curtis Lawyer brought up some of the drainage issues with grass fields and mentioned that a study is underway to review the elementary fields at all schools. It is a potential outcome that eventually grass will become turf at schools.
- 3. Gina Austin with the City of Bellingham mentioned that turf fields are better from a maintenance perspective than grass fields are. No water needed in the summer and no gasoline needed to mow the grass.
- 4. Cindy Pearson made the point that getting kids with disabilities 'on' to equipment should be a priority. Getting closer to equipment, while nice, is not the same.
- 5. Group members agreed accessibility is a priority.

6. Curtis Lawyer asked the group if we have enough information on playground surfaces? The consensus appeared to be, Yes. Curtis asked the group to motion thumbs up or thumbs down if the group is feeling good about moving forward with rubber tile and synthetic turf as preferred elementary school playground surfaces? 90%+ gave thumbs up.

#### Take home learning for members:

1. Do some research. Look into surface and equipment materials being listed in the One Note document. Also research online. Report back to group the findings.

**Meeting Adjourned**

**Next meeting: Tuesday, May 4 3:30**