

Communication PRinciples for Principals

NOVEMBER 2012

“WHEN IT COMES TO RECESS, PLAY IT SAFE”



IDEA

Share your playground safety ideas and practices with other principals in your district or area. Invite the base newspaper to cover a playground safety assembly or demonstration or special poster creation event.

Playground Safety Awareness for Everyone, Focus for Principals

As a school principal, you wear many hats and you have many responsibilities. One of your top priorities is school safety. A safe and secure learning environment fosters high student performance and achievement and strengthens ties between every group in your school community – students, teachers, staff and parents. Safety on the playground is one very important aspect of a safe and secure learning environment. Regardless of where you are in the school year, it's always a good idea to routinely review your playground procedures and make sure everyone in your school community is aware of and practices safety on the playground. How you communicate to your school community about playground safety is a critical element of a successful safety program and demonstrates your commitment to this priority.

Playground Safety – Putting it in Perspective

- » What's the playground safety picture in DoDEA? Here are some facts to put it in perspective:
- » DoDEA Regulation 4210.01, Playground Management Program and the DoDEA Safety Program, contained in DoDEA Regulation 4800.1 address safety in all aspects of DoDEA operations, including playgrounds.
- » Over the past three years, the number of reported injuries has remained about 1% of the total population using the playgrounds.
- » Most playground injuries occur during the months of March and September.
- » The leading causes of injuries are associated with:
 - Falls to Surface
 - Impact with Stationary Equipment
 - Other (Contact with student)



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- » Playgrounds are designed to be age-appropriate (3-5 year olds and 5-12 year olds) as defined by guidelines and standards published by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).
- » DoDEA considers many factors in designing school playgrounds including the number of students that will be playing on the playground.
- » All DoDEA school playgrounds and equipment are installed to meet safety standards established by four groups that DoDEA subscribes to: The American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM); Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC); International Playground Equipment Manufacturers Association (IPEMA); and the International Playground Contractor's Association (NPCAI).
- » DoDEA playgrounds are designed, built, and maintained to meet standards established by Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).
<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/325.pdf>
- » DoDEA Area and District Logistics and Safety personnel inspect playgrounds regularly throughout the year.

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TIPS



Playground Safety – What Messages are You Sending?

What you say about playground safety reinforces what you practice at your school. DoDEA has several key messages about playground safety that you can incorporate into your newsletters, meetings, assemblies, and school culture:

- » Playground safety is for everyone and “When it Comes to Recess, Play it Safe.”
- » One accident on the playground is one too many.
- » Safe playgrounds help create a safe and secure place to learn.



Playground Safety – How are you communicating and sending messages?

The only way your school will know that playground safety is important is if you talk about it with your students, staff, and parents. Try to create a balance between telling, doing, and involving. Start with your words and build on your words with actions, practices, and events that everyone can participate in, and more importantly, feel like a “shareholder” in playground safety.

Ideas for communicating playground safety:

1. Incorporate a “Playground Safety” corner in your school newsletter.
2. Make playground safety a regular discussion topic at staff meetings and training.
3. Have classroom teachers give quarterly Playground Assignments to students that can be shared with parents. Make assignments interactive – have students and parents watch a playground safety video together on the computer; identify books about playground safety that parents and students can read together; provide a list of questions parents and students can discuss at home together.
4. Have each classroom design a Playground Safety poster that can be displayed at school.
5. Hold special Playground Safety assemblies – if the weather is nice, conduct the assembly outside on the playground and incorporate visual and demonstrative tools to increase playground safety awareness.
6. Have a school-wide Playground Safety celebration to coincide with National Playground Safety Week in April.

Playground Safety – Practice Best Practices

- » Look for trends or patterns as you analyze reports from accidents on the playground. If they indicate a problem, act on the data.
- » Share your playground safety ideas and practices with other principals in your district or area.
- » Invite the base newspaper to cover a playground safety assembly or demonstration or special poster creation event.