### Outdoor Play Areas

**School Type:**

![School Type](EMH.png)

#### Functional Area Descriptions

Outdoor play areas shall include open turf areas, hard surface areas, outdoor tables and seating (middle schools) and play equipment (elementary schools). At CONUS middle schools (DDESS), athletic fields may also be provided if the school participates in interscholastic sports. For athletic fields, see separate Ed Spec section entitled “Athletic Fields”.

Separate play equipment areas shall be provided for PSCD and pre-k children; kindergarten children up to age 5; and for older elementary children ages 5 to 12. Play equipment is not typically provided at the middle school level. The areas for the younger children are called the Play Lots. Play equipment meeting ADA standards shall be provided at all age levels.

#### 1 Play Lots

The Play Lots serve as the primary exterior activity centers for preschool and kindergarten children up to 5 years of age. Used in association with the kindergarten, pre-kindergarten, Sure Start and PSCD programs, locate the Play Lots adjacent to the Neighborhoods they serve, or a short distance away with an accessible path. Play Lots shall be fenced. For large schools (enrollment over 500) separate the kindergarten Play Lot from the pre-kindergarten and Sure Start Play Lot with fencing. Professionally designed Play Lots should accommodate the number

#### Planning Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area Description</th>
<th>SF</th>
<th>M²</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commons</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Play Lot</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>278.7</td>
<td>800 SF (74.3 M²) per Learning Studio over 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Play lot—Enclosed Storage</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>Pre-fabricated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Elementary/Middle -Outdoor play areas</td>
<td>21,780</td>
<td>2,023</td>
<td>1 to 100 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Elementary/Middle -Outdoor play areas</td>
<td>43,560</td>
<td>4,047</td>
<td>101 to 500 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Elementary/Middle -Outdoor play areas</td>
<td>87,120</td>
<td>8,094</td>
<td>501 to 1,000 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Elementary/Middle -Outdoor play areas</td>
<td>130,680</td>
<td>12,141</td>
<td>1,001 + students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** Adjacency plan shown above is intended to provide and example to spark design creativity.
of students they serve, site constraints, and specific equipment requirements. The Play Lots must comply with US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), applicable American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) standards and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The minimum size for the Play Lot is 3,000 SF (279 M²). An additional 800 SF (74 M²) per Learning Studio served (over 2) shall be provided. Each Play Lot should have an enclosed, securable pre-fabricated shed type outdoor storage space of at least 100 SF (9.3 M²).

An enclosed area with age appropriate play equipment and special facilities shall be provided with the following considerations:

- All play equipment such as climbers, slides, play walls, playhouses, and play sculptures shall be International Play Equipment Manufacturers Association (IPEMA) certified and conform to the US CPSC, applicable ASTM standards and ADA.
- Play sand areas may only be used if the area is fenced and can be segregated from dogs and cats.
- Locate and arrange equipment with adequate surrounding space in small, natural play groups.
- Locate playhouses, and play sculpture away from equipment like swings and slides for safety.
- Ensure that all elevated play structures are at least 6 ft (1.83 m) away from any hard surface and adjacent play structures, and at least 9 ft (2.7 m) between play structures when play surfaces are more than 30 inches high.
- The playground surface shall be poured in place rubber or rubber tile that complies to ASTM F1292 for the critical fall heights. Provide subsurface substrate in accordance with manufacturer’s specifications, including proper drainage.
- Use the open turfed area and shaded quiet areas around the enclosed play area to serve as buffers around it.
- Conveniently locate secured benches to assure good visibility for supervision of all areas of the play lot.
- Consider a tricycle path/track in design.

2 Elementary/Middle School Outdoor Play Areas

Playgrounds

The playground serves children in grades 1-5 or 6 (5 to 12 years of age). A professionally designed playground should accommodate the number of students it serves, site constraints, and specific equipment requirements. The playground must comply with US CPSC, applicable ASTM standards and ADA.

Age appropriate play equipment and special facilities shall be provided with the following considerations:

- Locate the playground equipment area adjacent to the school.
- Disperse popular or heavy use equipment to avoid crowding and locate exit slides in non-congested areas.
- Avoid rung ladders and climbing components as
the sole means of access to play equipment.
- Consider prevailing sun angles. Keep slides out of the heat of the sun by locating the slide surface facing north. Use plastic slide surfaces only.
- The playground surface shall be poured in place rubber or rubber tile that complies to ASTM F1292 for the critical fall heights. Provide subsurface substrate in accordance with manufacturer’s specifications, including proper drainage.
- Provide tree-shaded areas for quiet activities, somewhat removed from the active play areas, i.e. play tables and activity panels.
- Fully develop the playground with landscape planting for activity and traffic control and to increase the interest and attractiveness of the playground.
- Avoid trees, shrubs, and ground covers with thorns, poisonous parts, or that attract bees. Also avoid trees with fruit or nuts.
- Consider security when developing landscape planting. Keep shrubs under 3 ft (91 cm) in height and tree limbs at a minimum of 7 ft (2.1 m) above each designated play surface or use zone (ASTM 1487).

**Open Turf Areas**
Open turf areas shall be provided for informal active games for elementary school students. An area for field games including softball, touch or flag football, and soccer shall be provided for middle school students. The field games area should be placed on fairly level, well-drained land. When possible, provide a shaded area for quiet activities such as reading, story-telling, and quiet games.

**Paved Hard Surface Areas**
A paved hard surface area shall be provided. This space should be large enough for activities such as hopscotch, four square, jump rope and other outdoor games. The design should separate the paved multipurpose area from the other areas with plantings and locate the hard surface near the school gymnasium or commons. Create a division between active, energetic spaces and quiet, discovery zones. At the elementary school level, several basketball hoops shall be provided at 6 ft (1.83 m), 8 ft (2.44 m), and 10 ft (3.05 m) heights, spaced far enough apart to avoid collisions when multiple baskets are in use. At the middle school level provide full basketball courts with regulation height baskets.

**Outdoor Tables and Seating (Middle School)**
At the middle school level, outdoor tables and seating may be provided near the dining area for outdoor dining or socializing at lunch or recess times.