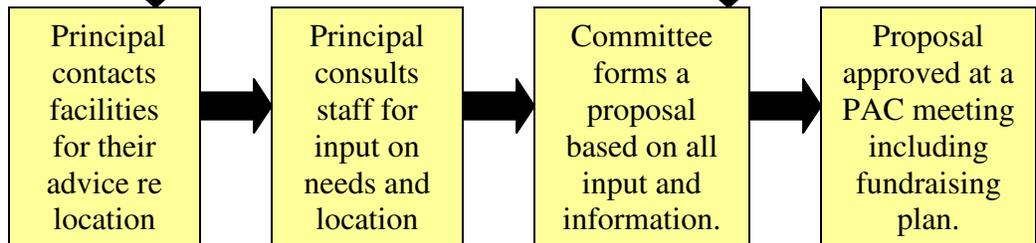
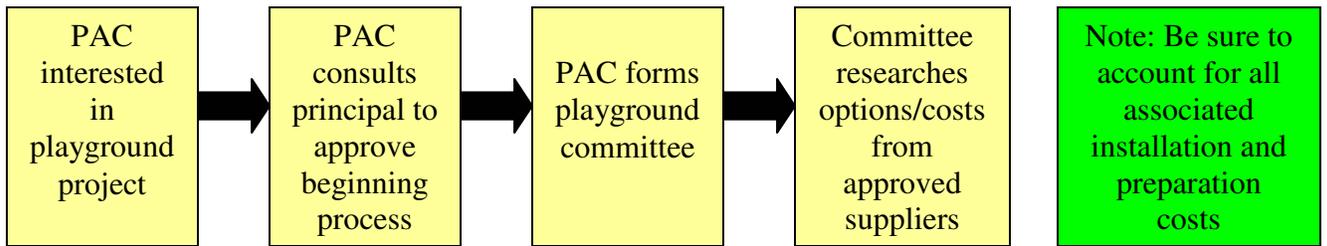


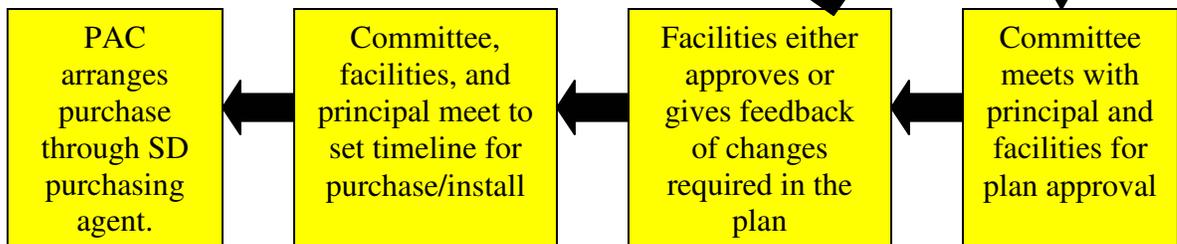
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Phase 1

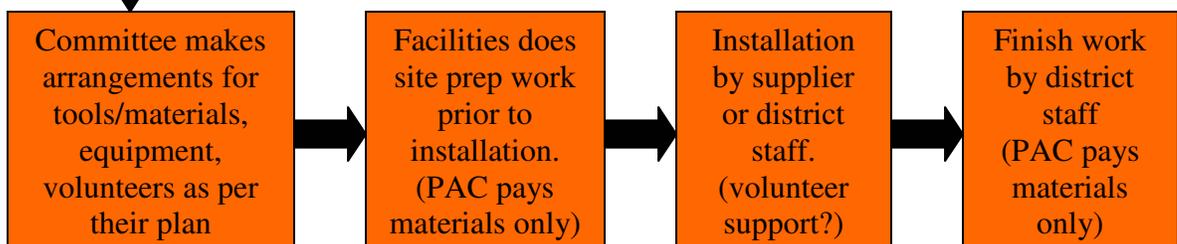
Summary Flow Chart



Phase 2



Phase 3



Everyone enjoys their new playground equipment!

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So your PAC is considering purchasing and installing new playground equipment. Where do you begin? This document is intended to help you plan, answer some of your questions and streamline the process for you.

### **Why Do We Need Playground Equipment?**

If you are undertaking a playground project, there must be some reasons why. Before committing PAC funds, many, many volunteer hours, and the hard work of fundraising, it is good to examine those reasons and what role PAC has to play in resolving them. Some of the reasons PACs decide to take on a playground project are:

#### Lack of Equipment

There is usually consideration given to the needs of primary and intermediate students separately when it comes to play structures. Sometimes separate pieces of equipment are placed at different locations on the school grounds. Your principal should be able to tell you if the equipment you have is designed for primary, intermediate or if you have some of both types. Some schools have one or the other.

#### Equipment in Disrepair (Safety Concerns)

Often, the School District does not have the funding to repair existing equipment and if it is identified as unsafe it is usually cheaper to remove the equipment than repair it. That satisfies the safety concerns, but now you have less equipment. If something is identified as unsafe or in disrepair your PAC may want to consider paying for a repair rather than just flagging it for the district to deal with. Good communication between the PAC and the principal can avoid the sudden loss of equipment if an alternative solution can be found. It may be expensive to repair the equipment, but replacement is always remarkably more expensive.

#### Old Equipment (Safety Concerns)

Older structures may have safety deficiencies that are not apparent to the parents at the school. The School District has guidelines that it must meet in order to meet its legal obligations to have a safe school-yard. Assessments are made on an ongoing basis by the Facilities Department of the School District. Your principal can request an assessment from the Facilities Department. Such a report may indicate whether it is time to replace your equipment or what changes may be required soon.

#### Equipment is Not Stimulating

Sometimes a parent's concern is installing equipment that is more stimulating, more accessible to students of varying needs or equipment designed to improve specific motor skills, etc. There is much research out there on playground equipment, and sometimes there are grants toward installing certain types of equipment. Mission City Hall may be a good resource to you when selecting equipment as they research types of equipment available and needed within our community. Kerry Bysouth, Maintenance Manager for Parks at the District of Mission, may be a good resource for helping address the needs of the community as you plan. There may be additional grants for Equipment specifically designed for accessibility.

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### **A note about funding**

It has been many years since School Districts or Government have wholly funded playground replacements at schools. Until several years ago, capital gaming grants were available for up to 50% of a playground project. A PAC fundraised the other 50%. Such grants are no longer available. Now PACs can use their regular school grant gaming money (best accumulated over 3 years) and they must fundraise the rest. In 2010/2011 the Ministry made available funding for playground replacement based on the greatest priority as determined by the individual Districts. Several School PACs were able to access some of those funds. At this point it is unclear if any such funding will become available again. I recommend asking your MLA if any funding is available. If you think your PAC may qualify for a grant, some advice from previous experience is:

- 1) Get information from the source; contact the agency that is funding the grant. (ie Provincial Government, Gaming, etc.)
- 2) Do your homework; don't assume that the District or your Principal has or knows all the information about a particular grant or the process. Respectfully share what you learn and work together with the District and your school administration to pursue any grant money you might qualify for. Some grants may even be retroactive.

### **How do we begin the process?**

Usually the suggestion to look at a playground improvement comes at a PAC meeting where it has been brought forward by a parent, group of parents or a staff member. If there is serious intent, a motion should be made to form a Playground Committee. A first meeting date should be selected at the PAC meeting and the committee can select a chair (at the first meeting) or the PAC can appoint one at the PAC meeting. The function of the Playground Committee should be to bring a formal motion to the PAC at a general meeting in the form of a proposal. Such a proposal should include:

- Type of equipment proposed to be purchased including the reasons for selection
- Cost of the equipment
- Equipment supplier name and why this supplier was chosen
- Cost of installation (performed by school district personnel or by the supplier)
- Cost of ground cover materials and delivery
- Other associated supply and installation costs
- Plan for fundraising or securing funding to pay for the entire project
- Timeline for fundraising, purchasing and installation

The Playground Committee will do all the research and planning in order to present the best option or several options for the PAC to approve. All this planning work is described as "Phase I" (see page 4). It is vital to consult with your school administrator and staff for their input during this process. They are able to identify needs and advise on locations based on space used by staff, needs of supervision, etc. The administrator will be required to give approval for the project to go ahead. It is necessary to have that approval before your final presentation to PAC. Once "Phase I" is completed and a sound

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fundraising strategy is identified, the plan can move to a PAC meeting for approval. Facilities staff will also have to approve the plan and if changes are required it will be sent back to the PAC to accept amendments.

Once approved, funds must be secured. It may be several months or even several years to meet the funding goal. Once the funds are in place the PAC can move to “Phase II.” Keep in mind that the School District may be able to negotiate a better price than an individual PAC and they are also willing to order the playground on behalf of the PAC. They will also reduce the GST by half up front so that your PAC does not have to apply for that rebate later (1/2 the GST is exempt.) The School District can generally get a better price on ground cover and other materials than the PAC because of purchasing power as well. At this point an organizational meeting will have to be arranged between the Playground Committee (or other PAC reps) and the Facilities Department. This meeting can be arranged through your school principal and will work out the details below in “Phase II.”

### **Cost Saving Considerations**

There are many creative ways PACs can reduce cost of installation. Local vendors may donate supplies such as ground cover or retaining materials. You may have parent donations or vendor donations for truck hauling services, excavating equipment or services, etc. Parents may also volunteer to do manual labour to assist district staff in the installation. District staff will not charge PACs labour costs for site prep work or site finishing work, though PAC will be responsible for the materials. Equipment installation costs are entirely the responsibility of the PAC. PACs must always understand that the School District is responsible for safety on the school grounds and urge all parent volunteers to respect the district staff’s direction during all aspects of installation. Even if a vendor installs their play structure district staff is responsible to ensure it is safe and that the ground cover and surrounding area is safe. Parents must be respectful of the needs and duties of district staff.

### **Communication**

The importance of good communication has been the number one piece of advice from those who have undertaken playground projects within the district. To have effective communication:

- 1) Appoint a single representative from your PAC or Playground Committee to speak to facilities staff and your school administrator on behalf of your PAC.
- 2) Proper protocol is to contact Facilities Department staff initially through your principal. Once contact has been made it is acceptable for your PAC representative to make direct contact with the facilities representative to address questions or access further information.
- 3) Any changes or new information should always be communicated to the principal and facilities representative.

Most frustrations with the process occur from misunderstandings, lack of communication, or delayed communication. Administrators and staff, district employees,

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and parents all have roles and responsibilities in the process and all should be kept up to date with the process as it progresses.

**Other Information**

Additional funding from the district for ground cover or timbers etc. is simply no longer available. In the past the district would sometimes be able to find budget money to help PACs out, but currently this funding does not exist.

Spring is the most difficult time of year for the Facilities Department to allot time to do an installation. Summer is best for the district, but parent volunteers are not as available. The fall may be the best for all concerned, but it would have to be planned well ahead. From the time of planning, installation usually takes from 6 weeks to 3 months, depending on the time of year and other obstacles.

If the vendor is doing the installation, bear in mind that the Facilities Department needs to be involved just the same. While they won't need to use as much manpower, supervision will be required. It is strongly suggested that the PAC or the District Purchasing Agent negotiate a "holdback" of 10% to the vendor until 30 or 60 days after installation if the vendor is responsible for installation. Vendors are then motivated to deal with any installation or equipment deficiencies if they have not received all of their money.

**School District Expectations**

Below is a three phase process outlining purchasing and installing playground equipment expectations from the School District perspective. Following these guidelines coupled with early and effective communication between the PAC, principal, and Facilities Department will make the job of acquiring a new playground much easier, quicker and enjoyable for all parties. Hopefully this guideline has put you on the path to succeeding in meeting your goals of improving your school and community.

**Playground Equipment Acquisition & Installation Process**

**Phase I:**

1. PAC identifies the equipment, equipment specifications and installation requirements they wish to acquire.
  - a. All equipment needs to be provided by a certified School District approved vendor to ensure that safety requirements are met.
  - b. Note metal slides are preferred to using combustible plastic sides that are easily vandalized.
2. PACs need to bear in mind that the cost of installation is a part of the total project. As a general 'rule of thumb' this usually adds half again of the equipment purchase price. (e.g. a \$20,000 adventure playground may require an additional

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\$10,000 of materials and equipment thus making the project costs \$30,000 to complete installation). This would include such items as the cribbing, ground cover fabric, concrete, Fibar®, disposition of soil and equipment being removed, etc. These costs will vary from project to project but will be identified in the cost estimates submitted from the Facilities Department (see point 1-5).

3. The PAC creates a plan and a site map in conjunction with school Administration as to where they would hope to see the new equipment located.
4. The school Administrator will arrange a preliminary meeting with the Facilities Department to review the original draft.
5. School Administration provides a copy of the equipment they wish to order, the site plan and equipment specifications to the Manager of Facilities.
6. Grounds and Carpentry Departments review the plan, make recommendations if necessary and provide installation cost estimate.
7. School Administration determines if they wish to proceed with the project or make alterations to the plan.

**Phase II:**

1. The Purchasing Department will not purchase any equipment without the approval of the Manager of Facilities.
2. PAC places the order through School District Purchasing Agent.
  - a. In so doing this allows PACs to minimize tax cost and leverages the School District's buying power where applicable.
3. Organizational meetings between PAC representatives and Facilities staff will be held to determine:
  - a. Confirmation of the plan as submitted and mutually agreed upon changes.
  - b. Date(s) for project installation.
  - c. Resources needed for the installation as well as any donated materials acquired by PAC to defray installation costs.
  - d. Scheduling of project:
    - i. Grounds Staff & Equipment
    - ii. Carpentry Staff & Equipment
    - iii. PAC Volunteers & Security

**Phase III:**

1. Site preparation work (removal of equipment, timbers for borders, etc.).
2. Installation of playground equipment.
3. Finishing work i.e. ground cover (Fibar®) and safety of the grounds.
4. To ensure the safety of students, the Manager of Facilities will inspect and approve the installation before the students can use the new playground equipment.