

PLAYGROUND VOLUNTEERS

Guidelines for grades K-6

As the playground volunteer, you are responsible for the safety, character development, and enjoyment of the students during recess. If there is a teacher working with you on the playground, please support the standards that the teacher conveys to you. If you are the “in charge” adult for a particular class, please realize that you have the full support of the teacher and administration to supervise the playground. Be proactive. These guidelines will help you do so in a consistent way with our culture at the school.

1. If more than 23 children are on the playground, there must be two adults monitoring them if at all possible. In some cases, it is impossible to have 2 adults monitoring the students on the playground. These should be rare.
2. Students are not allowed out of sight behind the picnic enclosure, shed, or well cover (at the south end of the field) or other visual obstacles. Students are not allowed on the east or north side of the picnic enclosure.
3. K-6 students must be escorted in lines across the driveway on the way to and from the playground. They may cross back and forth with permission.
4. If a student is injured or must be escorted back into the building, one of the two adult monitors can accompany him with the remaining adult watching the students. As soon as the student is transferred to the care of the office or another teacher, the playground attendant must return to the playground.
5. Adult playground monitors are encouraged to organize games and activities for students. First, check with the teacher. In some cases, game organizing can compete with other goals that the teacher has. Teachers may require that students participate in these events.
 - a. Games are important to encourage activity during recess. Monitors should encourage physical activity.
 - b. To minimize cliques and control cultural influences, some teachers choose to restrict playing with toys, particularly those that have a “have/have not” value. For example, the latest Star Wars gadget or Barbie Doll can promote scoffing and coveting. However, simple Legos or common dolls are unlikely to create this response. Check with your teacher to see what they require regarding toys on the playground.
 - c. Cliques and other unchristian and unkind behavior begins as some students are left out or groups of students avoid association with other students. Sometimes, girls who play quiet games are unintentionally or intentionally being exclusive. This leads to trouble (sin). Organized sports help to occasionally integrate the class when this occurs. While some cliques are inevitable, the play activities “stir the pot” and create more opportunities for unity.
 - d. Any games should be monitored to ensure that students are under control. When the noise level and “wildness” makes the situation appear “out of control”, it’s time to rein them in. One tactic is to organize or reorganize their game if they don’t respond to warnings.

6. **Shepherding hearts on the playground**
 - a. **Boys:** During games, watch the interaction of students. Aggressive, competitive play among boys can be a good or bad thing depending on their hearts. If they combine aggressive play with a joyful, inclusive, and loving spirit, we believe this type of play is good. Of course, safety is a concern. Our goal is to encourage self-control.
 - i. We do not allow tackle football or other games where students drag each other to the ground, push hard, or throw each other off a high and dangerous place (the top of the play equipment or something where they'll land on concrete). Having said this, we're not out to take the fun and aggression out of recess completely.
 - ii. If girls are playing with the boys, the level of competitive aggression needs to be tempered considerably. Girls should not be treated like boys. Physical contact should be kept gentle and girls should be respected.
 - iii. Watch for exclusivity, bad manners, rudeness, or other sins that may arise and *report them to the teacher upon returning.*
 - iv. Team unity should be encouraged above individual glory. While some students will certainly excel beyond other, be on the look-out for exclusive behavior in picking teams. We don't want parents telling kids to whom they can or cannot pass, but we want to encourage leaders to involve their entire team. It is sometimes appropriate for the parent volunteer, in cooperation with the teacher, to monitor and set specific teams and sometimes to shift them. Our goal is for the students to arrive at the point where they can self-monitor and play in Christian love, but this cannot be artificially imposed or forced.
 - b. **Girls:** The social problems that girls have on the playground are more subtle and therefore need to be watched closely. Often, exclusivity or forming cliques is not recognized by teachers or the girls themselves. However, these sins fester over time and become problems. The earlier we catch them, the better.
 - i. If you suspect there are girls left out, take the initiative to casually start a game with them. Jump rope, 4-square, and hopscotch are all available. Seek out the uninvolved and involve them.
 - c. As in all things, use wisdom, and restraint. Obviously, as a playground volunteer, it's hard to know what level of problem requires intervention. It's easy to get over protective. It's also difficult for the students when every attendant has a different standard for play. This is why we recommend you talk to the teacher before initiating games or if you're concerned about what you're seeing. The home room teacher will gladly come out and help you diagnose any issues before you start working with the children.
7. Remember, you're the eyes and ears of the school while you're on duty. Teachers and administration work through all of our activities—in and out of the classroom—to help train students in godly character. Recess is one of the best laboratories in which to test our training. You help us do that by communicating the details of these events with teachers.

Thank you so much for your help. As a volunteer, your service provides a valuable way for teachers to get work done and rest during the course of the day.