

Notes on the Playground Plan developed by the Coffin Playground Committee
Prepared for initial **New School Playground Committee Meeting –January 10, 2018**
By Jeanne Baker Stinson
Committee Members: Tracey Peck-Moad, Heidi Strait, Kim Jordan, Lisa Martin

Explanation of “the Coffin plan”:

This plan was developed to improve the current state of playgrounds at Coffin Elementary School before the bond for the new school was passed. Coffin has four distinct playground spaces that operate independently for daily recesses for smaller groups of students (1-4 classrooms). Two of those spaces combine to form one large space for daily recesses for larger groups.

In all four of the areas we have existing equipment most of which we planned to continue to use when we developed the plan. Because of the above considerations “the Coffin plan” could not simply be re-used for a new school.

(The estimate for the equipment we planned to purchase was \$100,000 but that included a significant discount!)

General Playground needs:

- Chance to see and interact with natural materials (pine cones, pine needles, leaves, sticks, acorns, grass, etc.)
- ADA compliant – meets spirit of inclusiveness, integrates children of various skills levels and interests, meets goals of mainstreaming and LRE
- Balance of open space vs. equipment
- Plan for provision of loose materials (balls, jump ropes, etc.) and their storage
- Equipment that encourages/demands a mix of solitary, small group, and large group play
- Good visual lines for adult supervision but some illusion of privacy/seclusion for children
- Continuum of challenge (all equipment is safe but some looks/feels risky and provides increased challenge for the children as they grow)
- Plan for bathroom/nurse visits with ease of access for teachers including a system for determining who is gone/who has returned
- Safety surfacing that works in all weathers

Necessary Equipment:

1. Large grassy area for games (i.e. soccer) and tag
2. Hard surfaced area for games (basketball, four square, hop scotch, jump rope) and winter play
3. Mobile play materials (balls, sleds, etc.) and storage
4. Sandboxes (both traditional and standing) with tools and storage
5. Protected places for dramatic play (house, store or vehicle structures, for example)
6. Climbing equipment
 - a. Usually works best if it leads somewhere (as in a structure with platforms) or is a structure with other purposes like a dome
 - b. Needs to have a variety of ways to climb
7. Other Traditional Equipment
 - a. Swings – adequate numbers including some social versions
 - b. Slides – speedy and varied
 - c. Teeter totter movement – safe, modern version still requires teamwork
 - d. Spinning movement

8. Isolated Upper Body Equipment such as ladder style monkey bars and pull up bars (used for “tricks”)

Aspirational Equipment – Dream Big – Grants?:

- Outdoor equipment for music making
- Area/equipment for creative play (large slate with chalk and brushes with water for example)
- Opportunity for students to build (large blocks or similar building tools)

Questions:

- What is the best loved/most used equipment at the Stowe playground?
- What areas are most used on the Stowe playground?
- What (if any) area/equipment is underused at the Stowe playground?
- Will both playgrounds for school aged children be used equally? Will they be used by the same groups of children or by different groups?

*In addition, an appropriately sized playground with age appropriate versions of the above will need to be designed for the preschoolers.