

Inclusive Playground Equipment

Your daughter is immersed in an imaginative adventure with her friend, exploring new places, but she watches from her wheelchair when her friend ventures away from her. She waits for her friend to return before continuing their adventure.

Project Narrative

Background Information

At Oceanview Elementary in Anchorage, Alaska there are two separate playgrounds. One playground is partially inclusive for children ages five and up while the second is a small, non-inclusive special education playground for children ages two to five. The latter playground is used by three special needs preschool classrooms and includes a simple climbing structure and two swings.

Equipment Request

We are requesting funds to purchase a Sensory Play Bell Panel and a Sensory Play Drum Panel to be installed in the preschool special education playground at Oceanview Elementary.

Statement of Need

The current preschool playground equipment is not accessible by physically disabled children and does not address the sensory needs of children with autism. A cement curb barrier and pea gravel surfacing limits access to the playground. Children with physical disabilities need to be carried to and placed on the equipment. This limits the children's independence, ability to play with their peers, and engagement in motor activities. Some children are not able to be safely carried to the equipment and are therefore denied the right to engage in physical play afforded to their peers.

Children with autism require sensory exploration with different textures which helps them learn and come to their own conclusions about the world around them. Sensory play promotes social skills, fine and gross motor skills, pretend play, and self-regulation skills. The addition of sensory equipment to the playground would allow children with autism to engage with their peers in a meaningful way.

Goals

Our overarching goal is to modify the playground to foster inclusivity for children with physical disabilities and autism. We want to provide children with equipment that lets them explore their independence while engaging in simple motor activities in order to promote their overall development. These modifications will provide additional ways for disabled children and children with autism to engage with their peers in play in a way that was not previously obtainable.

Current Models of Proposed Project

Anchorage, Alaska is currently leading the nation in inclusive playgrounds. The first inclusive playground, Cuddy Family Midtown Park, opened in 2013 and was followed by 11 additional playgrounds of this type throughout the city. Five more inclusive playgrounds are currently being designed due to Cuddy Park's success and a growing need for playgrounds accessible to children with special needs.

Sustainability

Due to the quality of the playground equipment, we expect the sensory panels to last up to ten years with yearly maintenance, safety audits, and inspections.

Budget

	<i>Sensory Play Bell Panel</i>		<i>Sensory Play Drum Panel</i>
<i>Cost of Individual Items</i>	\$1,515	+	\$1,412
<i>Total Cost of Shipping</i>			\$1475
<i>Total Cost of Installation</i>			\$1,600
<i>Northwest Playground Equipment Discount</i>		-	\$200
<i>Total Cost</i>			\$5,802

The amount afforded to us through the Carrs Safeway Alaska Education Grant would cover \$5,000 of the total expenses. The rest of the \$802 will be covered by PTA fundraising and parent contributions.

Inclusion means being a part of their peer group, not being apart.