

## Environmental Health Services Division

401 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1100  
Seattle, WA 98104

206-263-9566 Fax 206-296-0189

TTY Relay: 711

[www.kingcounty.gov/health](http://www.kingcounty.gov/health)

# K-12 School Playground Plan Review Process

Before adding a K-12 school playground or moving/modifying equipment, you must submit your plans to Public Health – Seattle & King County (PHSKC) for review (see [Washington Administrative Code \[WAC\] 246-366-040](#)).

## Playground Review Process

- Complete a playground plan review application via the online [Public Health Permit Center](#) (PHPC). We recommend you submit your plans before ordering equipment. *Payment for a minimum of 2 hours is required at application submittal.*
- We review for compliance and safety. We may ask you for additional materials during our review.
- We upload the approval letter to the [PHPC](#) that you can access.
- Install equipment. Before the playground is used, complete the online [Preoccupancy Inspection Request Form](#) to request a final in-person inspection. Contact us at least one (1) week advance to schedule the inspection.
- PHSKC completes final inspection.
- Open the playground.

The plan review application base fee covers two hours. Any additional hours will be billed at an hourly rate. For current fee rates, visit [School plan review - King County, Washington](#).

If you have questions, please reach out to the School EHS team at [schoolEHS@kingcounty.gov](mailto:schoolEHS@kingcounty.gov).

## Playground Application

- Submit K-12 School Playground Plan Review Application via [PHPC](#)
- Overhead drawing or footprint plan of playground design (example on following page) showing the following information:
  - Containment border for all surfacing material under the playground equipment.
  - Location of fences, trees, buildings, concrete, asphalt, and septic system drain fields.
  - Directional arrow showing true north.
  - If drawn to scale, indicate scale.
  - Location of existing playground equipment.
  - All equipment to be installed. Note activities attached to composite (multi-activity) structures.
  - Use zone around each piece of equipment. Use arrows to show distances between each piece of equipment (existing and new) and from equipment to containment border.
  - Distance of slide use exit zone from end of slide and length of flat exit region at end of slide bed (11 inches minimum length, 0 to -4 degree slope). Slide exit use zone is equal to slide height and measured from end of slide bed (minimum 6 feet; does not need to be greater than 8 feet).
  - Height of all decks or platforms for each piece of equipment. Indicate if platforms have guardrails or barriers.

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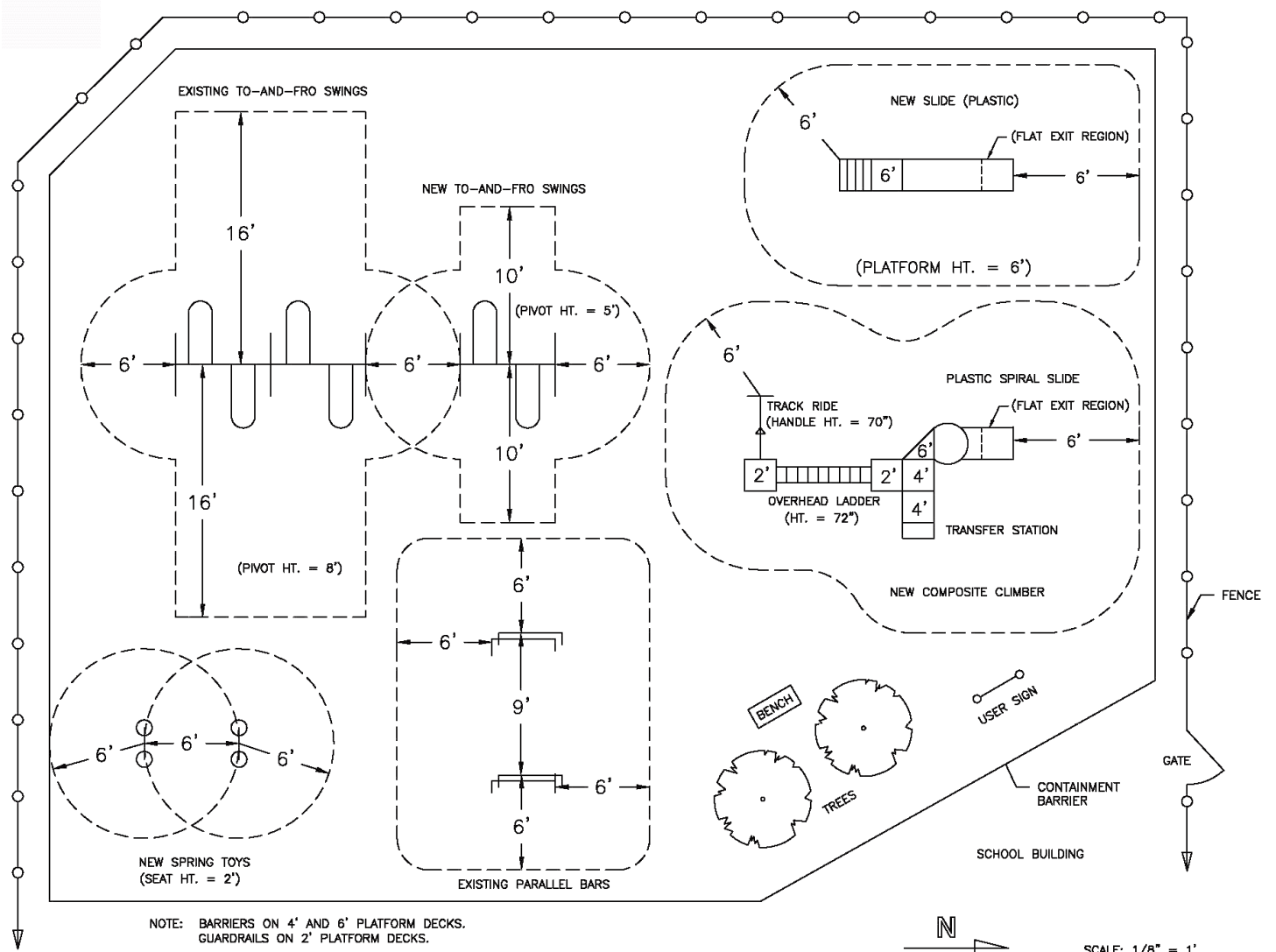
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- Height of all balance beams, spring toys, seesaws or other equipment less than 30 inches tall. Maximum height for balance beams is 12 inches for children 2 to 5 years and 16 inches for children 5 to 12 years.
- Height of all upper body equipment (arch climbers, overhead ladders, etc.). Maximum allowable height is 60 inches for children 2 to 5 years and 84 inches for children 5 to 12 years.
- Handle height for track rides. Allowable height is 64 to 78 inches.
- Height of all swing structures. To-and-fro swings are measured from ground to pivot point. Tire swings are measured from seat to pivot point.
- Manufacturer cut sheets with pictures of each new piece of equipment and design specifications.
- Letter from manufacturer of protective surfacing material stating compliance with [ASTM F1292-22 Standard Specification for Impact Attenuation of Surfacing Materials Within the Use Zone of Playground Equipment](#).
- Letter from manufacturer stating equipment being purchased meets or exceeds standards in the current [American Society for Testing and Materials Standard Consumer Safety Performance Specification for Playground Equipment for Public Use \(ASTM F1487-25\)](#) and [U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission Public Playground Safety Handbook July 2025](#) (CPSC PPSH).
- Manufacturer documents for installation, surfacing and equipment compliance, maintenance/repair instructions, inspection procedures, parts lists, and installation instructions.
- If equipment pieces are located closer than minimum use zones specified in the current [ASTM F1487-25](#) and [CPSC PPSH](#), provide manufacturer letter stating equipment is designed to be installed in this configuration (i.e., “functionally linked”). *Note: Climbing equipment should not be functionally linked with other equipment.*

*See example drawing next page.*

**Example Overhead Drawing of Proposed Playground Layout**

*Provided only as an illustration of information required on plan.*



# K-12 School Playground Plan Review Checklist

*Use this checklist to prepare for playground plan review application submittal*

## Surfacing

Types of surfaces will be installed?

- Artificial Turf                       Engineered Wood Fiber                       Pea Gravel                       Sand
- Shredded/Recycled Rubber     Unitary Synthetic                       Wood Mulch (non-CCA)                       Other \_\_\_\_\_

Material depth: \_\_\_\_\_ inches                      \*ADA accessible surfacing materials

For more information about surfacing materials, refer to [U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission Public Playground Safety Handbook 2025](#) (CPSC PPSH) section 2.4, page 14 to 18.

## Site Design

- Intended user age group for the playground?                       2 to 5 years                       5 to 12 years
- If the playground contains equipment for both age groups, does a distance separate the two areas?                       Yes                       No
- Will posted signs indicate the appropriate age of users?                       Yes                       No
- Is the playground fenced and separated from traffic?                       Yes                       No
- Are barriers and landscaping designed to allow users to be supervised?                       Yes                       No
- Is the site level and well-drained?                       Yes                       No
- Is a septic system located on school grounds?                       Yes\*                       No

*\*If yes, the playground cannot be located over the septic drain field. Show drain field on overhead drawing/footprint plan.*

## Equipment Design

If installing fulcrum seesaws, seats have padding underneath to prevent arms and legs from being crushed between the seat and the ground?                       Yes                       No                       NA

What is the seesaw height (distance between maximum attainable eight and the ground)?                      \_\_\_\_\_ inches

Slide bed exit region length (portion parallel to ground)                      \_\_\_\_\_ inches

Does the slide layout meet the minimum ASTM F1487-21 and CPSC PPSH slide exit use zone based on slide height?                       Yes                       No                       NA

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**Equipment Height**

- To-and-fro swings (distance from ground to pivot point) \_\_\_\_\_ inches
- Tire swings (distance from seat to pivot point) \_\_\_\_\_ inches
- Upper body equipment (maximum height of equipment) \_\_\_\_\_ inches
- Spring toys (height of seat or highest designated play surface) \_\_\_\_\_ inches
- Balance beams \_\_\_\_\_ inches
- Track rides (handle height above ground) \_\_\_\_\_ inches

**Equipment Not Recommended for Children 2 to 5 years**

- |                             |  |   |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| Free standing arch climbers | Swinging gates   | Chain or cable walks                              |
| Parallel bars               | Overhead rings   | Fulcrum seesaws, unless they are spring-centering |
| Vertical sliding poles      | Track rides  | Long spiral slides (more than one 360° turn)      |
| Log Rolls                   | Free standing climbing events with flexible components |   |

**Equipment Not Recommended for Public Playgrounds**

- |                          |               |   |
|--------------------------|---------------|---|
| Animal figure swings     | Giant strides | Climbing ropes not secured at both ends |
| Swinging gates and doors | Rope swings   | Swinging dual exercise rings            |
| Trapeze bars             | Trampolines   | Multiple occupancy swings               |

**Equipment Layout**

Refer to [CPSC PPSH](#) section 2.2, pages 10 to 13 for guidance. Consider these recommendations.

- Locate ADA transfer stations near school entrances to minimize travel distance.
- Add extra circulation zones to minimum required use zones to reduce congestion.
- Locate active, physical activities in a separate area from more passive or quiet activities.
- Disperse popular, heavily used equipment to avoid crowding.
- Locate composite structures so play and traffic patterns around adjacent components are complementary.
- Locate slide exits and moving equipment like swings and merry-go-rounds at the edge or corners of the playground.
- Guy wires, power lines and tree limbs should be at least 7 feet above the playground surface.