

**Ithaca City School District  
Caroline Elementary  
Site Based Council Parent Representatives**

**PLAYGROUND DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS**

**FEBRUARY 25, 2008**

## **Recommendations**

The Caroline Site Based Council Parent Representatives, having:

- consulted with Steve Lauzun, Landscape Architect and President of Parkitects, and other Site Based Council members including faculty, staff, and administrators,
- held an open playground planning forum cosponsored by the Caroline Parent Teachers Association,
- surveyed all parents in grades kindergarten through fifth grade, and
- having heard from many parents directly,

resolve to make the following recommendations for designing the new Caroline Elementary playground.

Our recommendations incorporate features and amenities to help ensure active and inclusive play during school hours as well as after school and in the summer for K–5 students (and those supervising them). Students will have a myriad of fun and engaging choices in a safe, playful environment.

### *Playground Committee*

Over a dozen parents stepped forward to volunteer and join the newly formed Caroline Playground Committee to review the draft plan and help coordinate the community build this spring.

We're eager for the Playground Committee to organize and will continue to support their efforts to as they refine the design and build what is surely to be an enriching and fun place for Caroline students and the wider community.

We thank the many passionate Caroline parents and members of the community who have given us such insightful feedback. You are all helping make Caroline a wonderful school and community!

A special thank you to Laurie Cuomo who joined in formulating these recommendations.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Christen, Tonya Engst, Chuck Goelzer Lyons, Gary Stewart, and Sarah Tarrow

Caroline Site Based Council Parent Representatives

## **Playground Areas**

The playground should consist of 7 primary areas:

1. Structure with ramps, bridges, and slides
2. Climbing structure
3. Swings
4. Natural area
5. Painted blacktop area
6. Existing fields for soccer and other play
7. Existing basketball court

We recommend having Caroline students select the individual components for items 1-5, within these guidelines suggested by the Site Based Council:

### **1. Structure with Ramps, Bridges, and Slides**

Large new structure connected to the existing structure installed by Parkitects

- Number of engaging components should outnumber elevated paths
- Wheelchair-accessible ramp and Sway Fun glider (see Accessibility below)
- Another component like the Sway Fun glider that allows students to play together in a small group
- More slides and overhead horizontal bars, and as many components as possible that the students choose
- No more than one component that spins or twirls
- Roofs designed to discourage bees and wasps from building nests.

### **2. Climbing Structure**

Large climbing structure on which many children can play at the same time; for example, Cascade Climber, Hemisphere Climber, O-Zone Climber, or Mini Quad Spacenet Climber

### **3. Swings**

Approximately 8–12 swings including at least one accessible Molded Bucket Seat

### **4. Natural Area**

To include:

- Low hills up to 4 feet high of different grades for sliding and other play
- Boulders or rocks for climbing (including natural rocks up to 3 feet high), place for a few hay bales
- Small garden with bench (or wall or other place to sit) as a quiet area for contemplation
- Sensory play components like a drum, chimes, and willow sticks
- Open space

Consider fencing a portion of the woods if this would permit increased access to and incorporation of the woods into the playground.

**5. Painted Blacktop Area**

Blacktop area painted for hopscotch, four square, and a giant map of the USA (or North America, solar system, New York State, a QWERTY keyboard or number board as determined by the faculty)

**Accessibility**

The playground should accommodate children with a wide variety of mobility and visual disabilities. It should exceed the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and accessibility standards and encourage inclusive play by incorporating elements such as:

1. For the structure with bridges (item 1 above), wheelchair-accessible entrance and components
2. Sway Fun, a wheelchair-accessible glider
3. Molded Bucket Seat swing
4. Wheelchair-accessible tables
5. Engineered wood fiber surfacing (rated accessible)

**Amenities**

Throughout the playground, these features should be incorporated:

1. Shade trees
2. Benches or other places to sit
3. Rectangular tables (2-6) with fixed benches and wheelchair-accessible ends

Garbage cans and recycling bins should only be included if year-round maintenance will be provided by the school.

Signs are a low priority and their type and content remain undetermined. We do not recommend a sign with rules unless required (such as to distinguish pre-K elements from those designed for older children). We tended to like signs with inspirational words or quotes, as well as signs that inspired imagination (such as how many miles to places like the North Pole, Pacific Ocean, Moon). We recommend the playground committee further consider any signage.

**Components and Amenities to Exclude**

Based on parent feedback and discussions led by Site Council, we recommend not including the following components in the Caroline playground:

1. Tunnels, enclosed slides, caves, or other hiding places (to maximize sight lines and ease supervision)
2. Chin-up bars
3. Balance beam
4. Parallel bars
5. Seesaws
6. Chess/checker games tables (instead, use multiuse 7-foot tables)
7. Tic-tac-toe boards (instead use more engaging panels, if any)
8. Water fountain, drinking fountain, or water elements
9. Sandbox
10. Night-time lighting
11. Bike racks
12. Bulletin boards

If any of these components are strongly desired by a different constituency, they should not be incorporated at the expense of losing components that support the Playground Areas detailed above.

**Color Scheme**

The color scheme and look of the playground should reflect Caroline's rural and suburban makeup as well as its beautiful natural setting. Colors should coordinate with the green and maroon colors of the existing structures. Blue and tan are suggested as additional colors.

**Vandalism**

To reduce vandalism, the playground should minimize surfaces that could be marred permanently with graffiti. For durability, safety, and to guard against vandalism the playground should be made with the strongest, most durable components resistant to sharp and blunt objects. Roofs should be made of solid, non-fabric materials and be configured to prevent anyone from climbing on top.