ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

GUIDELINES FOR OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES AND PLAYGROUND AND RECESS

AP No. 6130
Effective Date: August 19, 2026

I. PURPOSE: To provide guidelines for outdoor activities, playground and recess supervision.

II. POLICY: The Prince George's County Board of Education (Board) is committed to fostering a healthy school environment that promotes wellness, proper nutrition, nutrition education, and regular physical activity for students and staff. The Board recognizes that healthy habits support physical and mental well-being and contribute to positive academic outcomes, including improved attendance, achievement, and student success.

III. BACKGROUND: Elementary school principals and school staff have the responsibility to provide the proper supervision of students during regularly scheduled recess and playground activities during the school day. This administrative procedure sets forth the rules concerning such supervision. Elementary schools containing grade six follow the middle school schedule for the sixth-grade students. Recess is not required in middle school and an elementary school is not required to offer recess in the schedule for Grades 6-8.

IV. DEFINITIONS:

Qualified adult – A classroom teacher, long-term substitute, regularly scheduled aide or a non-classroom based staff member assigned to supervise outdoor, playground or recess activities.

V. PROCEDURES:

A. Outdoor Recess and Playground Activities

1. General Guidelines for Elementary Recess

a. Recess should be provided each day in every elementary student's schedule.

b. Recess should not be based on whether the student has or has not had physical education during a particular day.

    1) It is recommended that elementary schools set aside 30 minutes each day for recess, preferably before or after lunch. At a minimum, 20 minutes must be allocated.

    2) In accordance with the Society of Health and Physical Educators recommendations, recess should not be held before or after Physical Education.

c. Recess must be supervised by qualified adults who are trained regarding the requirements of this administrative procedure.

d. Weather permitting, the principal must schedule recess outside and designate the areas to be utilized.

e. Recess, other outdoor activities, and Physical Education must be considered for an inside activity if any of the following conditions exist:

    1) Temperature with or without a wind chill factor is below 32 degrees;

    2) Definite rain, sleet or snow with accumulation;

    3) Soggy, wet conditions; or

    4) Temperatures that fall within the categories for a Code Orange, Code Red, or Code Purple. See Attachment 1, Chart for Heat Designations.

f. A system of supervision must be established to cover any student not participating in recess due to illness or injury.

g. Per Administrative Procedure 0116, students may not be kept from recess as a punishment.

2. Guidelines for Proper Supervision

    a. By the first week of school each year, the principal of each elementary school will provide training for staff on the proper methods of supervision of playground activities; procedures for accident reporting; expectations for student behavior; and, in conjunction with the physical education teacher, the proper use of equipment.

1) At this training, the principal shall review with staff activities specifically prohibited on the playground including, but not limited to, any tackle activities, games and other activities identified as prohibited or high risk under Administrative Procedure 6153 - Student Trips: Virtual, Day, Overnight, and Foreign. Each teacher shall then be responsible for reviewing with students expectations for proper playground behavior and use of equipment.

b. Principal's Responsibilities

1. The principal is responsible for developing a schedule for playground and recess supervision using the following guidelines for each area to be supervised:

a) The principal, being knowledgeable of the students, the playground/recess area and configuration, is given discretion as to whether there will be:

1) one (1) qualified adult for every class, or

2) two (2) qualified adults for every three (3) classes on the playground/recess.

3) prekindergarten classes must maintain an average qualified adult to student ratio of 1:10; two (2) qualified adults for 20 students (COMAR 13A.06.02.01-05 Prekindergarten Programs).

b) In each major or distinct section of the playground/recess area, the qualified adult/class ratio must be maintained.

c) Except in instances where the principal determines that there are no viable alternatives, a short-term substitute, aide, or para-professional should not be allowed to supervise playground/recess activities without a qualified adult present. In such events, where a short-term substitute or paraprofessional is used, they must be accompanied by a qualified adult. The principal must fully brief the short-term substitute teacher, or para-professional on the procedures to be followed.

2. In addition to the annual training for staff on proper supervision, expectations for student behavior, use of equipment, and the accident and accident reporting protocol, the principal must:

a) Periodically remind staff at meetings and/or in writing after the start of the school year regarding the types of physical activities that are

prohibited and could cause injury. This includes dodgeball, football, or any tackle activities or games.

b) Personally observe, at least several times a month, the manner of supervision for each recess period.

c. Qualified Adult's Responsibilities

1) In addition to receiving the annual formal training on behavior and use of equipment, the qualified adult(s) will:

a) Continuously monitor and supervise the students by walking around in the area(s) to be supervised. When more than one (1) is on duty, each should assume supervision of separate sections of the playground.

b) Prevent those activities specifically enumerated by the principal as being prohibited playground activities.

c) Stop any activities which, in the judgment of the qualified adult, can lead to an accident and/or injury.

d) Use the walkie-talkie as a part of safety and monitoring for quick access to the office or nurse's office for emergencies.

e) Not participate in playground activities which will distract from the primary duty of supervising.

d. Accident Procedure

1) In the event that an accident occurs, such that the attention of the qualified adult(s) on duty are absorbed by the accident, all playground activities must stop and the remaining students should be lined up while the student(s) involved in the accident is (are) attended to.

2) Staff must complete an incident accident report using the Report of Student Injury form provided under Administrative Procedure 2805.2. The principal will include information on accident reporting in the annual training.

B. Indoor Recess

1. A minimum of one (1) qualified adult per class, per room, must supervise students for indoor recess. Students may not be left unsupervised at any time.

2. Prekindergarten classes must maintain an average qualified adult to student ratio of 1:10; two (2) adults for 20 students (COMAR 13A.06.02.01-05 Prekindergarten Programs).

3. Students are to be assigned to their regular classroom and to the extent possible the classrooms involved in indoor recess simultaneously should be in close proximity to one another.

4. Students can be engaged in quiet games and activities. Ball playing and other vigorous activities are not permitted.

5. Principals and staff must develop a plan of appropriate activities to be conducted during indoor recess. See Attachment 2, Ideas for Indoor Recess Activities.

C. Students with Disabilities

At the beginning of each school year, the principal and Special Education Coordinator/Special Education Chairperson or Individualized Education Facilitator will jointly review individual education plans (IEPs) and develop a recess and playground activities procedure to ensure that appropriate qualified adult-to-student ratios and accommodations are implemented during playground or recess activities. All staff members in the school will also be trained on the procedures.

VI. MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE: Schools will maintain a copy of the agenda and sign in sheets from the yearly meeting that explicitly lists the discussion points related to this administrative procedure. The agendas and sign in sheets should be kept in a folder titled "Outdoor Recess Procedures." There should be a file for each school year for a period of five (5) years.

VII. RELATED ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES AND OTHER RESOURCES:

Administrative Procedure 0116 – Health and Wellness
Administrative Procedure 2805.2 – Student and Visitor Accident Reporting
Administrative Procedure 6153 – Student Field Trips: Day, Overnight or Virtual

VIII. MAINTENANCE AND UPDATE OF THIS ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE: This administrative procedure originates with the Division of Academics, Physical Education Office, and will be updated as needed.

IX. HISTORY:
July 15, 2011 (Revised)
July 15, 2019 (Revised)

X. EFFECTIVE DATE: August 19, 2026

Attachments:

1. Chart for Heat Designations
2. Ideas for Indoor Recess Activities