



Home and School Association
Committee Reports
For Month of November

Committee Name

Chairperson Reporting

Hospitality Committee

Michelle Sheridan & Michelle Weber

We'll be hosting Coffee and Donuts for the Home and School on Sunday Nov. 20 after all three Masses. We have been coordinating Meals for the staff for Conferences on Nov. 21 and 22. The parents of St. Francis have been very generous with their time and talents and we have filled all areas of need. Nothing further to report at this time.

Committee Name

Chairperson Reporting

Scrip

Laura Krejchi

Committee Updates:

We are going to sell the weekend after Thanksgiving and the first 3 weekends in December after mass to hopefully get some angel tree business as well as the regular Christmas rush.

Committee Name

Chairperson Reporting

Entertainment Books

Stacey Dorsey and Kelly Ryan

Committee Updates:

The entertainment book program wrapped up the end of October.

- 422 books local books were purchased or sold by SFA families
- 5 out of town orders received via the order form
- 9 out of town orders placed over the Internet

When we returned books to the company, there were 17 books missing or outstanding. We did not have to pay for these books.

The company left 61 free books. Forty of these books were given to the administration, teachers, and office staff. The remaining books are available for sale.

Since the program has wrapped up, three additional books have been sold. We received 100% profit for those books.

There were fewer books sold than last year. However, Home and School still netted \$5,210 from this fundraiser.

Committee Concerns: One concern is that not all Internet orders were allocated to SFA. If individuals did not enter SFA's code on the order form we did not get credit. As more families purchase entertainment books online, chairs will need to focus on this problem.

Committee Name **CE**
Chairperson Reporting Liz Bedia

November 1st (Tuesday)

- **Kindergarten** – Lewis Major from **Polk County Conservation** – Spiders presentation
- In the classrooms
- 12:30-1pm, 1:05-1:35pm, 1:40-2:10pm

- **8th Grade Classes** – Tom Chapman with **Iowa Catholic Conference** – Social Responsibility as Catholics
- Erin Nennig's classes
- In Ms. Nennig's classroom
- 12:45-3:00pm

November 21st (Monday)

- **3rd Grade Classes – CultureAll Presenter**
- Citizenship presentation
- 8:45-11am

January 12th (Thursday)

- **Kindergarten** – Jim Birkel from **Mad Science** – Physical Force presentation
- In the LMR
- 12:45-1:30pm, 1:35-2:20pm, 2:25-3:10pm

January/February

- **K-2nd grade classes – Kenn Nesbitt – Poet and Author** – assembly and classroom presentations

February 9th (Thursday)

- **K-3rd grad classes – Iowa Opera – presenting Sid the Serpent Who Wanted to Sing**
- K-3 Assembly
- Class sessions with some of the grades

March 5th (Monday)

- **Middle School classes – Wendy Mass – Author** – Skype presentations
- In the LMR or Parish Hall
- 9-9:30am and 9:40-10:10am

March 9th (Friday)

- **5th grade classes & Middle School classes – Gordan Korman – Author** – Skype presentations
- In the LMR or Parish Hall
- 8:45-9:20am and 9:30-10:10am

March 12th (Monday)

- **Middle School classes – Roland Smith – Author** – Skype presentation
- In LMR or Parish Hall
- 9-10am

April 19th (Thursday)

- **3rd grade classes & 4th grade classes – Dan Gutman – Author** – Skype presentations
- In LMR
- TBD

Playground Vision 2011-2012

(revised 11/15/2011)

Playground Committee

Molly Eliason, Jenny Annexstad, Jennifer Scheck, Rob Szalay, Jennifer James, Jill Frerichs, Holly Harnden

Identified Areas of Improvement

The playground committee photographed local public elementary school playgrounds to evaluate how Saint Francis School compares. These schools included Walnut Hills Elementary, Waukee Elementary, Eason Elementary, Jordan Creek Elementary, and Brookview Elementary. We observed the following:

1. Each playground had a large play structure surrounded with adequate mulch to prevent mud. (Some had an additional second structure designed for younger grades.)
2. Each playground had additional, smaller free standing play devices.
3. Each playground had a set of swings. (Some had a second set of swings for younger grades.)
4. Each playground had immediate access to a large, grassy open area for free play.
5. Each playground had cement space to be used for four-square, basketball, tetherball, and hopscotch

In comparison, at Saint Francis of Assisi School we noted the following:

1. Our playground has an equivalently large play structure in very good condition, but a smaller area of mulch.
2. Our playground does not have additional, smaller, free standing play devices.
3. Our playground does not have a set of swings.
4. Our playground has an equivalently large, grassy open area for free play, but it is not immediately accessible to students at recess because they must be safely walked across the street by an adult.
5. Our playground has an equivalent cement space for basketball, four-square, tether ball, and hopscotch.

In addition to these observations, the playground committee received feedback from Saint Francis of Assisi teachers and associates, administration, the grounds committee, P.E. teacher, and parents. With this combined information, we have identified the following four areas of improvement:

I. Playground Congestion

II. Playground Supervision

III. Playground Rule Modifications

IV. Playground Capital Improvements

I. Playground Congestion

After the playground committee observed morning recesses of K-3 and lunch recesses of K-8, and received feedback from the teachers and associates supervising during these times, we have concluded that there is a concern of space limitations and a safety concern due to congestion.

The morning recesses have one or two primary grades (K-3) sharing the playground, but often just slightly overlapping. The use of the cement area and existing mulched play structure area seem to be adequate for these recesses. Lunch recesses, however, showed excessive crowding when students were unable to have access to the grassy, open area across the street. At the lunch recesses observed on a beautiful fall day, the grade 3-5 recess were offered the option to walk across to the grassy field. Approximately half the students chose this option and romped playfully in the grassy area engaging in football, soccer, tag, chase, walking, and running. The other half of the students chose to remain on the cement and mulched play structure area. Because the groups were spread out, four-square, hopscotch, catch, and the use of the playground structure were not overcrowded and very similar to morning recess of the younger grades. Supervision was also much easier. It was truly an ideal situation.

When the K-2 lunch recess began however, they were not offered the option to walk across the street to use the grassy area. It was highly congested on the cement and mulched area. Students were trying to play games but were interrupting other children's activities merely due to forced proximity. It was very difficult to observe appropriate play just due to the mass of children. Long lines formed in the mulched area play structures and cement area games. Supervision was more difficult.

When 6-8 grade recess began, they too were not offered to walk over to the grassy area. It was by far the worst scenario of the three lunch recesses as these students are so much larger. The play equipment designed for ages 5-12 was being misused by children far too large to use it. There were very minimal activities and space for the students to attempt to play and this resulted in mischievous behavior.

Moreover, our existing playground as described by the 2000 playground committee was to comfortably accommodate 125-150 students at any one given lunch recess. Our student body has grown, and is now uncomfortably accommodating 250 students at any one given lunch recess.

Proposal:

1. The playground committee proposes that all students at all lunch recesses be offered the option of crossing the street to use the grassy area when weather and grass conditions are favorable by a consistently assigned recess teacher designated for this area. It is understandable when this area is wet or muddy that this would not be an option, and as is true for the public schools visited, would be obligated to remain on the cement and mulched areas. When the conditions are snowy, but not slushy or muddy, students should continue to be offered to play in the grassy area if wearing appropriate snow gear.
2. Six additional four-squares, 3 small and 3 large, will be painted on the cement to offer students at different ages safe and fun options for the cement.
3. Two tether ball games will be moved to the cement area, and the other two tether ball poles will be modified to offer volleyball on the cement west of the furthest basketball goal. This equipment will be positioned along the center line of the center parking spaces. These poles will remain on the pavement. Playground committee will remove the volleyball net and tether balls after school and reattach them in the morning. Ultimately, with funds available, these poles will be replaced with poles that can be removed from a sleeve mounted in the concrete for easy removal for snow removal and school breaks. However currently, these poles will be removed from the pavement and stored over the winter months as to not interfere with snow removal. They will then be brought back to the pavement in the spring. This equipment will provide additional safe play options for the cement and offer more variety to students when conditions require them to remain on the cement.

4. Equipment supplies have been ordered to include soccer balls, basketballs, volleyball balls, four-square balls, kick balls, footballs, jump ropes, swing balls, hula hoops, and Frisbees. Footballs, soccer balls, kick balls, and Frisbees will be in color coded bags labeled “grassy area toys” and will be in the storage bin located in the grassy area, only to be used in the grassy area. Soccer and touch football games are only permitted in this grassy area. “Catch” only may be played on the pavement with balls brought from home. Tackle football is never permitted. Jump ropes, swing balls, hula hoops, basketballs, volleyballs, and four-square balls will be in color coded bags labeled “pavement toys” and may be used on the cement and mulched playground areas. This equipment will be stored in the cart located between the exit doors near the library. By providing different activities and specific locations for these activities to be played, congestion will be decreased.

5. We propose a play structure expansion across the street in the grassy area. We propose an eight seat swing set be placed in the grassy area across the street, east of the gate, along the south fence. To the left of the gate in the grassy area, we propose putting an agility course consisting of 9 to 12 play units along the south fence. The swings and agility equipment would be placed on a mulched area. This equipment is designed for ages 5-Adult. This would provide additional play options for not only K-5, but specifically for grades 6-8 who have outgrown our existing play structure. By situating this play equipment immediately beyond the gate and along the south fence, students could gain quick and easy access. Also, since this area will be mulched and students will not have to enter the grass to gain access to the mulched area, these play areas could continue to be used even when weather conditions are not ideal.

Additionally, we propose placing an outdoor classroom/nature area along the east tree line in the grassy area. This would include decorative grass mazes, picnic tables, synthetic climbing rock structures, and tunnels as examples.

6. Our existing play structure is designed for ages 5-12. Seventh and eighth students will not be permitted in the mulched area for play. Sixth graders will continue to have access to this area, as well of course to all other play areas. We believe this will promote students to choose other options on the cement or grassy area and alleviate congestion.

The playground committee believes that by implementing the above proposals, the playground congestion will be alleviated and provide a safe environment for grades K-8 to enjoy.

II. Playground Supervision

Currently, only grades K-3 offer a consistent morning recess. Fourth grade is offered occasional morning recesses. A teacher for each classroom is supervising the students during this time, and additionally parent volunteers organized by these teachers for each classroom grades K-2 are assisting in monitoring these morning recesses. So for grades K-2 morning recesses the adult to student ratio is approximately 3:27, or 1 adult per 9 students. Grade 3 has a teacher for each classroom during morning recess, but no additional parent volunteers. The adult to student ratio is 1:27. The playground committee believes there is adequate supervision for the morning primary grade recesses with the exception of third grade.

All three lunch recesses have primary grade associates or related arts teachers as supervisors. Currently no parent volunteers assist during these recesses. Grades K-2 lunch recess has 5 associates supervising approximately 250 students, or 50 students per teacher. Similarly grades 3-5 recess has 5 associates for 250 students, and grades 6-8 recess has 5 associates for 250 students. The playground committee believes this is an inadequate student to teacher ratio for the lunch recesses and the lunch recesses are too understaffed to effectively supervise and monitor the playground environment.

Proposal:

1. The playground committee proposes overseeing a lunch recess parent volunteer schedule. The playground committee will seek parent volunteers to assist during the entire lunch recess block beginning with the start of the first lunch recess and concluding with the final, middle school lunch recess, so from 11:35 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. A calendar schedule will be posted on the SFA website, and volunteers will contact the playground committee directly to sign up for a desired time. We are suggesting four parent volunteers per day. One will assist in the grassy area. Two will assist on the cement area. One will assist on the mulch area. The volunteers will be given the following guidelines:
 1. Monitor the safety and appropriate use of play equipment and games.
 2. Encourage Christ-like interactions on the playground.
 3. Ensure students are offered daily access to the grassy field, weather and conditions permitting.
 4. Ensure students are retrieving playground toys at the conclusion of each recess. If there is an inadequate number of parent volunteers, we propose additional SFA staff be assigned to the lunch recess duties.

2. Currently, Recess Teacher Duty Assignments are labeled as follows: 1. Door/Sidewalk (Lead Line), 2. Play Equipment (Outside), 3. Outside (Outside), 4. Blacktop-West (Outside), 5. BB/Gate (RR/Hall Sweep). We propose "Outside (Outside)" be relabeled and designated "Grassy Area (Outside)" to ensure a specific staff member is assigned the task of walking students over to the grassy area to consistently implement a routine for students at each recess.

3. The playground committee proposes that for third grade, teachers coordinate a recess volunteer schedule similar to that of K-2 for their morning recesses.

III. Playground Rule Modifications

The playground committee, as a result of parent feedback, teacher feedback, and observation at recesses, has concluded there is a need for specific additions and enforcement of playground rules. Teachers and parents have sighted safety concerns regarding students playing contact sports such as football and soccer on the cement. Associates monitoring lunch recess have great concern that grades 6-8 are too large for the play structure and causing damage. The playground committee spends approximately \$1800 on playground toys such as balls and jump ropes each year. Students do not have a system that enables them to responsibly retrieve and respectfully care for this expensive equipment.

Proposal:

The playground committee proposes the following rules be implemented and enforced:

1. Touch football games and soccer games be allowed only in the grassy area across the street or grassy/dirt area south of the play structure. Playing catch with the football and tag are acceptable for either the grassy area or the cement.
2. The existing play structure is designed for safe play for children ages 5-12. Grades 7 and 8 shall not be permitted to play on the mulched area or on the play structure during their recess.
3. The playground toys will be color-coded for each grade level. For example, Kindergarten will have all purple toys and balls, and they will have purple bags for the equipment to be placed in at the conclusion of each recess. Each bag will be labeled with the number and type of equipment to be placed in the bag. The teachers will assign student recess captains who will assist in ensuring all equipment has been returned to the bags. Supervisors and volunteers will assist them as well. Students will also be asked to immediately tell an adult on recess duty if a ball or toy is lost over a fence or rolls in an area that is out of bounds for students. The adult will retrieve the equipment either during or after the recess. The playground committee will perform monthly inventory of this equipment to ensure it is properly cared for and balls remain inflated and in good condition.

IV. Playground Capital Improvements

In comparison to the public school playgrounds visited, and in light of the fact that our school has grown significantly over the past 13 years, the playground committee feels the SFA playground needs to be comparable to area schools as well as adequately reflect the growth of our student body. The original equipment was specified by the playground committee in 2000 to accommodate 125-150 students at any one time for lunch recess. Our numbers are currently 250 students at any one lunch recess.

The area south of our existing play structure is habitually bare and muddy. Similarly, the area east of the play structure is difficult to maintain grass. No play equipment exists to the east and south of the play structure. Students in grades K-2 use the open area south of the play structure for safe play but it is often unusable due to the lack of grass. In addition, the grassy area across the street has no play structures, and unlike the five area schools we visited, SFA has no swings or additional free standing play structures.

Proposal:

The playground committee proposes the following playground capital improvements:

1. The mulched area on the existing playground should be expanded to encompass the east and south of the play structure up to the corresponding fences. This project would involve excavating this area of the playground approximately 12-15 inches, removing the excavated dirt, inserting border timbers, lining the area with landscape fabric, and refilling the area with 12 inches of mulch which is required for safety. This would provide a safe and mud free area to play.
2. In this new mulched area along the east fence, we propose to add 2 to 4 free standing play structures, which may include a tea cup merry go round, free standing spinners, agility climber for k-2, pea gravel pit, and/or umbrella spinner. We propose to keep the remaining space open in the area south of the play structure for free play such as football, tag, catch, and soccer. This area will be particularly important on days when weather is not favorable and the play structures are wet. Students could then still run and play on this mulched space as well as the cement areas.
3. We propose an installation of an eight seat swing set across the street in the grassy area, east of the gate, along the south fence. As mentioned previously, these swings could be enjoyed by grades K-5, but also by grades 6-8 as these swings are designed for ages 5-adult. This expansion would accommodate and reflect the growth of our student body and the 250 students who currently use the playground at any one lunch recess.
4. We propose an installation of an agility course consisting of 9 to 12 equipment pieces age appropriate for k-adult across the street in the grassy area west of the gate along the south fence to be used for both P.E. and recess. Similarly to the swings, this equipment could be enjoyed by grades K-5, but also by grades 6-8 because this equipment is designed for ages 5-adult. This expansion would also accommodate and reflect the growth of our student body and the 250 students who currently use the playground at any one lunch recess.
5. Additionally, to abide by safety guidelines, the areas for the swing set and agility course play structures referenced in 3 and 4 above will require a mulched area. This will involve excavating 12-15 inches, removing the dirt, surrounding the areas with border plastic timbers, lining the areas with fabric, and refilling with mulch.

6. In the grassy area along the east tree line, we propose designing an outdoor classroom/nature area. This would include picnic tables, decorative grass mazes, stepping stones, and synthetic large boulders for climbing. The outdoor classroom could be incorporated to our rewards system to allow students to have lunch outside or have a class taught outside. Additionally, teachers and clubs could utilize this area in any number of ways.

7. To alleviate the mud/dirt at the base of each slide on our existing playground, playground committee proposes installing 12" deep x 2'x 2' rubber tiles at each slide base/exit.

8. We propose installing new poles in the pavement for two volleyball courts and two tether ball games that would enable easy install and removal during weekends, summer, and snow removal.

Implementation Timeline

Phase 1: 2011-2012

- √ Order bases to assist students in designating a kickball field in the grassy area during their recess
- √ Move 2 tether ball posts to cement area and replace/repair tether balls
- √ Modify other 2 tether ball posts to be used for volleyball on cement area
- √ Paint additional four-squares...3 small, 3 large
- √ Paint hopscotch games
- * Purchase portable soccer goals for grassy area
- √ Purchase cones to be used to designate football field boundaries in grassy area
- √ Order color-coded playground equipment for grades K-8 and implement an equipment retrieval procedure
- * Purchase and install thick, rubber tiles under each slide exit to eliminate mud/dirt area
- √ Repair damaged playground equipment...discs, climbing net,
- √ Set up electronic volunteer schedule for all lunch recesses to increase supervision
- * Clearly designate a teacher at each lunch recess to supervise the grassy area.
- √ Implement a rule that will not allow grades 7 and 8 on the play structure and mulched area.
- √ Implement a rule that allows touch football and soccer games only on the grassy areas.
- * Add morning recess volunteers via the teachers for grade 3
- * Add large chalk bucket for k-5 only, to be used on Fridays only seasonally
- * Seek approval from home and school for capital improvements and expansion
- * Seek funding options and obtain estimates for proposed projects and equipment

Phase 2: 2012-2013

- * During summer 2012 while students are not in session, expand the mulched area on our existing playground by excavating the area to the east and south of our existing play structure 12-15 inches, removing the dirt, surrounding with border plastic timbers, lining with fabric, and filling with mulch.
- * In this new mulched area near the east fence, add 2 to 4 new free standing play structures, which may include a tea cup merry go round, free standing spinners, agility climber, pea gravel pit, and umbrella spinner
- * Install new pole system for two volleyball courts and two tetherballs that would enable easy install and removal during weekends, summer, and snow removal.
- * And/Or install a set of 8 swings across the street in the grassy area, east of the gate, along the south fence with a mulched base.

Phase 3: 2013-2014

- *If any of the bullets in Phase 2 were not achieved due to funding, continue with Phase 2
- * Install Agility Course with equipment age appropriate for k-adult across the street in the grassy area west of the gate along the south fence to be used for both P.E. and recess.

Phase 4: 2014-2015

- *If any of the previous plans have not been completed due to funding, continue with previous phase(s).
- *Create an outdoor classroom along the east tree line in the grassy area as described in Capital Improvements

