

May 23, 2024

Urgent Call for an Age-Appropriate Playground for Hazel Trembath Students

On October 14, 2023, the lives of 200 plus students, their families and teachers were turned upside down when their beloved Port Coquitlam school, Hazel Trembath Elementary, was burned to the ground. The impact of this one event and the ongoing turmoil has been devastating for the students. Although School District 43 (SD43), along with school staff, have done their best to transition the students to Winslow, there is one glaring deficiency; the lack of an age-appropriate playground for the students that range in age from 4 to 11 years-old.

As the Hazel Trembath PAC, we are the voice of the parent community and have the responsibility to bring their issues to the forefront for consideration by SD43 and elected School Trustees. We have heard from many parents who have expressed their dismay that there is no age-appropriate playground or play space for the kids at Winslow. As a result we formed a special PAC Subcommittee dedicated to the Winslow Facility and Outdoor space. This information has been prepared by that Subcommittee.

Study after study shows that outdoor play is critical for young developing minds. We as a PAC are hearing concerns of how a lack of an appropriate playground is resulting in students not getting the exercise or the mental stimulation they need as young learners. The students are struggling to learn and behavioral problems are becoming more and more common as the kids try to regulate themselves.

This has not only caused concerns in the classroom but also in the home as you will read in the firsthand accounts in this submission.

The most recent SD43 update posted on May 14, 2024 states,

“We are still waiting to hear back from the insurer about the main playground options, that we have provided to them earlier this calendar year.”

We appreciate the School District is trying to find a solution to the playground situation through their insurer but our children continue to lose out on the growing and development opportunities that are crucial due to a lack of an age-appropriate playground. This situation is unacceptable and cannot continue.

We are asking the School District and elected School Trustees to prioritize the installation of an age-appropriate playground at Winslow immediately and for it to be installed by the beginning of September 2024 school year.

It has been more than 7 months since the school burned down and our children have had to settle for a makeshift play area that frankly resembles a prison yard. A visit at recess or lunch time provides a shocking perspective when you see the children surrounded by fences and

concrete. We as a Subcommittee witnessed first hand how there are no colourful structures and there is limited shade for the kids to cool down or take cover in the rain.

I urge you to visit the bus drop off at Settlers Park at the end of a school day. You will be greeted by the sight of children rushing to the playground and climbing nearby trees. This is what our children should have access to at their own school.

We'd like to point out that we are not asking for special treatment in pushing for an age-appropriate playground for the students at Winslow. We are in fact only asking for the same access to play and age-appropriate equipment that other SD43 students have. We recognize that Winslow is a temporary solution but that does not mean our children should not have the full educational experience.

Hazel Trembath students find themselves in this situation through no fault of their own. It is our responsibility as the "grown ups" to give them all they need after continuing to overcome this incredibly traumatic experience that will likely stay with them their entire lives. It is SD43 and School Trustees who must take steps to ensure these children are allowed to flourish in this difficult situation.

There are approximately 5 weeks left in this school year. It would be wonderful for the students, parents and Hazel Trembath staff to know a playground will be coming for September.

We look forward to hearing back from SD43 and School Trustees.

Sincerely,

The Winslow Site Subcommittee - Hazel Trembath PAC

Lindsey Allen

Shawna Comey

Anu Dawit-Kanna

Shaunna Patel

Nicole Robles

Cara Schuster

In support of our request to prioritize an age-appropriate playground, you will find the following:

- **Parent Stories:** First hand accounts from parents and what their children's experiences have been due to a lack of age-appropriate playground and outdoor space
- **Pictures:** Current outdoor play space
- **Petition:** Signed by parents and guardians of Hazel Trembath students supporting the installation of an age-appropriate playground for the September 2024 school year
- A letter of support from the Mayor of Port Coquitlam, Brad West

Parents Stories:

These are some of the first hand stories from parents of of Hazel Trembath students

"Our 6 year old son has special needs that are currently not being addressed adequately. He has delayed gross motor skills and struggles with mobility. Unfortunately, during recess and lunch breaks, there are no suitable activities for him other than digging in a sandbox, as he neither enjoys nor is capable of participating in sports or using the swings independently.

Consequently, he gets no exercise, making it difficult for him to return to class and sit quietly during lessons. I've been informed that he is being taken out of class more frequently for body breaks, resulting in him missing more class time.

At his previous school, there was a fantastic age-appropriate playground that he adored, with climbing structures and slides that allowed him to burn off energy and return to class sweaty. While I understand that replacing such equipment may seem expensive to you, for my son, it's a necessary tool for success in the classroom."

~Nicole~

"I am a mother of an 8 year old girl who attends Hazel Trembath Elementary. I am writing to advocate for my daughter and her peers, they need an age appropriate playground on the grounds at Winslow Centre. These young kids have experienced trauma from this fire during the fragile years they're trying to navigate friendships and discovering themselves. Given the circumstances they're in, the benefits that come with a safe place to play is immeasurable.

Research studies confirm that children require a mental break during their school day to develop friendships, release energy and tensions, and improve focus in the classroom. When my child comes home, we have observed an increase in anxiety and frustration. During breaks, they typically walk around aimlessly, displaying signs of boredom and frustration.

The current outdoor environment refrains them from getting required physical exercise they need. In the elementary years, lack of playtime can have a negative impact in many aspects of their being . I urge the district to provide a safe, happy place for these kids to congregate and simply be kids."

~Jasmin~

"Our kids need to have an age appropriate playground and a place to cool down in the shade. It was quite eye opening to see kids huddling under one of 2 trees for shade and this needs to be addressed sooner rather than later.

There isn't enough play equipment, let alone age appropriate equipment. We really need to see some monkey bars, a proper slide and more swings for the kids.

My girls really miss Hazel and are having a hard enough time since the fire, that exercise is extremely important for their mental health.

Along with that it would be nice if they didn't just play in the dirt cause the playground is not cutting it."

~Cara~

I just wanted to take a moment to share some of my thoughts over the challenges with the playground space this year. The biggest impact I see is on the children's sensory systems not being engaged effectively to support self regulation, which impacts their ability to learn in the classroom.

The biggest one is there are no opportunities for green space play during recess and lunch. William expressed frustration that there is no wide open space to play. He said today that he feels like he is in jail with all the fences. I am wondering why there can't be a rotation of kids brought up to the green space to play at recess or lunch? Like the rotation that happens with swing use.

Open green spaces like we had at Hazel offer vast areas for exploration, imagination and unstructured play. Both of my children self regulate through creative and imaginative play and they are not getting the same opportunity to do this in a black top space.

I also feel like the lack of playground equipment is impacting the children's gross motor, sensory and self regulation. Playground equipment supports children to learn to climb, swing, and balance. They need daily practice with this. Having access to swings one day a week for example is not providing enough vestibular sensory input. Children learn to regulate their bodies through these activities at recess and lunch to be able to be calm, focussed and ready to learn during the school day.

Many social skills are learned through access to ample playground equipment. Children learn turn-taking, sharing, and empathy, all of which are essential for building emotional intelligence. Unfortunately with little equipment it is too overwhelming for children to be using that equipment in these ways. Too much tension arises and the assertive children maintain access where the quiet children withdraw and don't have access to play and as a result do not get the physical proprioception they need for growth.

~Rachel~

For us, our oldest in grade 2 is making do with the current playground but it's clearly not enough. He complains he is bored, that really it's only the sandbox to play in so they dig all day. That is if he is allowed as apparently there is a sandbox boss kid that sometimes doesn't let them. And then there is also the principal that makes them stop digging sometimes. Other than that, they play a lot of chase because of what's left. But with that is constant skinned knees from tripping over raised tree roots in the play area which clearly needs to be leveled with gravel or

something. Also, it is too crowded. Older kids were playing rough and when he was just minding his business waiting in line to go back in, he was bumped into which he went face first into metal railing, chipping a tooth which has life long consequences. They are clearly bored and crowded and accidents are happening.

Also my youngest starts kindergarten next year. What sort of playground will there be that's even age appropriate? What if someone forgets to move the temp fencing in place and she wanders off? Who is sweeping the grounds between our kids playing and the older kids playing to make sure nothing dangerous is left behind (like the knife found on the school bus)?

~Shaunna~

My daughter started kindergarten in September and has been having trouble adjusting to the whole situation of losing her school. Many things are out of all of our control but a playground could easily be put in by September. Kindergarten is hard as is, kindergarten for a highly sensitive child is even harder. Some of my daughters biggest complaint when she comes home is not getting a turn on the swings, may seem like a small issue, but to these children it's a big deal and they should have access to a proper playground since we will be at Winslow next year.

It's disheartening to hear that my child is timed on the swing and after 5 minutes is told to give someone else a turn, 5 minutes to a 5 year old is not long enough. After everything that has happened, all this change, they deserve a proper playground at the very least.

~Kristen~

My son, in grade 3, has really struggled since the fire, both emotionally and socially. We talked about whether a cross catchment request would be the best option but he really doesn't want to leave the Hazel community. When we did the pros and cons of a cross catchment, the first con of Winslow centre he listed was the playground. His biggest complaint about being at Winslow (and he has quite a few) is that there is nowhere for them to play and nothing to play on. The tag games they used to play using the playground equipment are now non-existent. He's also gotten into a few physical altercations since being at Winslow. When we talked about options when kids are pushing his buttons, such as walking away, he says where am I supposed to go, there's nowhere to go! These kids lost so much, they deserve more than what they've been given!

~Jennifer~

Pictures:

Current outdoor play space at Winslow



Road in front of Winslow Centre. This is also the bus drop off area.



This is the barrier that keeps vehicles from driving into the road space the children use to get to the current play areas.



Green space next to the Winslow Centre that is not accessible to students as it is not fenced in.



This area has some shady spots for kids to cool down but as you can see it provides little relief from the sun or rain. This concrete area could be a potential spot to install an age-appropriate playground.



Play area #1



Play area #2. This playground is not accessible for most students at Hazel Trembath as it is not age-appropriate.



Play area #3. This area consists of some picnic tables and a sand pit near the front fence. There is one tree for some shade but again it is not sufficient for the number of students at the school.



Play area #4. Students use this concrete space to play soccer.



This area is outside the Library and Steam area. There is a potential to install basketball hoops at each end to allow for more outdoor play options.

Petition:

Signed by parents and guardians of Hazel Trembath students supporting the installation of an age-appropriate playground for the September 2024 school year. There are a total of 162 signatures. We are able to provide the original documents if you would like to see them.

Petition for playground and outdoor space upgrades to Winslow

Are you happy with the playground and outdoor space the students have at Winslow? If not please sign this petition to urge SD43 to address this matter in a serious fashion and get the students an age appropriate playground and outdoor space by the start of the 2024-2025 school year:

Signature	First and last name	Phone #
	Inghara Comey	778 232 5564
	Gillian Rowland	604 567 0700
	Maria Chori	604-765-6920
	Brent Knud	604 312 0158
	Mike Comey	604 916 9981
	Geoff Ferguson	604 506 7821
	Jill Anderson	604 805 9024
	Philly Porter	604-313-8176
	Kristin MacDonald	778-919-7542
	Jenny White	604-782-3374
	Steph Scott	604-783-7413
	Jesse Somers	604-854-0405
	Kim Sale	604-374-5059
	Feena Addam	604-773-1266
	Tony	604 506 7807
	Sonja Hood	236 803 5216
	Alireza Pahlavan	604 367 6753
	Kristen Wealick	604-880-1757
	Beth Patterson	778-808-4859
	KYCB ROSS	604-306-8486
	Felipe Matista	604-816-9425
	Patricia Trueman	778-772-7937
	Nick Thomas	778 228 0411
	Alexa Gisswardh	778 773 4909
	Craig Tomlin	604 927 5222
	1325 Paulina Pl	778 230 9369
	Stephanie Hawel	604 941-3307
	Judy Erickson	604 941-2707
	Dave Palmer	778 288-4974
	Megan Moore	778 874-6407
	Shane Moore	604 619-1886
	Sam Schuster	604 551-7710
	Rebekah Moore	778-223-0548
	Chetere Van Brabant	604-619-6052
	Mitchell Johnston	604 767 0319
	John Johnston	778 895 7925

Petition for playground and outdoor space upgrades to Winslow

Are you happy with the playground and outdoor space the students have at Winslow? If not please sign this petition to urge SD43 to address this matter in a serious fashion and get the students an age appropriate playground and outdoor space by the start of he 2024-2025 school year:

Signature	First and last name	Phone #
	Nicole Robles	604-644-9787
	Angela Holloran	604 562 4801
	Zan Drive	604-724-4719
	Susan Penner	607-789-2084
	Hanna Hussain	226-883-3553
	SAM ZOOBKOFF	604 839 3330
	ANAND KANNA	604-418-3000
	RINA BOVILACSA	778 772 6938
	Jennifer Hares	778-773-2909
	PREETIKA TYAGI	778-999-6316
	MATT TRUONG	604-626-1410
	Bill HYTIUNEX	604 418 9581
	Lisa Dargette	778 839 4888
	Madia	604 363-1113
	Kar Hehar	778-863-0973
	Elaine Villeda	604-720-4172
	Scott Samsara	604-375-6157
	Morvarid Beikzadeh	778-773-5817
	Atteeh Jafarinia	778 251 4318
	Bahareh Farzhanai	62368666706
	Jot Grewal	604-600-4086
	Ali Taheri Par	778 251 6304
	David Ren	604-440-3557
	Anu Dawit-Kanna	604-552-9227
	Mike Chhun	778-233-3922
	Mehdiad Roushanvari	778-710-0378
	Karen Kamensek	604 339 9737
	Lisa Wang	778-839-1227
	Jessi Stovick	778-839-9101
	Jamie Wilson	604-803-3594
	DAWID MORA	604 780 7480
	Zoe Mora	604-537-6915
	Philip Ho	604-363-1747
	ROB AUDETTE	604 944 6979

Petition for playground and outdoor space upgrades to Winslow

Are you happy with the playground and outdoor space the students have at Winslow? If not please sign this petition to urge SD43 to address this matter in a serious fashion and get the students an age appropriate playground and outdoor space by the start of he 2024-2025 school year:

Signature	First and last name	Phone #
	Kerry Van Brabant	604-812-8754
	Ryan Van Brabant	778-869-1499
	Amy PASC	604-945-8499
	BRAD WEST	604 313 9185
	BLAKE WEST	604 376 2774
	Josephine Chan	604-318-5557
	Alaina Milicevic	604 375 0164
	Stephanie Sissworth	604 512 2431
	Tanya Nicoll	604 218 9332
	Hamid Jabbari	778-999-1650
	Sandra Donnelly	604-715-0250
	LINDA ANDERSON	604-788-5532
	Carnee Anderson	604-837-8486
	Erin Conroy	604-929-7050
	Kres Conroy	604-760-7686
	Eleanor Vincent	250 248 6692
	Fraser Vincent	250 248 6692
	Sarah Feurich	778-706-0751
	PJ Trautman	778-772-7937
	Cara Schusters	604 961-2210
	Andria Kochigues	778 996 8022
	Daniel Castillon	778 996 2035
	Danielle Rulers	(604) 617-1765
	Paul Campbell	604 754 8262
	LISA Pearson	604 808 0692
	Mariangi Ling	778-688-6511
	Shauna Patel	604 773-8373
	Victoria Naisbitt	778 939 3896
	Steven Wealick	604-838-0774

Letter from Port Coquitlam Mayor, Brad West



May 14, 2024

Michael Thomas, Chair
School District No. 43
1080 Winslow Ave.
Coquitlam, BC V3J 0M6

Dear Mr. Thomas,

I am writing to express my full support for the PAC Subcommittee's initiative to establish a playground in time for the upcoming school year in September 2024. Access to outdoor play is essential for the holistic development of our children, fostering physical activity, social interaction, and overall well-being.

As Mayor, I believe it is our responsibility to ensure that all children in our community have equal opportunities for recreation and growth. A playground not only enhances the educational experience but also promotes inclusivity and community engagement.

I encourage the School District to prioritize this project, and I am committed to providing any assistance necessary to make it a reality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "BWT".

Mayor Brad West

Office of the Mayor | City of Port Coquitlam
2580 Shaughnessy Street
Port Coquitlam, BC Canada V3C 2A8
604.927.5410

portcoquitlam.ca