

Variety KC Inclusive Playground Tips to Share!



Here are tips for your community or schools to create an Inclusive Playground for ALL kids to play together.



1. Surfacing. Mulch may provide a soft landing, but it can ruin the mechanics of a power wheelchair. Mulch is also extremely difficult to navigate through with any mobility device. To maintain its safety requirements and a firm, stable surfacing for kids with mobility devices, the mulch must be maintained constantly (which is rarely ever done). Poured in place surfacing, tile, or soft solid surfacing is easier to navigate walkers and wheelchairs. Additionally, these options are not choking hazards for small children. It is more expensive at the beginning but will require less maintenance than mulch and more kids will be included.

2. Fencing. Fences don't keep others out; they keep kids safe. Around 25% of children on the autism spectrum will wander or run. A fence around your facility will allow parents to safely bring their children (all children) to your place. Some studies show that fences help prevent vandalism.

3. Universal-size changing tables. There is no dignity in laying on a floor to be changed. A toddler changing table only holds children up to 40 lbs.

4. Provide disabled/reserved parking spaces near entrances. Offer plenty of seating for caregivers to sit and watch children play.

5. Shade over structure and slide for hot summer days. Children with special needs are less likely to seek relief and kids in wheelchairs can overheat faster. Some conditions prevent the body from self-regulating, so a shady area is critical. Some medications make a child sensitive to the sun and a place to escape the rays and grab a drink to hydrate is key. Shade over structure and slide for hot summer days is ideal!

6. Extra room on play equipment. This extra room creates space for social inclusion and kids learn by playing together. Give kids room to swing, jump or play together. Room for equipment like backpack oxygen units. Room for caregivers to assist as needed. No crawl through spaces- this alienates children from playing together. Transfer stations at the top of slides is a must also.

7. Communication boards. Boards with symbols and pictures allow non-verbal kids to engage better with other children and caregivers.

8. Re-think entry points that exclude children . . . climbing webs, stairs, ladders. Think about ways to create parallel play opportunities. For Example: Is there a climbing net? Then create an accessible entrance right next to it so kids can talk and be near their friends while reaching the next deck together side by side. This also is a way to continue to challenge every kid at their own level.

9. Include a VARIETY of kids with a variety of abilities when planning and designing spaces. They know what they like, what other kiddos like, and what they want to play on.

10. Make the impossible, possible. By design, a treehouse can keep kids with mobility issues down on the ground. But, a treehouse with a winding ramp access brings these kids up closer to the sky! Look for the Variety KC Inclusive Treehouse at the Wonderscope Children's Museum.

11. Save a little space on the side for a sensory break. Offer sensory packs with items to check out like noise canceling earphones, weighted blankets, and fidget items. Low lights and lower noise are key to help extend family time in community activities.

12. Offer plenty of activities that require multiple participants, this encourages inclusion of others. Ramping allows children with mobility devices to climb with their friends. Graduating complexity is vitally important within a playground. Kids can pick multiple levels of challenge without anyone being left behind.

13. Musical Instruments at wheelchair height and sensory play panels allowing mobility devices to get up close is essential.

14. Be careful with water features. If your community has a splashpad, ask about waterproof wheelchairs to check out by those who need them. Restrict water nozzles etc. from areas where power chairs may get wet.

15. Incorporate braille directions throughout the area and add sound effects and noises to enhance the experience for those who are visually impaired.

16. Be sure to provide adequate lighting and reflective tape near potential hazards.

17. Provide adaptive beach wheelchairs for people in wheelchairs to get closer to a beach or lake.

18. If snacks are served or sold nearby, **be aware of food allergies** and post them.

BIGGEST TIP THAT WE HAVE LEARNED FROM SPECIAL NEEDS FAMILIES: NO STAIRS OR MULCH SHOULD BE USED IN INCLUSIVE PLAYGROUND DESIGNS.



Variety KC has created inclusive playgrounds around the Greater Kansas City area!



Thank your city and government leaders who are working to make your community Inclusive – and speak up, tell them of areas and places that need improvement. It takes all of us to make this a powerful

#inclusionrevolutionkc

Join us and use this hashtag to show your support!



Please donate to Variety KC using this QR code to allow us to create more inclusive opportunities in the KC community for ALL kids to play together!



Visit us at VarietyKC.org!