

October 13, 2026

Board of Education and Senior Leadership
School District 63 (Saanich)
Via Email

RE: Urgent Reprioritization of KÉLSET Elementary School's Playground Renewal

SUMMARY PURPOSE

As an active parent, I respectfully request the District elevate KÉLSET Elementary School's on the playground renewal priority list so planning can begin in time to address urgent accessibility and capacity needs before students are negatively affected. The playground currently has no accessible play structures or reliable wheelchair-accessible routes, the secondary play area is closed following a District safety assessment, and the remaining primary structure is already so heavily used that access must be managed through a rotating schedule.

With early District leadership and the established fundraising capacity of the KÉLSET Parent Advisory Council and Playspaces Committee, the school community can work toward a playground where every student has a meaningful opportunity to access, participate in, and enjoy outdoor play.

DETAILED ISSUES

1. Significant physical barriers to access

The KÉLSET playground includes a substantial slope without wheelchair-accessible paths. Existing routes consist of gravel/sand, which do not provide reliable, firm, stable and accessible travel surfaces for wheelchair users or those with mobility restrictions.

2. No accessible play structures

Neither the lower sloped playground area nor the smaller, level concrete playing area offers accessible play structures that meaningfully support participation by wheelchair users. An accessible route alone is insufficient. Students must also be able to engage in play once they reach the space. An inclusive playground should combine accessible routes and surfacing with equipment that supports children of differing abilities.

3. Reduced playground capacity

The secondary play area ("spider climber") has been taped off, and students are no longer permitted to use it following a District assessment of safety. My understanding of District

policy is that if the structure cannot be repaired, it will be removed. At present, there is no assurance that the play capacity lost through its removal will be replaced. This reduces available play space and reinforces the need for a timely assessment and a comprehensive plan for the playground as a whole.

4. Primary play area is already over capacity

The primary play structure is already heavily utilized, requiring the school to implement a rotating schedule that determines which grades are permitted to use the structure during each recess. This indicates that the existing play space is insufficient to meet student needs, even before considering accessibility requirements of students with mobility-related limitations. The loss of the spider climber further compounds the capacity issue.

5. Anticipated student needs and inclusion

Wheelchair users are anticipated to enter KÉLSET in the 2027/2028 school year. Planning now would allow time for assessment, design, funding, and potentially construction.

6. Opportunity to reassess District priorities

The District's capital plan identified Sidney Elementary as its highest priority for playground replacement, followed by Royal Oak Middle School. KÉLSET's circumstances justify reassessing its priority considering accessibility barriers, the closure of a play area, existing capacity restraints, and the needs of students expected to attend the school in 2027/2028.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. Elevate KÉLSET on the playground renewal priority list.

Reassess KÉLSET's priority relative to other District playground projects, taking into account accessibility barriers, playground use (elementary use is much higher than middle school use), the closure of the secondary play area, existing capacity constraints, and anticipated student needs.

2. Initiate a comprehensive site assessment.

Assess both playground areas, including the slope, existing equipment, surfacing, drainage, accessible routes, and site constraints. Confirm the reasons for the secondary play area's closure and establish appropriate interim safety measures.

3. Develop an accessible playground renewal plan.

Working with the school community and active Parent Advisory Council, prepare a concept design and cost estimate for a universally designed playground that includes:

- Firm, stable, accessible routes connecting key play areas wherever site conditions permit.
- Appropriate accessible surfacing and safe transitions between surfaces.
- Inclusive play equipment that supports participation by wheelchair users and children with diverse abilities.
- Accessible play opportunities in the level area and consideration of how the sloped area can be incorporated safely and inclusively.
- A range of physical, sensory, imaginative, and social play experiences for students across elementary grades.

4. Partner with the KÉLSET Parent Advisory Council to implement.

Assess eligibility for the provincial *Playground Equipment Program* and other applicable capital or accessibility funding. Invite the KÉLSET PAC to participate in consultation, design input, and community engagement. The PAC has an active fundraising team and existing experience pursuing grants, donations, and community.

CONCLUSION & FINAL REQUEST

Playgrounds support physical activity, social development, relationship-building, and belonging. Students who cannot access shared play spaces will miss important opportunities to participate in informal social interactions with their peers. An accessible playground would benefit not only wheelchair users, but also students with temporary injuries, other mobility limitations, and a range of physical, sensory, and developmental needs.

In light of the issues detailed here, I respectfully request that the District elevate KÉLSET's standing on the playground renewal priority list so planning can begin in time to address urgent accessibility and capacity needs before students are negatively affected.

Sincerely,



Amber Brown
KÉLSET Parent

