

Frequently Asked Questions – Williams Playground Fundraising Campaign

1. Why does the current playground structure need to be replaced? It looks fairly solid to me.

The current playground structure needs to be replaced for many reasons.

Age and Increasing Equipment Failure: Generally wooden playgrounds are expected to last 15 years if well maintained, and 10 years if only minimally maintained. Our wooden playground structure is approximately 20 years old and is decaying. There is evidence of insect damage. The current structure is no longer “to code” and would never pass a safety inspection for today’s standards and guidelines.

Physical Fitness and Health are an Important Part of a Child’s Education. Many of us know that, without the release of recess and the opportunity that the playground structure provides to climb and explore and imagine and create, our children would not be able to adequately focus during academic times.

2. Could the city of Newton pay for our new playground?

One look at the TAB will reinforce that City funds are extremely tight, and the only playground-related expense that the city budgets for is maintenance. Playgrounds are exempt from what is known as an **equity cap**, and many PTOs have taken advantage of that to upgrade their structures. As a result, the city has come to rely on the fundraising ability of schools and neighborhoods to refurbish and enhance their playgrounds. The city will contribute \$12,500 of “Marathon Money” (money that the City of Newton receives as compensation for allowing the Boston Marathon to run through its communities, and which the Board of Alderman have determined are to be donated towards playgrounds) toward our campaign.

3. Why does the new playground cost so much?

The main reason for the high cost is the materials that are used. Plastics and steel are very expensive and the sophistication of their engineering can be the difference between a playground lasting 5 or 25 years. With the proper maintenance, we expect to get 20-30 years out of a new structure.

It is indeed a significant investment for the community, but is in line with newer play structures throughout the city and its elementary schools.

4. Can we reduce the cost of the playground in any way?

We have the option of doing a “community build.” This means that members of our community volunteer to install the structure under the guidance of a playground representative. We can also find some cost savings if parents/neighbors donate in-kind services to help install the playground (for example – if people with access to construction equipment assist with site preparation work)

5. *What if we don't raise enough money to pay for the entire playground?*

We can phase in the playground components as the money is raised. (Countryside has built their new playground in three phases). We can also substitute less expensive components for items not integral to the structure; e.g., play panels at the ground level.

6. *Since the City's school budget is so tight, shouldn't we be raising money for more essential things like teacher salaries or modular classrooms? (pertaining to Williams Playground)*

We are not permitted to fund teacher salaries or capital improvements. Each PTO has an “equity cap” or a cap on the amount of money that they can allocate towards classroom support. To date, the PTOs contribute towards Creative Arts & Science enrichment programs for all grades, field trips, and reimbursement to teachers for nominal classroom expenditures.

However, there are two items that fall outside the equity cap and can be directly funded by the PTO: playgrounds and technology. Because outdoor time is such an important part of our children's school experience and due to the increasing frequency of both injury and equipment failure, now is the time to raise money for a new playground.

7. *What about technology? If we are raising all this money for the playground, will we have any left over for technology? If not, when can we expect another fundraising campaign for technology?*

Funding our growing technology needs has also become a critical path for our PTO and every other PTO in the City of Newton. We plan to fundraise for technology as well over the next couple of years. The playground fundraising will be a one to two year event, and we plan to do technology fundraising as well, and continue it in the future.

8. *My own children have only another year or two left at Williams. Is my support that critical?*

Financial support of this effort is entirely voluntary and is a decision made within each family. The school and city communities appreciate your gift at any level so that the tradition of a strong school spirit may continue.

As a reminder, school playgrounds are city property and so are open to the public for their enjoyment. Your children may still wish to visit the playground on weekends even after Grade 5. While a new playground will primarily benefit the children attending Williams, the After School Program, and the summer camps, the community at large can benefit from a new playground as well.

Some families may wish to make a gift in honor of their graduating child or honoring a special teacher or administrator who made a difference to them while at Williams.

9. I'd like to support the campaign but I have no idea what size gift is appropriate. Can you advise me?

The size of your gift is a personal decision. We hope that you will give until it feels good! If you would find it helpful to have a conversation, you may contact the Fundraising Chairs for a confidential discussion.

10. How else can I leverage my donation?

One way to maximize your gift is to donate via a personal check or a check from a donor-advised fund. The Playground Fund will receive 100 percent of your donation this way. Giving via Paypal is convenient, but they do keep a small fee for each transaction.

You may also wish to encourage grandparents and/or extended family to make gifts to the fund on special occasions in honor of their grandchildren.

Many employers have a matching gifts program which could double your gift to the effort. You should contact your employer's HR department for more information.

11. A cash gift is simply not possible for our family at this time. Is there some other way I can help?

Yes! We need volunteers in several capacities: outreach to our own parent community this fall, and to local businesses and abutters. If fundraising is not your cup of tea, we could use some administrative help with thank-you notes and other tasks. And if we elect to do a community build, we will certainly need help with construction and support for those actively involved in the building. Please contact Jennie for more information.

14. Will the size of my gift be kept confidential?

While the PTO and the school community will be aware of the total amount of donations made towards this campaign, there are only a few people who will know the details of whom has chosen to give, and how much they have given – the fundraising chairs and the treasurer recording and depositing the checks.