SUPPORT SERVICES

Safety Program

Climbing Walls and Climbing Ropes

I. Purpose

The purpose of this regulation is to establish the procedures for planning, inspection, maintenance, and audit of climbing walls and climbing ropes for the Prince William County Public Schools (PWCS). This regulation covers the responsibilities of the School Division in providing site location and equipment for climbing walls and climbing ropes used for instructional use within the buildings of PWCS. Included are the steps necessary to gain approval for any new equipment and the upgrading of existing site locations.

The development of a successful activity for students takes careful planning. Creating a challenging, age appropriate, and accessible activity area that is safe, maintainable, and still offers excitement to the students is our goal. Supervision is a key component to the climbing walls and climbing ropes safety program.

II. Procedure

A. Requirements

1. Schools shall obtain pre-approval of the site location through the Offices of Risk Management and Security Services and Facilities Services prior to ordering climbing walls or ropes. (See Attachment I.)

2. All climbing wall and climbing rope site locations (new and existing) are subject to this regulation.

4. All climbing walls and climbing ropes shall be installed according to the manufacturer’s plans and specifications.

5. All climbing walls and climbing ropes shall be inspected, maintained, and repaired by PWCS employees on a regular basis.

6. All equipment purchasers, installers, inspectors, and any employee performing repairs shall assure compliance with public climbing walls and climbing ropes guidelines from CPSC and ASTM F-1487.

III. Climbing Walls – Installation, Use, and Security

A. Installation

1. All climbing wall units shall have 4' x 8' or 4' x 10' panels. (See Attachment II.)

2. Climbing wall attached to an interior wall: The manufacturer’s installation instructions shall be followed. A through wall method shall be used. Drilling of walls shall only be performed by Office of Facilities Services’ employees or approved contractors.

3. Climbing wall attached to an exterior wall: The manufacturer’s installation instructions shall be followed. No through wall attachments shall be used. Drilling of walls shall only be performed by Office of Facilities Services’ employees or approved contractors.

4. Safety matting shall be installed so that it will be attached to the wall under the area that will be used to prevent movement during use.

5. Walls shall consist of a one-piece panel (4' x 8' or 4' x 10') constructed for the use of climbing and moving from one panel to the other panel. There is no limit to the number of panels that may be used. Walls shall not exceed 10 feet in height.

B. Use

1. Climbing walls shall be used to support the PWCS physical education curriculum.
2. PWCS physical education staff shall be provided appropriate instruction before allowing students to use the climbing wall for class.

3. Proper supervision shall always be provided by the teacher and/or teacher assistant.

4. PWCS recommends that instruction and use of the climbing wall is restricted to students in grades two and above.

C. Security

1. Safety mats, installed to attach to the wall, shall be installed to fold up for security of the climbing portion of the wall, when the wall is not in use.

2. When the climbing wall is not in use, mats shall be folded up against the panels and secured with a designated locking strap.

3. A sign shall be displayed stating, “THIS WALL IS CLOSED.”

IV. Climbing Ropes – Installation, Use, and Security

A. Installation

Climbing ropes shall be fixed at both ends and not be capable of being looped back on itself, creating an inside loop diameter greater than five inches.

B. Use

1. Climbing ropes shall be used to support the PWCS physical education curriculum.

2. PWCS physical education staff shall be provided appropriate instruction before allowing students to use the climbing rope for class.

3. Proper supervision shall be provided by the teacher and/or teacher assistant at all times.
4. Students shall be limited to ascending the following heights while climbing up the rope:
   a. Elementary School – 10 Feet
   b. Middle School – 14 Feet
   c. High School – 16 Feet

5. A rope tambourine or similar device shall be used to prevent students from exceeding the specified climbing height.

6. A minimum of 12 inches of padding shall be at the base of the climbing rope and extending out eight feet or more on all sides from the center of the climbing rope.

7. All climbing ropes shall be stored or secured out of the reach of students when not in use.

C. Security

1. When the climbing ropes are not in use, mats shall be folded up and stored in a secured location.

2. All climbing ropes shall be stored or secured out of the reach of students when not in use.

V. Safety

A. The priority of the School Division is to provide safe play environments for students by being proactive in creating, maintaining, and supervising these play spaces.

1. Teachers and staff shall be instructed as to safe use and proper supervision of climbing walls and climbing ropes prior to student use.

2. Installation records, inspection reports, and maintenance records shall be maintained at the school site.
3. To facilitate a safe environment, incorporate the following activities in your school’s program:
   
a. Conduct yearly in-services to acquaint classroom teachers with the safety rules of the climbing equipment and ways to use the equipment.

   b. Review the basic safety rules to promote creative, yet safe play.

B. These universal rules shall be applied to all equipment.

1. Always maintain a good working space.
2. Always stay in motion on the equipment.
3. Always keep hands in contact with the equipment.
4. Always land on your feet when leaving the equipment.

C. Require adequate supervision of students on the climbing walls and climbing ropes by the classroom teacher, to include:

1. Be in a close proximity at all times.
2. Move from area to area while keeping the total equipment in view.
3. Have a basic understanding of first aid procedures.
4. Know PWCS accident reporting procedures.
5. Do not allow dangerous situations or inappropriate use of the climbing walls and climbing ropes.
6. Supervise no more than one class.
7. Review basic safety rules with all students throughout the year.

VI. Inspection

A. School personnel shall check climbing walls and climbing ropes regularly throughout the year. Schools shall maintain inspection documentation at the school site.
B. Prior to each new school year, the school shall perform a thorough check of all climbing walls and climbing ropes.

C. Regular checks shall be made by the school personnel for vandalism, broken parts, excessive wear, and obvious equipment damage.

D. A safety specialist with the Office of Risk Management and Security Services shall perform a comprehensive inspection of the Division’s climbing walls and ropes during the school’s annual building inspection. This ensures all climbing walls and ropes are inspected uniformly.

VII. Maintenance

A. Existing and new equipment installed by the manufacturer will be maintained by the School Division.

B. If problems are found during any of the inspections, the standard work order request should be submitted within 24 hours. If problems pose a safety hazard, the piece of equipment shall be taken out of service, and a phone call placed to the Office of Facilities Services to ensure the work order is received.

C. Schools shall maintain all warranty, repair, and inspection documentation at the school site.

The Associate Superintendent for Finance and Risk Management and the Associate Superintendent for Support Services (or designees) are responsible for implementing and monitoring this regulation.

This regulation and related policy shall be reviewed at least every five years and revised as needed.
Prince William County Public Schools  
Climbing Walls and Climbing Ropes Safety Program

The following process shall be followed when a school is requesting to install a climbing wall or climbing rope. This process follows the climbing walls and climbing ropes regulation. 

To be completed by the Office of Risk Management & Security Services

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Step A: Installation and Purchasing Information

_____ Date school contacted Risk Management and Security Services. Requestor has been sent the Climbing Walls and Climbing Ropes Regulation and Attachment I (Pre-Purchase Guidelines/Installation).

Name of Requester: ___________________________  Title: ___________________________

Phone: ___________________________  Email: ___________________________

Information Sent By: ___________________________  Date Sent: ___________________________

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Step B: Approving the Climbing Walls/Climbing Ropes Location

School was visited on what date: ___________________________ Visited by: ___________________________

Discussed Climbing Wall/Climbing Rope with: ___________________________  Title: ___________________________

Location agreed upon is:

Any special issues with this location?

Solution to special issues:

Approval for purchase based upon agreed location. Signatures of all involved:

_________________________  Signature: ___________________________  Date: ___________________________

Principal (Please Print)

_________________________  Signature: ___________________________  Title: ___________________________  Date: ___________________________

Risk Management (Please Print)

_________________________  Signature: ___________________________  Title: ___________________________  Date: ___________________________

Facilities Services (Please Print)

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Project: _____ Completed  _____ Cancelled  _____ On-Hold (As of what date: _____________)

Project: _____ Completed  _____ Cancelled  _____ On-Hold (As of what date: _____________)

Risk Management “File Completed” Signature: ___________________________  Date: ___________________________
**PWCS Climbing Walls**

**Pre-Purchase Guidelines**

1. Pre-approval of site must be obtained prior to ordering the climbing wall. (Call Risk Management and Security Services.)

2. Wall shall be purchased through Everlast Climbing Industries. Gripping hand holds shall be purchased through Groperz. All materials installed shall be used according to manufacturer’s recommendations.

3. Installation shall be completed by PWCS Facilities Services by placing a work order.

4. Walls shall not exceed 10 feet in height. Panels must be 4’ x 8’ or 4’ x 10’. There is no limit to panels purchased.

5. Safety matting shall be standard gym mat, not less than 2 ½ inches thick.

6. Safety mats used on floor shall be attached to the panel to prevent movement during use.

7. When not in use, mats shall be placed up against the wall, and secured. Signage must say, “THIS WALL IS CLOSED.”

8. Instructions for wall climbing must be given to all students prior to use. Supervision must be present during use at all times.

**Installation**

All wall-climbing systems shall have 4’ x 8’ or 4’ x 10’ panels. Depending on the wall location, one of the two below noted methods of installation may be followed:

- Climbing wall is attached to an interior wall: A through wall method is used. Two half-inch holes are drilled through the top of each panel, through the wall, and bolted. This method is preferred by PWCS; or

- Climbing wall is attached to an exterior wall: The manufacturer installation instructions are followed. No through wall attachments are used.

Regardless of which method is used, installation construction adhesive is applied to the back of the wall. The wall panels are placed on the walls lining up the half-inch holes and 3/8 inch bolts are placed through the panel and the wall. There is a flush washer-type fixture used on the climbing wall panel side which is pulled flush with the wall when the outside 3/8 inch nut is applied and tightened.

Random 5/32 inch holes are drilled through the panel and into the masonry. The 5/32 inch x 2 ½ inch bolts which are provided by the manufacturer are tightened into the masonry.