



Plant Services Standard Operating Practice Opening and Closing of Elementary School Grassed Areas & Playing Fields

Standard Operating Practice documents are specific to Plant Services and may be supplementary to York Region District School Board Policies, Procedures and Protocols. In the case of conflict between documents, the Board's Policies and Procedures take precedence. The intent is to provide a detailed outline of how to complete specific tasks or functions for Plant Services staff in relation to various activities, operations or circumstances.

Purpose

To ensure that elementary school fields are continuously available for students and community members, ensure safe and suitable conditions and sustainability, and educate individuals to participate in the stewardship of this valuable ecological resource.

Related Documents

[Board Policy and Procedure #412.0 Community Use of Schools](#)

[Board Policy #235.0 Environmental Policy](#)

[YRAA Field Preservation Tips](#)

ALL GRASSED AREAS

Grassed areas will be available to student and community use, unless:

- areas are seasonally closed;
- conditions exist where the proposed use of the grassed area will cause significant damage; or
- there is a safety issue.

Roles & Responsibilities

Seasonal Grassed Areas Access

(Definition: Unacceptable conditions – Conditions which would cause significant damage to the grassed area if used. Factors contributing to unacceptable conditions include, but are not limited to, pooling water, extreme mud, excessive soft spots, and ice or ground thaw during season change.)

Principals:

- Close all or any part of a grassed area due to any unsafe condition at any time.
- Close all or any part of a grassed area when conditions become unacceptable at any time.

- Inform the Senior Manager of Plant Services of any such declarations.
- Provide communication to staff and students at the location when conditions force the closure of any part or all of the grass area.
- Inform the Senior Manager of Plant Services when and if conditions change.

Note: The respective Assistant Manager of Maintenance or Caretaking Services and the Supervisor of Facility Services are available to assist in this decision-making.

Senior Manager of Plant Services:

- Make official decisions to close grassed areas due to unacceptable conditions based upon Principal recommendations.
- Inform the Permit Department of any such closures.
- Liaise with the municipalities of York Region.

PLAYING FIELDS

Playing fields are areas specially configured for organized sports, such as soccer football, rugby and baseball; are often lined and have goals (posts or cages); and can be permitted to community members. There are, however, special conditions which affect field availability. These include:

- seasonal opening and closing;
- weather conditions; and
- authorized use.

Seasonal Playing Field Opening and Closing for Permitted Use and Playing Field Closures and Re-opening Due To Inclement Weather/Rain Days

(Definitions: Inclement Weather/Rain Days – Severe weather conditions, as identified by Environment Canada, excessive rainfall, or as outlined in the ‘Inclement Weather Measures’ definition. Inclement Weather Measures – 10mm (0.4 inches) of rainfall within an eight-hour period, or 30 mm (1.2 inches) of rainfall within one week, or any rainfall within a 16-hour period after the last recorded rainfall has stopped.)

Senior Manager of Plant Services:

- Make official decisions to close individual playing fields due to inclement weather conditions or seasonal changes.
- Inform the school Principal, Supervisor of Facility Services, YRAA Athletic Coordinator and Permits Department of any such closures.
- Liaise with the municipalities of York Region.

Note: Some schools will have a Board or municipality sign(s) which identifies the open/closed status of the playing field.

Caretaking Staff:

- Maintain field use signage which includes updating the field status sign to reflect whether the field is open or closed for permitted use.

Unauthorized Use of Playing Fields

(Definition: Unauthorized Use – Use of Board playing fields without consent or permit or during field closures.)

In addition to identifying a field's open/closed status, Board signs may be used to state that "only authorized use of playing fields is permitted". Schools may contact Plant Services if the playing field requires such Board signage.

In the event of the unauthorized use of playing fields, any Board employee can request unauthorized users to leave the site. It is preferable for the most senior person on the site to perform this act.

If unauthorized use is suspected:

1. Contact the school Caretaking Office and/or Permit Department to verify whether a Board permit has been issued.
2. If confirmation cannot be obtained, approach the users and request to see the permit.
3. If a permit is available, confirm authorized use of the playing field.

When the user group does not have a required Board permit:

1. Inform the group that they are to leave the field.
2. Inform the group of the permit requirements which can be obtained from the Board's Permit Department.
3. If the users resist, inform the group that the Board's security company or the police will be contacted to assist in their leaving.
4. If necessary, contact the Board's monitoring company and explain the situation.
5. The monitoring company will dispatch an Assistant, Community Access and Caretaking to once again approach the people.

If this second approach fails, the Assistant, Community Access and Caretaking will contact the police for further assistance.

Plant Services Standard Operating Practices are updated and maintained by the Quality Standards Team. The most current versions of Plant Services policies, procedures, protocols, standard operating practices and guidelines are located on the Plant Services section of the York Region District School Board Enterprise Portal.

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By: Plant Services Senior Management Team

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Supporting Document(s): Board Policy and Procedure #412.0 Community Use of Schools, Board Policy #235.0 Environmental Policy and YRAA Field Preservation Tips