

PLAYWORKS FAQs

What is Playworks?

Playworks is a non-profit consulting organization that was brought to Kenter Canyon to assess how to better organize recess and to provide appropriate training for the aides to help with conflict resolution and inclusion.

What is the need for this program?

Kenter Canyon School office and administrative staff experienced a significant increase in office referrals for injuries, bullying, exclusion, and disrespect during recess and lunch playtime. Additionally, the aides noted an increase in inappropriate language and physical altercations and an inability for the students to effectively resolve conflicts. Teachers discussed how recess behavior was impacting their instructional program, and the staff felt these issues needed to be addressed quickly, as they were escalating over time.

The Instructional Leadership Team discussed the teachers' concern and asked administration for support. Administration consulted LAUSD Behavioral Support Unit, and following a Staff Development with this Unit, it was proposed that Kenter Canyon ~~to~~ explore Playworks to supplement the school's Second Step and Character Education programs. The recommendation was discussed and approved by the Positive Discipline Team and Safety Committee. Funding was then requested from PSG (Parent Support Group) after approval from Kenter Canyon Governance Council.

Why did Kenter Canyon enter into a contract with Playworks?

The vision for Playworks is to promote constructive and inclusive play; to establish consistent ground rules for set games; and to foster a foundation for conflict resolution. Playworks has a successful track record of including children who struggle to participate, while also reducing exclusionary or bullying tactics and injury.

Is my child required to play in only the organized games or may s/he opt to engage in "free" choice?

While this may have not been clear at first, there is an option for children to choose other activities during recess. Children have the option to use the Chill Zone for playing board games, drawing, reading or simply sitting and chatting with friends. The goal is that children who read while at recess - for example - are actively choosing to read as a

preferred activity and not doing it because they don't feel comfortable joining in other activities.

A weekly schedule will be provided to students/teachers/aides to inform everyone of the daily activities being offered

How long is Kenter Canyon contract with Playworks?

We entered into a one-year contract, however, they are consultants, so the school staff can implement strategies that work to help achieve our goals and leave out what does not meet the needs of our students.

How is Playworks being monitored?

Kenter Canyon staff is overseeing the program, so they are continually looking into first-hand feedback from parents and children and other staff members about the implementation – what's working and what improvements can be made. There is a suggestion box on the playground for children and in the Parent Center for parents and guardians.

What is the PSG role with respect to Playworks?

The Parent Support Group is the fundraising arm of Kenter Canyon. Playworks is a program that was implemented by the administration, faculty & staff and Governance Council. Playworks is funded by PSG.

I'm hearing negative feedback. Should I be concerned?

There are often some growing pains with the implementation of any new program, so the teachers and administrators are asking for your patience. You are welcome to sign up to be a Parent Playground Partner during your child's recess. The teachers and administration recognize that within the first 20 days of school ~~that~~ students are enjoying learning new games, exercising respect with one another, and demonstrating acceptance of all students.

Are we seeing any benefits from the program?

Many are finding value in the inclusive nature of organized play. Some children report that they are making new friends and playing with children they don't normally play with. Some parents are reporting their child is participating where they used to "wander". Others are happy with a more proactive stance towards bullying.

Who runs Playworks?

The program was set up to train Kenter aides and select teachers on how to implement the program. A Playworks coordinator visits campus one week per month to observe how the program is tracking and to make suggestions towards continued improvement. They led a Saturday training earlier in the year to teach the aides and teachers several games.

It sounds like the implementation of Playworks is punitive. Is this being addressed?

There is much discussion that Playworks is not being executed as presented. The administration is addressing the trained staff to ensure the principles of inclusion are guiding all aspects of communication and implementation.

Why can't the kids play on the structures?

The apparatus play structures were closed due to construction and do not have to do with Playworks' implementation. Tentatively, the North Yard structure will be open by the end of September. However, the South Yard structure needs to be re-configured due to new regulations.

Is it true that the children must wait in line until everyone is quiet?

Yes, however, this is not a Playworks policy. This is a Kenter philosophy. Each class takes recess at a different time, so it is required that the children proceed through the halls quietly and respectfully. This is not intended to be punitive but to coach our children to be respectful of both rules and of each other and not to disturb other children while instruction is going on in classrooms simultaneously. Additionally, in the event of an emergency, for the safety of all students, it is vital for them to be able hear instructions being given over the intercom and/or by the adult(s) supervising the group.

Are the aides hired to help with Playworks?

Aides are hired at Kenter every year to help with classroom and recess management. While they went through the Playworks training program, they are also being trained on the Kenter philosophy, and there is a learning curve that occurs every year. Weekly Aide meetings are scheduled to help them learn more about their roles and responsibilities.

I hear that some of the aides are being too hard on the children. Is this being addressed?

As mentioned, many aides are new and are learning. Tone and kindness are being - and will continually be - addressed and monitored. Parents should contact Kenter Canyon Principal if they hear or see an aide addressing children in a harsh or inappropriate manner.

Can parents get involved at Recess time?

Yes, parents can still sign up to be a Parent Playground Partner and we encourage participation, especially as we look to optimize our Playworks program and our principles of inclusion. The sign up will be available through your HRP emails.