

Daniel Butler Elementary School

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Michael E. McAllister
Principal

Monday, December 5, 2011

Dear Daniel Butler School Families,

Since the closing of our school playground on 11/3/11, we have done our best to communicate as much information as we have to the entire Butler Community. It is in that spirit that I write to you today to inform you about our response to Dr. Kingston's latest decision regarding the Butler School Playground.

As you know from Dr. Kingston's recent communication, the current Butler playground will not be repaired and re-opened. He cites several reasons for his decision, most important among them:

- Because of liability concerns, repair estimates are not forthcoming; and repairs alone will not address the issues.
- The reality that, as of March 2012, pea stone will no longer be an allowable surface under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

As you know, my hope since the closing of the playground had been that we might be able to fix some equipment to expected safety standards and reopen as much of the structure as possible. It is clear that is no longer an option. As a result, we have arrived at a slightly different phased approach for building a new playground. This adjusted phasing is available at <http://www.belmont.k12.ma.us/butler/playground/> for your consideration. That page is the online home for this initiative so please bookmark the site and return to check our updates often.

A number of efforts are ongoing in support of replacing our playground:

- The playground committee will continue to focus on raising the funds necessary to replace our playground. Goals and timing have been adjusted to reflect the new phases, and a variety of support is being pursued through grants, corporate sponsorship, local businesses, and private donations from members of the Butler community.
- I will continue to engage different town leaders to explore any public funding opportunities that may be currently available.
- Dr. Kingston has included some aspects of the playground project in his Capital Budget requests. This would impact phases 2 and 3 of the playground plan. In any case, we will have to wait for the Spring to find out whether this request will be approved, as it must follow the regular budget process.
- The school administration office is developing a work plan and will present it to the playground committee.

Most important to these efforts is the impact of this news on our Butler students. I am thinking carefully about how best to prepare your children for the disappointing news that their playground will not reopen at all. We will coordinate an effort, as we always do with difficult news, to tell students in a way that is appropriate, honest, and supportive. This important task is where my current focus resides.

If you have additional questions or concerns please contact me at school. My office is always open to you.

Respectfully,

Michael E. McAllister