
Lawsuits Take Swings Away From Kids

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Lawsuits take school’s swing sets away from kids

Everyone has favorite childhood memories. For many people, those memories include rolling down slides, dangling off of monkey bars and swinging on swing sets at their local neighborhood playground.

But elementary school students in Cabell County, West Virginia, may miss out on some of those childhood pleasures. That is because the county’s school system has decided to remove swing sets from all school playgrounds, due to lawsuit fears.

The decision came after the school district faced two different lawsuits from the same parent over relatively minor injuries suffered by his two kids in separate incidents on a school playground. Facing a tight budget because of the current economic situation, the school system determined that it could not afford the potential costs of playground-related lawsuits and decided to remove the swing sets.

“We’re disabling our swings to keep us out of the courtroom,” says Cabell County Schools superintendent William Smith. “Economically, school districts are really having to watch their budgets closely. Playgrounds are very important but the instructional program trumps that.”

Smith recalls his own experience growing up in Cabell County and how much everyone enjoyed the playgrounds. Kids got the typical scrapes and bruises, but parents took care of those injuries without resorting to lawsuits.

“The culture has changed so much,” he laments.

One school that is losing swings is Guyandotte Elementary School in Huntington. Donna Mooney attended Guyandotte and currently has a daughter attending. She is disappointed that her daughter won’t get to share in her own childhood experiences on the school’s swing set.

“The tragedy is that the kids are losing everything that is fun about being a kid,” she says. “You can’t bubble wrap everything from them. They have to be allowed to play and be kids.”

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