

OPRA Foundation Grant  
Playground Communication Boards  
Powell Parks and Recreation Department  
Final Report

Powell Parks and Recreation Department was awarded an Administrative Grant, funded through the Ohio Parks and Recreation Foundation. The project aimed to enhance communication opportunities for children with diverse needs by installing visually accessible communication boards at two playground sites, including a splash pad. These boards were designed to support non-verbal children, those with communication challenges, and English language learners (ELL), promoting inclusivity and interaction among all children. The initiative was successfully completed with all objectives met and a significant impact observed on playground engagement.

**Project Objectives:**

The key objectives of this project were:

- **Install communication boards:** Create and install durable, user-friendly communication boards in accessible playgrounds.
- **Promote inclusivity:** Enable children with communication challenges to engage more easily in social play.
- **Provide visual support:** Ensure boards are equipped with symbols, pictures, and simple text that facilitate communication.
- **Encourage interaction:** Facilitate peer-to-peer interactions by offering a common tool for communication.

**Project Activities and Implementation:**

- **Design and Development:** Communication boards were designed in collaboration with Resources at Lakeshore Speech. Staff met and spoke with staff from Resources at Lakeshore Speech at the OPRA Annual Conference and developed a strategic plan for implementation. Through meetings with Lakeshore Speech, a variety of symbols, including those representing emotions, actions, and daily routines, were incorporated to foster a broad range of communication.
- **Installation:** Boards were installed at two playgrounds located at Village Green Park and Adventure Park. The Village Green Park location also includes a splash pad, and symbols were included on the communication board to facilitate communication regarding splash pad activities. These locations were chosen based on their accessibility and frequent use by children with diverse needs. Signposts and boards were installed by Parks Maintenance staff.
- **Monitoring and Feedback:** A QR code taking users to an online survey were included on the signposts. The survey provides feedback on the current communication symbols, and an opportunity to give feedback on other communication symbols needed. We have not received any feedback currently.

## Outcomes and Impact:

The installation of communication boards provided opportunities for the following positive impacts:

- **Increased Engagement**
- **Improved Communication Skills**
- **Inclusivity in Play**
- **Community Engagement**
- **Feedback from Participants:**

## Challenges and Solutions:

During the course of the project, a few challenges were encountered:

- **Design Production:** In the initial shipment of the two boards, incorrect materials were used, and the boards were not able to be installed on the posts. The boards had to be re-fabricated and shipped, causing a delay in installation.
- **Sign Installation:** Since the signs were installed near playground sites, staff went through various post/installation designs to make sure the height of the signs were accessible to young children and those with mobility issues, but did not cause a safety concern for injuries from children utilizing the playground equipment.

The Playground Communication Boards have successfully enhanced the inclusivity of playgrounds, provided children with new tools for communication, and fostered greater social interaction among all children. We are proud of the positive outcomes achieved through this grant and are committed to ensuring the continued success and expansion of this initiative.

We would like to express our gratitude to the Ohio Parks and Recreation Foundation for making this project possible.



Playground Communication Boards

2024 Budget

**Lakeshore Communication Board Design & Production**

\$1,510

**Sign Post Materials**

\$250

**Staffing Costs**

Installation of posts and boards

\$350

**Total:**

**\$2,110**

**Grant Awarded: \$1,500**