Tech It Easy (Text only version. All pictures and special formatting has been removed)

Access Technologies, Inc

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**Dog Parks vs. Accessible Playgrounds**

I was recently asked “Why do we have more dog parks in Oregon than we have accessible playgrounds?” That made me wonder, is this true? Statewide statistics are not available to confirm or deny this question, so let’s briefly explore laws that govern playground design, as we look at what an accessible playground entails.

The ADA requires that any new or altered construction of State and local government facilities, places of public accommodation, and commercial facilities be readily accessible to, and usable by, people with disabilities. Playgrounds, or play areas are considered recreational facilities, and are included among these facilities. The Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, also referred to as the Access Board, developed guidelines to establish minimum accessibility requirements for play areas. The guidelines provide specifications for play components within a play area, thereby creating a general level of usability for children with disabilities. However, the emphasis is to ensure children with disabilities are generally able to *access* the diversity of components provided in a play area.

**Accessible Playgrounds**

Accessible playgrounds are designed to offer a range of play experiences for children with varying abilities. The play equipment, also known as components, such as swings, spring riders, playhouses, slides, and climbers should be designed to generate opportunities for play, socialization, and learning. This does not mean that every play component must be usable by every child, but rather, a playground that offers swinging, sliding, climbing and manipulative or interactive experiences must also provide comparable experiences for all. Therefore, if it has several slides and two or more swings, it is considered accessible if children with disabilities can use one of the slides and one of the swings.

Further consideration must be given to ground-level vs. elevated components. An elevated component is part of a composite play structure, which can be approached from above or below grade, while the ground-level item is approached and exited at ground level, such as a swing rider or panel. The guidelines note that “at least one of each type of play component that is provided at ground level in a play area must be on an accessible route. Additionally, the number and variety of ground level play components required to be on an accessible route is determined by the number of elevated components in the play area.

Have you noticed if the playground in your neighborhood is designed with a play area for 2 to 5 year olds that is separate from the one for 5 to 12 year olds? If so, this is because safety guidelines recommend separate play areas for different age groups of children in order to reduce the risk of injury. Therefore, when determining if the playground has the appropriate ratio of accessible play components, its necessary to take into consideration if the play area is divided into separate, age appropriate play areas.

Accessible playgrounds should also include an accessible route of travel that connects all entry and exit points of the accessible play components to the school, parking lot, or facility that it serves. Thereby, allowing all individuals with disabilities, including those using wheelchairs, walkers, canes and other mobility devices easy access. Chapter 4, of the Access Board Guidelines outlines rules pertaining to the play area accessible routes serving ground level and elevated play components, transfer systems, as well as ramps and handrails.

NOTE: For people without disabilities, technology makes things easier. For people with disabilities, technology makes things possible.

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**Inclusive Playgrounds**

While an accessible playground is about ensuring the overall design allows everyone to be able to get to and through the playground, as well as approach the equipment, an inclusive play area, on the other hand, is not solely about physically accessing the environment, but also about what happens once an individual gets there. These play areas are designed to provide inclusive and embracing play experiences that address the developmental needs of the whole child by intentionally providing opportunities for physical, cognitive, communicative, social/emotional, and sensory development. One way to accomplish this, whether upgrading an existing play area or building a new one, is to consider utilizing the 7 Principles of Inclusive Playground Design. These values were tailored specifically to the playground environment by Me2®; a leader in inclusive playground design allowing play areas to be designed in a manner that:

* allows everyone to participate equitably and as independently as possible with their siblings, neighbors, caregivers, and friends;
* is socially and physically inclusive;
* provides opportunities for everyone to discover and demonstrate that they are smart, capable, able to take risks, and successful;
* communicates information in multiple sensory modes;
* addresses physical, social, and emotional needs;
* allows everyone to participate actively in stimulating physical and social play; and
* allows for the comfortable use and movement of individuals with diverse abilities.

Some local inclusive play areas include Let’s All Play Place (Salem), Harper’s Playground (Portland), Amazon Park (Eugene) and Hope Playground (Redmond). Explore the playgrounds in your neighborhood. Are they ADA accessible, or are they inclusive play areas?

ATI graciously thanks the Me2 Program for the use of the 7 Principles of Inclusive Playground Design in our article. Please contact PLAYCORE online at [www.playcore.com](http://www.playcore.com) or telephone 877-762-7563 for more information about inclusive playground components.

If you have questions about accessibility requirements for play areas contact your local ADA Center or an ADAC staff member at ATI.

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Pages 3 – 7 of this edition of Tech It Easy contain listings of new durable medical and/or assistive technology devices that are available for sale through our Assistive Technology MarketPlace.

Page 8 - 9 of this edition of Tech It Easy contain our Bargain Basement. The Bargain Basement section is a listing of slightly used items which are also available for sale online in our Assistive Technology MarketPlace.

NOTE: Shop the MarketPlace on TWO DOLLAR OFF Tuesdays, and save two dollars off your purchase.

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Ask REMI!

Dear Remi,

What are colorblind glasses? I have trouble seeing some colors and wonder if colorblind glasses will correct my vision. ~ RG

Dear RG,

Let’s first talk a little about color blindness, which is not a form of blindness but rather a deficiency in the way a person sees color. Genetic reasons for color blindness occur when light-sensitive cells in the retina fail to respond appropriately to variations in wavelengths of light that allow people to see an array of colors. The most common form of genetic color blindness is red-green color deficiency. These individuals will typically experience difficulties distinguishing between reds, greens, browns, and oranges. Also, individuals with red-green color blindness may have difficulties with blue and purple hues.

Blue-yellow color blindness is also inherited, but is much less common. Individuals with a blue-yellow deficiency tend to confuse some shades of blue with green, and some shades of yellow with violet. However, contrary to popular belief, it is even more rare for an individual with color blindness to only see in shades of gray.

It’s important to note that medical conditions such as Parkinson’s Disease, Cataracts, Leber’s Hereditary Optic Neuropathy, and Kallman’s Syndrome; as well as certain medications can also cause color vision deficiencies. Therefore, if you normally have been able to distinguish colors, and you develop color vision difficulties, talk with your eye care physician.

Colorblind glasses, are also known as EnChroma glasses. Research has been completed on EnChroma glasses that show for some people the special lens expands their red-green color dimension, while others think the glasses simply create a more saturated contrast-filled world, but either way, the technology seems to have had positive effects for some people who experience colorblindness.

Rather than wondering if EnChroma glasses will correct your vision, consider thinking of the eyewear as an assistive technology (AT) device or tool. As we know, AT devices are designed to allow individuals to complete tasks easier., at home, work and during recreational activities. Therefore, depending on the individual’s eyes, EnChroma glasses may allow individuals increased access to a particular job that they have been excluded from because of colorblindness, or allow parents to assist their children in completing homework assignments.

Perhaps EnChroma glasses are right for you, but please, before you order a pair, remember it’s important to take care of eyes, and always work with your eye care physician when attempting to correct a vision issue.

Thank you RG for your question, and if you purchase a pair of EnChroma glasses, please let me know how they work for you. See you soon. ~ Remi.

NOTE: Email your AT related questions and newsletter article suggestions to: [info@accesstechnologiesinc.org](mailto:info@accesstechnologiesinc.org)

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Learn about a FREE Equipment Program

iCanConnect—Oregon

If you have significant combined hearing and vision loss, you know first-hand that sending emails or chatting on the phone can be difficult.

iCanConnect offers free communication equipment and training so you can keep in touch . . . and be more independent.

Contact ATI to learn about the program’s income and disability guidelines. Refer someone you know or apply for the program yourself.

Phone: (503) 361-1201

Toll Free: (800) 677-7512

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Web: [www.accesstechnologiesinc.org](http://www.accesstechnologiesinc.org)