

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Carla. I am a mother of two beautiful girls and we have lived in the Windsor Park community for 8 years. I am also an Early Childhood Educator for the last 17 years and specialize in the field of disabilities. I would like to start my letter off by asking you a few simple questions:

- Have you ever watched a young child in a wheelchair gaze with excitement watching other kids play? I have. Then I watched that child be wheeled around on pavement back and forth as that is all that is accessible.
- Have you ever heard the screams of joy from children happily swinging on a swing? I have. However that is a pleasure denied from those in wheelchairs.
- Have you ever seen family members watch their loved ones play in the distance because they can't access the playground area? I have.
- Have you ever watched a child cry and try comforting them because they have the knowledge to know they are unable to play because they are physically disabled? Once again, I have.

Play contributes to children's physical, cognitive, emotional and social development. Participation in play is enshrined as a right for all children. So why is it okay for children with disabilities to be excluded from play? It's not. Children with disabilities reap developmental benefits from play just as much as other children, and their right to equal access to participate in play is guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. However, the fulfilment of their right to play is often excluded as a result of physical barriers. Most often the spaces and structures set up for children's play are not accessible to children with disabilities.

General Vanier School has a wonderful special learning program that brings children from surrounding areas. We specialize in learning, developing motor skills, speech, and so much more. One of the huge obstacles we have is outdoor play. Our play structures are outdated, not wheelchair accessible, or safe for those with disabilities, thus making outdoor play a dream to those disabled. We dream with them of an inclusion playground where all children can enjoy the chance to play.

I gladly support the inclusive playground structure project at General Vanier School and look forward to watching all children play equally and happily.

Sincerely,

Carla Reitmeier

Nursery School Teacher  
General Vanier Nursery School