

Thanks to the community, Mentone Elementary has a new playground structure

By Kristina Hernandez, Redlands Daily Facts

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(Redlands, CA) Mission accomplished: Mentone Elementary's transitional-kindergarten and kindergarten students will have a new structure to play on come August.

The structure was made possible by those who supported the school's ["Mentone Playground Project."](#)

School staff helped launch fundraising efforts to replace an almost 15-year-old structure that accommodated only a small group of students at a time. Now, because of the thousands raised and a grant from KaBoom! and the Dr. Pepper Snapple Group, between 20 to 30 students can play on the structure at one time, encouraging more physical activity and the development of gross motor skills, school officials say.

"It's really exciting for us," said Azure Cawthon, a Mentone Elementary kindergarten teacher who helped spearhead the project. "To see their faces on the first day of school is going to be exciting."

The school raised \$12,000 of its \$15,000 goal through various fundraising efforts. For example, a spaghetti dinner helped bring in \$3,000, and KaBoom! and Dr. Pepper Snapple Group provided the school with an additional \$15,000 grant along the way.

• **Photos:** [Mentone Elementary gets new playground structure](#)

A climbing wall and a slide are just two of the new structure's features.

In coming weeks, Mentone will see the installation of engineer wood fiber around the playground site. And should the school raise additional funds, privacy fencing could be installed at a later date. Additional activities will be added to cement surrounding the structure, said Cawthon.

Linnert Builders of Orange was hired to work on the project. School parents and staff also lent a hand to the build, which began earlier this week.

"Our start build day was Tuesday," Cawthon said, "and we had 30-plus people here digging holes and such."

While the structure may not make its official debut until school is back in session, it is already getting approval from Cawthon's daughters and from Mentone teachers like Lori Regalado, who watched the build unfold.

"I've been here since 2006 and I'm so excited every time this project moves forward," she said. "This play structure is going to be something the kids are going to love playing with, and while it is metal and material to some, it is more than that to us. This is about the community coming together for the kids."

To support or contribute to the project, call Cawthon at 909-794-8610 ext. 60327 or Kristen Mariani at 909-794-8610 ext. 60309.

Donations may also be dropped off directly at the school, 1320 Crafton Ave., Mentone.