How to say YES to creative, challenging play in the school yard:

In the OPAL program we encourage play supervisors to:

1. **WATCH**: get a good understanding of what is going on, and if students are managing risk independently.

2. **WAIT**: check-in with yourself, weigh your fear against actual risk.

3. **MOVE CLOSER**: get another perspective; see if your presence cues children to manage the situation differently.

4. **INTERVENE without SHUTTING DOWN THE PLAY**: inform students about the risks and give guidelines for them to manage those risks.

*Instead of saying NO – try these:*

**When students are play fighting with loose parts:**

“Are you still having fun? ...if not maybe you should play with something/ someone else.”

“Did you check in with your partner? – is she/ he still having fun?”

“What would happen if you hit each other’s face /head/ eyes?”

“Are you aiming below the shoulders?”

**When students are climbing/managing heights:**

“Do you feel safe?”  “What would happen if...?  “What’s your next step?”

“Do you think that’s stable? How can we make that work?”

“Look around - did you check to see if anyone near you could get hurt?”
Quick Wins: Easy ways to improve outdoor play time for your class

- **Digging area** – add gardening shovels, large buckets and pvc pipes to your sand area (or talk to staff about a designated mud digging area).
- **Messy kitchen** – use an old school table with pots, pans, spoons etc. and set-up near natural loose parts already in your yard, e.g. sand, leaves, pine needles, mud puddles.
- **Chalk** – buy in bulk and take out in a bucket once per week, month etc.
- **Low risk loose parts** – get started by collecting unchallenging items which are easy to get hold of and manage, e.g. fill a second hand suitcase with sparkly fabric, tarp, etc.
- **Small world area** – start a collection second hand figurines, toy cars etc. to bring out during outdoor play time, and locate a good spot (e.g. an un-used corner protected from heavy traffic) where kids can have creative quiet play with each other. You can easily build up these ‘small worlds’ with a few rocks or pieces of wood.