

Active Play (w/o play equipment)
description & considerations

• **urban areas lack sufficient safe, stimulating places for active play for the school age population** who ride a bus rather than walk. When at home, activity is often limited to indoor activities or TV watching - a sedentary lifestyle.

• **today's schoolyards are often defined by the play equipment they contain, however other forms of active play - running, ball playing, jump rope, etc. - are an essential part of active play and require open unobstructed space**

• in heavily used small sites grass turf is not sustainable, open area of asphalt with graphic markings support large group play

• **play graphics** are an effective way to maximize use of open space use by defining activity zones (see play graphics page)

• **consider all community users by including seating** for supervising, watching games, grandparents, afterschool programs, homework sessions, etc.

Imaginative Play (informal play)
description & considerations

• **imaginative play** - invented games, fantasy play, building from found materials - are basic to creative thinking, invention, socialization & behavioral health

• in some cases, students are so over-programmed that there is no time allowed for imaginative play

• **provide places for both spontaneous and programmed activities /** - props and stage sets encourage dramatic play
- protected places suggest quiet social play
- provide a place to build a fort, shelter, or fantasy environment

• **design for safety:**
- provide clear site lines so play space is easily monitored
- fence & protect areas so children and parents are at ease and separate from vehicular traffic

• **public artworks can stimulate imaginative play** and provide new ways to encourage creative use of the schoolyard

Design Checklist

open unobstructed space

areas defined by play graphics for sports / games

seating for informal play in shade, separate from active areas

small places for small groups

graphics to encourage play

large group play space (field day, graduation, etc.)

clear sight lines for supervision

Illustrations



competitive and cooperative game play, encouraged with simple painted graphics



schoolyard exercise and calisthenics space



schoolyard exercise encouraged with running track, a measured course with indicators and start/finish lines



basketball hoop in schoolyard for student and community use



synthetic grass, an option for high traffic areas

Schoolyard Play Play is being talked about a lot these days, lines are being blurred when defining play. Is it also education and teaching and learning? Is it exercise and a socialization opportunity. Is it important? How? Have we forgotten how to play?

Do today's children ever have the chance to be unstructured, to have the freedom and safety to discover the natural world around them while living in the urban context. What are the barriers to play? What kinds of play are there? How do we maximize play in a child's day and why?

One important step is the realization that we need to make room for play in a world of smart phones, unsafe streets, and lack of access to the natural world. Elimination of time for recess leads our kids into obesity, diabetes, poor muscular development and coordination problems. limited play opportunities stunt the imagination, prevent opportunity for

discovery, connection and familiarity with the natural world. Schoolyards can help answer some of these challenges - bringing the mind, body and spirit back into a healthy balance and supporting the need for improved academic achievement.

New playgrounds are springing up that reintroduce water and sand, natural materials, interactive objects and tools "manipulatives" (see report: "Examining Playground Play Types", BSI 2010 in the Design Workbook section of the Schoolyard website)

Schoolyards are urban public open spaces that the school shares with the community. Similar to a public park there might be play equipment or places to run or areas for organized sports. Like a private backyard there may be seating, landscaping or vegetable planting beds. Or there may be places that feel like being in the woods, or in a small meadow where birds and butterflies abound.

Schoolyards may also have places traditionally found in a classroom or museum exhibition. Schoolyards with outdoor classrooms are places where the natural world has been deliberately introduced to offer a chance for individual discovery, the freedom to play in a safe place, and providing opportunity for healthy living.

Play is what humans have done from the earliest ages as a way to learn, to discover and to grow. We evolve through spontaneous play. It is the "hard work" of childhood - where toddlers struggle for competency building with blocks; preschoolers push their limits to master balancing or climbing; elementary age children navigate the world of socialization and experimentation with water and numbers and words; middle school kids find their own boundaries; and in high school we learn discipline and collaboration – all in the context of play.

Illustrations
Imaginative and Nature Play

- provide **natural elements** - sticks, dirt, and leaves, that have loose parts (manipulatives) to encourage discovery and creativity
- many of these items may be supplied by teachers, playground helpers or after school programs to enhance the play experience in the schoolyard



Natural "movable parts" to play with



immersed in tall grass, only a few feet from the asphalt schoolyard



walking and balancing on rocks in the OC



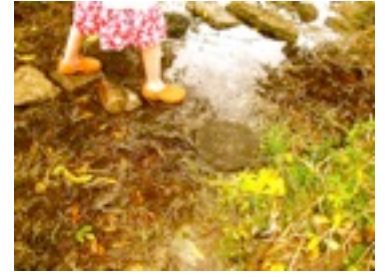
winter offers opportunities to play & learn outdoors



children invent their own games with natural materials



inventive play with found natural materials - building a miniature world with sticks and stones



play in a area designed to collect water after a rainstorm