



**ACADEMY - Focus 2:
Health & Wellness Toolkit: Topic 1:**

Outdoor Learning Environments

May 3, 2022

Presented by:

**Lynne Sorkin, AIA, LEED AP – FGM Architects
Amy Veytsman & Kristy Seifert, River Trails SD26
Brian Scully, DLA Architects
Ashley Burger, Western Springs SD101**

Image: Play Safety Forum



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STRONGER TOGETHER. SMARTER TOGETHER.



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Peterson Elementary School, Chicago

Beyond Slides and Swings

- Benefits of Outdoor Learning
- Opportunities and Programming
- Myth Busting: Risk Assessment
- Planning
- Case Studies
- Resources

Why Teach Outdoors?



Space to Grow

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Risks to a Sedentary Student



Higher BMI/Obesity



Anxiety & Depression



Diminished use of Senses: Myopia

Benefits of Learning Outside

- Natural settings engage children longer
- Less competitive / More cooperation
- Promotes Confidence



River Trails SD 26Prairie Trails ELC

Engaging with Nature

- Improves Self-Regulation
- Increases Cognitive Development & Concentration
- Experimentation Spurs Imagination and Creativity



Opportunities & Programming

- **Environmental Awareness**
- **Biology: Ecological Awareness, interaction with animals**
- **Biophilia / Sensorial Enjoyment**

Opportunities & Programming

- Perceived Lack of Time
- Curriculum requirements
- Costs



River Trails Middle School



Openlands, Poetry in the Garden



Hadley Middle School

Opportunities & Programming

- Agriculture / Healthy Food Systems
- Nutrition
- Gardening and Kitchen Skills
- Understanding Food Justice
- Reducing Food Waste



Myth Busting Safety Concerns

What is your Risk Tolerance?



Simon Fraser University Childcare, Burnaby BC

Myth Busting Risk Assessment

Mitigating Hazards



1970's - 2000

- Playgrounds became prolific in the US and standards were first developed.
- Focus on impact-absorbing materials

Early 1980's

- US Consumer Product Safety Commission Handbook

Late 1990's

- 3rd Party Standards & Certification Processes
- Move away from metal parts

Myth Busting Risk Assessment

Manufactured Standards for vs. Behavior

Protection/Prevention

- Falls
- Entrapment
- Sharp Edges
- Tripping Hazards
- Suspended Hazards
- Entanglement
- Crushing
- Impalement



Myth Busting Risk Assessment

- Determining likelihood and severity of harm
- Maintain access to challenging play
- Limit exposure to permanent disability



Myth Busting Risk Assessment

Opportunities, Benefits and Rewards of the Activity

- Master and overcome fear of challenges
- Learn how bodies move
- Develop motor and navigation skills



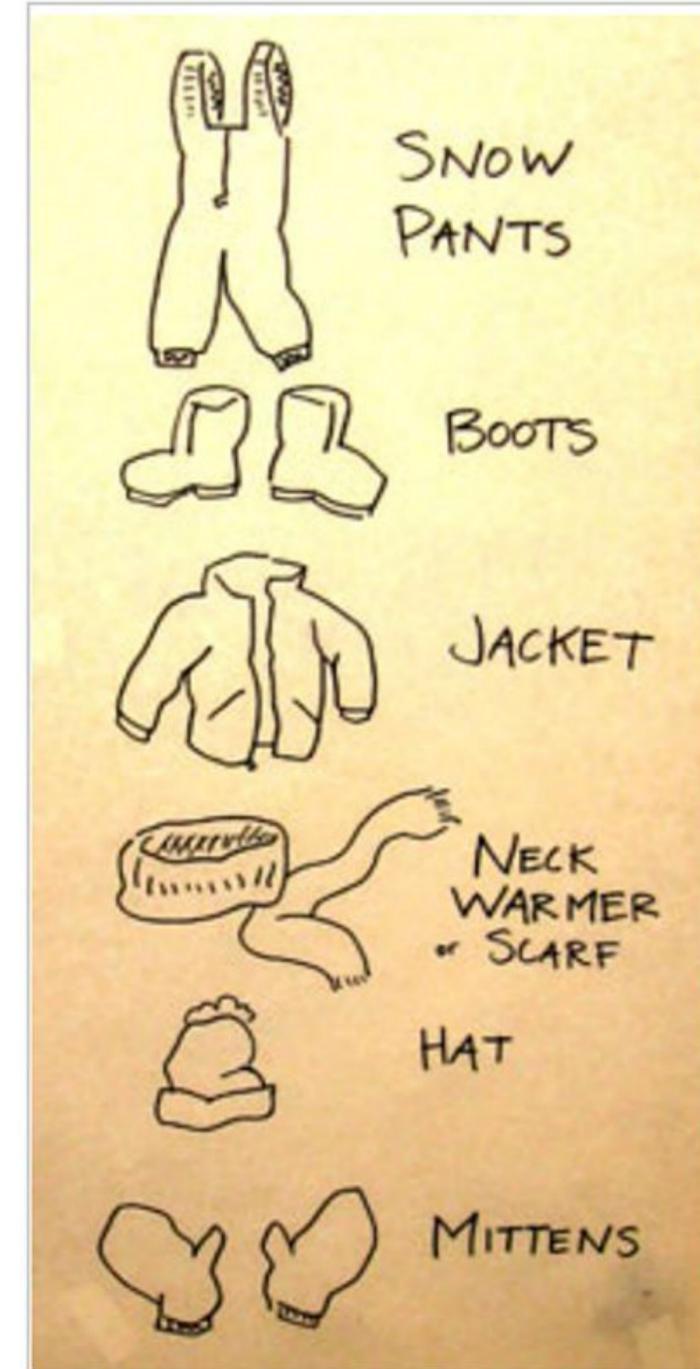
Terra Nova Adventure Play Experience, Richmond, BC -Hapa Collaborative



Forest School, Huddleston, VA

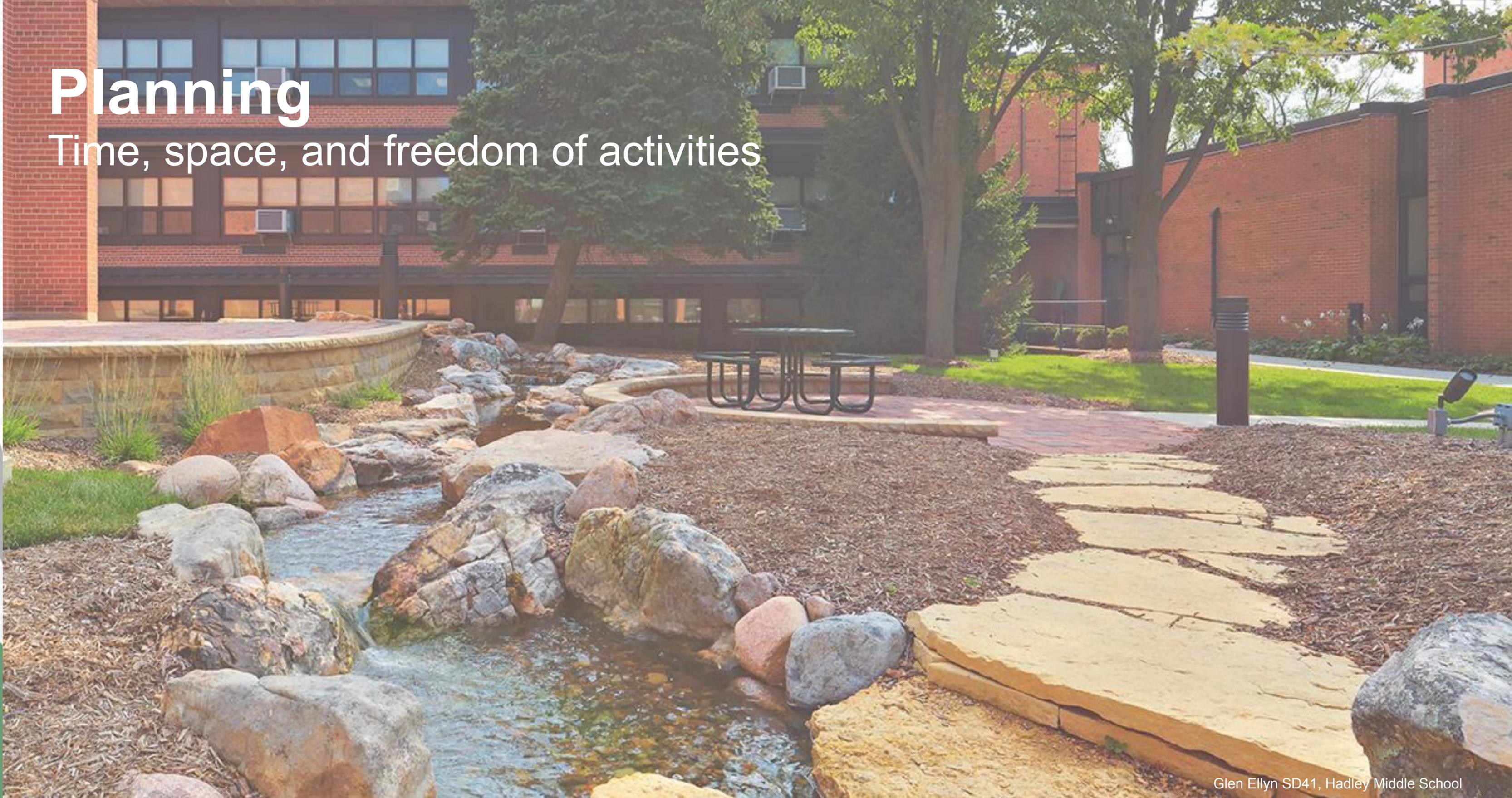
Myth Busting Barriers

- Fear of Nature
- Managing Students
- Equipment and Training
- Getting Wet/Dirty
- Weather



Planning

Time, space, and freedom of activities



Glen Ellyn SD41, Hadley Middle School

Planning: Goals and Metrics

Mariana Brussoni: The Outdoor PLAYbook Value System
Evaluating the features of your Outdoor Play Area

Values



Green Value



Creative Play



Durability



Challenge



Maintenance



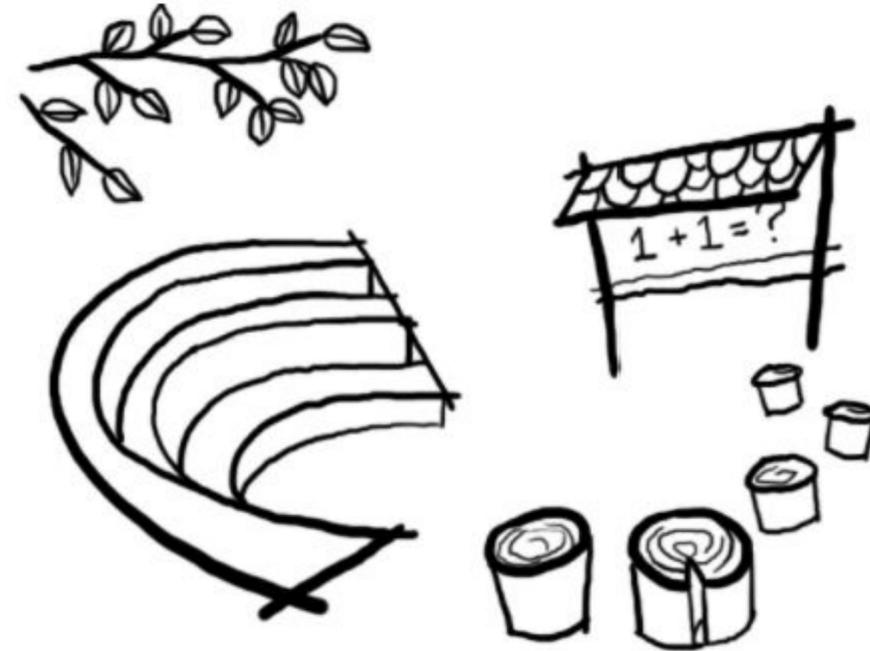
Social Play



Cost



Learning Opportunities



Case Studies

- **Western Springs District 101**
- **River Trails District 26**
- **Chicago Public Schools**

Case Study: Western Springs District 101

Starting Small: Taking Advantage of What You Have



- Neighborhood Schools
- Land Locked
- Tight Budget
- Engaged Community



Case Study: Western Springs District 101

Starting Small: Taking Advantage of What You Have

- Newly Enclosed Spaces
- Embrace Underutilized Exterior Areas
- Opportunistic Adjacencies
- Two Birds, One Stone



Case Study: Laidlaw Elementary School

Inner Courtyard

- Fully Enclosed Courtyard Created by Building Addition
- Need to Retain Natural Light and Views for Classrooms
- Want for Exterior Space



Case Study: Laidlaw Elementary School

Inner Courtyard

- Amphitheater Seating & Patio
- Meandering Path with Bench Seating
- Small Garden Plots & Greenhouse
- Low Maintenance Landscaping



Case Study: McClure Junior High School

Revitalized Courtyard

- Existing, Underutilized Below Grade Courtyard
- Intended for Exiting and Light to Cafeteria
- Overgrown Landscaping Above
- Harsh & Underdeveloped



Case Study: McClure Junior High School

Revitalized Courtyard

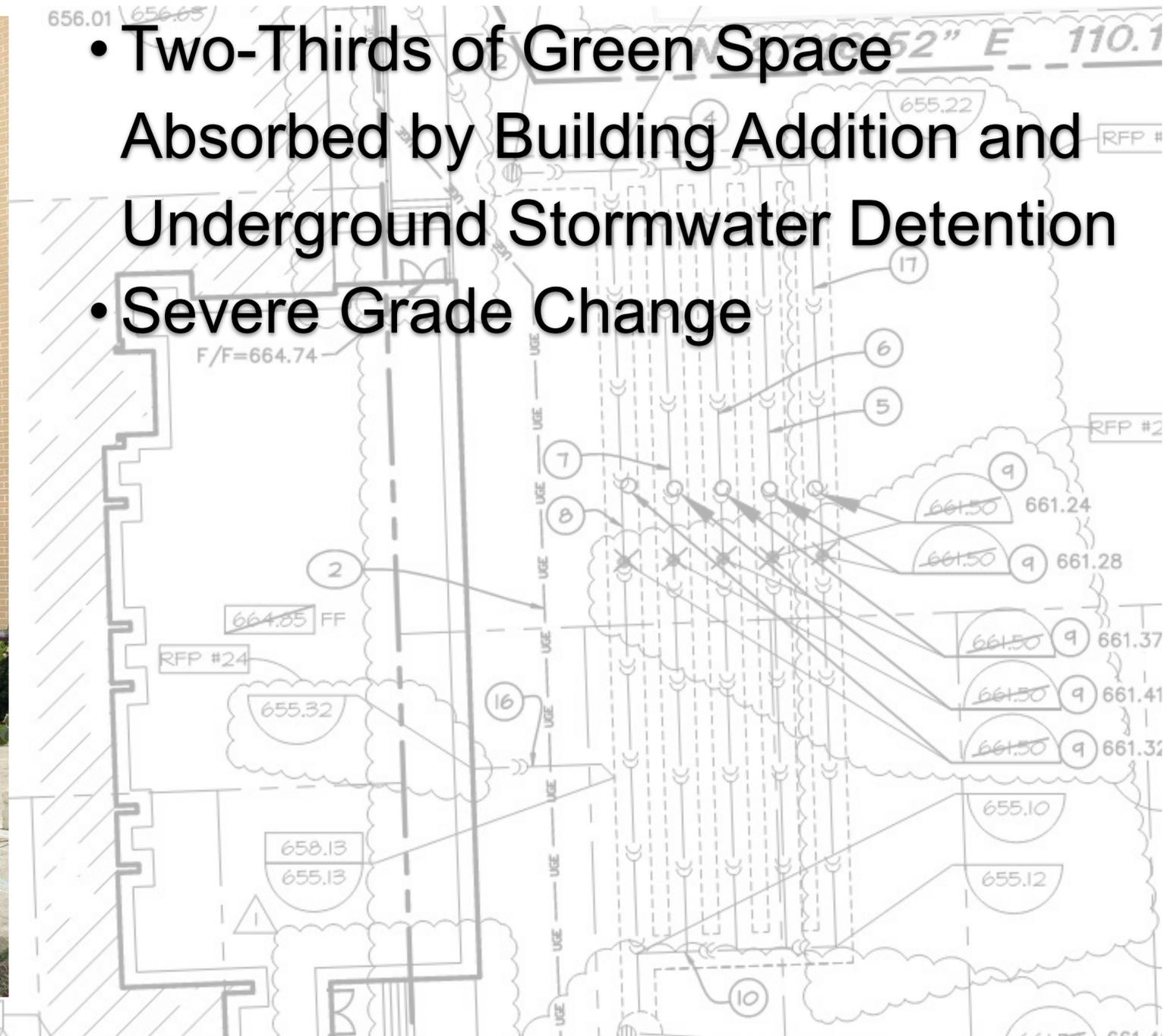
- Promote Adjacency to Cafeteria by Creating Inviting Space
 - Curved Stone Benches
 - Grass & Crushed Granite Paths



Case Study: Field Park Elementary School Gardens



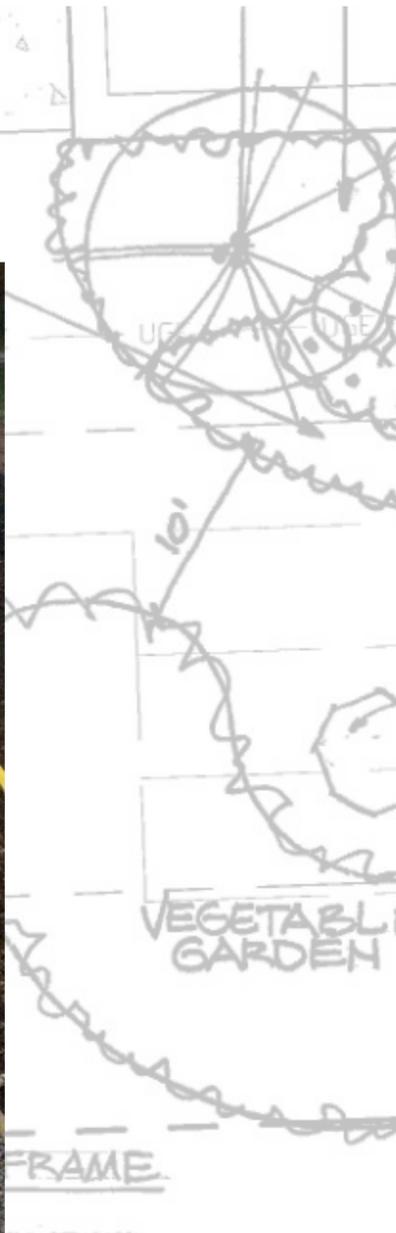
- Two-Thirds of Green Space Absorbed by Building Addition and Underground Stormwater Detention
- Severe Grade Change



Case Study: Field Park Elementary School

Gardens

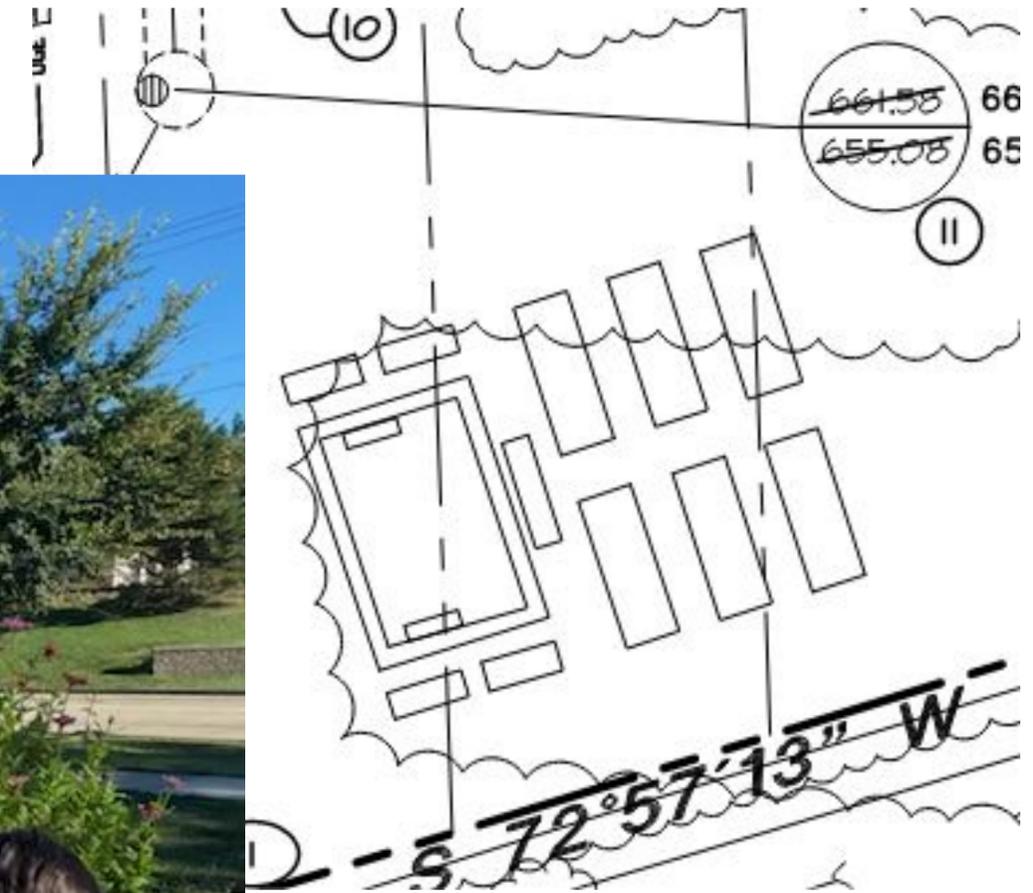
- Sensory Garden and Pathway with Bench Seating
- Pollinator Garden
- Active Garden Plots & Shed
- Picnic Table Seating



Case Study: Field Park Elementary School Gardens



Pollinator Garden



Case Study: Field Park Elementary School Gardens

Garden Plots



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Case Study: Field Park Elementary School Gardens



Garden Plots



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Case Study: Western Springs District 101

Beta Testing

- Tent Space Outside During Pandemic
 - Continuing Even as Restrictions are Lifted



Case Study: Prairie Trails ELC Case Study



Case Study: Prairie Trails ELC



Case Study: Prairie Trails ELC

Features

- Manipulative Areas
- Physical Areas
- Nature Area
- Sensory Areas
- Spacial Awareness
- Social Areas and Sit Spots
- Outdoor Classroom
- Green/Landscaped Areas

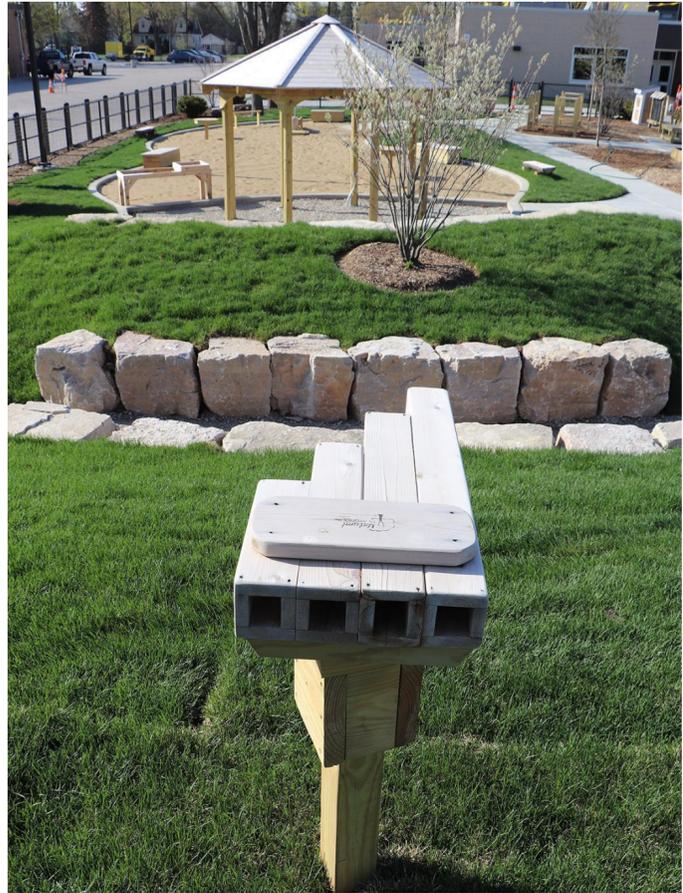
Case Study: Prairie Trails ELC Case Study

- **Benefits**

- Offers age appropriate challenges
- Encourages creative and exploratory play
- Allows students the opportunity to take risks
- Increases movement

Case Study: Prairie Trails ELC

Manipulative Areas



Case Study: Prairie Trails ELC

Physical Areas



Case Study: Prairie Trails ELC

Nature Area



Case Study: Prairie Trails ELC

Nature Area



Case Study: Prairie Trails ELC

Spacial Awareness and Wayfinding



Case Study: Prairie Trails ELC

Social Areas & Sit Spots



Case Study: Prairie Trails ELC

Outdoor Classroom



Case Study: Prairie Trails ELC Case Study

Classroom Connections



Case Study: Chicago Public Schools- Space to Grow



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Case Study: Chicago Public Schools- Space to Grow



Inspiring outdoor space for kids

NEIGHBORHOODS

An investment in neighborhoods

ENVIRONMENT

Flood reduction and water conservation

WHAT IT IS

TRANSFORMING UNDERUTILIZED SCHOOLYARDS

Space to Grow is a Chicago-based initiative working with many of the city's low-income communities of color to transform underutilized schoolyards into inspired playgrounds for students and vital outdoor places for the whole neighborhood to get together and reconnect with nature. Our green schoolyards replace expanses of asphalt with landscaping that absorbs rainwater, helping to address neighborhood flooding issues.

WHY IT MATTERS

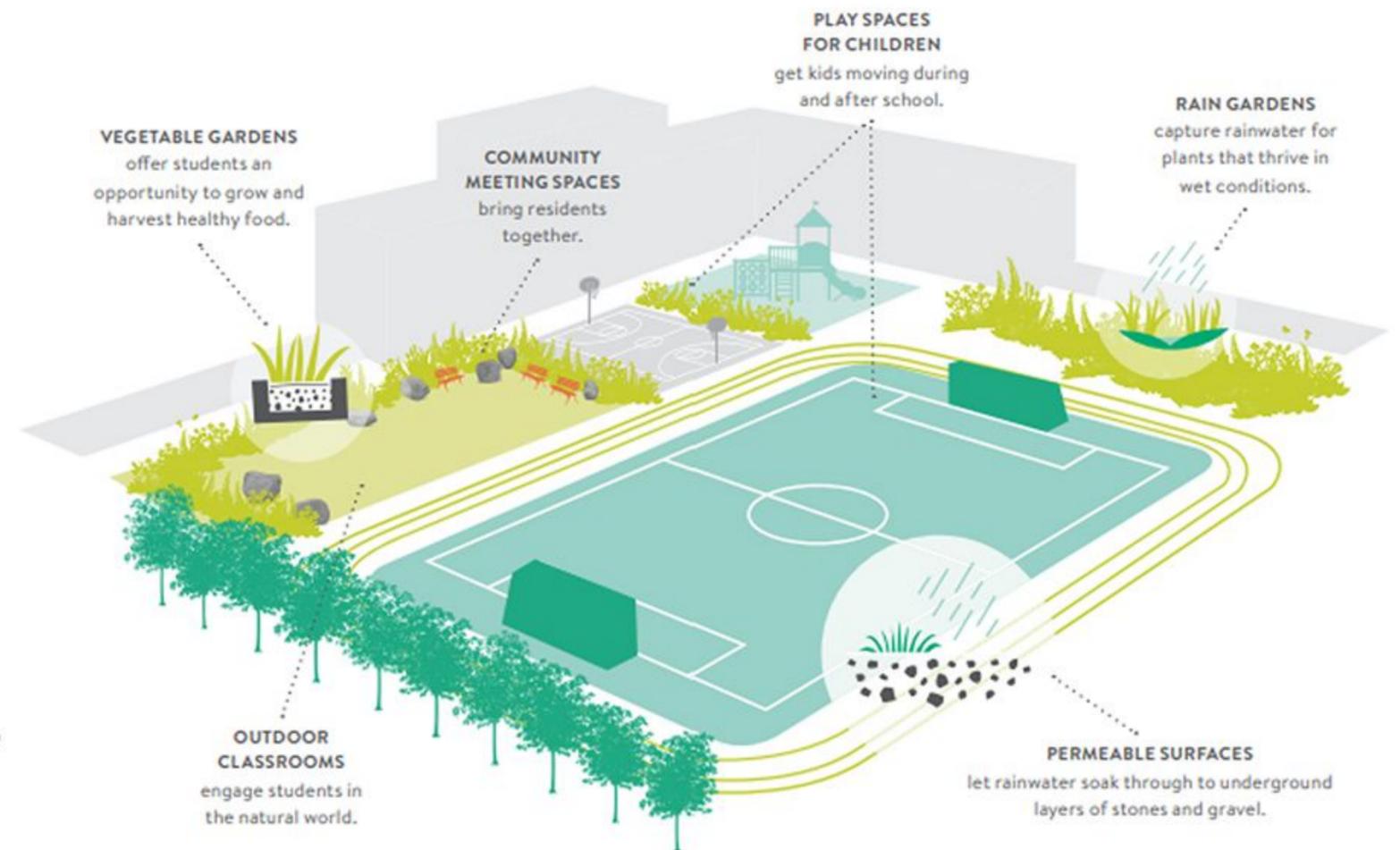
IMPROVING CHILDREN'S HEALTH & WELLNESS

Green schoolyards provide an opportunity for kids to learn and grow outdoors, and for schools to support student health and physical activity.

WHAT WE DO

CREATING NEIGHBORHOOD HUBS

We engage the entire school community, including neighborhood residents, to create a schoolyard that meets many needs and serves as a source of neighborhood pride.



Case Study: Chicago Public Schools- Space to Grow



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Case Study: Chicago Public Schools- Space to Grow

Virgil Grissom Elementary

- Students are more active
- Positive Community response



Case Study: Chicago Public Schools- Space to Grow

James Wadsworth Elementary



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Case Study: Chicago Public Schools- Space to Grow Community Engagement:

Parents and community members are invited to be part of the planning, planting, workshops, and ongoing events.



Case Study: Chicago Public Schools- Space to Grow Support Programs & Training

- Creating a Culture of Wellness
- Professional Development
- Garden Planning and Management
- School Yard Best Practices
- Stormwater Education



Top 10 Reasons

To have an Outdoor Classroom in Every School Yard



Space to Grow

International School Ground Alliance – Kirk Meyer

1. Learning through direct experience
2. Embrace process as well as outcomes
3. Multi-sensory experience
4. Emphasizes the interconnectedness of things
5. Inter-disciplinary studies
6. Recognizes different learning styles
7. Connects school to neighborhood & world
8. Design & installation is a modest expense
9. Projects a positive message about public education
10. Blurs boundaries between academic learning and creative play

Resources

Play Safety Forum, Managing Risk in Play Provision, Implementation Guide [untitled \(ioe.ac.uk\)](#)

Juli Ordower Landscape [PLAY | juliordower](#)

National Children's Bureau: Play England Position Paper:

<http://www.playengland.org.uk/resources/managing-risk-in-play-provision-implementation-guide.aspx>

Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA). Children's Unstructured Play Position Statement. March 2019. Available at <https://www.cpha.ca/childrens-unstructured-play>.

Simon Fraser University Childcare, Burnaby BC (space2place design inc.) <http://www.space2place.ca/sfu-childcare/>

International Play Equipment Manufacturers Association <https://ipema.org>

Risky Play and Children's Safety: Balancing Priorities for Optimal Child Development, Brussoni, Olisen, Pike, Sleet.

Terra Nova Adventure Play Experience, Richmond, BC -Hapa Collaborative [Terra Nova Adventure Play Environment - Hapa Collaborative \(hapacobo.com\)](#)

The Forest School, [A Virginia Forest School stays open through coronavirus - The Washington Post](#)

A Review of Research on Outdoor Learning by Rickinson, M., Dillon, J. Teamery, K. Morris, M., Choi, M., Sanders, D. & Benefield, P.

Outdoor learning for children aged 2-11: perceived barriers, potential solutions by Sue Waite [Losing our way preprint.pdf \(plymouth.ac.uk\)](#)

Project Learning Tree <https://www.plt.org/>

Gray, P. The decline of play and the rise of psychopathology in children and adolescents. *Am. J. Play* **2011**, 3, 443–463. [[Google Scholar](#)]

Wyver; Carson & Predy; Gill, (2019) Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development

Glen Ellyn SD41, Hadley Middle School, FGMA

Being and Becoming in Nature" Defining and Measuring Connection to Nature in Young Children, International Journal of Early Childhood Environmental Education. T. Beery, L. Chawla, P. Levin (2020)

A Review of Research on Outdoor Learning by Rickinson, M., Dillon, J. Teamery, K. Morris, M., Choi, M., Sanders, D. & Benefield, P. (PDF) [A Review of Research on Outdoor Learning | Dawn L Sanders - Academia.edu](#)

Nature and the Outdoor Learning Environment: The Forgotten Resource in Early Childhood Education, , International Journal of Early Childhood Environmental, A. Cooper National Wildlife Federation (2015)

Jeavons Landscape Architects, Melbourne Zoo [Jeavons Landscape Architects - Thoughtful, Playful, Engaging](#)

The Edible Schoolyard Project [The Edible Schoolyard Project |](#)

Reflo Sustainable Water Solutions [Reflo \(refloh2o.com\)](#)

Mariana Brussoni: The Outdoor PLAYbook Value System [Play Elements - Outdoor PLAYbook](#)

River Trails School District 26, Prairie Trails School

Natural Playgrounds www.naturalplaygrounds.com

Gross Motor Skill Development and Delays in Childhood, A. Logsdon, J Forman, MD Verywell Family (2019)

Moving from Biophobia to Biophilia: Developmentally Appropriate Environmental Education for Children, R. White (2001)

Space To Grow <https://www.plt.org/>

Open Lands <https://openlands.org/>

Children & Nature Network <https://www.childrenandnature.org/>

Green Schoolyards America <https://www.greenschoolyards.org/>

International School Grounds Alliance <https://www.greenschoolyards.org/>

Real Play Coalition <https://www.realplaycoalition.com/>

[Wisconsin Standards for Environmental Literacy and Sustainability | Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction](#)



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