

Designing Play Spaces for Inclusion

Devilish details that make a difference

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Design for children's play is a pressing issue



Children are dependent on the *qualities* of parks for experiences that affect their development



Accessible, engaging, child friendly outdoor play spaces have never been more important



Design matters more than ever before ... for everyone

- play and recreation
- physical activity
- social interaction and inclusion
- respite and retreat and
- engagement with nature



Swings and slide are important for vestibular development – but so much more is needed

- Design is often the missing ingredient. Most playgrounds are not designed – they are “provided”.
- However it is the detailed conscious selection and placement of elements and living components, that create a diversity of experiences and specific opportunities that provide value for play, and inclusion.



For every one to play you need: physical, sensory, social, imaginative play, graded challenges and access options

Play

- 1. movement, physical activity and risk taking**
- 2. creative/sensory play**
- 3. imagination/fantasy/role play**
- 4. social interaction**
- 5. nature and loose materials**

Access options

- 1. Wheels and legs**
- 2. Sit and stand**
- 3. Front, and side**
- 4. Up and under**
- 5. Group and individual**



Physical skills for many children need to be learnt, and practiced

- fitness, strength, resilience
- fine and gross motor skills
- sensory integration – balance, vision, hand- eye co-ordination, the position of the body in space
- confidence and mastery of challenging or unpredictable situations



Creative/ cognitive skills

- imagination and fantasy
- lateral thinking
- a sense of enquiry

Exploration of materials, their sensory qualities and their potential use in play



Social skills. These enable inclusion



- communication skills
- interaction with others
- interdependence
- confidence
- empathy
- tolerance

Children with a disability have the same need- less access and benefit more from play

1. How can you bring the environment/ adapt the setting to the child?
2. Can you adapt the equipment to create opportunities?
3. Can you enhance their choice, access or experiences through positioning, or specific support of the child etc. to create opportunities



Details make a huge difference for both play and inclusion, and the experience generally

- Getting **to** the park
- Access **into** and **around** the park
- Access to **social spaces and amenities**
- A choice of play activities once you are there- **participation**



Is the outing going to end in frustration and the pain of exclusion?

Information before the journey is critical.

A trip to a park may be out of the question without:

- a full fence
- accessible toilets, and
- a curb crossing for wheel chair access



Parking: options for different (side, rear) loading cars



Poorly designed car parks can be hazardous



Access to toilets and changing places



- Accessible design, space with adult-sized change bench



Getting into the park, and social spaces



- A seamless accessible path of travel
- Through gates, to social areas and shelter
- Activities for all the family – not just children



Beware the “accessible” design – that is not accessible, inclusive, or playful



There's always more than one way to create access



All play spaces can be made accessible - to some central social activity



- One central social heart for social interaction – for all ages



Put social spaces and activity areas close by



Add accessible elements to equipment to provide social inclusion



Provide access to cubby / role play off central social areas



Choose from a variety of movement types-
rocking, swinging, spinning etc.



**Inclusive equipment for movement and risk taking:
back support, hand holds, space for a carer to support**



You do not know on what senses a child may later depend – so provide sensory stimulation



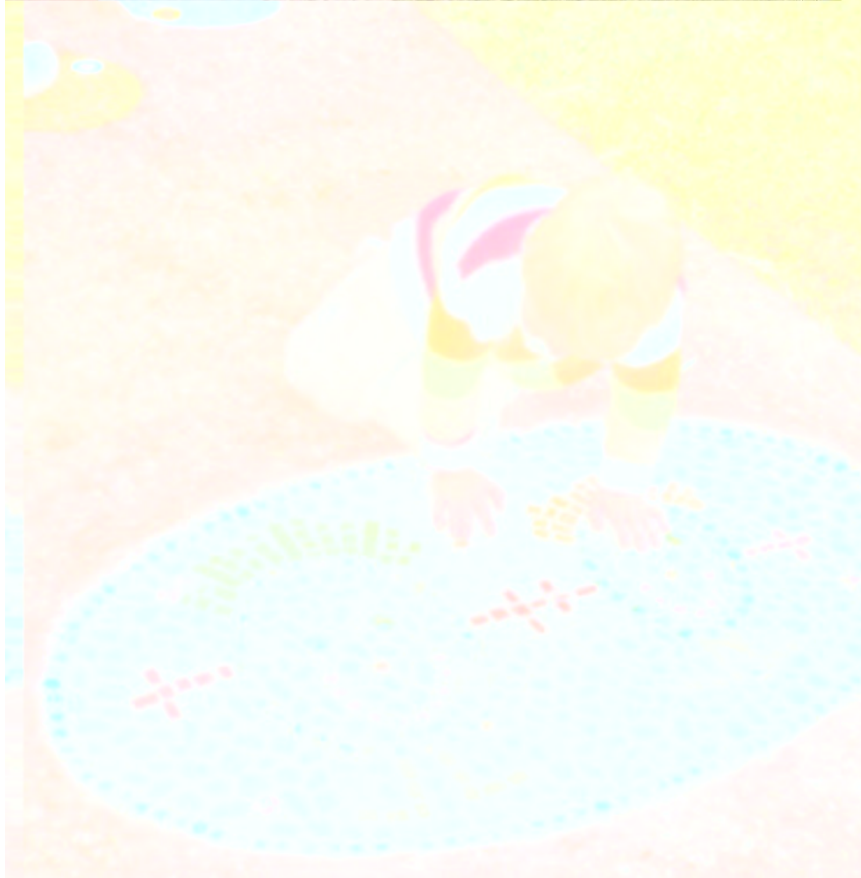
Bead wall by Zabinsky Hahn



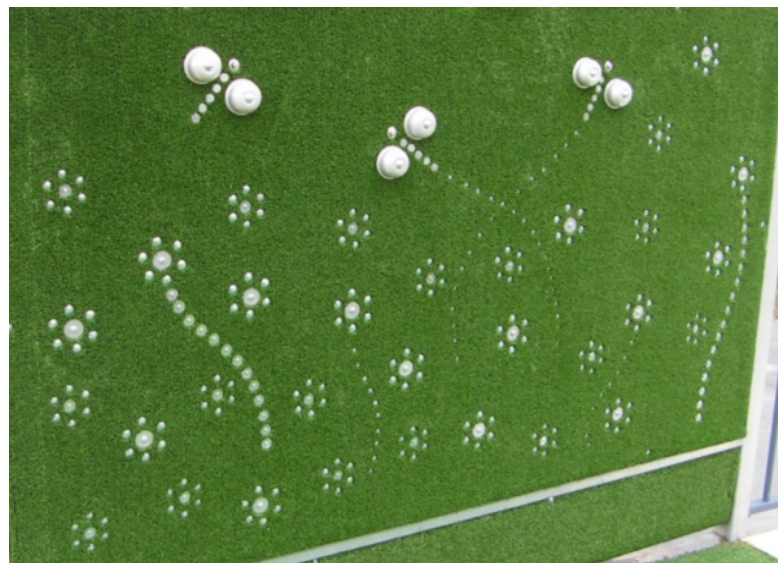
Materials for building and construction provide high play value



Pattern, texture and detail in hard landscape



**Paving
details**



**Textural
panels**



Maximise usability and inclusion on a 'standard' play structure

Accessible
steering
wheel in
the front

Hand grips

Manoeuvrable
surface

Stair and
handrail

Choice of
climbing
challenge

Social
play
under.
More
than one
entry



Accessible interactive/tactile elements



Access under and space beside



Elements to manipulate and make music



Play with loose materials- can provide endless open ended options



looseness is a precursor to creativity



Multiple ways to access sand play



A choice of edge designs encourages access and participation.



Options for accessing sand play



Even in small scale spaces contact with nature can be created with vegetation and natural materials



Less manicured corners invite exploration



Diversity, options and complexity provide greater play value and inclusion



More diverse environments include more people



Connections between play elements that enhance play between them



- A diversity of connected elements
- Here: cubbies and sand play, vegetation and sand



In summary

- 1 **Play is an essential part of child development and vitally important to children with disabilities**
- 2 **Today we rely on parks for most of our urban play experiences**
- 3 **Design can ensure play value, and facilitate access to essential learning and fun experiences**
- 4 **A diverse choice of play opportunities makes it more likely that every one can find some way to participate, and children can maximise their development potential**
- 5 **Inclusion requires a high level of attention to detail and multiple access options, and a combinations of elements suitable for people with different abilities**



Thank you. Questions?



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