



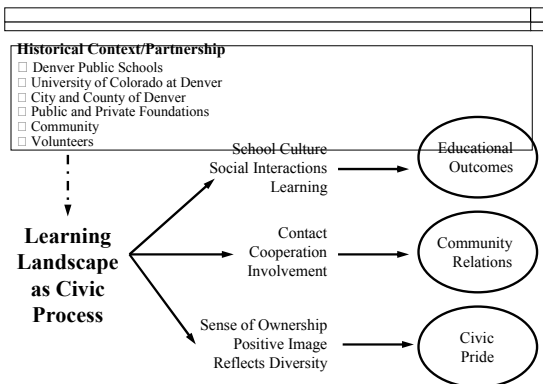


Learning Landscape Initiative

Building Community Through Play







Transformation

By bringing together diverse groups working in concert, a civic process not a design project—is created.



Old south entry to Bromwell



New south entry to Bromwell

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How Learning Landscapes Came About

- In 1998, the first Learning Landscape was started at Bromwell Elementary School—what began as a renovation project would evolve into a citywide urban initiative.
- The ability to transform Bromwell’s renovation project into an urban initiative was dependent on the convergence of four variables:
 - An aging elementary school infrastructure
 - Elimination of court-mandated busing
 - A new urban university mandate that encouraged outreach into city neighborhoods and communities
 - City, state and non-profit funding as a catalyst for implementation

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In 2000, Denver Public Schools’ Grounds Foreman Don Moon stated that approximately 75 elementary schools required moderate to extensive renovations or upgrades to meet adequate standards.



Bradley Elementary at Elm and Cornell Streets

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Elimination of Mandated Busing

- In 1995, Denver Public Schools was released from a federally-mandated school busing plan.
- Though controversial, for the first time in twenty years, children could freely attend their neighborhood school.

CU Urban University Mandate to Encourage Outreach into City Neighborhoods and Communities

- Agreement between the University of Colorado at Denver's Landscape Architecture Department and Denver Public Schools.
- Graduate students learn design and the value of civic responsibility while providing a much-needed design service to local communities.
(Lois Brink, coordinator)



University Role Design/Build Process

UCD develops trilogy of graduate courses...

- Master Plan
 - completed by UCD or others
 - Reviewed by DPS comments included in report
- Design development drawings
 - Developed by UCD
 - Reviewed by DPS comments with drawings go to LA
- Construction drawings
- Built landscapes
- TAP/Maintenance



UCD Design Build



Reviewing shade structure design on site @ Gilpin



Forming the stainless steel elliptical orbits @ Bromwell

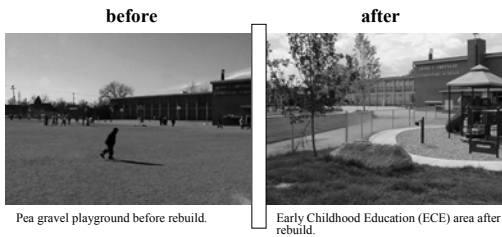


Installing crusher fines with bonding agent @ Swansea

City, state and non-profit funding as a catalyst for implementation

- Spring of 2000—one million dollar grant from Denver’s Housing and Neighborhood Development Grant.
 - Funding was part of the Denver Focus Neighborhood initiative that targeted 16 underserved neighborhoods for capital improvements to community facilities.
- The City of Denver became the catalyst for collaboration.
- The Learning Landscape Alliance was established—an entrepreneurial and community based association of public and private interests—to raise 10.6 million dollars and implement 22 learning landscapes.
- Fall of 2003—overwhelming voter approval for a \$310 million dollar general obligation bond, with 10 million dollars to complete another 23 learning landscapes. Average cost — 400K.

What is a Learning Landscape?



Learning Landscape Objectives

- Participatory landscapes that support outdoor learning with academic and physical education and socialization tools for school-age children.
- Creating a multi-generational space that foster healthy living principles for both students and the community.
- Create an aesthetically pleasing focal point for the community.

Outdoor Learning

Nature-related experiences tend to foster a child's emerging sense of wonder.



Butterfly Garden & Numbers at Garden Place Elementary



Grassland Garden & Bird House @ Remington Elementary

Hard surface educational elements



Rebar Concrete Stamps for Math Walk @ Castro Elementary



Compass Rose @ Ebert Elementary

Improved hard surface games that promote physical activity



Aerial view of Munroe Elementary



Aerial view of Crofton Elementary

Improved multi-purpose fields - physical activity for children and community



Traditional developmentally-appropriate play equipment



Supporting Program collaboration for healthy communities



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Gardens promote stewardship and healthy eating



Denver Urban Garden and Slow Food Garden during harvest time @ Bromwell Elementary

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Aesthetically pleasing places



View of Remington Elementary
Central Plaza and Shade Structure

**Common areas for
school children and
community to socialize**



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**Instilling a sense of pride and improving
accessibility**

before

after



All levels of playground ADA accessible - Cowell Elementary playground

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Art Projects

- Interactive art, collaborative art projects conceived and created by students, instills a sense of pride and ownership and reduces incidences of vandalism.
- Each school has at least one art project as an initial element.
- The goal is to have a series of temporary installations that renew on a cyclical basis in an effort to sustain community involvement.

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Art elements empower...



Earth Mother in play equipment pit
@ Fairmont Elementary



Outdoor stage and Mural @ Smith Elementary

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and foster ownership



For school &
community



Community gateways welcome



Shady Places are
focal points



Shade Structures @ Garden Place, Crofton & Colfax Elementary Schools

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Physical Educational Outcomes

- The new equipment promotes more creative play. (80% of teachers agreed)
- Children are more physically active during recess. (80% of teachers agreed)
- Test pilot program at three schools using playground as warm up circuit for Phys. Ed. Program

Center for Research Strategies, 2003



Running on boulders as part of a warm up circuit @ Munroe Elementary

Participatory landscapes for outdoor learning socialization skills

Perceived Social Benefits of Recess

- ☐ Learning to Share.
- ☐ Cooperating. *Activities that require students to work together to accomplish a task.*
- ☐ Communicating with teachers and children.
- ☐ Solving problems with peers. *Smaller areas for children to have discussions.*
 - at about 8yrs. children would rather discuss problems with each other as opposed to seeking out an adult for advice.
- ☐ Learning to follow rules.
- ☐ Self-discipline.

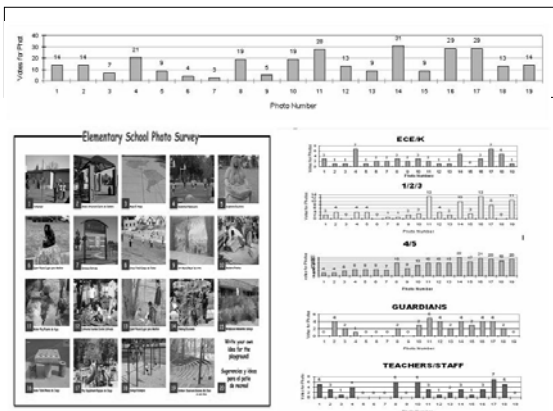
Social Abilities formed on the Playground

- A time without adult leadership.
- The perceived social benefits of recess.

“As a child moves through specific stages of development, play creates lifelike situations in which the child can “practice” understanding and acting on the choices each situation presents.”
Erik Erikson

Learning Landscape as a Focal Point and Source of Civic Pride

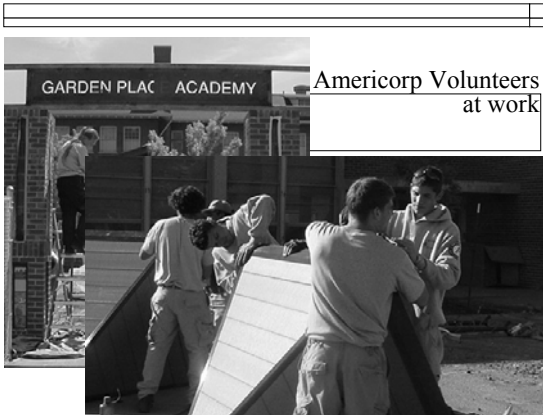
- Community Outreach
 - Collaborative design process
Community input during the master plan & design phases of the process
 - Significant community input
School/community fund-raising to support the playground
 - Volunteerism at a school and community level
Community support during the construction of the playground in the form of volunteer builds



<p><i>"Building the playground generated increased parental involvement by providing a non-threatening opportunity for parents to help the school"</i></p> <p>Principal Comment, CRS 2003</p>	



Volunteerism



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Community Relations

Community Response to CRS Survey

- The playground has improved the beauty of our community.
(97% agreed)
- The playground provides areas that are developmentally appropriate for children to play.
(90% agreed)
- The playground has created a green space in the community.
(86% agreed)

Parent Response to CRS Survey

- Parents participated in building the playground.
(79% agreed)
- Local community businesses contributed to the playground. (78% agreed)
- The community has a sense of pride in the playground.
(77% agreed)

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Creating a Holistic Process that is sustainable



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Where do we go from here?

Sustaining the Learning Landscapes –
Create a Culture within the school and
community of stewardship

- ☐ Establish Technical Assistance Program for site-based sustainability/Denver School Yard Consortium
- ☐ Collaboration with Parks and Rec. on master planning and maintenance at contiguous sites



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Research and development

- ☐ Seek funding to support holistic approach to nutrition and physical activity - COPAN
- ☐ Seek grant funding to adapt physical education curriculum for maximum use of playground RWJF
- ☐ Seek funding to support community outreach and safe routes to school

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9 Concluding Points

- 1 Improved student behavior & reduced disciplinary and safety problems
- 2 Improved student attitudes toward school and increased readiness to learn
- 3 Increased student learning and performance
- 4 Potential for school district wide implementation



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9 Concluding Points

- 5 Community input and assistance crucial for successful project – particularly volunteer builds.
- 6 Enhanced community pride and use of playgrounds as “green spaces.”
- 7 A holistic collaborative civic process that includes planning, fund raising, construction and on going sustaining programs
- 8 Increased parental involvement
- 9 Research and funding needed to support use of outdoor learning curricula



The end.