



When developing this proposal for the remodelling of Prospect Park, we decided to focus on themes on inclusivity and accessibility. We wanted to create a playspace where all children feel welcome and comfortable in exploring the features of the park without feeling excluded. By encouraging children to play outdoors, we can help them engage in different forms of play such as pretend play. Children who participate in collaborative and complex forms of pretend play have been found to be better at regulating their emotions and at creative problem solving (Wallin, 2019). This is due to the varying complexity of pretend play requiring the child to increase their cognitive processing abilities in order to participate in pretend play (Wallin, 2019). Additionally, playing outdoors has been found to contribute greatly to children's physical health (Wallin, 2019). Promoting playful learning opportunities and opportunities for conversational interaction in parks are important for children's development in their cognitive, communicative, physical and social skills.

Park Features

1

Elevated
Structures &
Playground

3

Amphitheatre,
Paths & Benches

2

Quiet Space &
Community
Book Library

4

Signs (Pond
+Map)

The main features of the park include: elevated structures, play structures, quiet space, community book library, amphitheatre, paths, benches, and signs.



This is the map that would be placed at each of the four entrances to the park. We wanted everything on the map to be bright and easy to distinguish to increase readability. The maps will also be presented with a legend to represent different features of the park.

1

Elevated Structures & Playground



Elevated Structure



The playground will include an elevated hill section made of tarmac that includes embedded structures such as a rock climbing wall, stairs, a ladder, a rope, and a slide which will be wide enough for two adults for instances where parents/guardians may need to go down with the child. These structures in the natural outdoor setting will encourage collaboration, creativity, imagination, and social interactions through pretend play between children and their peers or family members. Pretend play can require more complicated interactions such as cooperation, collaboration, sharing, and negotiating, which give children new learning and development opportunities, especially in language development (Community Playthings, 2019). The playground will also have various play structures that are wheelchair accessible such as an orbiter and swings. Having these types of accessible structures will ensure the playground is inclusive to all children with disabilities and that they get equal opportunity for play and interactions. These play structures, while providing the opportunity for play, can also provide the opportunity for narratives and conversations such as reminiscing about the past, which would encourage the co-construction of shared narrative and further language development.

Image Source

Right: Ross Recreation Equipment. (2016). *Hillside park rubber surfacing*.
Ross Recreation Equipment.
[Digital image]. <https://www.rossrec.com/news/award-for-hillside-park/attachment/hillside-park-rubber-surfacing/>

Play Structures



These playground structures can also encourage different conversations. When it comes to the wheelchair accessible play structures, children may not have seen these before since they are not as common, which can spark a conversation regarding these structures and why they may be different. This can expand a child's vocabulary and encourage more conversational turns. Examples of conversations that may occur can include conversations about past events (e.g. a personal event linked to a certain play structure), future events (e.g. returning to the park again), and open-ended questions (e.g. children may ask questions about the different structures/signs).

Image Sources

Middle Top: Burke. (n.d.). *Inclusive orbit*. [Digital image]. Burke.
<https://www.bciburke.com/our-products/product/inclusive-orbit>

Right Top: Landscape Structures. (n.d.). *First no-transfer inclusive swing*. [Digital image]. Landscape Structures. <https://www.playlsi.com/en/ad/we-go-swing/>

Bottom Right: Adventurepaul. (2021). *A wheelchair accessible seesaw in Quito*. [Digital image]. Reddit.

https://www.reddit.com/r/mildlyinteresting/comments/p05322/a_wheelchair_accessible_seesaw_in_quito/

ASL/PECS Board/Texture Board/ Musical Element



The playground will also have an American Sign Language (ASL)/Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) board, a board with various textures on it and a musical element such as a xylophone structure. The ASL/PECS board will provide an important learning opportunity for children, as well as deliver an opportunity for interactions to communicate and acquire new vocabulary. For example, adults can describe the words on the board and engage in conversations, and take turns exchanging information with a child, which would help to develop their language. It was found that children's vocabulary has been linked to the frequency and nature of parent-child shared reading interactions and that children's social cognition has been related to the frequency and nature of parent-child verbal interactions. The ASL/PECS board provides an opportunity for parents to initiate these verbal and reading interactions. As well, language learning involves complex interactions between the children's characteristics and environmental contexts, and it is strongly affected by small shifts in ongoing conversational exchange and social-emotional engagement. An ASL/PECS board would help children and adults to increase conversational exchanges and increase social-emotional engagement, which would aid in language development.

The texture board and musical element can allow sensory play either alone or with peers. Sensory activities dealing with various senses such as sound and touch are important for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) who may have trouble processing sensory information. These elements can help stimulate and engage children with ASD by helping them with cognitive, emotional, physical, social, and communication development. Sensory play can develop better coping skills when dealing with different sounds and textures, while also helping them develop language skills. This is due to children often talking about what they're doing while playing and creating dialogue during pretend play, which would aid in the development of communication skills, even in children who are non-verbal (The FCA, 2022). The peer-to-peer interactions during sensory play can help a child to practice having conversations and taking turns expressing themselves with others (Miracle Recreation, 2022).

Image Sources

Middle Top: Cunningham Recreation. (n.d.). *Sensory panels*. [Digital image].

Cunningham Recreation. <https://cunninghamrec.com/articles/2021/11/how-and-why-to-incorporate-sensory-play-into-your-playground/>

Right Top: Rodenkirchen, L. (2020). *Example of daily schedule*. [Digital image]. Boardmaker. <https://myboardmaker.com/Activity/29915485>

Middle Bottom: *Playground park outdoor Xylophone*. [Digital image]. Pinterest. <https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/257901516137465698/>

Right Bottom: *ASL & Symbol CORE Boards*. Teachers Pay Teachers. [Digital image]. <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/ASL-Symbol-CORE-Boards-Leveled-SYCT-5408054>

2

Quiet Space & Community Book Library



Location



Next, we will introduce the Quiet Space and the Community Library aspects of the park. The map of the park with labels is attached above to help visualize their placement in the park. The Quiet Space will be located beside the main playground structures, which are represented as the three bright green circles on the map, and the Community Library will be beside the amphitheatre.

A Quiet Space

What It Is...

- A Safe Space
- Adaptable



What It Does...

- Promotes Mindfulness
- Filters Sensory Input



What It Has...

- Accessible Entrances
- Built in Seating



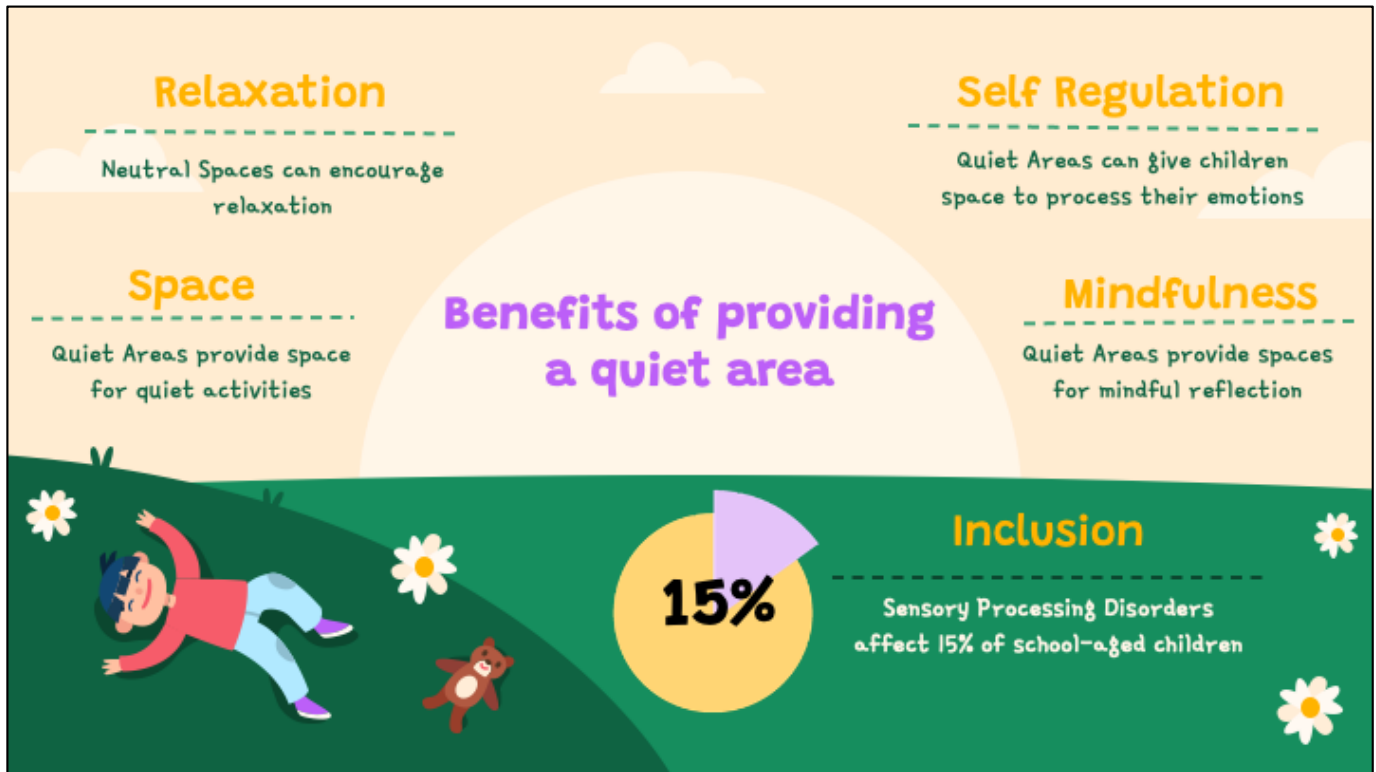
This area of the park will be designed to be a safe space for children to go to whenever they feel overwhelmed, overstimulated, or simply want to spend some quiet time alone. There will be a sign nearby to indicate where this begins, the sign will have an image of a finger up to the lips along with the words “Please be quiet in this area”. This is so everyone, including children who are not able to read yet, can be aware of where this area begins. This area will be easily accessible and the entrances will be large enough to accommodate wheelchairs, as well as allow adults to walk in comfortably. The interior of the structure will be large enough to accommodate two to four individuals at a time. The flooring will be made of the same soft padded rubber material that will serve as the base for the play structures, and feature built in elevations along segments of the walls for both adults and children to sit on. This structure is designed to blend in to the park atmosphere. The design of this structure will allow for proper lighting and air circulation, while also serving as a filter, minimizing sensory input. Allowing children to take a sensory break in an environment which promotes silence and calm. This area is also adaptable, and can serve as a reading corner for families. In summary, this area is surely to be in use in a variety of ways, keeping accessibility for sensory overstimulation, at the heart of the structure. Please note, the diagrams attached above do not include all entrances for

the sake of showing possible seating placements more clearly. The image with the white background has an accurate representation of entrance location and openings. The seating can be placed along the walls wherever it is deemed fit and accessible.

Image Source

For cozy dome model: Landscape Structures. (2022). *Cozy Dome® Model #168099* [Digital Image]. Landscape Structures.

<https://www.playlsi.com/en/commercial-playground-equipment/playground-components/cozy-dome/>



There are countless benefits to providing children with a quiet space but we have narrowed them down to what we believed to be the top five most significant benefits - at the heart of which is accessibility and inclusivity. We believe that providing a quiet area will give children the freedom to play and explore without any restrictions. This space would provide families access with a feature few parks offer— a structured area for quiet play. This could be used by parents of young children who want to give their babies some fresh air while protecting them from the sun, and lessening new, potentially overwhelming input from their surroundings. The quiet area could also be used by families who want a quiet space to engage in reading. This structure will be neutral in colour, which we believe would encourage relaxation and self reflection. By providing children with a relaxed environment in which they can check in with themselves, we give them the chance to practise self-regulation. Children who might be having a tough time, need a break from their friends, or even just need a moment to breathe, could use our quiet space to practise mindful thought. Finally, we think that this structure will de-stigmatize sensory overload and foster a sense of social acceptance. A recent study in Utah found that 15% of school-age children struggle with some form of sensory processing disorder, among those struggling are children with ASD and ADHD (Bunim, 2013). This space will give

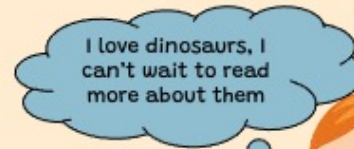
children the confidence to play knowing they have somewhere to go if they need to take a break.

Community Library



Why It Matters

Encourages Reading and Promotes Learning

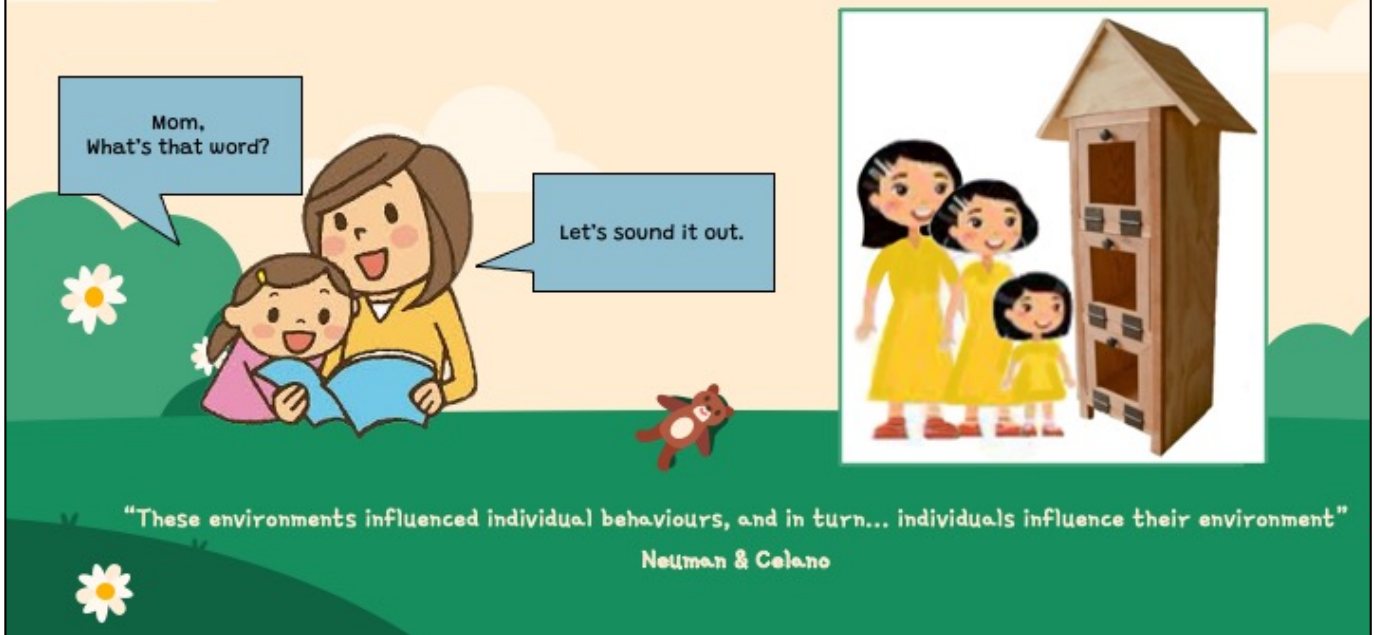


What It Is

Accessible Eco-Friendly Community Sustained Book Collection

Another aspect of our park is the Community Library. This would be a small outdoor library, which would hold approximately between 40 and 50 books. It would be evenly divided between 4 sections for kindergarteners, children, teenagers, and adults. The community library will be set up as suggested in the image above with the section for kindergarteners will be placed at the bottom and the section for adults will be placed at the top. This will be accessible and free to use for anyone who visits the park, and we believe will help encourage reading, promote learning, and provide invaluable access to print to all visitors.

The Value of Free Access to Print



This community library can provide families with opportunities to come together and read. We believe the inclusion of a community library would encourage learning and development, which will serve children in their academic journey, as while children grow up they can continue to use the library, exploring the next age section. Finally, the design of our community library would not only foster a sense of community but also provide an accessible resource for parents to read to their children. This will give children an opportunity to access books nearby, expand their interests, and take part in a community experience. By offering spaces where families may be encouraged to read together, our playground could have a positive impact on a child's entry into print.



This library would be accessible to all, and managed and sustained by the community itself. It is suggested that some community members volunteer as the curators or librarians of this community library in order to regularly maintain that the books in each section are appropriate for the suggested age ranges. In preparation for the opening of the park, a book drive can be held, and volunteers could be selected to weed through and curate the initial book selection. Once the park and the library are unveiled, the community will be encouraged to take books, and donate those they have grown out of. This will create a community sustained project, which would require minimal upkeep.

3

Amphitheatre, Paths & Benches



Amphitheatre



In order to add a community gathering space to the park, we decided to add an outdoor amphitheatre. The amphitheatre will not only serve as a place for people to sit down and rest, but also as a place where outdoor learning can occur. Teachers and students from nearby elementary schools can have field trips and classes at the amphitheatre where they will be able to continue their development of language skills outside of the classroom. A study found that an increase in lifetime residential exposure to greenspace was associated with an increase in total Early Development Instrument (EDI) scores, which is a tool used to assess children's development in kindergarten (Jarvis et al., 2021). The EDI assesses a variety of developmental domains, including language and cognitive development, and communication skills and general knowledge (Jarvis et al., 2021). In other words, encouraging children to play outside in parks, where greenspace is common, can lead to increases in the development of children's cognitive and communication skills. Also, the Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA) has recommended access to unstructured play for children in communities as this can encourage children to be less sedentary, decrease depressive symptoms through physical activity, and further develop their cognitive skills (CPHA, 2019). One type of unstructured play that is recommended is play that can be performed at different height levels as this gives children the appropriate space

to engage in diverse types of play (CPHA, 2019). The amphitheatre provides different levels of seats in a stair-like format which provides children the opportunity to play at different heights. To consider individuals who may be especially sensitive to sunlight or for those who want to be in the shade, we decided to place a line of trees along the back of the amphitheatre to provide a sitting area with shade. A shaded area in the park can prevent some children and parents from feeling discouraged to visit the park as they have an area to be protected from the sun if they were concerned about the lack of shade in the park. Shade in parks have been reported to be appreciated by parents and guardians in Ontario, which is why we decided to add trees behind the amphitheatre (Tucker et al., 2007). As seen in the picture above, it will have two different types of paths for people to access the various rows of seats where one path has a smooth ramp to be more accessible for those who have difficulty in mobility (such as individuals who are in wheelchairs) and another path which has stairs.

Image Source

Right: Renta Urban Land Design. (2019). *Art park* [Photograph]. Renta Urban Land Design.

https://www.renta-uld.com/civic-projects/Art-Park?pgid=jxn9j50b-c97efa_edd98dfe205a42ce8b77fa17b69cda7cmv2_d_6589_5004_s_4_2

Raised Structures (Animals)

Where are the fish going?

This turtle looks like the one from the zoo!



The raised structures beside the path will be made to resemble aquatic animals (such as turtles and fish) as this fits the physical environment of the park with the addition of the pond. This can encourage children to engage in pretend play which is rich in decontextualized language. Decontextualized language is defined by Rowe (2012) as “language that is removed from the here and now.” An increase in decontextualized language was found to lead to an increase in conversational turn-taking between parents and children (Leech & Rowe, 2020). Children who are better at sustaining conversations with their parents were found to have larger vocabularies and stronger language skills (Adamson et al., 2012). The raised structures can elicit different types of decontextualized utterances from children. For example, children may ask open-ended questions, which are “questions framed with who, what, when, where, why, or how” (Leech & Rowe, 2020). Children may ask: “Why do turtles have shells?” or “Where are the fish going?” Another category of decontextualized utterances that the raised structures may elicit are connections to another time or place (Leech & Rowe, 2020). For example, children may say: “These fish look like the goldfish from home.” The CPHA has recommended play space designers to take into consideration the addition of play structures that can provide different sensory and tactile experiences (CPHA, 2019). In order to incorporate this recommendation, the

animal-like raised structures will have different types of tactile surfaces such as animals that feel smooth, bumpy, and scaly. Some children may also jump on top of the raised structures or climb them, which can help develop their physical health and motor skills (CPHA, 2019).

Image Source

Right: Marathon Surfaces. (2021). *Rubber playground surfacing*
[Photograph]. Marathon Surfaces.

<https://marathonsurfaces.com/files/2018/09/Margaret-Stenerson-13.jpg>

Paths & Lighting



To accommodate vehicles traveling in and out of the park for management- or construction-related reasons, we decided to add a tarmac path that runs from Kenneth Avenue and into the center of the park. This pathway will be wide enough for two vehicles. For increased accessibility, the main paths in the park will be wide and smooth with gradual variations in height to accommodate individuals who use wheelchairs and others who have difficulty in mobility. For increased visibility in dark conditions, we decided to add lights along the paths of the park as this can increase navigation ability and can help people feel safer when traveling through the park at night. A national consensus from Great Britain found that “four out of five women and two out of five men felt unsafe walking alone after dark in a park or other open space” (Stripe, 2021). Some children in the surrounding community of Prospect Park may feel unsafe going to the park, which deters them from playing or walking in the park. Therefore, lights were added to the park to increase perceptions of safety in public spaces for children and parents, especially for women and girls. In addition, the lighting in the park will be as sustainable and efficient as possible by using low level lights, sensor technology, and ground spot lights (Pain et al., 2022). The lights will be placed along the main paths of the park and also at the entrances and exits, as suggested by the Safer Parks Standard (Pain et al., 2022).

Image Source

Left: NK Asphalt. (2020). *Red asphalt driveways & car parks in Perth Hills* [Photograph].

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Right: Wo Life Store. (n.d.). *Solar powered LED ground light outdoor waterproof garden decoration path deck lights yard driveway lawn buried solar led lamp* [Photograph].

<https://ae01.alicdn.com/kf/Sc2aba9cceb804bf7af9e3758b8e23b59p.jpg>

Updates to Entrances/Exits



Current Wilfred Ave. Entrance



To increase the visibility of the existing sign at the Wilfred Avenue entrance, we decided to add the words “Prospect Park” to all four sides of the rectangular beam instead of just two sides of the beam. This is displayed in the picture above on the far left. An additional entrance at Kenneth Avenue will also be added to the park to make it easier for community members to find and access the park. In our renovation of Prospect Park, all four entrances to the park will have a banner-style sign with the words “Prospect Park” printed horizontally and on both sides of the banner. These banners will be situated further into the park (but will still be visible from the sidewalks that are beside the entrances) so that neighbours who live directly beside the entrances do not see the banners from inside their properties as this may be an eyesore to them. There could be confusion as to where the entrances/exits to the park are (as the park is situated behind people’s backyards), so the banner-style signs have been added in hopes of making it easier for people to find and identify the park. Helping visitors be able to find entrances/exits easier can increase perceptions of safety in the park as they feel more certain about where to go (Pain et al., 2022).

Benches



	Entrance
	Elevated Area
	Accessible Play Structures
	Play Structures
	Trail
	Bench

We decided to add more benches throughout the park. We placed benches along the paths, near the playground area, around the pond, and near the elevated area so that parents can supervise their children while sitting down and also so that anyone can sit down if they want to rest while walking through the park.



In our redesign of Prospect Park, we decided to include two types of signs that can both promote language learning and provide a fun experience for the children who visit Prospect Park.

Sign 1: Informational Board



The first type of sign that we chose to include is an informational board, as seen above. This board displays information about the pond and its surrounding environment in a fun way that encourages language development. On the board, there would be a real-life look and find, fun facts, jokes, animal sounds and different textures of animals that would be found in this environment. The look-and-find aspect of the board could promote interaction between children, and between children and their caregivers by encouraging them to look for the objects together and explore the park for new creatures they may not have heard of before. This could expand their vocabulary and introduce them to new words, while also getting them interested in their own immediate environment. Older children will be able to enjoy this feature on their own, as they'll be able to identify the animals on the board and look for them with friends whereas younger children may need help from an adult to decipher what animals to look for. Nevertheless, all ages of children will be able to look around the pond for the various animals.

As for the jokes, the humour can also be used as a way to make conversation between children and caregivers, and also can be used as a way for children to make new friends at the park through telling those jokes. Next are the fun facts, which can

expand the children's knowledge by introducing them to new information about their environment. Both of these features are better suited to children who are older, as they require a higher level of knowledge to understand. In contrast, the different animal sounds can be interesting to a variety of ages and introduce young children to the sounds that letters can make when put together in different ways. The different textures can also be used as a learning experience for the children by teaching them what different animals feel like. It can appeal to some sensory needs of children if they enjoy feeling different textures to soothe or satisfy them.

Language facilitation activities help to grow a child's language capabilities, which positively affects all areas of a child's academic growth, especially in literacy (Nelson, 2010). The fun facts and jokes on our board can initiate conversations between children and their guardians where they introduce them to new words and word combinations they haven't heard before. Showing children these new elements may encourage them to experiment with new combinations that may help combat language delays. They can also tell these fun facts to their friends, and share information about new words with one another.



These are some examples of utterances that could be said by both children and adults in response to different sections of the informational board. An example for the jokes section could be one child going up to another and saying, "Want to hear a joke?" or starting a new conversation with the joke itself to another child. As for the look and find section, an adult could say, "Look! We have to find a frog!", and a child could reply with, "What colour is it?" or "What does it look like?" In the fun fact scenario, a child could go up to another, and say, "Hey! Did you know....," where they state the fact that they either read themselves or were told by someone older to them.



In the picture above, the large yellow arrows are pointing towards the placement of the informational boards with the three boards being placed around the pond and facing outward. The boards would be placed at a height that would allow most children to read them comfortably, and we would also provide a stool made from rubber tarmac surfacing that they could stand on to read them. We chose to include this board in our park because we wanted a way to promote language development in children in an engaging way. Since the board is focused on the environment the child is in, they might be more likely to take part in the activities because it involves their immediate surroundings.

Sign 2: Park Map



The next sign that we chose to include in our remodelling of Prospect Park was a map, which would include every structure and where they are located. There would be a map at each entrance of the park, which would be four maps in total. In the picture above, the large yellow arrows point towards each entrance, where the maps would be located. We chose to add the maps to our park because we needed a way for people to navigate our park, and we put it at every entrance because we wanted visitors from any entrance would be able to orient themselves towards the structures they wanted to see.

Thank you for listening to our presentation!

Do you have any
questions?

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The references used for this presentation (including sources of information and pictures) are included below in the speaker notes.

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