



In this presentation, we will be going through and explaining our proposed park design for Prospect Park in Kitchener, Ontario. The theme of our park is ‘The Arts’, and our playground design is an integration of play with music, theatre, literature, and visual arts. The overall appearance of our park design is inspired by Jamie Bell High park in Toronto, with naturalistic wooden structures. The theme of the arts was chosen due to this park’s proximity of Eastwood Collegiate Institute, a high school known for its Integrated Arts Program. Our park would be fitting in this community that is home to many arts students, and would also inspire and encourage children who may attend this high school in the future, by further cultivating an interest in the arts, and thus strengthening the unity of the community.



This is the inspiration for our park design: Jamie Bell High park in Toronto.

Note: see slide 21 for Image sources.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01

Goals of the
Park



02

Blueprint/Layout
of the
Playground



03

Playground
Components

04

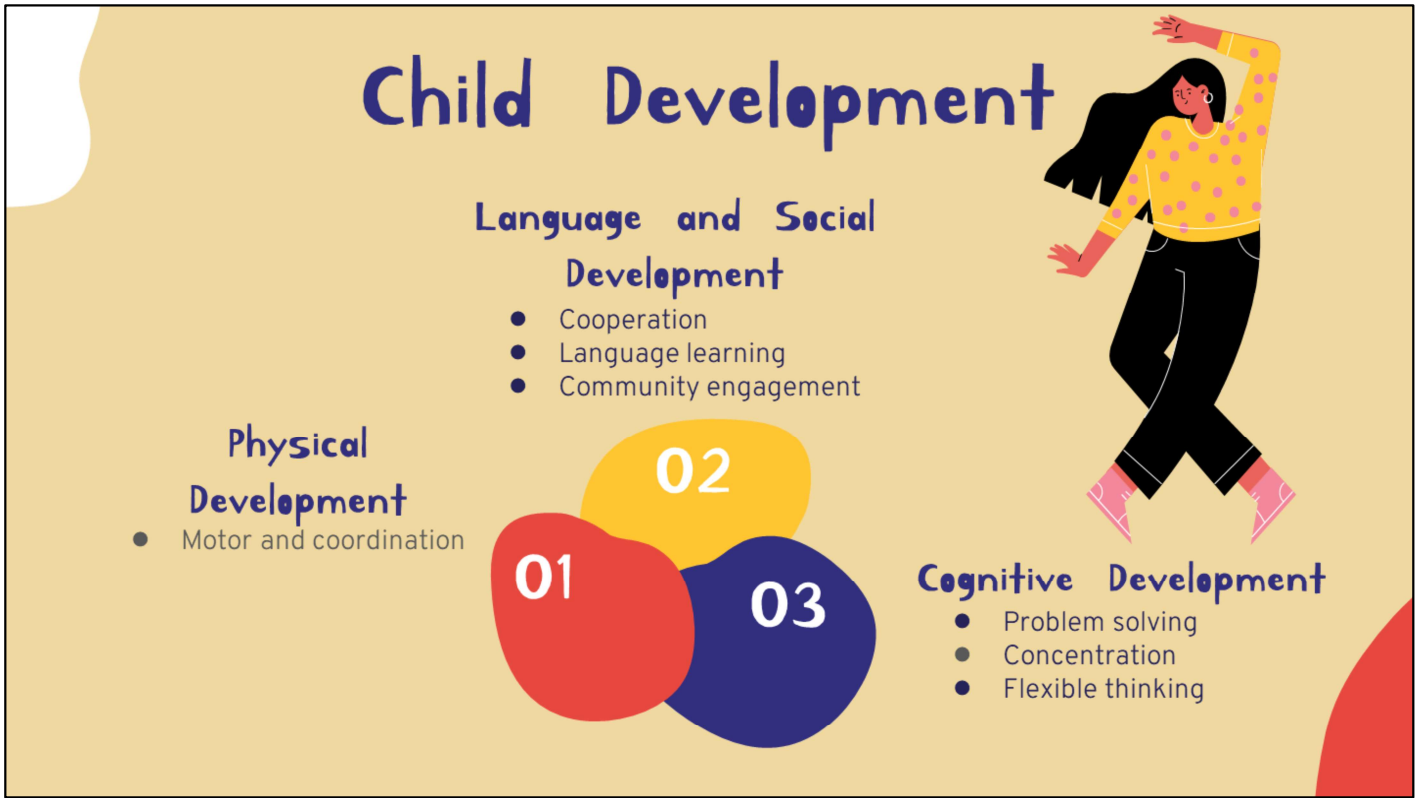
Conclusion

This presentation will begin by highlighting the overall goals of the park, including how the park will help facilitate child development and our focus in making this design inclusive. The presentation will then reveal the proposed blueprint/layout of the playground. We will then go over the various playground components, and finally conclude by tying everything together.



Goals of the Park

Child Development 
& Inclusion



There are multiple types of development we want to stimulate through our park design. Firstly, we focused on physical development. Our park will have climbing equipment and play structures that help develop motor skills, stamina and also make children more confident in their physical abilities. This in turn improves their health and fitness.

We also want to give a space for children to socialize and talk. The different equipment on the playground will help children learn to share, negotiate, and develop rules with one another during games. There will be also be speech tubes and communication boards to facilitate further communication. Language learning is an important goal here as it's key to children's future academic success and socialization. Our park will also be designed to promote community engagement through showcasing of the arts.

Finally, cognitive development is an important goal in our park design. We aim to help develop children's thinking skills through play. Our park design contains musical instruments. Music is seen to help increase concentration, memory and improve emotional regulation among children (Van der Linde, 1999). Fantasy play will also be an important component of our park, as it allows children to use

their imagination and think creatively.

Inclusion Goals

01
Community



02
Knowledge



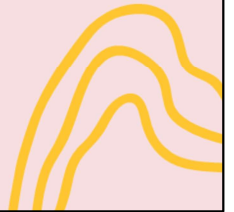
03
Materials



During the initial conceptualization of the park, a demographics review was conducted to understand the key populations involved. Through the findings, three guiding principles relating to inclusion were employed for the construction of the final product. To begin with, community inclusivity was key. Despite its close proximity to the local schools, the age distribution is quite wide, featuring a sizable elderly population (Stanley Park demographics: https://app2.kitchener.ca/appdocs/GISImages/GIS_Web_External/LM/Demographics/2019/PlanningCommunities/StanleyPark.pdf). With this age polarization, it is imperative that activities are constructed to fit all groups. Furthermore, as mentioned above, there is a local school near the park site, which specializes in the arts. Catering to this, the second inclusion goal of the park is to be inclusive in facilitating knowledge. Thus, the arts theming of the park was constructed with attention paid to visual, musical, spoken and performance arts. By doing this, the park can function as an applied setting for local children to reinforce their classroom knowledge. Finally, with the implementation of a little library, which we'll give more details on later, will foster material inclusivity. The demographics highlighted a host of non-official languages spoken in the area, ranging from common usage of Arabic and Serbian to the less common but still prominent Vietnamese and Croatian languages. To ensure

both cultural integration and cultural maintenance, the materials included in the scope of the playground will highlight a variety of languages. Taken together, these guiding principles will function to cultivate a space for everyone to engage in safe and educational play.

Blueprint / Layout



The Playground Components



Community Art Piece



Inspired by High
Park's Jamie Bell
adventure
playground

In our design, the moment you enter the park, you will first see these special wooden arches. They will go over the paths, as you make your way towards the playground equipment. What makes these arches so special is that they will be decorated with children's art pieces. Students at the nearby schools (both the highschool and elementary school) can be involved in this.

(Look at Blueprint Slide). The pathways are long so many arches can be added past these 3 entrance ways, and more art pieces can be included.

This is an excellent way to involve the community surrounding Prospect Park as not only does it encourage children's creativity, but it also increases conversation within families. Children will be eager to showcase their art pieces and bring their family and friends to the park to show and describe it to them. This will increase traffic to the park, and make it a popular place for community engagement.

Blueprint / Layout

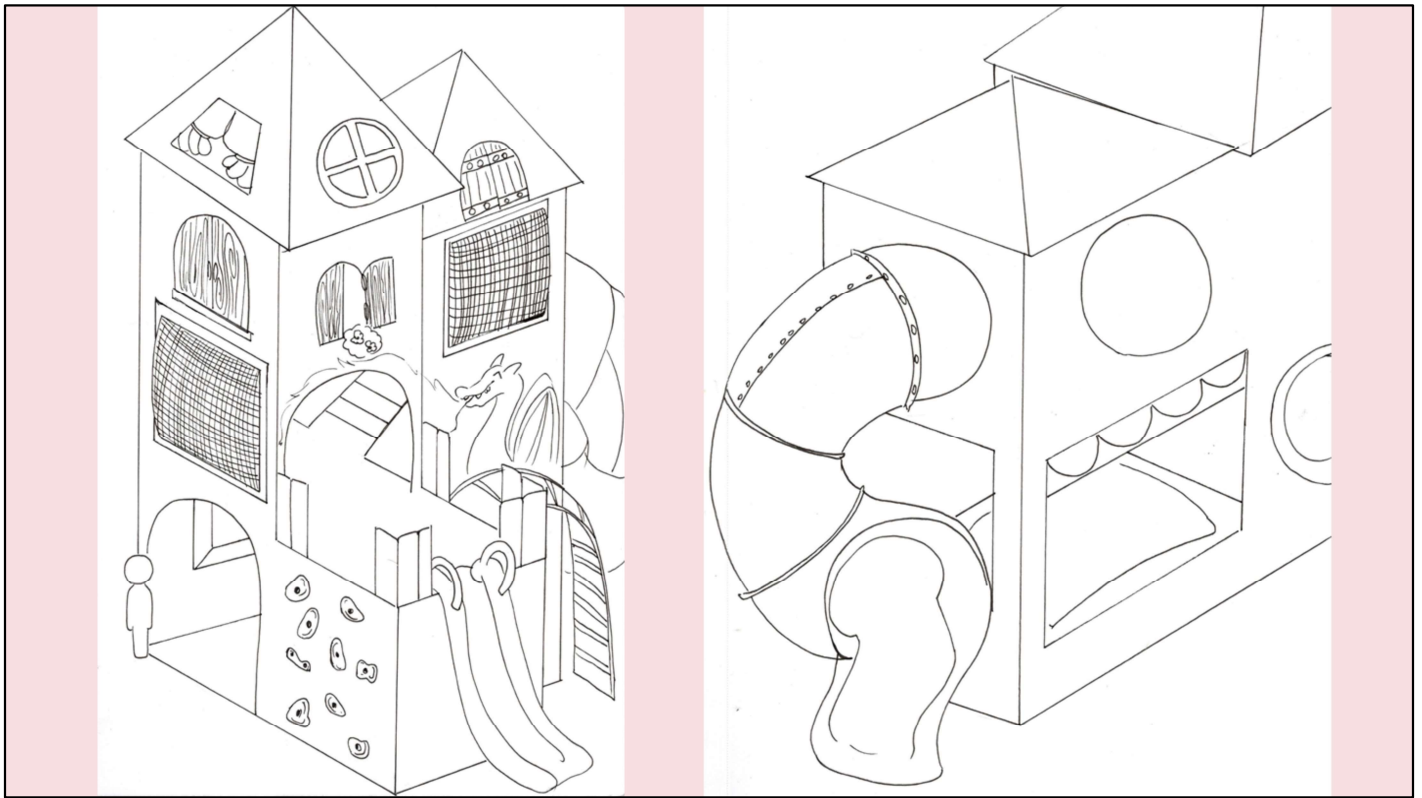


The Main Castle

- A tie-in to the nature in the park
- Options for parent-child play, alone play, and collaborative play
- Variety of sensory inputs
- Lots of room to be a prince or a princess!



The idea for the main play area would be a castle made out of wood and with painted and plastic elements. The main goal of the castle was to have an interesting, naturalistic, and open playscape that can be used in multiple ways while still fitting in with the theme of the rest of the park.



The castle is made out of wood and simple materials with natural colours not only to fit in with the nature of the park, but also to help in development. Outdoor play and learning helps children connect with their current environment, develop their confidence in interacting with the natural world, and development in social skills, motor skills, and leadership skills (Wallin, 2019). While there is much to do without needing imagination, having a space that is created to facilitate pretend play - especially in a more natural setting - children practice and strengthen their abilities to connect and work with others (Wallin, 2019).

Inside the castle, children have ample room to explore despite it looking like a smaller space.

The first floor is semi-open, with lots of windows and openings for parents to interact with children while they are in the castle. As the castle lends itself to imaginative pretend play, some things parents can do is: ask about the various murals and art on the castle (e.g. what do you think that dragon is going to do?), pretending to be shopkeepers or medieval peasants/lords/ladies/etc., or simply interacting with the other children and talking about their previous experiences in the park, both imagined and real.

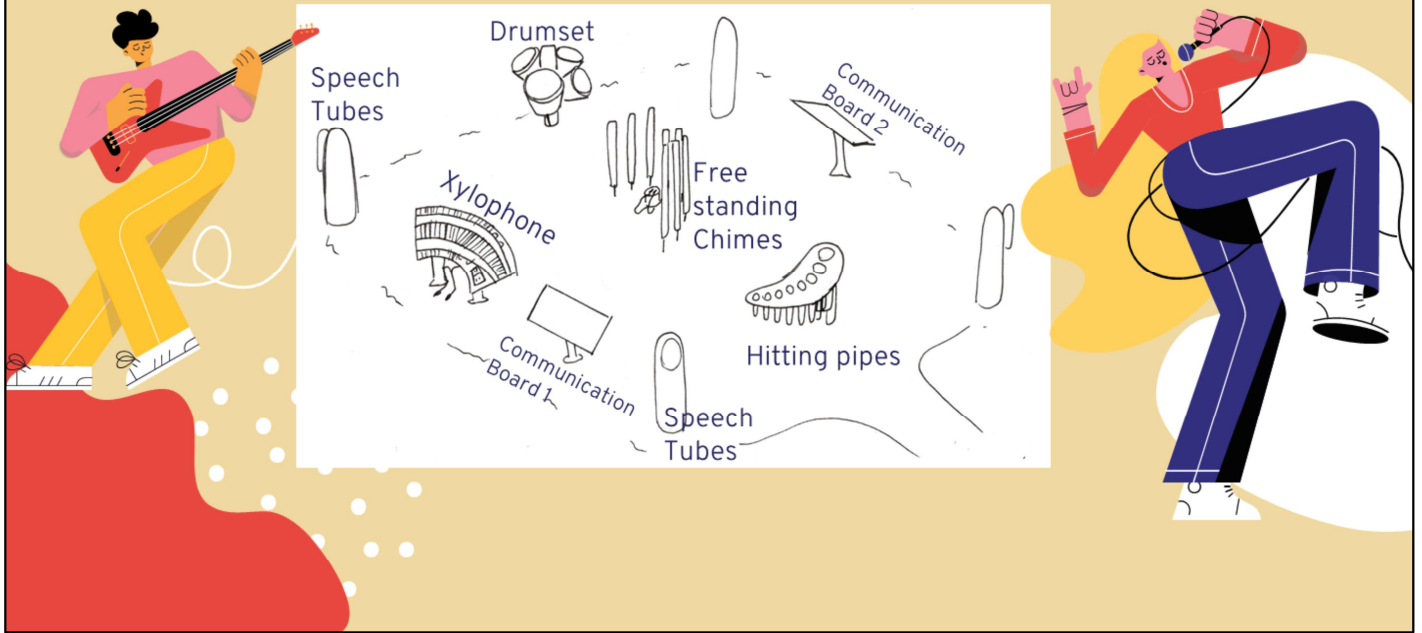
There will also be murals on the first and second floor of a painting that tells a story but also lends itself to interpretation. There will be a small blurb next to it, to perhaps get the children and parents started, but no more than a paragraph. This is to help with background knowledge. Children without that knowledge may not be able to

start a story in the castle, and the painting will not be of any known story - for there may be a family that does not know it. By giving everyone a story they can build on regardless of prior knowledge, we facilitate word learning, comprehension, and vocabulary (Kaefer et al., 2014). Another facet will be the different objects able to be played with.

On the second floor, there will be a sort of abacus structure with different plastic “beads” that have different shapes, colours, and textures. Children engaging in play on their own, can go back to their parents and explain the beads, and the parents can ask questions that lead to a fruitful conversation.

Conversational duets - an interaction that is cohesive and well-balanced, with multiple connected turns per person that flowed smoothly - are quite influential to expressive language development (Rowe & Snow, 2019). Thus, having an open space already set for pretend-play, where a conversational duet is how the play is continued, is perfect for facilitating that. Even if the children are not actively pretending, there can be an abundance of back and forth when parents ask them to explain what they are doing or what they want to do and their perception of ability in the structure.

The Musical Pad



On the path to the castle and situated next to it, park-goers will find the musical pad, shown on the slide. At the center are free standing chimes arranged in a semicircle, where there are 8 chimes to form the C major scale. Other instruments around the chimes include the xylophone, drumset, and hitting pipes which are hollow pipes at different lengths that produce different sounds when hit from the top hole. Meanwhile at the 4 corners of the pad are speaking tubes alongside communication boards. Children can speak into one of these tubes and have a conversation with the person standing at another tube diagonally across from them. The number of different instruments and sounds in this area provides children with elements of surprise and variety, which will keep them engaged in the park.

Blueprint / Layout





These are what the various instruments and structures will look like in the musical pad. As mentioned earlier, music has an effect on improving mental capacity and concentration. Beyond this, the musical pad can even help children to further their vocabulary and knowledge of the world. Often children come with parents, or babysitters, or older siblings to parks. As an older person plays with a child in this musical area, they can be using a variety wide vocabulary that the child can pick up on, which maybe they wouldn't have known or learned otherwise.

For example, a parent or guardian may say: "See this instrument with the colorful keys? This is called a xylophone! You can hit the keys like this", or "Look, when you hit the top of the pipes like this, they make different sounds", or "See the letters on these chimes? These letters are called musical notes, and these 8 notes make what's called a musical scale". Words like xylophone, notes, scale, chimes, and simple explanations of musical terms makes this area both fun and educational. Children are also curious and may even dig deeper. For instance they may ask, "Well how do the pipes make different sounds?", and this can lead to rich, learning filled conversations.

The musical pad also encourages very hands on learning, as children get to try all these instruments that are suddenly available to them. What they might've only seen and heard in books or tv, they can go around themselves and try it out. Or if children had opportunities to play with instruments in school, this would help reinforce their knowledge that they obtained from class, in a more flexible and open environment. There's much to explore here too. Children can go feel the different textures of the instruments, they can hear the different sounds, and experiment with what part of the instrument makes which note, and even pick up on the distinction between these notes! For example, a child may notice how the longer pipes are making a higher pitched sound than the shorter pipes. This leads more inquiries and fun. The aspect of novelty here is key, as there's so much variety in this area. There's many different type of sounds, and movements they can make, and melodies they can try and create, that they're bound to stay engaged.

The musical pad also has a component to encourage further collaboration and communication. This is through the speech tubes, where one person speaks into one tube, and they can be heard at the end of another tube. These speech tubes require collaboration with more than one person, which is really important for social development for children. They'll be encouraged to find or bring a friend to the park, and initiate conversations such as "You go to that tube, and I'll go to this one, and we can talk!". Communication boards will also be placed alongside these speech tubes. These boards contain basic vocabulary and words and phrases that children may use at the park, and are especially helpful for those learning to read as there are pictures and symbols alongside the words too. A unique idea that some parks have incorporated on communication boards, is having braille lettering on the boards too! This promotes inclusivity, and provides yet another object for children to touch and feel as they explore the park.

We also aim to make these structures inclusive, as the instruments and speech tubes will be at various heights which makes it accessible to children in wheelchairs and children of all ages. There could also be braille on the musical instruments for the letters indicating the notes of the scales, which makes the structures more inclusive as well.



Gazebo Theatre

The gazebo portion functions as one of the “all-ages” areas of the park. Structurally, the gazebo is made out of wooden materials, has a semi-circle structured design and a full awning covering. Albeit being mostly open concept, in the rightmost corner, there is a wooden podium that is bolted in place. Also, on the roof, a sign will hang out over the front that reads “Prospect Theatre - Read, Speak, Perform.” The purpose of this area is to provide a community space for both structured and unstructured play. For the younger children, the hope is that the stage theming prompts them to run their own “performances.” Given that the staging area does not contain interactable features, this would either require children to bring their own props or to partake in imaginary play. This is a crucial design choice as through requiring imaginary play, decontextualized conversation is fostered due to having less reliance on the immediately salient “here and now.” Providing an alternative context for these decontextualized interactions can help children to reinforce this type of speech outside the home with similarly aged peers. Outside of the children, teenagers may find this space beneficial to practice speeches/performances for school or just to use as a covered hangout spot. For the others, this constitutes a free use space that could be used for community gatherings or local events.

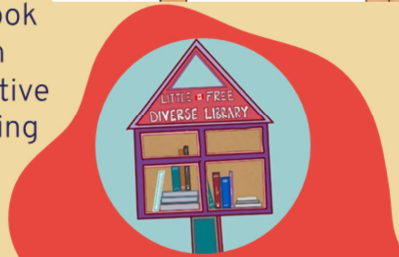
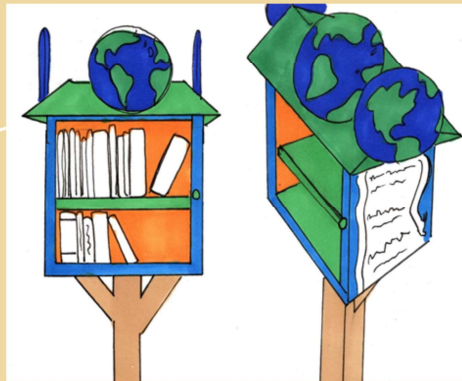


Across from the semi-circle structured gazebo will be a range of log seating. The seating is set up in relation to the gazebo to promote an “audience space” for performances. However, given the close proximity of the two, it can also serve to function as a reading circle. On each log there will be a plaque that reads either: “Read & Plot Talk Log!,” “Read & Dreams Talk Log!,” “Read & Life Talk Log!,” and “Reading to Mom and Dad Log!” to reflect each aspect of the model. Through this reflection, the child will be able to add another layer into their understanding of each book that they read. The child-directed nature of the reading logs engages younger children by allowing them to pick out a book from the diverse library box and meaningfully engage with each “activity.” To ensure that the parents understand the prompts, a little information plaque will be located on the book box to explain the rationale. Through this, the parent can guide the initial interactions and once the child has been acclimatized, they can take charge in subsequent park visits. The hope is, with enough meaningful engagement, reading will become as enjoyable of a park activity as the playground structures.

Little Free Diverse Libraries



Encouraging parent-child book sharing interactions in which children are engaged and active participants in the story-telling experience!



Another feature of this park design is the Little Library, which was inspired by the Kitchener-Waterloo Little Free Diverse Libraries project. The goal of having a Little Free Diverse Library in the park is to encourage parent-child book sharing interactions in which children are engaged and active participants in the story-telling experience. Research has found that the mother-child book-share experience can significantly impact a child's language and narrative skills. These narrative skills can in turn affect how ready a child is for school, their levels of academic achievement, and their socio-emotional skills (Luo et al., 2014). Culture also has a significant impact on the book-sharing experiencing and language development. The Prospect Park is in a culturally diverse neighbourhood and variations in book-sharing interactions based on cultural differences may be evident. For example, some cultures emphasize individual goals, whereas others emphasize emotions or negative consequences (Luo et al., 2014). This emphasis can be seen as children begin to develop their own storytelling skills and styles. Additionally, when parents begin to discuss social and cognitive themes with their children, through books and storytelling, this has a clear effect on the child's ability to connect their own experiences to others in various social situations (Aram et al., 2013).

Another idea that could be incorporated into this park is having prompts that

encourage caregivers to ask their children questions during the book-sharing experience so children can develop independent storytelling skills (i.e., using dialogic book-sharing styles). As children orally answer questions about the books this could help develop strong oral language skills. This is important not only for their reading comprehension but also for their mental health, especially because early reading difficulties and oral language impairments can seriously impact a child's mental health throughout their school years.

Pathways & Open Play



- Hopscotch
- Maze
- Alphabet Hop

Games

- Community building
- Time to take a rest!

Benches

- Archway entrance signalling the grand entrance of the park

Entrance

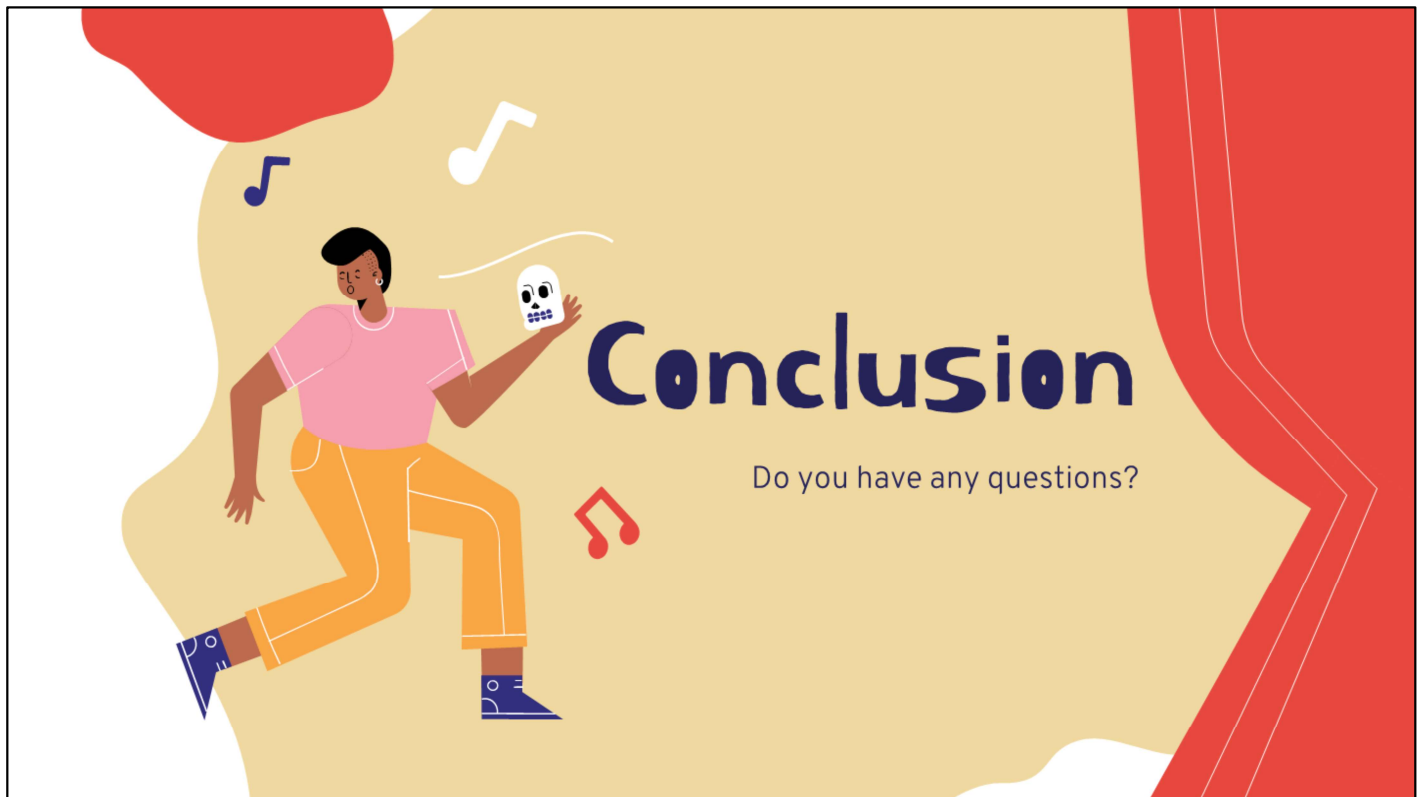


Though play structures are an integral part of every park playground, other aspects of the park such as the pathways and nature that surround it are important for promoting natural play and allowing children to let their imagination run wild. Therefore, it could be beneficial to add drawings to the pathways that would allow children of all ages to play simple games such as Hopscotch, Alphabet Hop, and Finish the Maze. These three games not only encourage movement of the body but also require thinking skills and social collaboration. Furthermore, adding benches to the pathways could help in fostering connectedness and community building. Finally, having an archway entrance to the park would act as clear marker of where the park begins and would help invite children and parents alike into the playground area.

Blueprint / Layout



We specify the maze on this map because it requires the path to widen out, in order for it fit.



To conclude, the importance of creative and open play is evident not only for a child's language development but also for their emotional and social understanding, their mental health, and their overall well-being. Thus, we hope that the ideas presented for this park will help in encouraging creativity through song, visual art, theatre, and literature!

Images Used

High Park's Jamie Bell adventure playground: https://www.highparktoronto.com/images/parks/playground/IMG_6518.jpg →<https://www.highparktoronto.com/playground-img.php>

Xylophone: <https://www.littledayout.com/wp-content/uploads/04-musical-playground.jpg> →<https://www.littledayout.com/musical-playground-gardens-by-the-bay-music/>

Drumset: https://playground.columbia-cascade.com/playground/Files/Images/Products/BaseProducts/Drum-5530A_web.jpg →<https://playground.columbia-cascade.com/?PageData=baseproductsdetails&catid=72&catid2=133>

Freestanding Chimes: https://www.percussionplay.com/files/processed/1053541418_760x1140-Tubular-Bells-Horseshoe_Girl.jpg
→<https://www.percussionplay.com/tubular-bells/>

Hitting pipes: https://www.percussionplay.com/files/processed/1053541418_760x1140-Handpipes-2.jpg →<https://www.percussionplay.com/handpipes/>

Communication board: https://blog.nsslha.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Nazzal_Playground-2-1024x768.jpg →<https://blog.nsslha.org/2021/04/06/newly-installed-communication-board-on-playground-encourages-inclusion/>

Braille communication board: <https://littletikescommercial.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Braille-Writing.jpg> →<https://littletikescommercial.com/our-products/commercial-playground-equipment/system-choices/kidbuilders-inclusive/?lang=canD>

Community Artwork Piece: https://www.highparktoronto.com/images/parks/playground/IMG_6519.jpg →<https://www.highparktoronto.com/playground-img.php>

Pavement Maze: https://fastline.net/uploads/stencils/stencil_entry/IMG_6188.jpg →<https://www.fastline.net/playground/stencil/playground-circle-maze>

Art by Remy Sremcevic

References

- Aram, D., Fine, Y., & Ziv, M. (2013). Enhancing parent-child shared book Reading interactions: Promoting references to the book's plot and socio-cognitive themes. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 28*(1), 111-122. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2012.03.005>
- Kaefer, T., Neuman, S. B., & Pinkham, A. M. (2014). Pre-existing Background Knowledge Influences Socioeconomic Differences in Preschoolers' Word Learning and Comprehension. *Reading Psychology, 36*(3), 203-231. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02702711.2013.843064>
- Luo, R., Tamis-LeMonda, C. S., Kuchirko, Y., F. Ng, F., & Liang, E. (2014). Mother-child book-sharing and children's storytelling skills in ethnically diverse, low-income families. *Infant and Child Development, 23*(4), 402-425. <https://doi.org/10.1002/icd.1841>
- Rowe, M. L., & Snow, C. E. (2019). Analyzing input quality along three dimensions: interactive, linguistic, and conceptual. *Journal of Child Language, 47*(1), 5-21. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0305000919000655>
- Van der Linde, C. H. (1999). The relationship between play and music in early childhood: Educational insights. *Education, 119*(4), 610-610.
- Wallin, M. L. (2019, June 4). *The Importance of Pretend Play in Natural Settings*. www.communityplaythings.com.
<https://www.communityplaythings.com/resources/articles/2019/the-importance-of-pretend-play-in-natural-settings>