

Crocker Farm Pre School Playground CPA Proposal

Response to questions asked on August 25, 2015

Project Justification:

Creative movement is an ideal way to help young children develop critical- thinking and problem-solving skills. Most young children are, by nature, extremely physical. They delight in exploring the world with their bodies and expressing their ideas and feelings through movement (NDEO 2005; Lobo & Play has great importance , not just for children but for families and communities as well. Winsler 2006; Lorenzo-Lasa, Ideishi, & Ideishi 2007). When presented with movement ideas or problems that can be solved with a movement response, many young children create movement spontaneously. Furthermore, linking movement experiences with language—both receptive language (understanding that of others) and expressive language (sharing one’s own thoughts and ideas)—builds children’s thinking skills. Children go through a thinking process when given a problem to solve. Movement provides the cognitive loop between the idea, problem, or intent and the outcome or solution (NDEO 2005)

Benefit to the community:

One of the struggles that families with disabilities can face are fewer places to meet and be part of the community. Playgrounds that are not inclusive may not be usable by their children, isolating them from important social and physical benefits outdoor play brings. This would be the first inclusive preschool play ground in Amherst. And, the playground is open after school hours and on the weekends for the public to use and enjoy.

Goals:

The goal of this project is to have a safe ADA accessible playground with materials that are open-ended and provide children with the opportunity to develop a variety of skills including:

- large and small muscle motor activities
- social skills as they plan and play together
- executive functioning – being able to develop a play plan and then follow-through
- math and science skills and concepts, as they plan, move, make estimates and predictions
- communication, as they have opportunities to communicate with one another as they plan, build, or move around the play yard
- memory, as they remember what they built or played the day or week before

Our objectives are as follows:

1. To provide opportunities for children to develop large muscle motor skills. Many

children do not have access to outdoor play structures where they live, nor do they have the opportunities to develop strength and coordination.

2. To provide opportunities to develop sensory integration skills by doing “heavy work”. Heavy work activities (i.e., proprioceptive input) are used for children with sensory processing difficulties to help increase attention, decrease defensiveness, and modulate arousal. Proprioceptive input is the performance of tasks that involves heavy resistance and input to the muscles and joints, and is essential in helping our bodies assimilate and process both movement (vestibular) and touch (tactile) information.
3. To develop language skills that are necessary to plan and carry out play schemes using the large outdoor blocks and wheelbarrows.
4. To develop social interaction skills necessary to develop a plan with peers, to carry out that play plan, and to negotiate with peers.
5. To develop imagination, as children develop various play schemes.

How pieces were selected:

The district Early Childhood Education Center Director, Preschool teachers and specialists (Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, Speech Therapists) first developed a “wish list” of skills and types of movements that should be addressed by the equipment based on the diverse needs of the population served by the Center. Several meetings were held with Berkshire Design to discuss the wishes and needs and from these conversations, pieces were selected based on the goals and objectives stated above. The process took place over a year in an effort to insure that we were planning a space that was developmentally appropriate, accessible and had the longevity necessary to justify the cost.