



ACTIVE DESIGN

Playbook for Early
Childhood Settings

NYC
Health



A child at Salvation Army Early Childhood Center in Brooklyn plays hopscotch and develops gross motor skills, such as jumping and balancing. Ground markings can make a blacktop more inviting and encourage children to get moving.

Cover: Preschoolers at Our Children's Center in Brooklyn play and practice balancing on logs. *Photo Credit: DCF*

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Play has multiple cognitive, emotional, social and physical benefits for children,^{3,4} including improved attention, competence and motivation in the classroom.⁵ Physical activity also has many benefits for children. It can boost healthy bone development and muscle development; reduce the risk of obesity, diabetes and other chronic diseases; and provide emotional and mental health benefits, including reduced feelings of depression and anxiety.⁶

Play has been in decline over the last several decades⁷ including among preschool age children.⁸ A focus on academics from an early age⁹ is just one of the factors that contributes to a decrease in play and physical activity among children. Parents also report that screen time can be a barrier to children being active.¹⁰

We can counter the decline in play and physical activity, and better support physically active learning, by using active design strategies in our child care and education settings. Given that children spend on average more than 30 hours per week in preschool or early child care,¹¹ these settings can be key intervention points for active design projects.

“PLAY IS OFTEN TALKED ABOUT AS IF IT WERE A RELIEF FROM SERIOUS LEARNING. BUT FOR CHILDREN, PLAY IS SERIOUS LEARNING. PLAY IS REALLY THE WORK OF CHILDHOOD.”

— FRED ROGERS

PLAYBOOK DEFINITIONS

PLAY

/noun/

the “work of children”; activities that are spontaneous and performed for self-amusement¹

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

/noun/

any bodily movement that requires energy²

PHYSICALLY ACTIVE PLAY

/noun/

any form of play—structured or unstructured, social or solitary, indoor or outdoor—that raises activity levels among children

PHYSICALLY ACTIVE LEARNING

/noun/

learning that takes place while children are physically active, both in the classroom and in other spaces



Queens Early Childhood Center in Queens has stepping stones of varying heights for children to hop and jump on. *Photo Credit: DCF*

Active design is an approach to the development and design of buildings, streets and neighborhoods that makes daily physical activity and healthy foods and beverages more accessible and appealing.



QSAC Early Childhood Center in Queens has an indoor play area with adaptive equipment that can be used by students of all abilities. Staff can easily modify activities based on each student's needs and challenges. *Photo Credit: DCF*

About This Book

This playbook offers ideas and resources that NYC early child care and education providers can use to increase physically active play and learning. The strategies offered in this guide take into consideration and are intended to address the time, capacity and space challenges many NYC providers face. Additionally, the strategies are aligned with child care center regulations, such as Article 47 of the New York City Health Code, and the diversity of assessment tools and rating scales, as well as performance standards that regulate early childhood education and care settings in NYC.

This publication offers:

- Low- and no-cost ideas for creating spaces to support physically active play and learning
- Examples of active design projects in NYC early childhood centers and beyond
- Activity ideas that align with NYC preschool and early childhood care education codes, standards, requirements and curricula
- Supportive resources such as grants, vendors and free services in NYC
- Ideas for starting improvement projects

The active design ideas in this playbook fall into three categories:

- Gardening and nature
- Outdoor play and learning
- Indoor play and learning

Project and activity ideas are provided for each domain and are intended to align with the regulations, standards, requirements and curricula that early childhood education and care settings in NYC must comply with. Look for the following symbols to see how you can integrate physically active play and learning activities into your lesson plans.

Curriculum Key



MATHEMATICS



SCIENCE



LANGUAGE/LITERACY



PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT



**SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT/
COMMUNICATION**



Logs at Our Children's Center in Brooklyn provide varied elevation for children to develop gross motor skills, while introducing natural elements to their outdoor playground. *Photo Credit: DCF*



United Community Day Care Center in Brooklyn has an outdoor garden for growing fruits and vegetables. The children help maintain the garden to complement their science lessons. *Photo Credit: DCF*

GARDENING AND NATURE


Spending time in natural environments, including gardens, has many benefits.

Gardens can be used to teach children where food comes from and increase their physical activity levels.¹² For example, rather than only learning about how plants grow in the classroom, children can go outside and see the growing process for themselves. This section provides ideas for incorporating greenery in your indoor and outdoor spaces. It also includes activities that align with learning development goals, such as knowledge of characteristics of living things, comparisons and measurements and knowledge of Earth's environment. This section also includes alternatives for sites unable to accommodate an outdoor garden or with limited access to nature.

Benefits of gardening and nature include:

- **Increased constructive play:** Teachers reported that outdoor spaces and exposure to natural zones stimulated almost twice as much constructive play compared to playing in a manufactured zone.¹³
- **Improved cooperative play:** Teachers, parents and administrators at schools with green grounds reported improvements in behavior among children.¹⁴
- **Improved coping skills:** Children who have more access to nature may be able to cope better with stress.¹⁵
- **Increased knowledge of nature:** Preschoolers who had access to an edible garden displayed respect for nature and the outdoors, and demonstrated knowledge of ecosystems and plant parts when tested.¹⁶

BEFORE GETTING STARTED

- 
- Recruit volunteers.
 - Create a maintenance plan.
 - Know how much sunlight your location gets and what the closest water source is.
 - Become familiar with toxic plants, allergens and pests to ensure children's safety.
 - Include gardening as part of ongoing programming and curricula.

Ideas

- **Build a green structure or willow house.** These structures create a niche for children to play, adding greenery and providing a source of shade. Green structures can be grown in pots, planters or buckets. As a rule of thumb, the bigger the plant, the bigger the pot—so choose plants that fit your space. Another option is to grow vines on a fence or trellis.

SAFELY INCORPORATING NATURE

- Be mindful of children with severe asthma or allergies at your center when spending time outdoors and in nature.
- Consider low-pollen species to reduce allergy-induced asthma events when planting outdoor trees and plants.
- Choose non-toxic plants.

Visit the Head Start website at eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc and search “poisonous plants” to find a list of safe non-poisonous plants and poisonous plants to avoid.



This squash structure in the garden at the United Community Day Care Center in Brooklyn provides a shady nook where children can play or sit.

ACTIVITY IDEA: Use the structure as an outdoor learning, storytelling or reading area!



A willow house adds greenery and shade to an outdoor play space.
Photo Credit: Earth Play Design

- **Build planter boxes or hang vertical planters.** Parents or other volunteers can help build planters and children can help choose the location, plant seeds and plants and help water the plants. If outdoor space is limited, vertical planters on a fence or exterior wall can add greenery and provide an area to learn about nature while saving space. Consider using hollowed-out logs or household items for planters. For example, toilet paper rolls or cardboard egg cartons can be used to hold seedlings and can be transferred directly into the soil because they are compostable. Plastic bottles and milk jugs can be used as planters for larger plants.
- **Plant trees and flowers.** Add greenery to your outdoor space. Trees not only beautify the environment, they also provide shade.
- **Use natural playground surface materials.** Consider soil, pea gravel, wood mulch or wood chips as surfacing options to bring natural elements to the outdoor space.
- **Repeat a nature experience throughout the year.** Whether in a garden or park, return to the same place each week for free play, singing and simple work projects. Children can observe how the outdoor space changes with the seasons, including changes in temperature, the colors of the leaves and outdoor smells, and the presence of birds or bugs.



Our Children's Center in Brooklyn used logs as planters to add nature and greenery to their outdoor space. The logs were also used for a life science lesson: when the fresh logs arrived, bugs were still living in them, and the children got to see where bugs live. Each class maintains their own log planter. *Photo Credit: DCF*

- **Plant a garden indoors.** Plant an indoor garden on a window sill or shelf to brighten up your classroom. Indoor gardens are also a great way to support learning goals such as identifying characteristics of living things and learning about the physical properties of different objects. If your indoor space does not receive enough natural sunlight, consider purchasing indoor gardening lights, which mimic natural light, or research and discuss shade-tolerant plants with your students.
- **Connect with a community garden.** No space for a garden? No problem! Connect with a nearby community garden to increase access to nature for children at your site. Visit greenthumbnyc.org, part of NYC Parks, and follow the “Find a Garden” link.



United Community Day Care Center in Brooklyn grows herbs and avocado, palm and ficus trees in their indoor space so children can be around nature even when they cannot go outside.

ACTIVITY IDEA: Teach children to keep a nature journal. Children can write or draw what they see outside and how the environment changes with each season. They will be learning about the environment while developing writing skills.



United Community Day Care Center in Brooklyn grows various fruits and vegetables in their outdoor garden, allowing children to learn about different, and sometimes unfamiliar, kinds of produce.

RESOURCES

GreenThumb is the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation's community gardening program, the largest community gardening program in the nation. Contact GreenThumb if you are interested in visiting a nearby community garden with your students or in establishing an ongoing relationship with a community garden. GreenThumb can refer you to the primary contact for that garden.

greenthumbnyc.org

Urban Park Rangers, led by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, connects New Yorkers to the natural world through environmental education, outdoor recreation, wildlife management and active conservation. They offer free events such as shapes and colors hikes, park tours, and bug and butterfly exploration hikes around the city.

nycgovparks.org/programs/rangers

The **NYC Compost Project** works to rebuild NYC soil by providing New Yorkers with the knowledge, skills and opportunities they need to produce and use compost locally.

nyc.gov/compostproject

Big Reuse is a NYC-based non-profit retail outlet for salvaged and surplus building materials. Their mission is to reduce waste in landfills by offering materials such as doors, window shutters, reclaimed lumber and flooring for discounted prices. They periodically host giveaways for non-profit organizations.

bigreuse.org

Farm to Preschool is a national program model that includes information on gardening, nutrition and food tasting, and access to local produce for young children.

farmtopreschool.org

Team Nutrition, an initiative of the USDA, has healthy eating and physical activity resources for providers and teachers of children aged 2 to 5. Resources include the Nutrition and Wellness Tips for Young Children handbook, and the Grow It, Try It, Like It education kit.

fns.usda.gov/tn/resource-library

New Yorkers for Parks Daffodil Project distributes daffodil bulbs for free to civic organizations, individuals, corporate volunteer groups, schools and community leaders. Register your site to receive free bulbs every year in mid-August.

ny4p.org/daffodil-project

New York Restoration Project's Gardens for the City program helps transform community spaces into gardens, supporting sites with tree planting; building raised beds; planting annuals, perennials and bulbs; and green space education and training.

nyrp.org/gardensforthecity

Project Learning Tree offers GreenWorks! grants of up to \$1,000 to schools and youth organizations for environmental service-learning projects that link classroom learning to the real world.

plt.org/resources/greenworks-grants

CASE STUDY:

BUSHWICK UNITED EARLY LEARN

Goal: To incorporate greenery into their outdoor space

Key Takeaways

- Explore creative options when outdoor space is limited.
- Consider maintenance or storage of gardening materials during inclement weather.
- Prepare for difficulties that may arise during installation.
- Involve custodial and maintenance staff to ensure project success.

The Bushwick United Early Learn Center located in Bushwick, Brooklyn serves children aged 2 to 5 years old. The center found that students had limited knowledge of where their food comes from. To address this, the center planned to incorporate greenery into their school so that students could learn about planting seeds and growing vegetables. Because they had limited outdoor space, they decided to purchase a vertical garden kit with removable planter bins that students could take down to sow seeds and bring indoors during inclement weather.

When the center tried to install the vertical garden materials, they realized that the materials they bought did not work with their fence. Their custodian suggested hanging wooden beams across the posts on the fence. He was then able to attach the bins to the wooden beams. After the system was set up, the children were able to sow seeds and watch plants grow!



The children at the center helped plant different herbs and vegetables, such as peas, lettuce, rosemary, carrots, broccoli, lavender and tomatoes. Each classroom maintains six bins.
Photo Credit: DOHMH



The children at the center helped plant different herbs and vegetables, such as peas, lettuce, rosemary, carrots, broccoli, lavender and tomatoes. Each classroom maintains six bins; some are shown here at the end of the growing season.

Photo Credit: DOHMH



Children at Salvation Army Early Childhood Center in Brownsville play “Red Light, Green Light” as they follow the painted lanes. Circulation paths can promote safe play, providing children with a pattern to follow as they run or bike. *Photo Credit: DOHMH*

OUTDOOR PLAY AND LEARNING

Children need the opportunity to explore, create and discover freely, and this can be done by spending time outdoors.

Outdoor spaces promote physical activity and provide an ideal setting for recess and formal or informal educational activities. Inviting and stimulating outdoor environments can be created at a low cost with the help of volunteers, maintenance staff or external contractors.

Benefits of outdoor play and learning include:

- **Increased physical activity:** 3- and 4-year-old children are more physically active when they are playing in outdoor areas compared to indoor play areas.¹⁷
- **Increased creativity:** Early childhood teachers and providers reported that going outside gave children more room to run and expend energy, and that children seemed more creative outdoors. Teachers also noted that children more freely expressed themselves when outside, compared to when in indoor play areas.¹⁸

BEFORE GETTING STARTED



- Find creative ways to make the most of your outdoor spaces for various learning activities.
- Secure storage space for loose toys.
- Ensure children have adequate clothing for weather conditions.

Ideas

- **Paint playground markings.** Painted bicycle or running routes, and outlines for hopscotch and other games can encourage active play and learning. Use tape or chalk if paint is not feasible.
- **Provide varied elevation.** Use logs, tree cookies, blocks and earth mounds to create a more engaging and interactive play space while helping children build balancing skills.
- **Install play and climbing structures.** Outdoor play and climbing structures can help develop children's gross motor skills while contributing to imaginative play.
- **Provide loose materials.** Hula hoops, balls, blocks and other play materials can encourage active play.
- **Provide shaded areas.** Use trellises, shade sails or trees to incorporate shaded areas in the outdoor play space. Shade protects children and staff from harmful UV rays and heat and helps them stay comfortable during the warm summer months.

ACTIVITY IDEA:
Ask the children
to draw an animal
for each letter of
the alphabet.



Salvation Army Early Childhood Center in Brownsville has painted playground markings in their outdoor space where the children play hopscotch and other games. *Photo Credit: DOHMH*



Queens Early Childhood Center in Queens uses varied elevation stepping stones in their outdoor play area, which help with the children's balancing skills. *Photo Credit: DCF*

ACTIVITY IDEA: Have children gather objects they find outdoors, such as stones, leaves and pine cones. Use those items to lead a lesson about sizes, shapes and patterns.



If your early childhood center has limited access to parks or green space, use materials found outdoors such as logs, stones, acorns and pinecones for outdoor learning activities. *Photo Credit: DOHMH*

- **Create an outdoor art station.** Install a white board or chalkboard outdoors and provide chalk, paint and other art materials to stimulate children's creativity. Teachers can also tape paper on the board for children to draw on.
- **Create an outdoor classroom.** Set up an outdoor classroom using logs or large rocks as tables and chairs, or bring out tables and chairs from the classroom.
- **Decorate a fence with art or install a bamboo screen.** Fence art or bamboo screens can help create an attractive outdoor space and screen views from the street. Have children decorate fences using materials such as colorful fabric strips donated by parents.
- **Build a stage.** Stages can be used for lessons, plays, story time or imaginative play. Create a simple platform out of plywood that can double as seating and storage.
- **Build a music wall.** Use pots, pans, spoons and other kitchen elements to build a music wall on an existing wall or fence. Encourage parents to donate these materials.

ACTIVITY IDEA: Have a few children play on the music wall while everyone else runs around or dances. When the music stops, the children freeze in place.



When the music starts up again, they keep going!



Parents donated materials for this music wall at the Salvation Army Early Childhood Center in Brownsville, Brooklyn. *Photo Credit: Salvation Army*

ACTIVITY IDEA: Discuss the weather and seasons. Talk about the positive effects of sunlight (helping plants grow, warming the earth) and what happens when there is too much sun. Discuss the benefits of shade.



Photo Credit: DCF

- **Purchase or build storage sheds or benches.** Storage sheds or benches keep play areas tidy and materials safe, and they make it easier for staff to access materials. If space is limited, go vertical and take advantage of empty wall space. For example, use a hanging shoe organizer to store gardening tools, or use hooks to hang hula hoops and other play equipment.
- **Install safety surfacing.** Safety surfacing prevents injuries from falls. Choose shock-absorbent materials such as rubber, pea gravel or wood chips.¹⁹
- **Keep extra clothes on hand for outdoor play during cold weather.** Request donations from parents, local churches or stores, or purchase used cold-weather or rain gear for children who do not have adequate clothing.

ACTIVITY IDEA: Teach cooperation and responsibility by working with children to help take out toys and put them away.



The Salvation Army Early Childhood Center in Brownsville built a storage area for their outdoor play materials, making it easier for staff to transition between activities.
Photo Credit: Salvation Army Early Childhood Center

RESOURCES

The American Academy of Dermatology's Shade Structure Grant Program awards grants to public schools and non-profit organizations to install permanent shade structures.

aad.org/members/volunteer/shade-structure-program

Freecycle is one of many online networks that allows members to exchange items for free within their community. Sign up for a free membership to request items, to see what items others are offering and to give away items.

freecycle.org

Habitat for Humanity NYC's Brush with Kindness Program can help rehabilitate your center's playground area through mural painting and other services.

habitatnyc.org/projects/brush-with-kindness

KaBOOM! is a national non-profit dedicated to promoting balanced and active play and providing grants and resources to communities interested in creating and enhancing play spaces.

kaboom.org



Photo Credit: DCF

CASE STUDY: QUEENS EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

Goal: To provide a safe and comfortable outdoor play space for preschoolers

Key Takeaways

- Involve teachers and parents in the planning process.
- Work with maintenance staff for planning and installation.
- Purchase items that cater to the specific needs of the children.

The Queens Early Childhood Center serves children with autism and other developmental disabilities. They have a large outdoor play space that receives a great deal of direct sunlight, making it unusable for large portions of the day during warmer weather. Their school operates year-round, so providing shade is critical during the summer months.

The center purchased three shade sails to create a more comfortable outdoor play space for students and staff. The center's maintenance staff helped with the installation. At first, the center used tether cords to install the shade sails, but the sails hung too low to the ground. Center staff replaced the tether cords with metal cords, which were stronger and held the sails at an appropriate height.

The shade sails allowed the children to play outside for longer periods during the day, so the center purchased toys for outdoor use, including water tables and sensory balls, both of which have specific benefits for children with autism. Teachers and parents participated in selecting the new toys and the center found that parental input was key in determining which materials would best promote interactive play.



Queens Early Childhood Center provides a variety of shade options so children can play in the outdoor area for longer amounts of time, especially during summer days. *Photo Credit: DOHMH*



Children play with the water tables and predict which objects will float and which ones will sink. They explore water's properties as it trickles through the funnels. *Photo Credit: DCF*



The indoor equipment at QSAC Early Childhood Center in Queens fosters cooperative play and helps students develop their social and motor skills. *Photo Credit: DCF*

INDOOR PLAY AND LEARNING

Indoor play spaces help keep children active and promote physically active learning and play during inclement weather.

There are several ways to enhance indoor areas even when space is limited. Include a variety of textures and colors to enrich an indoor space.²⁰ Providing different types of play materials and different kinds of activities in the indoor area can also encourage gross motor play, dramatic play and exploratory play.

Benefits of indoor play areas include:

- **Increased activity:** Children may be more active indoors if jumping equipment, push or pull toys, portable slides or balancing surfaces are available.²¹ Loose equipment such as hurdles, tunnels, balance beams and balls can also increase physical activity levels among preschoolers.²²

Ideas

- **Provide a variety of play structures.** Use a combination of fixed and loose structures such as indoor climbers, tunnels and blocks to encourage crawling, balancing and climbing.
- **Provide individual toys for creative play.** Individual toys or loose items such as wood blocks and cardboard boxes can promote self-directed and creative play. Children can use their imagination to build towers or other structures with the blocks and boxes.

BEFORE GETTING STARTED



- Secure adequate storage for loose toys.
- Think creatively when choosing a space for your indoor play area; hallways can make good indoor play areas as long as exits are unobstructed.

ACTIVITY IDEA: Have children imitate different animals while they go through the obstacle course.



Photo Credit: Earth Play Design



United Community Day Care Center in Brooklyn (left) and QSAC (right) provide indoor play materials and structures to get their children climbing and crawling. *Photo Credit: DCF*

- **Use paint or brightly colored duct tape to create ground markings.** You can create ground markings indoors as well as outdoors. Painted pathways and mazes in hallways or in your indoor play area promote balance and gross motor skills.
- **Create an indoor obstacle course.** Use paper circles for stepping stones and thick rope, cones, tunnels or fabric draped over tables as obstacles in your course to get children crawling, hopping and climbing.
- **Set up balance beams.** Balance beams offer varying elevations to promote balance and gross motor skills.
- **Use movable furniture.** Use light and movable furniture so you can easily rearrange the classroom to make more room during play time. Have the children help rearrange the room to get them moving.
- **Replace traditional chairs with wobble chairs.** Wobble chairs allow for movement or “wiggles” during seated activities.
- **Set up sensory tables.** Sand and water sensory tables in the classroom can reduce children’s sedentary time while encouraging exploration, fine motor skill development and creativity.
- **Use scarves and music to teach children about rhythm.** Play music with different tempos to get children moving and dancing. Have children wave, toss and twirl brightly colored scarves to the beat of the song. Scarves are also useful for children who are shy, as it gives them a prop to work with.
- **Create dramatic play or reading nooks.** Use pillows and fabric to create a dramatic play space or reading nook.



ACTIVITY IDEA:
Promote dramatic play
by having children act
out different stories.



Furniture can encourage an active posture and specially designed seating can support children’s micro-movements. *Photo Credit: VMDO Architects and Tom Daly*

ACTIVITY IDEA: Place different objects in the water sensory tables and ask the children to predict which items will sink and which ones will float.



RESOURCES

Head Start Design Guide provides ideas on design of indoor spaces.

eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/resources/ECLKC_Bookstore/PDFs/head-start-design-guide.pdf

Bright Horizons offers the Greenman Gift Award to one child care program each year to improve its facilities. The award is for a \$35,000 grant of direct and in-kind contributions.

brighthousefoundation.org/what-we-do/greenman-gift-award

THERE ARE MANY ONLINE RESOURCES AND BLOGS ABOUT DESIGNING INDOOR PLAY SPACES. SEARCH "DIY INDOOR PLAY SPACE" FOR SIMPLE AND LOW-COST IDEAS.



United Community Day Care in Brooklyn provides a variety of indoor play materials so the children stay active, even during inclement weather. *Photo Credit: DCF*

CASE STUDY: UNITED COMMUNITY DAY CARE

Goal: To provide a comfortable, aesthetic and welcoming indoor learning and play environment

Key Takeaways

- Use natural lighting to brighten up an indoor space.
- Plant trees or an indoor garden to liven up classrooms.
- Paint walls different colors to create a more playful and welcoming environment.

United Community Day Care Center in Brooklyn serves children aged 2 to 5 years old. The center made the indoor space for their preschoolers a comfortable learning environment by decorating it with bright colors. They also offer an indoor play space in their multi-purpose room, which can be used during inclement weather.

The indoor space has exposed piping, but the pipes are painted different colors to make the space more playful. The classrooms are built with large, garage-style doors that let in light from the hallway skylight. This creates an open feeling for the classrooms, as they do not have any windows. The skylights also have retractable shades which block out the light during the children's nap time.

Various herbs and trees are planted indoors at the center to brighten up the indoor space and supplement the children's science lessons. The children help maintain avocado, palm and ficus trees, as well as herb gardens with oregano and cilantro.



The center has garage-style doors for each classroom to let in natural sunlight, exposed piping that has been painted over and a skylight with retractable shades. *Photo Credit: DCF*

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Use the matrix on the following pages to guide the development of your improvement project. You do not need to follow the matrix in sequence.



QSAC Early Childhood Center in Queens transformed their gymnasium into an indoor play space with diverse equipment designed to meet the students' unique needs. This included a climbing wall, trikes and scooters, a seesaw and a trampoline.

Photo Credit: DCF

TIPS FOR WORKING WITH FAMILIES

- Involve parents and staff in the assessment of the play space and planning of active design projects.
- Take advantage of gardening, carpentry and other skills parents and staff at your center have to offer.
- Ask parents to donate materials for projects.

Play Space Assessment

Take a look at your space and check off any materials you already have.

Outdoor Play	Gardening and Nature	Indoor Play
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Anchored play structure<input type="checkbox"/> Wheeled toys<input type="checkbox"/> Loose toys<input type="checkbox"/> Sensory play equipment<input type="checkbox"/> Crawling equipment<input type="checkbox"/> Climbing equipment<input type="checkbox"/> Music play area<input type="checkbox"/> Balancing equipment<input type="checkbox"/> Arts and crafts materials<input type="checkbox"/> Bench or sitting area(s)<input type="checkbox"/> Ground markings<input type="checkbox"/> Shade<input type="checkbox"/> Storage<input type="checkbox"/> Safety surfacing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Garden or planters<input type="checkbox"/> Indoor plants<input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor plants<input type="checkbox"/> Natural materials (e.g., stones, pinecones, logs, stumps)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Loose toys<input type="checkbox"/> Sensory play equipment<input type="checkbox"/> Balancing equipment<input type="checkbox"/> Crawling equipment<input type="checkbox"/> Climbing equipment<input type="checkbox"/> Storage

What are some of the strengths of your space? *Ex: Large outdoor space*

What are some areas for improvement? *Ex: Lacking natural materials and green space*

Additional comments:

Project Visioning

Engage staff, parents and children in brainstorming for improvement ideas.

Ask children to draw and share what they like about the indoor and outdoor spaces, and what the preschool or daycare of their dreams would have.

Host a focus group, visioning session or walk-through with parents and/or staff, using butcher paper or photography.

Conduct a survey with parents and/or staff on what they love about the physical environment of these sites and what improvements they would like to see.

Project Planning

Review the play space assessment and visioning results. Which areas are lacking the most resources? What were some common themes for improvements? Develop a few short- and long-term goals to improve those areas.

Proposed improvement:

Short-term goals:

Long-term goals:

Work Plan and Budget

Identify key steps needed to carry out your project. Include items to purchase, estimated cost, deadlines and a project lead.

Item/ Action	Task	Budget	Timeline	Task Lead	Others Involved
<i>Ex: Purchase wood for planter boxes</i>	<i>Measure outdoor space</i>	<i>\$XX for XX boards</i>	<i>Order by XX</i>	<i>Director</i>	<i>Parent volunteer (carpenter)</i>

Maintenance

Determine ongoing maintenance needs and the individual or group responsible for the task.

Task	Person/Organization Responsible	Frequency/Timing
<i>Ex: Watering and weeding the garden</i>	<i>Students and teachers during the school year, maintenance staff during the summer</i>	<i>Water the garden X number of times a week</i>

Programming

Determine how proposed enhancements will be integrated into existing lessons and activities.

Mathematics	Science	Language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Numbers, counting and quantities<input type="checkbox"/> Matching<input type="checkbox"/> Shapes and patterns<input type="checkbox"/> Measurement and comparison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Classifying and sorting<input type="checkbox"/> Observation<input type="checkbox"/> Life science<input type="checkbox"/> Earth science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Storytelling<input type="checkbox"/> Reading<input type="checkbox"/> Alphabet knowledge<input type="checkbox"/> Writing
Social and Emotional Development	Physical Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Curiosity<input type="checkbox"/> Cooperation<input type="checkbox"/> Persistence and attentiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Fine motor skills<input type="checkbox"/> Gross motor skills<input type="checkbox"/> Balance and coordination	

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

New York City Service

Register with NYC Service to recruit volunteers for your active design projects.

nyc.gov/service

Eat Well Play Hard in Child Care Centers provides trainings and technical assistance to help eligible centers promote a healthier environment. As part of the program, registered dietitians from the New York City Health Department host nutrition education and physical activity workshops for children and parents. To find out if your center is eligible, email ewph@health.nyc.gov.

Growing Healthy Children is a nutrition education curriculum that makes it easy for child care centers to implement nutrition lessons and cooking activities. The curriculum was developed by the New York City Health Department for use in group child care settings.

www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/cdp/growing-healthy-children.pdf

Citizens Committee for New York City offers grants to help grassroots groups improve the quality of life in low-income neighborhoods. Their grants support work around composting, climate change, active design and general neighborhood improvement.

citizensnyc.org

New York Cares is the city's largest volunteer organization, with projects ranging from tutoring to gardening to serving at soup kitchens. Sites can request volunteer support on a one-time or ongoing basis.

newyorkcares.org

Open Architecture New York believes that everyone deserves access to the benefits of good design. Through Design Evaluation for Youth, they work with local youth to design and develop innovative education spaces that encourage learning and foster pride in the community. The organization helps clients realize their goals through various methods, including design or planning activities, competitions, schematic and design services, education and advocacy, and small-scale design/building services.

oacny.org

CURRICULUM AND TRAININGS

The Children's Museum of Manhattan's EatPlayGrow™ curriculum, developed with the National Institutes of Health (NIH), combines the latest science and research from the NIH with the museum's holistic arts and literacy-based pedagogy.

eatplaygrow.org

Right to Play trains and coaches local teachers and community leaders to deliver play-based educational programs. Their goal is to improve the quality of education opportunities and to make learning fun and engaging for children.

righttoplayusa.org

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