

PLAYGROUND REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Princes Hill Primary School 2011

The Scope

Duration

The project was developed over a full school year.

Participants

- Year 6 children - Tessa, Patrick, Kosta, Rafi, Aidan, Ben, David
The group was formed on the basis of expressions of interest
- Teachers – Shana & Pat
- Play Specialist: Judy McKinty
- Parent Volunteers
- School Council
- Landscape Designers: Urban Initiatives



Topic / Research Questions

To engage children as both clients and designers in a real-life design project: the redesign of a senior adventure playground.

Teachers' Research Questions

- What are the implications when children build a relationship with place?
- Why how do they build this relationship?
- How does this impact on their sense of self and relationships with others?
- How does it impact on them as active citizens and allow for a powerful collective voice?



Survey

Together with the landscape architects Urban Initiatives, the Project Group decided to conduct a survey to find out from the school community what they wanted in a new playground.

Dear teachers,

The Playground Redevelopment Group has made this survey for you to ask the children in your class for their ideas on the new playground. They could show their ideas through multiple forms of media such as:

1. Writing
2. Drawing
3. Building a model
4. Or some other way of your choice

Please set aside a time for the children to complete the survey- half an hour to an hour at least- and after that if it is not complete it can be sent home. This survey needs to be handed in by Thursday the 31st of March. We will be setting up a display of all the children's ideas in the library. Each of these ideas will be incorporated in the new playground design.

Thank you for your help.

The Playground Redevelopment Group

Survey



Dear students and parents,
We are ***the Playground Redevelopment Group*** and will be working on a new playground design with landscape architects, students, teachers and parents.



We have sent out a survey to all the children in the school asking them for their ideas about the design of a new playground. We would also like parent input.

With the redesign of the playground are there any suggestions you would like to make?

This can be shown through different forms of media such as drawing, models and writing.

We will be setting up a display of all the school communities' ideas in the library. Please feel free to come and have a look before school.

Thank you for your ideas,

***Shana Upiter
On behalf of The Playground
Redevelopment Group***

Survey – Written Responses

Class Survey Playground redevelopment

Tara

What differences have the changes to the school buildings made to how you use the outdoor space?

They have made me use them more

What are the three things you most enjoy doing on the play ground?

1. Flying Fox
2. Balancing Beams
3. Monkey Bars

What have you seen on other playgrounds that you found interesting?



What areas do you enjoy playing in and what do you do in them?

I like playing on the rock climbing wall, the swinging monkey bars and the flying fox

What kind of space would you like to go to on a hot summer's day?

a nice shady playground
Or a cold wintery one?

a nice area that we can do lots of stuff so that it will warm us up

What would you like to see in a new playground?

double story playground
swings
trampolines

Prince Hill Primary School

Sian

Class Survey Playground redevelopment

What differences have the changes to the school buildings made to how you use the outdoor space? The removal of the old playground has led to me not playing as many games as I used to play.

What are the three things you most enjoy doing on the play ground?

1. Going on the wobbly bridge
2. Looking for new hiding spots
3. The rope steps on the triangles

What have you seen on other playgrounds that you found interesting?

- Swings
- two levels
- treehouses
- enclosed slides with twists and turns
- long high rope bridges
- See-saw
- Swimming pool

What areas do you enjoy playing in and what do you do in them?

- 5/6 Area - talking and games like police.
- Round the school - Gang & Tiggy
- Playground - hanging out.

What kind of space would you like to go to on a hot summer's day?

A shady tree or patio, preferably with a chair. Or a swimming pool!

Or a cold wintery one?

A shelter of some sort, maybe with some games.

What would you like to see in a new playground?

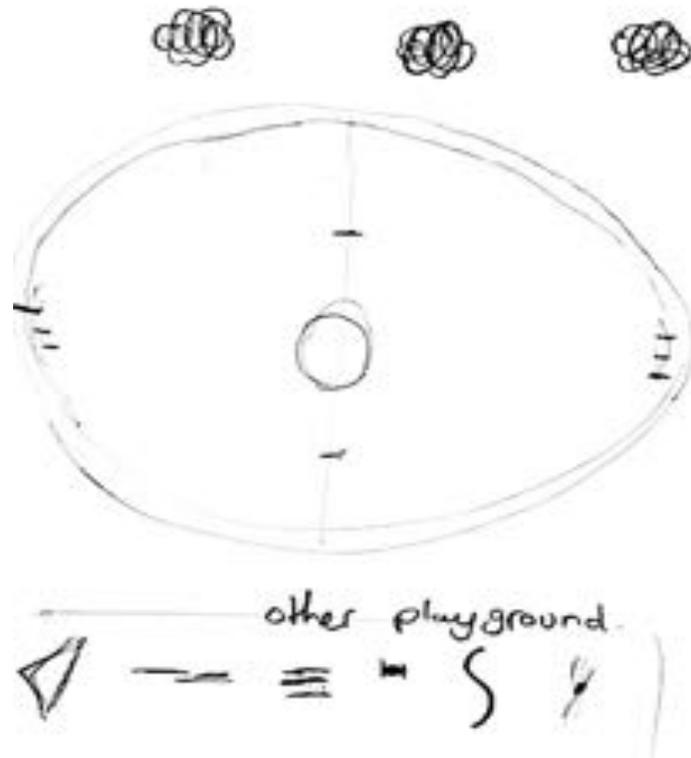
Swings, two levels, trampolines

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Survey — Visual Response

Imogen

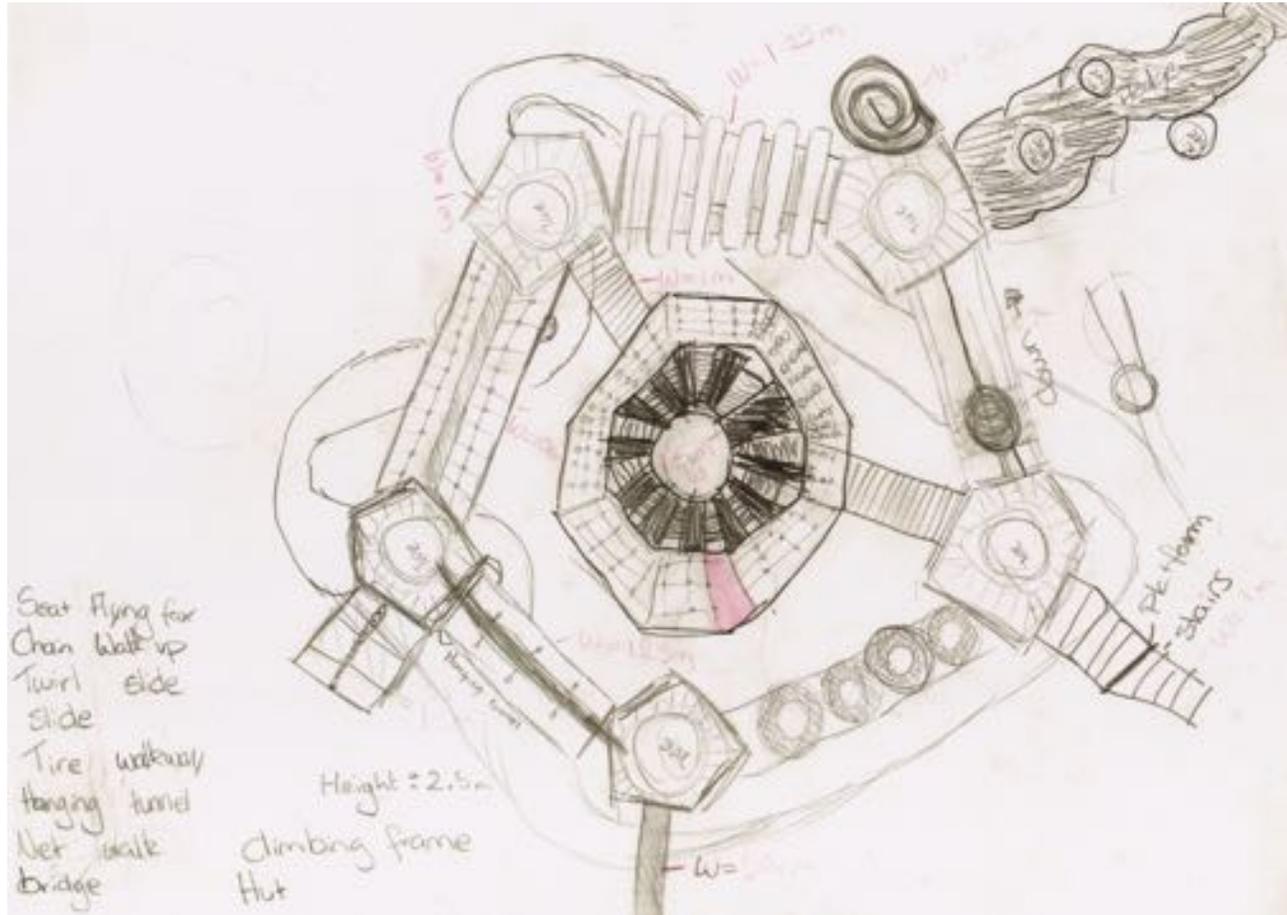
Playground desing



Design Process - drawing

The project group worked to develop a plan. They wanted a double level playground and climbing equipment.

Everyone incorporated the pentagon formation of trees.



We decided to combine the best elements of each design into a single concept.

AGM Presentation

It felt exhilarating to show the school community what we have been working on this semester. Seeing the people looking interested was really motivating.



The Playground group were invited to speak to parents about their project at the school's Annual General Meeting on June 22, 2011.

I felt that the parents approved our ideas on the new playground. We had great feedback and it felt great to stand up as the student body of the school for this redevelopment project.

Scale Model

The group decided they wanted to communicate their ideas in a 3D scale model. An architect parent showed the children how to make a professional model of their playground.



Matilde showed us the importance of a good strong base and choosing the right materials. She helped us choose a scale and construct the 5/6 N1 portable to scale.

The Environment as Teacher

The children set up an inspiration board to support their work. They began to see model making as a language used to express ideas.



The Process of Model Making

Scaling was the hard part. While some children were measuring trees, others were scaling the already-measured trees.



We had to measure every tree in the area and find out the length from the fence line.

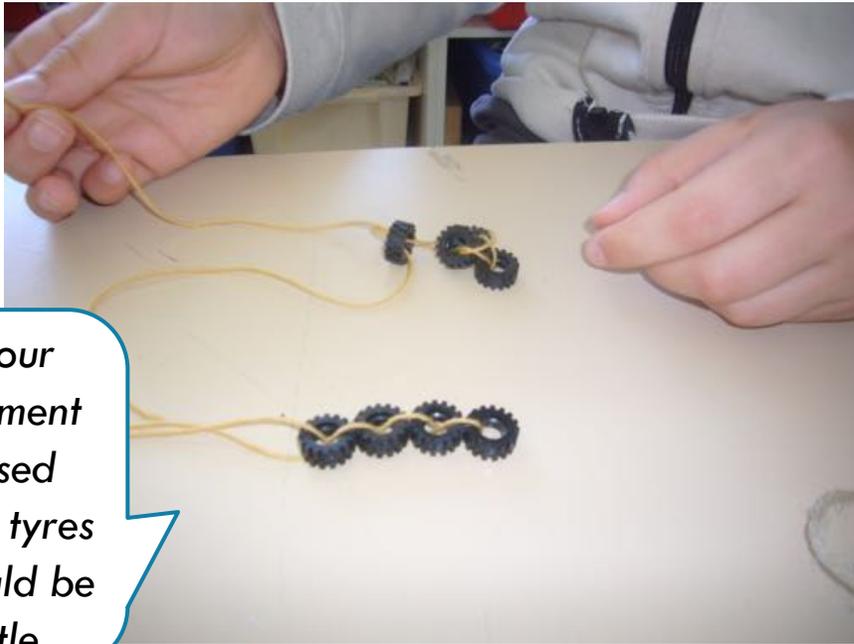


The scale was 1:50 so 50cm in real life equated to 1cm in the model. The way we went about figuring it out was to work out how many 50s were in the real life object.

The Process of Model Making

Selecting the materials was very important. It took many trips to the site to determine which material was the right one.

We wanted to make our model as realistic as possible, just like a miniature version of the real thing.



We had to make our playground equipment just as real. We used string to mesh the tyres together so it would be able to move a little.



Making the trees with cardboard and paper didn't look that real. We chose to make them with real branches because it showed the differences between real trees (rough and smooth).

The Process of Model Making



To complete our model we needed to represent what the people would look like compared to the playground. We decided to make miniature figures of ourselves. The average of our heights was around 1.5m so when scaled would make the little figure 30cm in scale model size.

Playground Design for Safety

Throughout the project the children were very aware of safety and continually assessed whether their designs were reasonable. The issue was discussed many times.

We understand that people are concerned but they don't get it that we can be responsible and have fun with risks.

Taking the chance out of something takes the fun out of it. If there is no risk, you're not unsure then there's no reward. It's boring.



If there's a risk kids are not going to do something incredibly dumb. If there's no risk kids are going to seek it out, to do something incredibly dumb.

Kids don't go out of their way to break the rules. They go out of their way to have fun.

Presentation - Year 5/6 Creativity Expo

The expo in fourth term was a presentation of all the Year 5/6 students' learning.

The whole school came through and looked at our work.

Lots of children thought our model looked very exciting and fun.



They liked how we had made a miniature 'world' of what it could look like.

We also presented to some parents who were interested in what we had been doing this past year.

Presentation – School Council

The group presented their ideas and their model to School Council to convince the members to support the building of the new senior adventure playground. They were asked to consider what they wanted to say and why.

We have to make them like it and really want to do it.

We want a replacement not a substitute for the old playground. What they've given us is a substitute.



Criticism is not going to persuade them. We need to talk more about what we have to offer.

Instead of talking about the adults we needed to talk about the kids because this is a school and it was built for the kids to learn and play is part of learning.

Reflections

It was clear the project gave the children a powerful voice. They now saw themselves as strong competent learners, able to construct knowledge and negotiate meaning. What started off as a project about the redesign of a playground ended up as a project around concepts of student voice, active citizenship and democracy. Shana, teacher

The project demonstrates what can be achieved when children are given the authority and the means to develop a project around a subject on which they are the experts.

Judy McKinty – editor Play & Folklife N058, 2012
Museum of Victoria Journal.



Final Word

*This is not ANY playground,
it's THE playground
and we know it
because we chose it!*

