

Press Release



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Three Steps To Successful Public Playgrounds

More Than Fun And Games!

Research has shown that children that have play built into their learning and care centers do better academically over time than those that do not have unstructured play as part of their day at school, daycare, child care. "The experience of play changes the connections of the neurons at the front end of your brain," says Sergio Pellis, a researcher at the University of Lethbridge in Alberta, Canada. "And without play experience, those neurons aren't changed" he stated in his report. ¹

The environment shapes the young mind and leads to future potential and possibility.

A big driver to improved play and social skills development is a well designed and built playground. It allows both children and their caregivers a chance to go beyond books and structure to all out fun and playful interactions. Lifecycle Construction Services has been in the middle of playground improvement and development for nearly 10 years, "We find that it is not all fun and games when creating a physical environment for a playground at a public facility" stated Ty Crowder, VP Operations "there are many rules, regulations, materials considerations to take into account." The summer months represent a focused period of time every year where schools, day care and child development centers look at renovation and/or new construction of playgrounds. A tight time window with unique challenges.

"We have seen an increased interest to improve and when needed build brand new playgrounds at military bases, public facilities that support families and schools, going beyond the time tested teeter-totter and metal swing I grew up with at school" said Sean Haynes, Founder and CEO of Lifecycle. Mr. Haynes continued, "We review the current trends in materials, play flow and continued child education through play, and a few things remain the same no matter one play ground or a series of playgrounds to renew, allowing for long use and improved outcomes for everyone. Our experience is based on numerous projects, over many types of facilities. These three steps apply across a wide variety of playground needs."

Step 1. Building Lifecycle Practices Apply - Even breaking a facility down into the key areas of interaction, including offices and administration, security, learning areas, cafeteria needs, indoor gym/play areas and outside play areas the methods of building lifecycle apply. It is important to apply the cycle of planning, design, construction, ongoing operations/ maintenance, analysis and continual improvement. When possible

¹ <http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2014/08/06/336361277/scientists-say-childs-play-helps-build-a-better-brain>

taking into account the use of recycled materials and an understanding of the long-term waste stream of everything used. Just because it is one part of a larger facility it is important to apply the needed thinking at every stage of the playgrounds lifecycle.

Consider lifecycle costs, you're not just buying a playground you're creating an asset that will have to be maintained for years to come. All the decisions you make now affect how long the playground will be viable and how much it will cost to maintain over time. For instance, rubber tile surfacing typically has a lower maintenance cost than loose fill, but it's more expensive initially. Wooden equipment tends to have higher maintenance costs than metal. In a lifecycle building approach things like maintenance, repair costs, and typical deterioration are taken into account and compared costs over time.

More upfront planning, interactions and design review leads to fast execution of the work. If a facility is on a growing installation or one under change the lifecycle approach allows for taking this into account. "We find it best to do the up front planning, design, and construction plan in advance allowing for clear execution once ready to get things built," stated Ty Crowder of Lifecycle Construction Services. "With renovations we encourage the owners to allow our team to see the facility and the current playground in use, it helps understand the challenges of today and come up with creative ways to mitigate them with the renovation."

Step 2. Start With The End In Mind - Deciding up-front what you want to accomplish will help guide your decision-making. It will also help with better advice and planning by the design construct partner. Will your playground be open only during school hours, or will it be available to the neighborhood? Are there special requirements for accessibility? Environmental friendliness? Is there a special theme the organization would like to follow? Creating a kind of mission statement for your playground, or at least a list of goals, will give a strong base on which to organize the project(s).

Keep accessibility in mind, whether you're building a new playground or changing an existing one, the project is subject to the Americans With Disabilities Act. The play structure and a variety of equipment must be accessible to children with disabilities. That doesn't mean the whole structure needs to be accessible, but children with and without disabilities should be able to play together in a variety of ways. The playground itself must be accessible to people with disabilities from the school and parking lot. A design and construct partner with experience will take all this into account from the project start.

Step 3. Choosing The Right Partner To Help Design & Construction - It is not about looking through the latest and greatest catalog of playground equipment and placing an order. In looking at the full lifecycle it is key to do the needed upfront work and planning. A professional who has experience in working in public funded facilities understands the need to gain upfront input from the staff, the administrators, the parents and understand the children utilizing the playground. What are the age groups, the potential disabilities, security, the physical space, the weather conditions year round and much more needs to be taken into account.

Finding a partner that has done a wider variety of family and childhood development center projects, including playgrounds, allows for a partner that understands how the whole picture of development interacts, building, end users, families and the children. The right professional partner provides efficiencies in design, materials selection and execution of the work. Past performance is a strong indicator of future success.

"We really enjoy building and renovating playgrounds at the bases, installations and facilities we serve," shared Sean Haynes, Founder & CEO "the end result is happy, energetic kids making our work more about creating smiles in safe, well designed and built playgrounds than anything else. Now making a satisfied end-user climb, swing, jump and play is wonderful!" Those smiles happen when the right level of planning, collaborative design and well executed construction come together at the start.

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Lifecycle Construction Services is based in the Washington DC area, supporting nationally and globally public funded construction programs that are focused on Federal and State facilities. Specializing in programs and projects that include renovation, repair and facilities improvements. In addition they provide a wide range of new construction services, ranging from metal buildings to complete design and construct structures for Federal and State public facilities. Having placed over \$1 billion in completed work, at numerous military installations, bases, airfields, GSA facilities, universities and other public owned facilities around the country. Applying lifecycle practices, collaborative design and planning methods while focused on superior outcomes generating high levels of customer satisfaction. To learn more go to www.Lifecycle-inc.com