

Learning Landscapes Toolkit



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The Learning Landscapes Toolkit is in draft form.

This draft was created spring 2013 and is being piloted at DPS elementary schools who are participating in the HEAL project. Final draft of the Toolkit will be published in the near future.

Introduction

Denver Public Schools' Learning Landscape schoolyards provide a tremendous opportunity for elementary students and the surrounding community to engage in physical activity. Since the program began in 1998, Denver Public Schools in partnership with the University of Colorado Denver and the residents of the City of Denver, transformed 96 elementary schoolyards into vibrant active Learning Landscapes. The district-wide Learning Landscapes effort is considered a nationwide model for multi-stakeholder collaboration to develop school campuses for educational, recreational, and civic uses. The Learning Landscapes are designed to provide elementary students with physical and mental challenges in a stimulating and aesthetically appealing environment. Reaching the majority of elementary and K-8 students in Denver Public Schools, it's estimated that 45,000 students benefit daily from physical activity on the Learning Landscapes.



Before



After

Learning Landscapes Toolkit

To preserve the quality and character of Learning Landscapes, the schoolyards need to be respectfully used by the schools, students and surrounding community. Developing site-specific programming, such as this toolkit for physical activity, specific to the design and educational elements found on a Learning Landscape, will encourage intentional use and stewardship of the schoolyards.

The toolkit is designed to promote use of the Learning Landscapes throughout the day. With activities targeted to increase physical activity before and after school, at recess, as well as during both physical education (P.E.) and class time. The activities also target the architectural features of a typical Learning Landscape including: a grass field, a crusher-fines running track, a blacktop with colorful hard surface games, age-appropriate play equipment, climbing features, a shade shelter, an outdoor classroom, natural areas and gardens, and inviting community gathering features throughout the schoolyard.

Design Elements



Grass Field

Coveted recreational spaces and a vast improvement from the pea gravel fields of the past.



Blacktop with Colorful Hard Surface Games

A variety of colorful games and educational features spark excitement and creativity during play.



Climbing Features

Features to increase upper body strength and coordination.



Crusher-Fines Running Track

A safe walking and jogging area students, teachers, and community to track their distance and encourage movement.



Age-Appropriate Play Equipment

Safe, developmentally appropriate, and challenging activities for all students.



Shade Shelter

A gathering space protected from the intense Colorado sun.



Outdoor Classroom

A place for teachers to bring students outside for inquiry and to interact with the landscape as an educational system.



Natural Areas and Gardens

An opportunity for science education, discovery and imaginative play as well as a source of healthy fresh vegetables.



Community Gathering

Promoting a sense of pride and welcoming the neighborhood to gather and play through gateways, artwork, and seating throughout the schoolyard.

Colorado Physical Education and Comprehensive Health Standards

The Learning Landscape Toolkit activities are designed to align with the Colorado Physical Education and Comprehensive Health Standards. Activities will continue to be reviewed and revised to maximize alignment to these standards. Examples of standards and student outcomes potentially achieved through toolkit activities include:

Standard: 1. Movement Competence & Understanding in Physical Education

- Demonstrate skills of chasing, fleeing, and dodging to avoid others (DOK 1-3)
- Perform successfully a variety of jump-rope skills using both short and long ropes, and jump to various tempos (DOK 1-2)
- Balance demonstrating momentary stillness in symmetrical and nonsymmetrical shapes on a variety of body parts (DOK 1-3)
- Recognize and demonstrate agility, balance, coordination, power, speed, and reaction time in a variety of physical activities (DOK 1-2)

Standard: 2. Physical and Personal Wellness in Physical Education

- Identify several moderate to vigorous physical activities that provide personal pleasure (DOK 1-2)
- Identify all activities that children participate in on a regular basis (formal or informal) (DOK 1-2)
- Identify physical activities that cause the heart to beat faster (DOK 1-3)
- Compare heart rate before, during, and after exercise, and explain that increasing the heart rate during physical activity strengthens the heart muscles (DOK 1-3)

Standard: 3. Emotional and Social Wellness in Physical Education

- Follow directions, activity-specific rules, procedures, and etiquette with few reminders (DOK 1-2)
- Ask a partner to participate in a physical activity (DOK 1-2)
- Follow safety rules in the gymnasium and on the playground (DOK 1-2)
- Maintain safety within personal space while using implements (DOK 1-2)

Safety

Safety is a priority when engaging in physical activity on the Learning Landscapes. Participants should make sure they can answer yes to the safety questions below before engaging in any Learning Landscape Toolkit activities on the schoolyard.

1. Am I wearing appropriate shoes for active movement?
2. Are my shoelaces tied?
3. Do I have all jewelry secured and drawstrings tucked in?
4. Am I ready to be mindful of other participants?
5. Am I ready to respect everyone's personal space and treat each other with respect?
6. Am I ready to take turns and not push or shove others?
7. Am I ready to listen to all instructions and stay within designated boundaries?
8. Am I ready to seek cooperation with others at all times, follow rules of the activity?
9. Am I dressed appropriately for the weather?
10. Am I ready to avoid slippery surfaces, loose gravel and cracks on the Blacktop?
11. Am I ready to steer clear of bumps, dips, rocks, and irrigation heads on the Grass Field?
12. Am I ready to keep a lookout for any broken play equipment?
13. Am I ready to zigzag around rocks, tree stumps, or plants in the Natural Areas?
14. If I find any safety hazards will I report them to the school office?

If you answered YES to all of the safety questions you are ready to

Get Outside and Get Moving!

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Category Catch

When to Play: Before and After



10-15 min.

Where to Play: Blacktop

Equipment: Ball(s)

How to Play:

- Players form a circle.
- Leader picks a category (Fruit, veggies, states, countries).
- Players call out a word from the category and safely pass ball to another Player (Kiwi, lettuce, Nebraska).
- Players keep passing the ball until they run out of words in the category.
- Players take 3 steps back, choose a new category and start over again.

Change it up!

Try adding multiple balls to keep the Players moving.

Try adding memory challenges: Reverse the game, Players call out another Player's word and pass the ball to that Player.

Instead of a circle, try scattering Players to make the game more difficult.

Tips:

Number of Players: 10 - 30

Demonstrate safe passes:
forward chest pass,
bounce pass, underhand
throw

Categories: Fruit, veggies,
states, countries, sports,
books, animals



What's the Forecast?

When to Play: Class Activity



5-10 min.

Where to Play: Shade Structure

Equipment: None

How to Play:

- Players form a circle around the Leader, standing arms distance apart so they are spread out.
- Leader calls out different forms of weather.
- Players perform the movements below to imitate the form of weather called out by the Leader:
 - "Lightning" (clap hands), (Jump into air),
 - "Thunder" (stomp feet),
 - "Rain" (bring arms up over head and bring down with wiggling fingers),
 - "Puddles!" (jump over puddles),
 - "Wind" (swing arms around),
 - "Tornado" (spin around),
 - "Snow" (pretend to float around),
 - "Sun" (make big circle over head and walk around)
- Once each form of weather has been called, the Players find a group of 3.
- In their groups, Players make up a "Storm Routine" using the weather movements and perform it for the rest of the groups. Groups repeat the routine, calling out each movement as it is performed.
- Allow each group to teach their routine to other Players.

Change it up!

Ask for short routines for younger Players and longer routines for older Players.

Add direction:

"A thunder storm is moving in from the south"-
Players move from south to north across the Learning Landscape imitating the weather.

Tips:

Number of Players: 5-30

Blizzard - hug your body to stay warm and spin around


Hurricane - twirl your arms while you spin around

Flood - pretend to swim to safety



Tundra Tag

When to Play: Recess

 5-10 min.

Where to Play: Grass Field

Equipment: N/A

How to Play:

- Players are animals out on the Colorado Tundra.
- Choose one Player to be the "Ranger."
- Players run around to avoid being tagged by the Ranger.
- When tagged, Players must instantly freeze.
- Players who are not frozen can "unfreeze" frozen Players by running a circle around them.

Change it up!

Tagger can indicate an action to perform while everyone is trying to avoid being tagged, such as skipping, jogging, or hopping.

Tagger must perform action as well.

Tips:

Number of Players: 10 - 15

Change Ranger every few minutes.

Vocabulary - Alpine Tundra:
The Colorado alpine tundra is an ecosystem above 11,000 feet elevation. The environment is harsh with high winds, snow, and cold temperatures. Chipmunks, marmots, pikas, and other animals live on the tundra.



Fly-Fishing Frenzy

When to Play: P.E.



10-20 min.

Where to Play: Grass Field

Equipment: Ball - At least 1 ball for every 5 players

How to Play:

- Designate boundaries of an area to be the "river."
- Players are "fish" and line up arm to arm at one end of the river.
- Choose one Player to be the "fly-fisher."
- The fly-fisher casts the fly out into the river by throwing the ball as far as he/she can down the river.
- The fly-fisher calls out a movement (e.g. run, skip, swim, frog hop, big steps, etc.).
- The fish do the movement and race to get to the "bait" (retrieve the ball).
- The fish who gets the bait first must be quick enough to make it back to the starting point without being tagged by the fly-fisher. The Player with the ball can avoid being tagged by tossing or throwing the ball to another fish.
- The last fish with the ball at the starting point is the next fly-fisher.

Change it up!

Try other movements (e.g. running, tip-toeing, heel-toe, big steps, little steps crab-walking, etc.).

Tips:

Number of Players: 3 - 15

Limit 5 Players per ball



Stretching Exercises



Shoulder Stretch

Use the left arm to gently press the right arm across the body. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.



Calf Stretch

Stand with one leg near the wall. Extend other leg back, keeping the heel on the ground.



Tricep Stretch

Grab the right elbow with the left hand and gently pull back. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.



Side Lunge

Bend leg to a 90-degree angle and stretch out other leg with toes pointing at 45-degrees.



Straddle Stretch

Bend over right leg, then to the center, then to left leg. Hold each for 10 to 30 seconds.



Crossover Toe-Touch

Stand with feet together. Slowly roll down from the back and reach for the toes with your hands.



Quadricep Stretch

Bend leg and grab it with opposite hand. Gently press the foot toward the buttocks.



Hamstring Stretch

Sit down with leg stretched forward, toes up. Bend other leg inwards. Reach forward to toes.

Cardio



Jumping Jack

Stand with feet together and arms by your side. Bend knees a little and as you jump to a straddle, bring arms above your head. Arms should not go out in front but out to the side. Jump feet back together while you bring arms back by your side. Repeat.



Sit Up

Lay on your back, with knees bent, pointing to the sky. Cross your arms over your chest. Use your abs sit up and extend your arms to reach your toes. Return your back and shoulders to the ground and repeat.



Tuck Jump

Stand with your feet shoulder width apart. Jump up as high as you can and pull knees up into the chest and release before you land.



Crab Walk

Sit on the ground and hug your knees. Release your knees and place hands, palm down, on the ground behind you. Push up. Walk around on your hands and feet.



Mountain Climber

Begin in a pushup position on the hands and toes. Bring the right knee in towards the chest, resting the foot on the floor. Jump up and switch feet in the air, bringing the left foot in and the right foot back. Hands stay on the ground.



Squat

Stand shoulder width apart. Keeping your back straight, bend at your knees, keeping your knees in line with your toes. Your knees should never pass your toes. Bend until your knees are bent 90 degrees and return to a stand. Repeat.



Plank / Push Up

Place both hands on the ground and stretch your legs back so you are holding yourself up. Bend arms til you almost touch the ground and extend them to push up position. Repeat. For plank, start in push up position with arms straight and body in a straight line. Hold for 15 – 60 seconds.



Skip

Start by standing up straight with your legs together. Drive your right knee up towards your chest while pushing off/ jumping with your left foot. Land on your left leg and put your right leg down. Push off your right foot as your drive your left knee up towards your chest. Repeat.

Yoga Moves



Sunrise / Sunset

Stand up tall and take a deep breath. Lift both arms above your head and reach toward the sky. Hold for two breaths then bend at your waist and reach for your toes. Hold for 2 breaths and repeat.



Wide-Legged Bend

Stand in a wide straddle. Bend forward at the waist, bending your knees a little bit. Let your arms hang down in front of you and swing your upper body back and forth. Breathe.



Tree Pose

Stand evenly on both feet, then shift weight to balance one foot. Raise the other foot up and rest it on the calf or thigh (not knee). Put the palms of your hands together in front of your chest or spread your arms up and out like tree branches and balance. Breathe and hold.



Downward-Facing Dog

Begin on your hands and knees like a dog. Press into your hands and feet, straighten your legs and arms, and lift your hips into the air. Breathe and hold.



Butterfly Pose

While seated, bring the bottom of the feet together and let the knees fall out to the sides. Grasp ankles with hands and sit up straight and tall. Flap knees up and down like butterfly wings. Breathe and hold.



Camel Pose

Kneel on the ground, then sit back onto your calves. Slowly rise up off of your calves until you are standing on your knees. Reach back and grab the soles of your feet. Breathe and hold.



Warrior Pose

Stand with feet pointed forward. Lift arms, keeping arms and hands straight. Turn out toes of right foot so it's pointing in direction of right hand. Lunge with the right leg and hold. Switch legs.



Child's Pose (Arms Out)

Kneel on the ground, touch big toes together. Sit back on your heels, separating your knees hip-width apart. Fold over and bring your head down to the ground. Stretch arms out in front, breathe and hold.