

PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS

Parks and public play spaces give everyone opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. Observe what makes parks and playgrounds attractive, engaging, and functional. Ask children what might make these areas even more enjoyable.

GATHER MATERIALS:

- Paper Pad
- Erasable Colored Pencils
- Markers



Hayden M. and Hayden P.

ASK AND LISTEN:

- When we go to the park, what do you notice and use?
- What would you like to add to make the park or playground even more enjoyable?
- Can everyone use the park or playground? What could be designed differently to help people who have different abilities or needs enjoy the park or playground?

Draw pictures of perfect parks and playgrounds.

What could be added to the park or playground? Who would enjoy using the new features?



Bring paper and pencils outdoors to sketch what is seen in a park or playground. Take turns drawing new areas or equipment and talk about why it would be good to add these features or activities. What if a community garden, fountain, or sundial was added to the park? How might you design new places to read, dance, watch performers, or observe birds? How could areas be innovatively designed for multiple uses? How will people who use wheelchairs enjoy the equipment?



As children share sketches, ask them to describe the new features. How could these ideas be communicated to community leaders? Practice presenting the story of how and why the park could be reimaged.



Together, discuss what is great about the current park and what new features could be added. Talk about why it is important to "dream big."



Think about people who have different abilities, whether they use a wheelchair, have vision or hearing challenges, or are academically or emotionally challenged. Does the park meet their needs? Think about ways the park might serve these individuals.



Hannah S.

MORE ART AND STEAM IDEAS

- Draw a dream playground for your school with activities that students of all ages would enjoy: swings, climbing equipment, ball field, forts, bridges, and so on. Share these sketches with classmates.
- Research what is involved in maintaining public places and what it means for public spaces to be eco-friendly.

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN: Ask them to contribute one or two items for the new park design. Talk about the shapes of what they draw. For example, does a climber look like a triangle and do the flower beds look rectangular?

FOR OLDER CHILDREN: Consider safety and signage for the park. How could bicycle routes be separated from walking pathways? How do community planners and park designers consider safety as part of their planning process?



Winnie L.

VOCABULARY:

public spaces
nature
recreation
innovation
community
multi-purpose
performance
maintenance
eco-friendly
differently-abled
accommodations

Hannah S.