

The Project Approach to Learning at

RisingOaks
Early Learning

| Saint John Paul II

Project Name: People Pleasing Playground Construction

Age Group: Infant (11 months to 17 months)

Project Start Date: September 13, 2021

Project End Date: November 8, 2021



RisingOaks
Early Learning

Growing minds through play

Background

Our playground project started on September 13, 2021 with the infants ranging in ages from 11-17 months. The educators assisting with the project are Connie Cunningham RECE, Judy Hackbart RECE, Jennifer Silva RECE and Tami Sutton RECE.

Phase 1: Beginning the Project

The project started as a new playground was being constructed at RisingOaks Early Learning | Saint John Paul II. Hezi, Heerut and Oliver took interest in the busy movements in and around the playground, as we were headed out for a walk. Hezi tracked the riding forklift using his eyes and moving his head as it drove all around the playground working.



Figure 1 Hezi, Heerut and Oliver show interest and curiosity in what is happening on the playground

The questions we decided to investigate are:

1. How long does it take to build a playground?
2. How do you know where the playground equipment goes?
3. How do you design a playground?

We thought the best people to ask our questions about the playground, are the people who are putting it in for us.

We also created a survey and placed it outside the entrance on the A frame for families to answer the following questions:

1. Have you ever seen the construction of a new playground?
2. Have you ever visited a new playground?

It was interesting to see the results, out of the families who answered, we noticed that nine families have seen the construction of a new playground and two have not. Our neighbourhood is not that old and has a park at the end of the street; some may have caught glimpses as that one was constructed. When asked if they had been to a new playground two families have and nine have not.

Phase 2: Developing the Project

With the playground changing daily, we were able to go on walking field trips and observe the changes happening outside. The infants noticed and took a liking to the big machines moving in and around the playground. Their eyes tracked the riding forklift as it removed things from the playground and brought things into the playground. As the days carried on, we the educators presented the infants with different creative experiences. These activities increased our fine motor skills as we gripped markers and glue sticks, creating collages and sun catchers.



Figure 2 Eric holding a marker in Palmer grasp, as he looks at all the construction vehicles on his paper.



Figure 3 Isla manipulating the construction vehicle cutouts as she creates a collage

As the project progressed the infants were introduced to new construction related words such as; forklift, mini bull dozer, oak tree and sump pump to name a few that they heard their educators say as they talked about the playground.

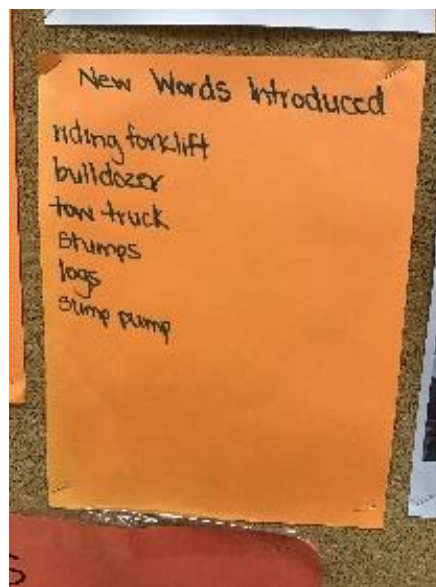


Figure 4 Documentation of new words introduced during the project

During one of our walking field trips to see what was happening in the playground. We noticed the big puddles, heard a humming sound and saw a hose going to a sewer. Our educators said, "This can't be good". As we watched it, we noticed that the construction crew were trying to drain a puddle from the playground.



Figure 5 The hole filled with water after a couple days of rain

After experiencing a couple days of heavy rain. The construction crew had connected two hoses together, so it would stretch to the sewer. Our educators had mentioned there was a sewer closer to the pump and puddle they were trying to drain. With the newfound information, the crew disconnected the hoses and were able to run the sump pump using one hose. They asked if we could help them. We were happy to help, Heerut and Hezi used their gross motor skills and increased social skills and moved the hose to the closer sewer to help the water move through the portable sump pump for quicker drainage.



Figure 6 Hezi and Heerut helping to place the hose in the sewer

As the project continued we incorporated a sensory activity with rocks and trucks, creating our own little construction site. The infants used taste exploration to get an understanding of the rocks, while their educators showed them how to manipulate the small toy trucks to move the rocks around.



Figure 7 Oliver exploring the rocks through taste



Figure 8 Eric manipulating the bulldozer

Phase 3: Concluding the Project

We concluded the project with our questions that we wanted answered, in which the employees from Bienenstock were more than happy to help.

1. **How long does it take to build a playground?** Typically, 2-3 weeks depending on the size of the playground.
2. **How do you design a playground?** A team of architects uses computers to create a layout and design images of the playground. They design different steps from vantage points, grading, layout, irrigation, plant/tree placement etc.
3. **How do you know where the playground equipment goes?** We use the drawings to know where to place each object. We follow a design page for every step, one for the grading, one for tree/plant placements etc. For each playground, there could be 10-12 pages of drawings to reference. Following these drawings, ensures everything is placed in the correct position.



Figure 9 A picture of the original playground plans the water barrier to adhere it to the stepping-stone



Figure 10 George mimicking Jen's actions of pressing down

We started to wrap up our project, on October 18, 2021 when the construction of our new playground was completed. We were able to take a field trip to see the finished project and explore our new outdoor environment. However, we did not actually finish our final project until November 3, 2021. As a final project, we created sensory stepping-stones. Our educators found different material to adhere to the stone to create different textures. When the summer returns it will be great to explore in our bare feet. We used pool noodles, water barrier, turf, beach stones, foam and nature to create our sensory stones. We contacted the Stone Place and they kindly donated six patio stones to us. With some assistance, we used contact cement to help adhere the materials to the stone. Fine motor skills improved as we gripped the brush and used it in a back and forth motion or patted it up and down. We mimicked actions of patting and pushing, as the children observed Jen doing this. After creating the sensory stones, we allowed them to dry and on Monday November 8, 2021, we set them out in the playground for exploration.



Figure 11 our final project sensory stones



Figure 12 Everly and Tami exploring the feel of the stone, sensory stone

Teacher Reflections

This project has been one of the best, as the infants were able to see first-hand, the demolition, the redesign and the completion of the project. We were able to experience field trips every day and take in the different actions of the many machines used. When we watch the infants on the playground, they take risks, create music and art, and experience different textures. Thank-you Bienenstock for providing the infants with a playground that promotes object permanence, risk taking, building social skills and increasing their sense of wonder and curiosity as they explore the many things to encourage healthy development in their growing bodies. Jennifer Silva RECE

It was very exciting to have all the construction action right by our window for the Infants to observe. This allowed them to see firsthand the cause and effect of a playground being demolished and then rebuilt. Watching as the mini forklifts went back and forth, they were able to track the movements and follow them when we were in the garden area. A highlight for me was when we brought in some larger rocks and introduced heavy work where the infants were able to transport the heavy rocks in different containers and lifting them to increase focus and attention. Connie Cunningham RECE

Watching the progress made every day was probably the most surprising aspect of this project. Co-learning alongside the children built a sense of excitement and wonder. Each step of the way we had a front row seat to the changes and the construction crew went out of their way to answer questions and interact with the infants. We watched from every angle as we made it part of our daily routine to see what was happening in the yard. Asking the infants what they were seeing and labelling the actions that they were observing supports our philosophy of belonging and allows them the freedom to express themselves while fostering intimate connections with us educators. Watching the concentration and delight on the faces of the children who were engaged was a highlight for me. Hezi really continued to explore at length what he knew about the playground construction with the materials inside the room building on schemas such as transporting. This project was one of those close to home, hands on easy to access experiences that the infants really were able to focus in on. Cannot wait to see all the learning still to come. Tami Sutton RECE

This project was well underway when I returned from my summer leave. Once the playground was completed, I saw the eagerness of the children for getting outside where they could explore the new elements available to them for both gross motor movements and sensory experiences. Although I was not here to see the ongoing construction, I have been able to witness the interest for getting outside to explore their new surroundings. Judy Hackbart RECE