

INCLUSIVE

Design Manual



**A guide to creating play spaces which welcome
children of all abilities**

Acknowledgements

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- Brian Luce

Illustrations by Alejandra Gómez

Please note:

These materials are offered as concepts only, to be used in close conjunction with:

1. Your local playground safety standards/ guidelines (as some of these ideas may not be suitable in your location).
2. Your local experienced builders, engineers, and/or NGO's (as materials, construction styles and cultural norms will be unique in your location). It is your responsibility to ensure that the playground equipment you construct complies with the relevant laws, regulations or standards in your location.

Lastly, maintenance of equipment is extremely important; any material will degrade over time, especially with heavy use from children, so maintenance over time is as important to children's safety as the initial construction to reduce the inherent risks of a playground.

In locations where no standard applies, please refer to our safety manual at www.playgroundideas.org and the Public Playground Safety Handbook prepared by the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/325.pdf>) and the United States technical performance standards that relate to playgrounds.

Important: Read Terms and Conditions (<http://playgroundideas.org/terms-ofuse>) for use of these materials before commencing construction - they contain, among other things, important information about the risks involved in construction of playground equipment and the limits of Playground Idea's liability. Designs and equipment made based on this website do not conform to any standard, law or regulation.

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Design

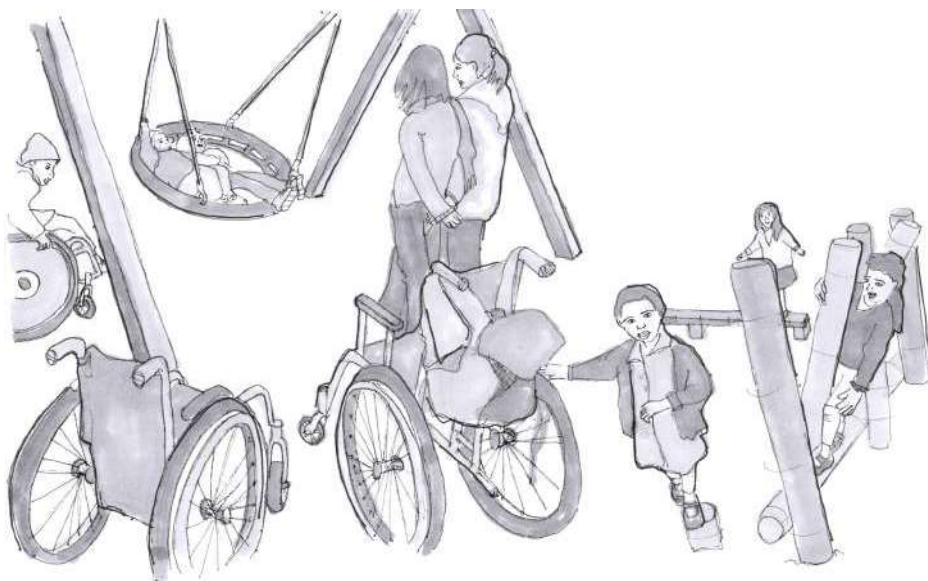
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Intro

Introduction

This manual is meant to supplement Playground Ideas' Five Step Manual. The Five Step Manual guides you through the process of building a custom playground from start to finish. The "Play for All: Designing Spaces of Inclusion" Manual is intended to introduce you to helpful ideas and guidelines for designing play spaces that are inviting to children of all abilities. We'll investigate the idea of inclusive design and explore how to design a space that all children, regardless of their particular set of strengths, can enjoy.

While they are often used interchangeably, "Inclusive Design" is different from "Handicap-Accessible Design." The latter begins by looking at a child's disability first and then designing spaces to compensate for that challenge. While this perspective is often well-intentioned, it can result in playgrounds that are exclusively designed for children with limited abilities and in doing so can further ostracize children with disabilities from their peers. In addition, when design only seeks to compensate for disability, it ignores children's unique strengths and misses the opportunity to create a space that can encourage children to engage in challenging, even reasonably risky activities that build resilience, mastery, and a positive image of self.



In this manual you will learn about “Inclusive Design.” Design that is inclusive begins by looking at children’s strengths, instead of their disabilities. All children have strengths and by taking into consideration the range of different strengths within a community, you’ll be better equipped to design a fun, safe, and beautiful playground that brings children together, instead of dividing them by ability. By designing for inclusion, and beginning from a perspective of “strengths,” you can create play space that is designed with everyone in mind and that challenges and supports children with a wide range of abilities. For example, a blind child’s strengths are their heightened sense of touch, hearing and smell, How could these senses be better use in a playground for both sighted and non-sighted children?

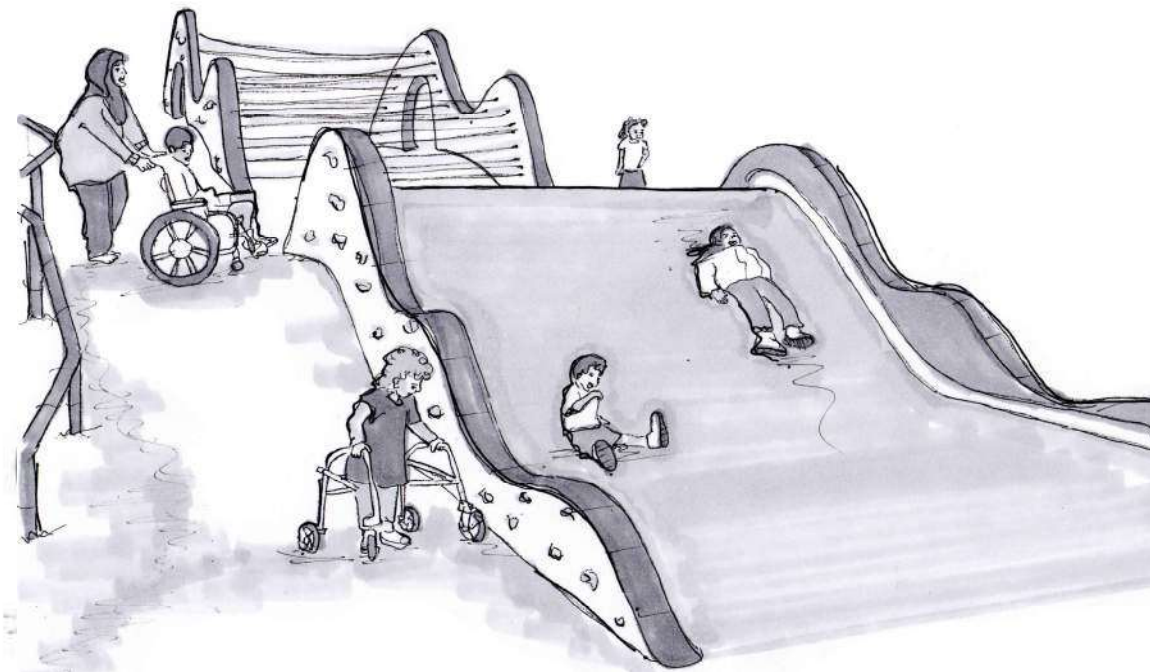
One last point on inclusion is that children of different ages have wildly varying abilities. For example, a ladder or fireman's pole that is used with ease by a 7 year old may be a neck-breaking deathtrap to a toddler. So regardless of whether you have children with ‘disability’ in your community, all playgrounds have to deal with children whose abilities are very different.

In this manual you will discover tips and strategies that you can deploy while following the process laid out in The Five Step Manual.



Designing for Intersections

It is human instinct to try and categorize and differentiate. This can be helpful in some areas of our life, but when we categorize people by ability, it can lead to isolation and exclusion – and this can manifest as bad playground design. A playground with a handicap-accessible slide and a regular slide conforms to a bias we have to categorize people of different abilities and separate them. It is easier to build two slides than it is to think of a way to build a new form of slide that allows children of all abilities to play together on the same playground equipment. We want to look for ways that children of different abilities can interact with each other. When a feature has different challenges associated with it and a range of difficulty, children with different levels of ability will interact with it and each other. When designing for inclusive play, consider how you might create spaces of “intersection” on the playground. “Intersections” create opportunities for children of all abilities to interact and play together.



Jowonio School, an all inclusive elementary school located in Syracuse, New York, likes to say they make things “only as special as necessary.” This is a good way to think about the design of an inclusive playground. Determining what needs you will have to accommodate and then making them blend into the design is very important

www.jowonio.org

"When working with students, it is often easier to categorize than to spend the time and treat everyone as an individual. However, everyone has their own abilities and disabilities. To create an inclusive classroom, take the time to identify the individual needs of all students."

- Rick Hansen Foundation

www.rickhansen.com

In designing spaces of “intersection”, it’s helpful to think about ability on a scale, instead of categorizing children as “disabled” and “able-bodied”. “Toddler”, “tween” When you think about the strengths of children on a scale, you can design spaces where features have a range of difficulty instead of a distinction like the handicap slide. Looking for “intersections” within a design where children of different abilities end up interacting and playing together is essential. Van Campenvaart, a playground designed by Carve in Amsterdam, deals with the idea of intersections very well. The design employs a ramp that allows children who use wheelchairs to ascend into the playground. The ramp crosses the playground back and forth on its way up. This in turn creates triangular sections of the playground populated by whimsical features that children with a wide range of abilities can play on. As children move throughout the playground they interact with other children with different ranges of abilities. Opportunities for play exist at these intersections.



Source: www.carve.nl/en/item/22

Each triangular section of the playground can be seen as having a scale of ability from the ramp on one corner to a feature such as a rope ladder on the other. It dissolves categories by placing similar features with different ability levels on the same triangular section and intersecting them with the ramp.



Source: www.carve.nl/en/item/22

Every child does not need to access every inch of a playground for the playground to be successful, but the more intersections there are, the more that the differences between children become strengths and stimulus for games.

But what if children with low physical ability are confronted with an element that is too challenging? Firstly, children develop very fast and need constant boundary pushing activities to progress. If given enough time to experiment, children are very good at managing the line between something being challenging as opposed to being dangerous. Try to create elements that have a range of challenge where children have the option to get off or stop at the level they feel is challenging enough, e.g., an angled balance beam that gets narrower and higher on a gentle slope so children can assess as they go.