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Concept Map of the Conversation



Summary

The morning began with an introduction by Jane Clark Chermayeff that explored today's diminished state of play and the juxtaposition of our increasingly risk-averse society with current research into the role of risk in healthy child development. Julian Richter, Sr. then discussed the importance of play value and risk management, from both the German legal perspective and his personal vision for improving the state of childhood for the future. Roger Hart initiated a wide-ranging discussion of play in America that touched on issues as diverse as child development, legal procedures, and the power of custodians to veto design plans. In the end, the group arrived at the consensus that what is needed is both revised policy and standards and new cultural norms. It was acknowledged that this conversation, in various forms, has already been going on for a number of decades but has not yet created significant change. To make a difference, we will need to adopt a broader perspective that looks at challenges to child development overall and brings together a truly interdisciplinary coalition of advocates and experts.

What We Heard

A collection of design recommendations and key quotes from the discussion:

- Create play environments that minimize children's anxiety and frustration
- Design risks such that children can see, understand, and explore them
- Design for the behavior you want to see in children as well as adults (ex: hills slow children down)
- Think carefully about enclosures: where needed, what type, how high, how much space they enclose

"We must think about risk perception and risk awareness." –Nadine Levick

"Playgrounds are spaces that bring together people of all ages and abilities." –Christopher Nolan

"Are we entering a POST-PLAYGROUND ERA?"
–Paige Johnson

"Kids don't understand the repercussions of risk because they don't have experience with risk."
–Elaine Gangel

Moving Forward

A number of small, feasible ideas were identified over the course of the conversation:

1. Think about language used to talk to parents: Focus on the benefits, find language that resonates (ex: "challenge" is a better choice than "risk")
2. Think about how risk is evaluated and communicated on playgrounds
3. Acknowledge the concerns of a diverse group of design allies, including maintenance staff
4. Develop creative design solutions that respond the layers of standards playgrounds must adhere to (ASTM/CPSC + ADA)
5. Find a way to align concerns about play value with growing public concern about the competitiveness of education and the erosion of play opportunities
6. For POLICY MAKERS: Bring a child development perspective to bear on play-related policy

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Standards and Guidelines

ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials)

CPSC (Consumer Product Safety Commission)

ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act)

EN-1176 (European Standards for Playground Equipment)

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Noteworthy Playgrounds and Play Advocates

Beauvoir Outdoors

Official site: <http://www.beauvoirschool.org/beauvoiroutdoors>

APE photos: <http://archplayequipment.com/richter/beauvoir- outdoors.html>

Brooklyn Bridge Park

Official site: <http://www.brooklynbridgepark.org/events/recre- ation-facilities/playgrounds>

APE photos: <http://archplayequipment.com/richter/brooklyn- bridge-park.html>

Prospect Park – Donald & Barbara Zucker Natural Exploration Area

Official site: <http://www.prospectpark.org/about/community- news-updates-post/zucker-natural-exploration-area>

Blogger photos: <http://mommypoppins.com/prospect-park- playground-donald-barbara-zucker-natural-exploration-area>

10 Adventure Playgrounds in the UK

<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/article-1356402625938/>

UK Play Advocacy Groups:

www.playengland.org.uk,

www.playwales.org.uk

Life without a swing is a misunderstanding!

–Hugo Kukelhaus