

SUPPLEMENT

PARK PRACTICE *Grist*

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NEW CONCEPTS IN PLAYGROUNDS — A CHILD'S WORLD OF TOTAL ADVENTURES

A new concept for the creation of scientifically planned play areas for children has been developed to assure safe and constructive play. It is based on children's behaviour characteristics such as:

1. Children are uninhibited, imaginative and energetic.
2. Children have very short spans of interest.
3. Children grow and change in size.
4. Children have a basic need to be successful (in their play activities); being successful builds up their confidence and keeps them interested in their activities.
5. Children spend between 800 and 900 hours a year in unsupervised play.

Taking these characteristics into consideration, children—regardless of age—are treated as persons and as persons they are challenged on their own terms and with forms they can readily understand and relate to. These forms are child-scaled conceptions of trees, rocks and shelters. They are designed to trigger the imaginations of creative uninhibited children and channel their energies into constructive play. The platforms are scaled to fit three basic play groupings: (A) pre-school, ages 1 to 5, (B) lower elementary, ages 5 to 9 and (C) upper elementary, ages 9 to 13.

To take advantage of a child's short span of interest, the platforms (equipment) are placed adjacent to each other in the Playscape so that when a child loses his interest in one play situation, a short step leads him to a new play possibility. To the child, each platform can be many things, to be used in numerous ways depending on individual levels of skill and momentary interest. Since success is important to a child's learning process, as he masters one situation he goes on to another—in each instance setting his own standards.

As the child gains confidence, his interest is stimulated to explore new activities. This play process defeats boredom and keeps a child interested and constructively playing in the Playscape for hours. Most important, through the self-directed unsupervised fun of dramatic and physical activity children increase their proficiency in hand and eye coordination, balance and muscular development.

Safety in the Playscape is increased by making the platforms (equipment) stationary. The equipment does not move; the children do the moving. The small space required for a Playscape is especially important where space is limited, and in large parks it is a safety factor—separating the activity of playing children from that of organized sports, as well as cycling and running.

PLAYSCAPES MEET THE PLAY NEEDS OF CHILDREN



Swimming and Play

Between swims, children climb, crawl and cavort in a PCA Playscape at Valley Stream, New York. Installed in a pool area of a public park, the Playscape provides safe and satisfying play experiences after lunch and during other periods when children stay out of the water; vies with the pool as an attraction of the park. Note that the children are playing happily without adult supervision—a boon for parents who need relaxation too!

SOLVES THE PROBLEMS OF MANAGEMENT



The Playground of Tomorrow

Youthful visitors to the New York World's Fair discover a new world of fun in the shell-ters, "rocks" and "trees" in the playground at the Demonstration Center. The three Playscape circles at this playground illustrate how play areas can be "age-graded" with separate spots for pre-schoolers and lower and upper elementary age groups. Called the "Playground of Tomorrow", this actually is a playground of today in many progressive communities.

FREES PARENTS FROM WORRY



Swing and Sway

This playground in a public park in Dover, New Jersey is separated into three play groupings: one for pre-school children, ages 1 to 5, one for elementary school children, ages 6 to 13, and the third play area is a Cat's Cradle—a play prop designed to increase the balance and coordination of children of all ages. The playground is located near an outdoor concert area and is lighted at night. While adults are listening to concerts, the playground attracts children away from the music area and keeps them constructively playing and occupied for long periods of time.

THE PCA PLAY PROPS

PCA Playscape plans utilize play props (equipment) in different ways according to area, age, or the special needs voiced by playground administrators. However, the play props, basically, are divided into four groups . . . with many variations in each. Some substitute for natural elements—such as:

"TREES"

The PCA "trees", usually clustered together in "magic forests", are constructed of reinforced natural white concrete—strong and heat-resistant, silicone-treated to resist water absorption. Saddle-type seats and crowns are provided by the design of the "branches". Platforms which can be used to sit or stand on or as toadstool-like shades to sit beneath are also provided. The trees range in height from lilliputian-sized (24") for pre-school children to jungle trees (60") for 13-year-olds.



"TREES"

"SHELL-TERS"

Dome-shaped shells of cast aluminum are caves, ships, playhouses, crows' nests, forts . . . whatever busy young imaginations proclaim them to be. They can be installed concavely or convexly or upended to form curved walls. They are used in a variety of ways in combination with sliding poles and/or with such climbing apparatus as cylindrical "ring dings" and grill-like "wing dings". These versatile shapes are made of non-corrosive aluminum, require no maintenance.



"SHELL-TERS"

"NETS"

Wiggle wall, cat's cradle, wigwam, monkey cage, spider web are some of the wonderfully expressive names of platforms which are colorful networks of linked cast aluminum bars, anchored to the ground at strategic points. They invite all kinds of acrobatic, yet safe, activity—and the more acrobats, the merrier! Joints where connecting rings link the bars are pinch-free; fingers are absolutely safe!



"NETS"

"ROCKS"

Serving the same climbing, hiding-behind, and exploring purposes as real rocks are the PCA Polyblocks grouped together in any number of ways. They can be stepping stones, mountains, cliffs, spiral staircases, bridges. Hexagonal in shape, the blocks are made of galvanized pressed steel; the cover plates of cast aluminum that form the tread tops are permanently anodized in bright colors.



"ROCKS"

Play is the serious business of children. They learn through play. To create the proper environment for play and learning, PCA produces planned Playscapes to

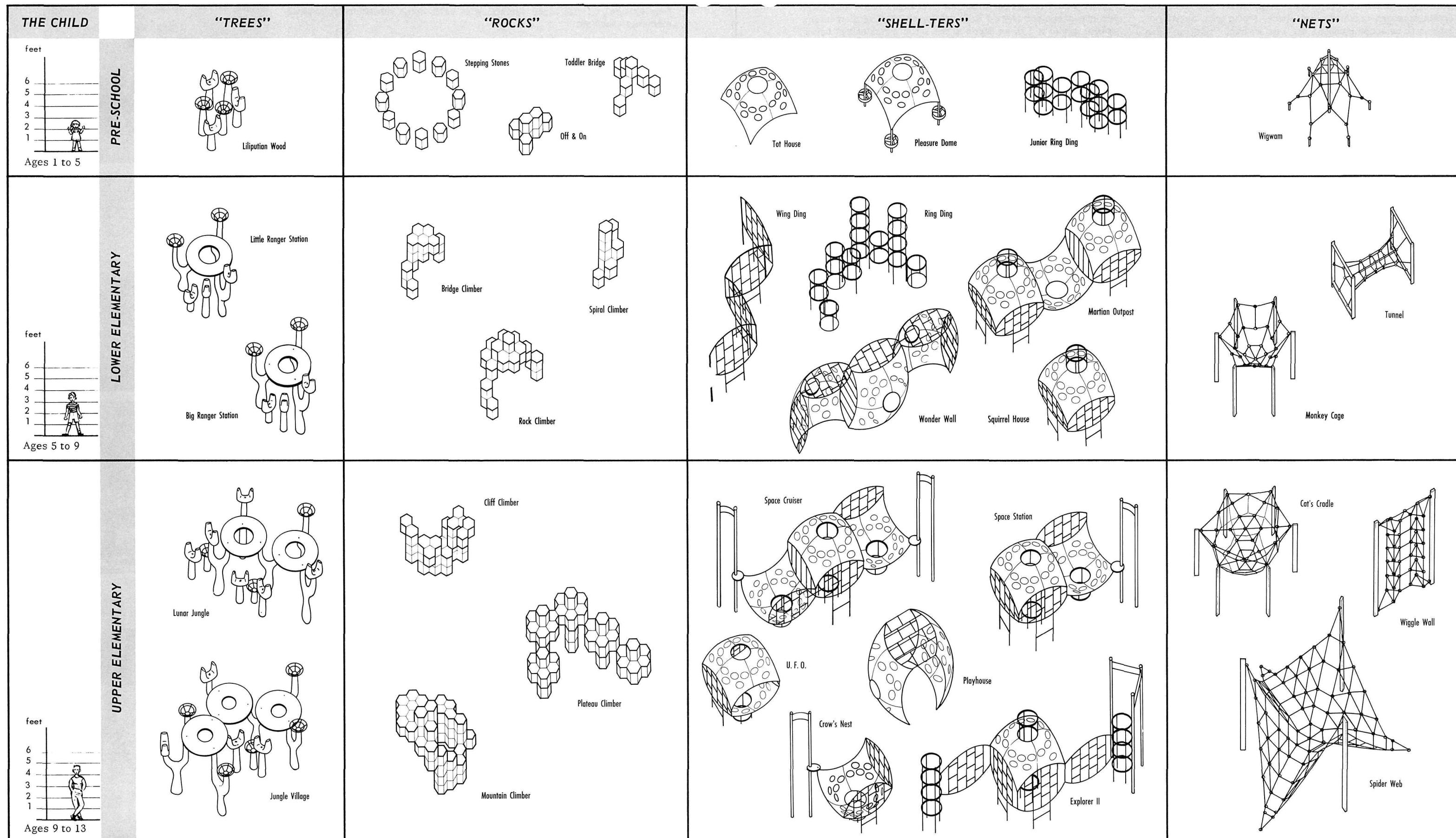
capture and hold the interest of three separate age groups of children: preschool, aged 1 to 5, lower elementary,

aged 5 to 9, and upper elementary, aged 9 to 13. The basic PCA components—trees, rocks, shelters and networks—are used in different ways to challenge and develop

the skills of the different age group. The designed-to-age Playscapes are separated physically—not rigidly, but by

such subtle devices as graduated ground levels and low-sitting wall enclosures. This subtle separation is a factor in preventing accidents which sometimes are

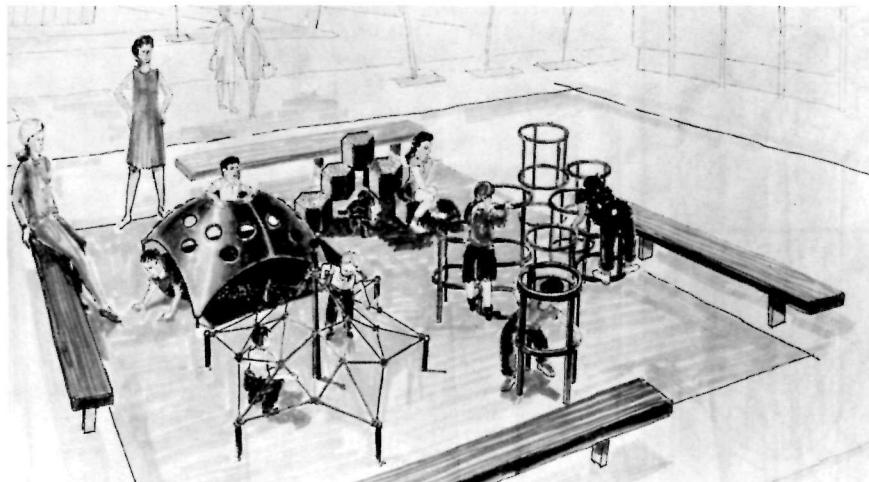
caused by smaller and less skilled children getting in the way of older, more adept ones.



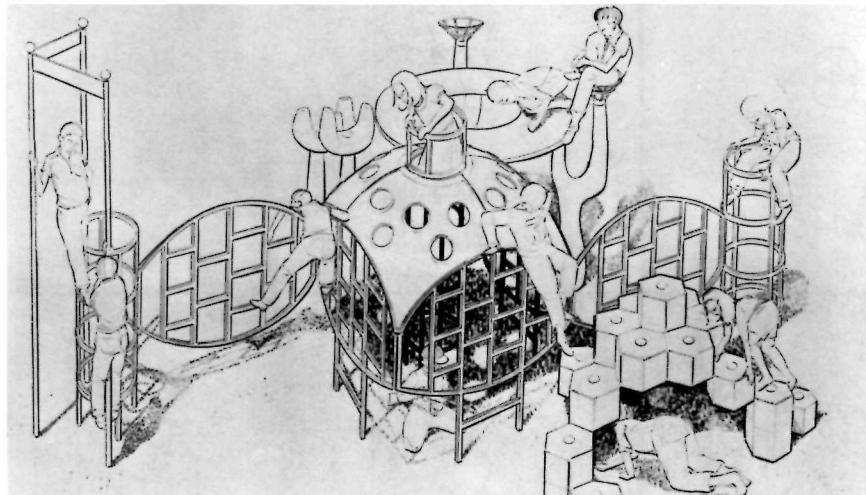
PACKAGED PLAYSCAPES MAKE PLANNING EASY

"PACKAGED" PLAYSCAPES AVAILABLE. PCA has created "packaged" economy playscapes suitable for use wherever certain standard conditions (of space, topography, number of children to be accommodated, etc.) exist. Each "package" can be altered somewhat by eliminating one or two of the playforms

to reduce the cost. These may be added later when the community's park budget permits. The "packages" have been done for pre-schoolers (ages 1 to 5) and for children of elementary school age (6 to 13), as shown in the artist's renderings below and opposite.



Designed for children ages 1 to 6, the pre-school "package" at left includes a Tot House (perforated shell-ter), a Wigwam network, a Toddler Bridge fashioned from Polyblocks and Jr. Ring Ding (circular climbing ladders). This Playscape, developed as a result of five years research, accommodates more than 30 playing children in 400 sq. ft. The benches shown—which serve as informal boundaries and provide seating for adult supervisors—are not included in the "package", but can be constructed easily by park maintenance men from common pipe, pipe flanges, and wood planks in standard lumber yard sizes.



Together, in 500 sq. ft. are Explorer II created from an aluminum shell-ter and a variety of climbing grills and sliding poles, an intricate grouping of Polyblocks called a Rock Climber, and a Ranger Station which is a grouping of the concrete tree shapes combined with circular platforms. Sixty elementary school age children can play here at the same time in perfect safety. Although the climbing forms give the illusion of height to challenge the children, none is higher than 5 1/2 feet where a child might fall off. Closeness of the props accomplishes two purposes: (1) when interest wanes in one play situation, new challenges are just a step away; and (2) it keeps running games and vehicle riding outside the area eliminating collision accidents. Supervision is not necessary in this Playscape.

INSTALLATION IS EASY

Installation instructions accompany every shipment of PCA equipment and any maintenance crew will find them easy to follow. Tools required are those commonly available. In the photo at right, installation of play props is shown at Tillis Park, St. Louis, Mo. with park maintenance men in the process of bolting together PCA Polyblocks. The cement mixer is on hand to produce concrete needed for securing the equipment in the ground area laid out for it. Usually, most PCA Playscapes can be completed within two to three days' time.

PCA maintains a planning and consultation service available on request and involving no obligation. A written request for this service should be accompanied by such information as age group(s) and number of children to be accommodated, budget allotment, space, kind of site and existing surfacing; and by photographs of site, if possible. Based on this information, PCA makes recommendations in a detailed plan.

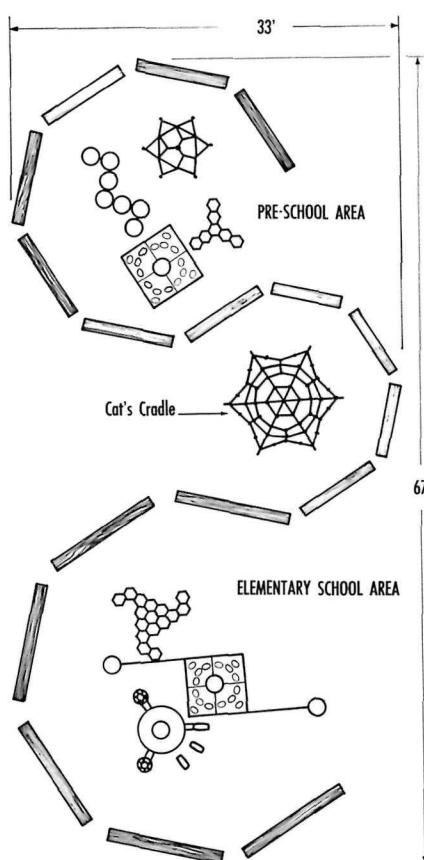


ANATOMY OF A PLAYSCAPE

Cat's Cradle—one of the network platforms—serves as a liaison between the pre-school Playscape illustrated above and the elementary age Playscape below. Flexible and bouncy, it provides a give-and-take, push-and-pull activity that develops muscles, improves coordination and guarantees plenty of fun.

In the Elementary School Playscape children, aged 6 to 13, can relate to and be challenged by the play equipment which is child-scaled conceptions of trees, rocks and shelters.

To take advantage of a child's short span of interest, the play equipment is spaced near each other so that when a child loses interest in one play situation, a short step leads him to a new play possibility. To the child, each platform can be many things, to be used in numerous ways depending on individual levels of skill and momentary interest. Since success is important to a child's learning process, as he masters one situation he goes on to another, in each instance setting his own standard.



The pre-school Playscape for children aged 1 to 6 includes safety-engineered, imagination-stimulating play structures. They are specifically proportioned to the scale and physical capabilities of pre-schoolers. A child's imagination can make of the play equipment whatever play prop he desires. Since the equipment is based on concepts he understands—caves, shelters, rocks--each play prop provides different opportunities for active play.

In the small area required by the pre-school Playscape, children with short interest spans can be easily looked after by keeping them constructively occupied with a wide selection of challenging play possibilities. A few steps to each adjacent piece of equipment provides a whole new choice of creative play challenges. Triggered by their creative imagination, children will stay in the pre-school Playscape for prolonged play periods and at the same time derive a well rounded physical workout.

Safety engineering eliminates the four most important situations that cause accidents in pre-school playground activity.

Running Children — The playwall-bench creates the boundaries of the pre-school Playscape and defines a specific entrance. The 18" high playwall-bench prevents full-tilt running through the area and protects groups of playing children. The equipment, spaced only a few steps apart, does not allow running games or invite skaters or tricyclists.

Lack of Close Supervision of pre-school children. The playwall seats permit mothers to be comfortably and safely seated practically reaching distance of their children.

Moving Equipment — The equipment in the pre-school Playscape is completely stationary. Injury from unpredictable actions of flying swing seats or seesaw boards is eliminated.

Fights and Squabbles — The play equipment in the pre-school Playscape is not rides, thus turn-taking is not necessary. All the children can play at the same time. Pre-schoolers need not contend with older, bigger and more aggressive children. The low-scaled equipment has no attraction or challenge for older, more physically adept children.

IMPORTANT SAFETY FEATURES BUILT INTO PCA PRE-SCHOOL AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLAYSCAPES ARE:

1. The play equipment does not move, the children do the moving.
2. The highest point above ground to which a child can climb on the trees, rocks or shelters is 5 1/2 feet.
3. The platforms are not turn-taking or thrill rides. There are no fights and squabbles over turns. All the children have an opportunity to play at the same time.
4. The one-step-to-another equipment arrangement within the Playscape leaves no space for dangerous cross-purpose activity such as running, tag games, cycling or roller skating—thus creating a safe, unsupervised play area.
5. It economizes in the use of land, requiring only 500 sq. ft.
6. A single tree or small canopy can shade the play area for extended summer use.
7. Noise of playing children is localized, as close spacing of the platforms reduces the need for children to shout to one another.
8. Littering within the small play area is localized to a small, quickly cleaned space.
9. The Playscape confines equipment play to a minimum area, and allows adjacent open spaces to be useful for organized sports without interference from younger children.
10. Since the Playscape requires no supervision, it frees recreation personnel to concentrate on other organized playground activity.
11. Annual maintenance on the Playscape is reduced to a minimum since the materials that make the play props are pre-cast reinforced concrete, cast aluminum, galvanized steel, and epoxy painted steel, and have no moving parts that can wear out.
12. Directing children's energy toward constructive activity for long periods of time minimizes the time children can spend in play which may be destructive to property.
13. The rugged construction of the equipment resists vandalism.
14. Approximately 60 children can play on a Playscape at the same time. The cost per playing child averages approximately \$40—considerably lower than the cost per playing child for conventional equipment.
15. The Playscape can be used year round. Since it is made of permanent outdoor materials, it is not necessary to dismantle for bad weather seasons.



PHILADELPHIA, PA.

West Park Housing Project in Philadelphia was made a happier place for the many children who live there by the installation of four Playscapes designed for three different age groups. Housing and apartment-house managers find the constructive play offered by PCA Playscapes an aid in the prevention of vandalism and general mischief-making. Maintenance and clean-up are kept at a minimum also.

NEW YORK CITY, N.Y.

Riverside Drive Park at 76th Street in New York City gained a new perspective with the addition of PCA Playscapes. The two play areas--separated by the friendly barrier of a play wall--were designed for pre-school and lower elementary groups respectively. Because the platforms have no moving parts (a significant safety factor), Playscapes require little space, can be installed in any existing park.



SANTA MONICA, CALIF.

Douglas Park in Santa Monica has been enriched by the addition of networks, polyblocks, shell-ters and "trees" that comprise two adjoining PCA Playscapes--one for pre-school children and one for elementary youngsters. Eighty to ninety children can play on the Playscapes at the same time. All platforms allow for simultaneous group play--no need to wait to "take turns"--there's room for everyone. Concrete footings secure all the equipment in this sandy location.

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expressly for Park Practice GRIST by

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