



# What if...

**we could transform cities into playful learning centers alive with fun opportunities for children that prepare them for success in a global world?**

**What if, on any given neighborhood block, we could find kids playing together while building skills in math, science, language, and reading?** What if children not only learned “basic” skills – but also learned how to learn – experimenting, taking risks, and gaining confidence by playing in everyday places?

Now more than ever, as we recognize the great disparities along racial and ethnic lines, we need to ensure that all children, and not just some children, have equitable access to critical interventions that will support them now and in the future.



# Playful Learning Landscapes Action Network



## Our Mission:

To infuse our neighborhoods with playful learning opportunities that encourage cross-generational interaction and enhance children's cognitive and social development, better preparing them for success in a changing world.



## The Vision:

Imagine cities and public spaces where the science of how children learn and develop healthy relationships is built into the very foundations of design – and families and communities are stronger, healthier, and more powerful because they have the confidence and skills they need to forge the futures they want.



photo: Sahar Coston-Hardy



photo: Sahar Coston-Hardy

## Defining

# Playful Learning



Kids learn and develop skills from all kinds of play, but they learn best when learning goals are intentionally integrated into play from the start, and when they are guided by an adult, or the environment itself, toward a particular learning goal.

We can think about play as running along a spectrum from free play to instructional games. Evidence suggests that when people have a learning goal that they hope to achieve, guided play is better than free play for achieving learning.

# What Kids Learn... The 6 Cs

## Building the skills for future success.

To flourish in this future, kids will need to master a suite of skills that complement and evolve with each other. We call them the 6 Cs:



**Critical Thinking**

**Creative Innovation**

**Communication**

**Collaboration**

**Content**

**Confidence**

# The Project: Urban Thinkscape

Turning community spaces (primarily bus stops) into hubs for learning, so families can play math, literacy, and even impulse control games while they wait.



**The Learning Goal:** Urban Thinkscape encourages playful interactions between children and caregivers that feature Content in math, science, and literacy, as well as Collaboration and Communication with peers, adults, and family members.



**The Design:** Playful Learning Landscapes Action network will provide you with the designs required to transform your community space into a thriving Urban Thinkscape.



**The Science:** Preliminary results suggest that families at the bus stop are now interacting around the games while talking about numbers and shapes. They are moving, thinking, and talking about language, literacy, and STEM.

Does it include the 6 Cs?



Communication



Collaboration



Content



Critical  
Thinking



Creative  
Innovation



Confidence





# Action Steps

For building an  
Urban Thinkscape  
in your community

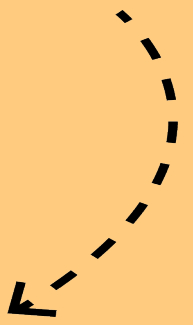
# Action Steps for Creating an Urban Thinkscape



1

Start with an idea and a site for creating joyful learning experiences for a community.

Enhance literacy or STEM achievement by activating an Urban Thinkscape in an underutilized public space where community members gather, such as a bus stop, a shopping area or a route to school. Identify a community and a potential site(s) for Urban Thinkscape.



# 2

## Identify Partners & Build a Team

**Successful initiatives require planning, coordination and community buy-in.**

**Consider who should be sitting at the table with you? How will the team work together and allocate responsibilities?**

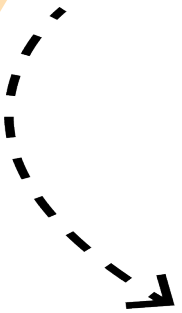
- Create a project team who represent the critical stakeholders and who are willing and able to see the project through.
- Consult with community members to ensure that they are on board with the idea. The greater community ownership the greater the potential for sustainability and relevance.
- Identify potential partners who might support the work.
- Build a volunteer community group that will work with you.





# 3 Plan for Needs

**Identify who controls the site on which you want to build Urban Thinkscape and ensure that the site is appropriate and available for use. Ensure that you have any permissions that are needed to proceed with the work and know if there are any regulations governing the activity.**



**Assess potential vendors who can execute the project design within the allocated budget.**

- Decide with your vendor which material will work best for your location (consider weather, usage, long term maintenance).
- Consider how signage or “prompts” are mounted.

**Ensure that there are plans to maintain the site and to rejuvenate activities as needed. This might include identifying resources for maintenance and oversight.**



# 4 Communicate With Broader Community

Promote the Idea



Share on social media

Print and post signage

Get on the agenda of a community meeting



# 5

## Launch Your Urban Thinkscape

**Consider a kick-off event such as a Block Party to show off the Urban Thinkscape!**

**Observe how families use and interact with the space. Share your experience with other communities.**

**Enjoy! And think about how you can continue to spread Playful Learning throughout your city.**

