

# The learning and health promoting schoolyard – preschool teachers reason about the design of the schoolyard

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The objective of this project is to increase the knowledge about how preschool teachers reason about the design of the schoolyard to promote health and learning. The objective is also to understand what is needed to be able to develop the schoolyard.

Learning is situated, according to the socio-cultural perspective, and cannot be understood without knowledge about the learning environment. A diverse school setting, indoors as well as outdoors, affords a variety of play and other activities that may promote learning and health. The design of the outdoor (as well as indoor) setting therefore is considered to be important.

The method of the present project was group interviews. I interviewed three groups consisting of 2-8 preschool teachers (and similar personnel categories). Each group was interviewed twice. I asked preschool teachers to describe their schoolyard and what affordances for health and learning it presents. I also asked them how they wished to change the yard and what conditions were necessary to realize changes. I recorded the interviews and transcribed to be able to analyze the answers.

The preschool teachers described schoolyards rich in design and material. They also described what kinds of activities the settings afford. Even though they expressed that the yard affords a variety of activities, they had a lot of suggestions on how to improve the yard to increase health and learning. The teachers also described changes they had realized before as well as changes that were not realized. According to the interviewed teachers it is complicated to make changes in the outdoor settings, much more complicated than in the indoor settings. To be able to develop the schoolyard there has to be ideas, knowledge and time. There also has to be support from the colleagues, the director and the parents. There are also rules such as safety guidelines to consider. Additionally, an agreement with the municipality and the property management is necessary, and this has to be negotiated.

To conclude, even though the preschool teachers are rather satisfied with the outdoor settings, they wish to develop the schoolyards to increase opportunities for health and learning. They however describe a lot of obstacles and asks for new routines on how to allocate resources and reach agreements.