

“Space to Grow: What’s New,” *Space to Grow, Healthy Schools Campaign, link to video*
Full article text:

Two New Schoolyards Are Open

This fall, we wrapped up construction and cut the ribbons at two new Space to Grow schoolyards—one at Orozco Community Academy in Pilsen, and the other at Willa Cather Elementary in East Garfield Park.

The schoolyards now feature new play equipment, turf fields, edible gardens, rain gardens and permeable surfaces to help absorb rainwater. These new schoolyard features bring great benefits for boosting physical activity, limiting neighborhood flooding and increasing community connection to the school. We hosted student and community planting days at each school, as well as celebratory ribbon cutting ceremonies that were attended by students, community members, Space to Grow partners, local aldermen and other city officials.

The Dean of Students at Cather wrote a special song for the ribbon cutting ceremony—what a great way to celebrate their new schoolyard! You can see a [video of his performance here](#). It has been inspiring to watch these schoolyard transformations take place, and we’re looking forward to working with the Orozco and Cather school communities over the coming years to help them take full advantage of their new outdoor spaces!

Innovative Transformations Are Taking Place

The team at the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago was able to capture some amazing aerial views of the Space to Grow schoolyards. Below are two photos that highlight some of these amazing transformations.



Virgil I. Grissom Elementary School in the Hegewish neighborhood, completed in Fall 2014. Grissom's schoolyard transformation included new play equipment, a jogging track, an outdoor classroom, turf playing field, multi-purpose courts, new Learning Gardens from The Kitchen Community and several native gardens as well as permeable asphalt, permeable pavers, permeable poured rubber surfaces and other natural elements.



Donald J. Morrill Elementary School in Chicago Lawn, completed in Fall 2014. Morrill's schoolyard transformation included new play equipment, a jogging track, an outdoor classroom and community gathering space, turf playing field, basketball courts, new Learning Gardens from The Kitchen Community and several native gardens as well as using permeable asphalt, permeable pavers, permeable poured rubber surfaces and other natural elements.

Chicago Innovation Awards: Top 100 Finalist

Space to Grow was honored to be nominated as a Top 100 Finalist for the 2015 Chicago Innovation Awards. The Chicago Innovation Awards aim to strengthen Chicago's economic future and build "the spirit of innovation throughout the community." Space to Grow was nominated in the People's Choice category. Thanks to everyone who voted for Space to Grow!

American Council of Engineering Companies of Illinois: Special Achievement Award

Primera Engineers, Ltd received the 2016 Special Achievement Award for their work on the transformation of Morrill Elementary's schoolyard from the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) of Illinois. Congratulations to Primera, and thanks to all the firms who are helping make Space to Grow schoolyards so successful.

Nationwide Presentations

Space to Grow continues to serve as a model for schoolyard development around the country. Jaime Zaplatosch, Vice President of Community Engagement and Education at Openlands, recently delivered presentations about Space to Grow at the National League of Cities municipal Leadership Academy in Salt Lake City and at the US EPA Learning Lab in Maryland. Meg Kelly, Space to Grow Project Manager at Healthy Schools Campaign, recently presented to the Green Schools Consortium of Milwaukee.

Space to Grow Pilot Study Shows Increase in Physical Activity Among Students

Earlier this year, the Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children (CLOCC) conducted a small, longitudinal pilot study to measure the impact of the Space to Grow schoolyard redesign on students' physical activity and the community's social cohesion. Two schools, Morrill Elementary in the Chicago Lawn neighborhood and Grissom Elementary in the Hegewisch neighborhood, participated in the study.

Notable findings of the study include:

- **Students are more active.** Data collected from accelerometers used to measure students' physical activity before and after the schoolyard redesign showed notable increases in moderate to vigorous physical activity during the week with statistically significant increases among boys (from 20.3 min to 49.6 min) and promising (though not statistically significant) trends among girls (from 22.8 min to 28.1 min).
- **Activity increased in all grade levels studied.** The evaluation included three grade levels (first, fourth and seventh grades) and students in all three grades showed increased activity. Statistically significant increases were evident among the first graders (19.5 min to 27.8 min) and 7th graders (7.8 minutes to 27.9 minutes). MVPA also increased among 4th graders from 31.7 min to 39.2 minutes.
- **Community response is positive.** Notable trends in the community member survey data suggest community members felt more positive about their community's social cohesion and the number of safe places for kids to play and be active in their neighborhood.

This is exciting information as it shows that Space to Grow schoolyards are working! Space to Grow will work with Loyola University and the Nutrition Policy Institute at the University of California to conduct a larger, longitudinal study to validate these findings and to investigate the links between green schoolyards and other outcomes including students' behaviors, school attendance, teacher morale, frequency of schoolyard use, and neighborhood trust and safety.