

Contest Brings Designs for Outdoor Play

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Source: www.TurfMagazine.com

The industry continues to see news and research studies showing the benefits of encouraging children to embrace unstructured play in rich outdoor environments.

This year, the Delaware Valley Association for the Education of Young Children and the Community Design Collaboration in Philadelphia partnered to bring attention to the critical role play, especially in well-designed outdoor environments, can have on children's social, physical, intellectual and even emotional development.



Photos: Community Design Collaboration

As part of their initiative, they had a [Play Space Design Competition](#) this year, funded by the William Penn Foundation. The contest's mission was to find ideas for outdoor play and learning environments on three sites in low-income neighborhoods with very little park space. Each space was also affiliated with a facility that serves young children – from a school to a recreation center to a library. There were three winning designs – one for each site.

One of the winners was a design for Haverford Bright Futures and included experts from Atkin Olshin Schade Architects, Meliora Environmental Design LLC, Viridian Landscape Studio, International Consultants and The Parent-Infant Center.

The winning scheme was inspired by the classic children's board game: Chutes & Ladders. The board game is brought to life in three dimensions with the construction of two large-scale "ladders" that act as shading devices and with a lushly planted "chute" that represents the long buried Mill Creek. This connects the front and rear of the site while dividing the play space into public and private zones.



Photos: Community Design Collaboration

Shade trees define outdoor classrooms and rich plantings support rain gardens that help manage rain water in multiple ways.

The board game is realized on a smaller scale with landing spaces represented by eight outdoor playrooms – each with a different ground surface and unique play theme. Smaller chutes and ladders throughout the site reinforce the theme.