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ABSTRACT

The creative/adventure playground, a restrictive modification of the true adventure playground, has been developed in various Vancouver elementary schools because it stimulates self-expression and has greater possibilities for play than does the traditional playground. This evaluation includes student, school personnel, parent, and community response to a questionnaire on the creative/adventure program, playground use statistics, and recommendations for improvement. (AG)

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AN EVALUATION OF CREATIVE/ADVENTURE PLAYGROUNDS  
AND THEIR USE BY PUPILS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

June, 1971

Marilyn J. Reid

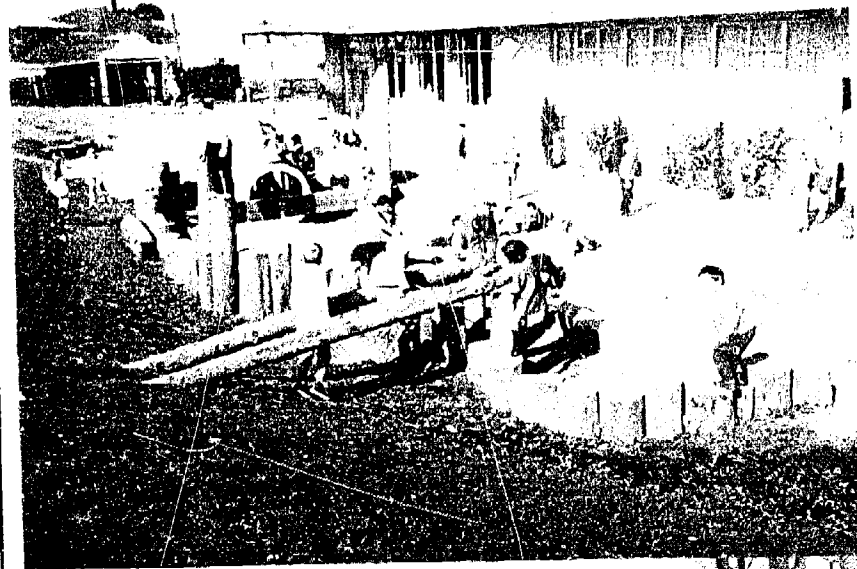
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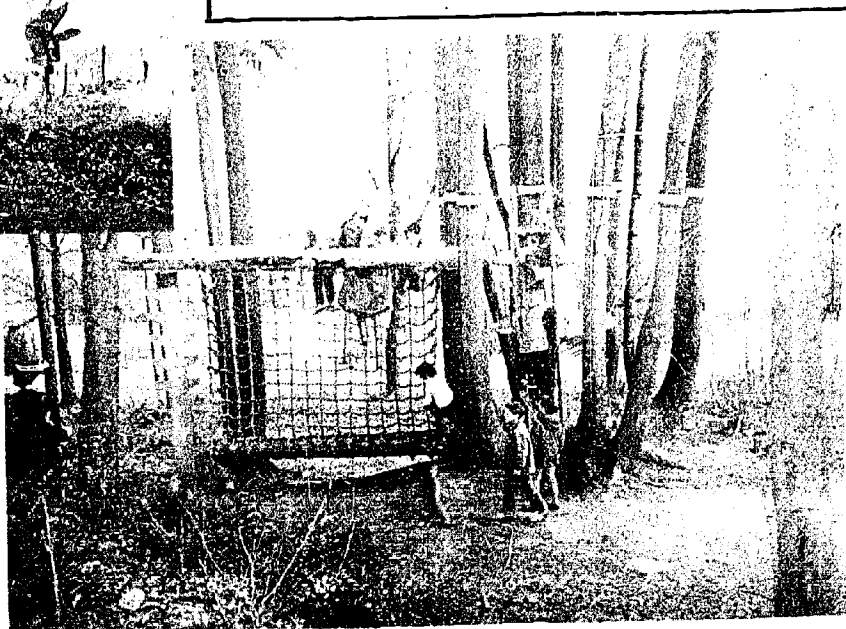
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An overview of a section of the playground at Graham Bruce School.



A cargo net and other climbing apparatus at Queen Mary School.



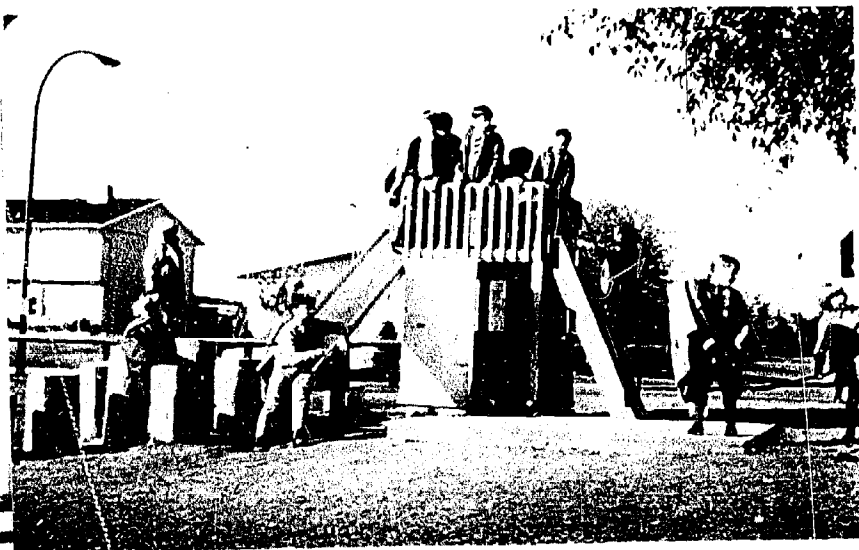
Part of the playground at Dr. Annie B. Jamieson School showing the rounded slide, a semi-underground tunnel and the fort.



An example of the forts which are popular with the children. In the foreground are concrete tunnels.



A "Wendy House" complete with steps, slide and look-out.



Opportunities for climbing are a central and popular feature of many of these playgrounds.



An old boat and a cut-down tree give some idea of the wide assortment of objects to be found on these playgrounds.



When provided with the materials children will construct their own "buildings", as on a true adventure playground.



## INTRODUCTION

"Adventure Playgrounds" attempt to create in the city the play opportunities enjoyed by children raised in the country. They are designed to stimulate and exercise the mind and body in a manner not possible in traditional playgrounds.

True adventure playgrounds bear a strong resemblance to junk yards of waste materials. Although there is no set form for adventure playgrounds, they have some common features. They contain numerous assorted items, mostly discarded junk—lumber, nails, furniture, tires, boats, etc.—which the children use as they wish. Frequently, water, animals, means for fire, and gardening areas are also included. An overall requirement is that the materials be manipulative (that is, have many movable parts) and be simple enough to stimulate self-expression. In order to be used fully, an adventure playground should have a supervisor to provide leadership and to be responsible for maintenance of equipment.

This type of playground as a planned play area originated in Denmark in the early 1940's and the idea has spread rapidly, first throughout Europe (particularly in England), and more recently in North America.

In Vancouver, attempts have been made in recent years to develop adventure playgrounds on some school grounds. However, these would be categorized as "Creative Playgrounds" rather than true adventure playgrounds. For the purposes of this report, these will be referred to as "Creative/Adventure Playgrounds".

A creative (or creative/adventure) playground has characteristics of both a true adventure playground and the traditional playground which is generally a level area of asphalt, grass, or gravel, on which may be erected swings, slides, and apparatus for climbing. The creative playground is less manipulative, less

challenging, and more restricted in the variety of activities possible than the true adventure playground but it allows more rein for imagination and greater possibilities for play than a traditional playground. When, for any reason, true adventure playgrounds cannot be built, a creative playground is often the solution. By its nature the creative playground is generally more suited to the younger than to the older child.

The creative/adventure playgrounds at Vancouver schools have come about in various ways. For some schools, members of the P. T. A. and neighbours have done most of the construction. In others, it has been done by School Board staff. At least one school has raised the necessary funds and arranged for outside contractors to do the job. At present the individual school is held responsible for a large part of the cost of the project and the Vancouver School Board furnishes the balance.

This study is an attempt to evaluate some aspects of these creative/adventure playgrounds.

### PARTICIPANTS

Three elementary schools were chosen to represent all those with completed or partially completed creative/adventure playgrounds in Vancouver. The selected schools, Graham Bruce, Dr. Annie B. Jamieson, and Queen Mary are considered representative both of the differing ways in which playgrounds have been developed and of the different areas of the city.



## EVALUATION

### I. Summaries of Questionnaire Responses

#### A. Student Questionnaire

Questionnaires were distributed to all pupils in Grades 4 and 6 in the three schools in the study. Questionnaires were also completed by pupils in Grade 1 on a group basis with the teacher recording the children's responses.

Questionnaires were returned by 165 Grade 6 students, by 155 Grade 4 students, and by 175 Grade 1 students for a total of 495. (79% return)

#### Summary of Student Questionnaire Responses

The first two items on the questionnaire were merely sex and grade identifications.

3. "Before the creative/adventure playground was built, were you or your class asked if you had any ideas or suggestions about what it should be like or what should be included in it?"

Yes	116 (23%)
No	347 (70%)
No comment	32 ( 7%)

The older children answered this item more positively with the highest number of "Yes" responses coming from Grade 6 and the lowest from Grade 1. There was also considerable variability from school to school.

4. "Do you ever use the creative/adventure playground by choice (when you don't have to)?"

Yes	318 (64%)
No	100 (20%)
No comment	77 (16%)

There was no difference either between the boys and girls, or among the three grades in their responses to this question.

5. "When do you play there?" \*

Recess	242 (49%)
Lunch time	238 (48%)
After school	174 (35%)
Before school	115 (23%)
Other times	210 (42%)
No comment	50 (10%)

\* For item 5 and for many of the items that follow, respondents were free to make more than one response.



The higher the grade the less frequent was the use in the categories of "before school", "recess" and "lunch time" (i. e., Grade 6 the least, Grade 1 the most). This trend was altered for the categories of "after school" and "other times" with Grade 1 being the lowest, Grade 6 next, and Grade 4 being the highest. One could hypothesize that the smaller children (Grade 1's) must report home immediately after school and then stay fairly close to home. Also, perhaps the older children (Grade 6) are less interested in the creative/adventure playground once school is over and choose it less when there are other alternatives.

6. "How often do you play there?"

One or more times a day	237 (48%)
Less than one time a day	227 (46%)
No comment	31 ( 6%)

Generally, the younger the child the more frequent is the use of the playground, that is, the highest frequency of daily use is by the Grade 1 students, the lowest frequency is among the Grade 6 students.

7. "Do you ever use the creative/adventure playground with your class for Physical Education?"

Yes	185 (37%)
No	305 (62%)
No comment	5 ( 1%)

The highest frequency of positive responses was by Grade 1 students, the lowest was by Grade 6 students.

8. "What is your favourite part of the creative/adventure playground?"

Fort	161 (33%)
Firemen's pole	79 (16%)
Balancing boards or logs	78 (16%)
Bars	75 (15%)
Stepping logs	64 (13%)
Tunnels	50 (10%)
Wendy House	33 ( 7%)
Sandbox	33 ( 7%)

Items listed voluntarily by respondents —

Ropes, nets and ladders	38 ( 8%)
Hills	28 ( 6%)
Slide(s)	20 ( 4%)
Others	37 ( 7%)
No comment	15 ( 3%)



There was considerable variability from school to school, reflecting, in part, the differing facilities of the schools. However, a few items were popular throughout, particularly the forts which were rated high by students at all levels in all three schools.

9. "What is your least favourite part of the creative/adventure playground?"

Sandbox	181 (37%)
Tunnels	113 (23%)
Wendy House	47 ( 9%)
Balancing boards or logs	38 ( 8%)
Fort	31 ( 6%)
Stepping logs	30 ( 6%)
Bars	27 ( 5%)
Firemen's pole	20 ( 4%)
Others	27 ( 5%)
None	5 ( 1%)
No comment	24 ( 5%)

The sandbox was least liked at all schools and at all grade levels. The tunnels were liked least by the students of one school in particular. Girls objected to the tunnel more than boys did.

10. "What do you like best about having a creative/adventure playground?"

Something to do outside so you're not bored	270 (55%)
Like to play there with other children	248 (50%)
Can do what you want with no one saying it's right or wrong	244 (49%)
Like to climb there	221 (45%)
Can play pretend games there	108 (22%)
Something you can play by yourself	73 (15%)
Like to make things there	36 ( 7%)

Items listed voluntarily by respondents —

Like the openness and freedom for activity	72 (15%)
Others	31 ( 6%)
No comment	13 ( 3%)

There is some variability in the distribution of responses by grade and sex. Climbing seems to be less important to the Grade 1 students than to the older children. On the other hand, pretending there seems less important to the Grade 6 students than to the younger children. Grades 1 and 6 students like the freedom to do what they want far more than Grade 4 students. Grade 1 and 4 students are more impressed than are the Grade 6 students by the value of the playground in giving them something outside to do so that they aren't bored. The social aspect of playing with others seems to be of greater importance to the grade 4 and 6 students than to the Grade 1 students.

11. "What do you not like about having a creative/adventure playground?"

Some kids are bossy or push other children around	268 (54%)
Get too dirty or damage your clothes	240 (48%)
Animals (and sometimes children) use parts as a toilet	204 (41%)
Too crowded	136 (27%)
Not enough things there	126 (25%)
Not grown up enough—just for little children	81 (16%)
Can't do much with the things that are there (can only do some things certain ways)	76 (15%)
Afraid of getting hurt	70 (14%)
Get tired of it quickly	61 (12%)
Farts of it are scary	21 ( 4%)
Takes up too much of the school ground	13 ( 3%)

Items listed voluntarily by respondents —

Find it too muddy	34 ( 7%)
Don't like ground cover of wood chips	17 ( 3%)
Object that Grade 4 plus not allowed to play there	9 ( 2%)
Others	38 ( 8%)
No comment	15 ( 3%)

The girls are only slightly more concerned than the boys about getting dirty, and by grade, the Grade 1 students are considerably more concerned about getting dirty than the higher grades (reflection of their parents' attitudes?). The Grade 1 students are also the most concerned about getting hurt. Overcrowding seems to present the biggest problem to Grade 1 students as well. The lack of things there seems to bother Grade 6 students most and boys more than girls. Grade 6 students also seem to get tired of the playground more quickly than do students in the lower grades. The Grade 1 students find themselves the least limited in their activities with what is available. Children at all grade levels and boys and girls alike find it objectionable that animals use the playground as a toilet. The older the students the less concerned they are about bossy children pushing them around; this is much more a complaint of the younger children. On the other hand, the older Grade 6 students commented most that these playgrounds are for 'little kids' only.

12. "How could it be made better?"

Additions to what exists now	293 (59%)
Separate time for different ages or grades of children	179 (36%)
Different times for boys and girls	151 (31%)

Items listed voluntarily by respondents —

Add tunnels or improve present ones (make higher, longer, bigger)	52 (11%)
Better ground cover, e. g., grass, too wet and muddy	36 ( 7%)
Let everyone (all grades) play there	9 ( 2%)
No comment	27 ( 5%)

Among the more popular additions suggested were slides, swings, pool, skating rink, ropes, toilet and fountain. Some form of segregation by sex and/or age with different times when each is allowed to use the playground seems to be a popular idea. Grade 6 students seem considerably less interested in segregation by sex than the younger students.

13. "When you play in the creative/adventure playground do you mostly"

Play by yourself?	68 (14%)
Play with other children?	385 (78%)
No comment	42 ( 8%)

The interest shown in playing by oneself decreased as the grade level of the students increased. That is, the older children were more interested in playing with other children than were the younger ones. At all levels though, the children far prefer the more sociable playing with others than playing alone.

14. "Do you play in the creative/adventure playground in all kinds of weather?"

Yes	182 (37%)
No	280 (56%)
No comment	33 ( 7%)

Grade 1 students answered this question positively much more frequently than did the older students. It would appear the nature of the weather is of less importance to the younger students. Boys are less concerned about the changes in the weather than are the girls.

15. "Do you mostly like or dislike the creative/adventure playground?"

Like	419 (85%)
Dislike	65 (13%)
No comment	11 ( 2%)

This question sums up the whole questionnaire and in a very positive way. The groups by grade and sex are very similar in their liking of the playground with the exception of Grade 6 students—the boys at this level, while still far more positive than negative, like it considerably less than do the girls at the Grade 6 level.

## B. School Personnel Questionnaire

Questionnaires were sent to the three schools in the study to be distributed to all personnel.

Questionnaires were completed by 50 members of the staffs of these three schools. (68% return)

### Summary of School Personnel Questionnaire Responses

The first three items on the questionnaire were merely for identification purposes.

4. "What percentage of your class uses the creative/adventure playground regularly by choice?"

The median of the estimates of the total group of school personnel was 50%.

It should be noted that some classes are excluded from the playgrounds.

5. "What percentage of the school population uses the creative/adventure playground regularly by choice?"

The median of the estimates of the total group of school personnel was 40%.

Similarly, some groups are not permitted to use the playground.

6. "What percentage of the children who use the creative/adventure playground regularly are boys?"

The median of the estimates of the total group of school personnel was 50%.

It can be seen from the above estimates that the responses of the school personnel are not in agreement with those of the students regarding the extent of usage of the playground by the children. Considerably more children claim they use the playground than the school personnel estimated.

7. "Does the creative/adventure playground encourage children to be more adventurous or experimental in their activities generally?"

Yes	36 (72%)
No	9 (18%)
No comment or undecided	5 (10%)

This appears to be one aspect of the playgrounds viewed fairly positively by the school personnel.

8. "Does the creative adventure playground encourage children who might otherwise be relatively inactive outdoors (or perhaps avoid going out-of-doors) to be more physically active?"

Yes	33 (66%)
No	14 (28%)
No comment	3 (6%)

The school personnel appear to see this as a constructive feature of the playground.

9. "What other changes, if any, are noticeable in children that may be attributable to their use of the creative/adventure playground?"

(a) Outlet for energy, something worthwhile to do, can entertain themselves, encourages greater activity, children more adventurous	10 (20%)
(b) More imaginative, creative, "pretend" play	9 (18%)
(c) More socializing, mixing of different groups, shared, cooperative and group activities, getting along with each other better	9 (18%)
(d) No comment or none	30 (60%)

The similarity between these changes noted and the most frequently noted advantages of the playground listed later are remarkable.

10. "What difficulties, if any, do inclement weather conditions create?"

(a) A great deal of mud and sand is dragged into the school; halls and classroom floors filthy	26 (52%)
(b) Muddy and wet clothing and children; clothing sometimes ruined; children frequently have to stay in wet clothes	22 (44%)



(c) General muddy, dirty, wet conditions	15 (30%)
(d) Play equipment and area is slippery and dangerous when wet	8 (16%)
(e) Limits use of equipment and area (mud, puddles, cold, get wet, etc.); children find it objectionable	7 (14%)
(f) Poor drainage in area (need better drainage)	6 (12%)
(g) Some children like wet muddy conditions and take advantage of it in their play (they get wet and muddy though)	3 (6%)
(h) No comment or none	5 (10%)

The consensus seems to be that the wetness and mud created in these playgrounds in Vancouver's long wet winters is of great concern to nearly all school personnel.

11a. "Does the creative/adventure playground require more supervision than a standard playground?"

More supervision	19 (38%)
Less supervision	1 (2%)
No difference	21 (42%)
No opinion	5 (10%)

The majority of the school personnel seem divided in opinion between there being no difference in required supervision and more supervision being required for this type of playground.

11b. "What restrictions, if any, should be placed upon children in the creative/adventure playground?"

(1) Various safety considerations including care of, respect for and constructive use of equipment; avoiding overcrowding, pushing, stone and sand throwing, etc.; a common sense approach with an attitude of safe play and using general safety rules	23 (46%)
(2) Consideration for other people, their rights and property, particularly smaller children, fair play, sharing	11 (22%)
(3) Avoidance of some areas in poor weather due to mud (dirty and slippery)	6 (12%)

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| (4) Specific times for pupils of different grades (some age group restrictions) | 4 ( 8%)  |
| (5) Only when adequately supervised   | 3 ( 6%)  |
| (6) Very few, minimum, unspecified, none at all or no comment                   | 16 (32%) |

The school personnel think that if there are to be any restrictions they should be limited and of two kinds only, involving safety, and consideration for others. There were only a few comments suggesting more stringent restrictions.

12. "Why did your school want a creative/adventure playground?  
(i. e., reasons and goals)"

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| (a) To facilitate the learning of various skills —social, physical, personal, etc.; to provide challenges and opportunities for creative play; to provide experience and for the development of ideas and potential | 12 (24%) |
| (b) Makes better use of that area of the playground, more suitable and worthwhile play area (particularly for younger children)   | 10 (20%) |
| (c) Provide a place with opportunities for increased activity by children   | 3 ( 6%)  |
| (d) Provide it for fun and pleasure for the children  | 2 ( 4%)  |
| (e) No comment or don't know  | 22 (44%) |

In addition to these goals listed, 10 (20%) persons commented that they'd had little or nothing to do with the planning of the playground, that it had been largely organized by the P. T. A. and parents with little involvement of the school personnel. It seemed that many people were unclear as to what the goals actually had been but had vague ideas that the children would gain and thought it was a good thing to build such a playground.

13. "Is the creative/adventure playground fulfilling the purposes that were intended for it?"

- |            |          |
|------------|----------|
| Yes        | 23 (46%) |
| No         | 6 (12%)  |
| No opinion | 11 (22%) |
| No comment | 10 (20%) |

Of those who expressed an opinion the majority considers that the playground is fulfilling its purposes, even though many were vague about what the goals were.

14. "Please list examples of children's comments that you have received in regard to the creative/adventure playground."

Positive Comments:

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| (a) Various enthusiastic expressions such as "lots of fun" and "great"; expressed a liking for it generally or specific parts of it or activities there, e. g., fort, paths, climbing, etc. | 27 (54%) |
| (b) Lots to do; always something to do; a choice of activities; encourages (creative) play; especially suitable for younger kids  | 10 (20%) |
| (c) Asking for extra time on the playground; like to be there as much as they can   | 5 (10%)  |
| (d) No comment or none  | 18 (36%) |

Negative Comments:

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| (a) Wet weather difficulties, children objecting to getting muddy, dirty, and wet; object to dirt from animals; various objections to ground covers, drainage, etc. | 14 (28%) |
| (b) Dangerous aspects; possibilities of getting hurt, e. g., splinters, in tunnels, by glass; find some parts frightening   | 10 (20%) |
| (c) Difficulties with bossy kids, bullying, shoving, fighting there, lack of fair play  | 7 (14%)  |
| (d) Not being allowed to play there or not having enough time there   | 5 (10%)  |
| (e) Objections to overcrowding  | 4 ( 8%)  |
| (f) No comment or none  | 24 (48%) |

15. "Are the children's comments generally positive or negative?"		
	Generally positive	31 (62%)
	Generally negative	7 (14%)
	Neutral	5 (10%)
	No comment	7 (14%)

Although there were relatively similar numbers of responses to the requests for comments in #14, school personnel perceive the children's comments as generally positive in nature.

16. "Please list examples of parents' comments that you have heard in regard to the creative/adventure playground."

Positive Comments:

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| (a) Parents are proud of the playgrounds and take pleasure in their involvement in their planning and construction; feel it was a worthwhile project; think it shows that adults are interested in the kids; parents generally approve of idea  | 8 (16%)  |
| (b) Of value in various ways to the children; good for them; encourages creativity and experimenting; parents are pleased with the kinds of experiences and opportunities they provide their children; children seem happier and less lethargic | 7 (14%)  |
| (c) Many children enjoy it; provides good time to children; children spend extra time at school to play there; wish to go there other times to play; well used, always seem to be kids on it  | 7 (14%)  |
| (d) No comment or none  | 33 (66%) |

Negative Comments:

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| (a) Problems with mud and dirt, torn and dirty clothes and dirty children | 14 (28%) |
| (b) Increased minor injuries  | 3 ( 6%)  |
| (c) Needs constant or more supervision                                    | 2 ( 4%)  |
| (d) Very noisy, especially on weekends                                    | 2 ( 4%)  |
| (e) Bike riders create problems   | 2 ( 4%)  |
| (f) No comment or none  | 36 (72%) |

17. "Are the parents' comments generally positive or negative?"

Generally positive	16 (32%)
Generally negative	1 ( 2%)
Neutral	3 ( 6%)
Don't know or no opinion	22 (44%)
No comment	8 (16%)

The above results suggest either uncertainty or ambivalence among the school personnel about the parents' attitudes to the playgrounds, or uncertainty and ambivalence about the playgrounds among the parents themselves. However, of those who expressed opinions the majority felt that parents react positively.

18. "How many children have expressed a concern about getting their clothes dirty on this playground?"

	<u>Boys</u>		<u>Girls</u>
None	17 (34%)	None	9 (18%)
Some	14 (28%)	Some	22 (44%)
Many	7 (14%)	Many	8 (16%)
No comment	12 (24%)	No comment	11 (22%)

It would appear that a considerable number of children (roughly half), boys as well as girls, have expressed concern about getting dirty on the playground. (This finding is consistent with that of the questionnaire to pupils on which nearly half of the respondents indicated that they were displeased about getting dirty.)

19. "Were the children at your school involved in the planning of the creative/adventure playground?"

Yes	18 (36%)
No	17 (34%)
No opinion	11 (22%)
No comment	4 ( 8%)

20. "Has the creative/adventure playground been used by children who are not pupils at your school?"

Yes	32 (64%)
No	1 ( 2%)
No opinion	12 (24%)
No comment	5 (10%)

Most school personnel acknowledge that non-school members use the playground but their attitudes to it vary, depending partly on the use of the playground by others (play or vandalism).

21. "Please list or check up to 3 main advantages of the creative/adventure playground. "

(a) Provides a good means for using excess energy	26 (52%)
(b) Helps children learn to share and cooperate in activities with others	25 (50%)
(c) Helps develop muscular control and bodily awareness	20 (40%)
(d) Provides a challenge to children	18 (36%)
(e) Encourages self-expression	16 (32%)
(f) Keeps children occupied and out-of-trouble	15 (30%)
(g) Helps develop independence, self-confidence, and self-respect	9 (18%)
(h) Suggests a modern progressive school or neighbourhood	1 ( 2%)
(i) Items listed voluntarily by respondents —	
For each child it has its own advantages	3 ( 6%)
In some neighbourhoods could be many of these advantages	1 ( 2%)
(j) No comment	7 (14%)

The three items rated highest by the school personnel have three comparable items on the students' questionnaire which are rated the highest by the children, too.

22. "Please list or check up to 3 main disadvantages of the creative/adventure playground. "

(a) Children get dirty or damage their clothes	26 (52%)
(b) The playground is dangerous in some respects	17 (34%)
(c) The playground is costly to build and/or maintain	14 (28%)
(d) Some children are frightened of some parts of the playground	6 (12%)
(e) Children are too limited in what they can do with the facilities	4 ( 8%)

(f) The playground is a waste of valuable space	4 ( 8%)
(g) Items listed voluntarily by respondents —	
Improper drainage	2 ( 4%)
Dogs	2 ( 4%)
Dirt problems (other than (a))	2 ( 4%)
Others	10 (20%)
(h) No comment	9 (18%)
(i) None	2 ( 4%)

With only one major exception what the children see as disadvantages are quite different from what the school personnel see as disadvantages. Both groups expressed a concern about the children's clothes getting damaged or dirty, but, very likely a large part of the concern expressed by the children in the matter is a direct extension of their parents and teachers. The children are far less concerned about dangerous or frightening aspects of the playground than the school personnel.

23. "What are your feelings generally about the creative/adventure playground?"

Mostly positive	30 (60%)
Mostly negative	4 ( 8%)
Neutral	4 ( 8%)
Undecided	8 (16%)
No comment	4 ( 8%)

Generally, it seems that the majority is favourably disposed towards creative/adventure playgrounds.

24. "Please add any further comments you may have regarding creative/adventure playgrounds."

- |  |         |
|--|---------|
| (a) Some dissatisfaction with playgrounds: too costly; aesthetically displeasing; takes up too much of school ground (not enough room for other activities); think it was more attractive and better play area previously; feel it is overrated; some problems with it | 5 (10%) |
| (b) Children are using and enjoying them extensively; good for the kids  | 4 ( 8%) |
| (c) Ambivalence towards it: think it's a good idea but have some negative feelings about them too, e. g., suggestions for ways it could be done but differently  | 3 ( 6%) |



- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| (d) Brought parents, teachers, children, whole communities together to plan and arrange for the construction of these; community effort and involvement which were thought to be good | 3 ( 6%)  |
| (e) Fewer disciplinary problems amongst the students  | 2 ( 4%)  |
| (f) Hideout for older non-students in after school hours and some resulting vandalism   | 2 ( 4%)  |
| (g) Other comments by individuals   | 3 ( 6%)  |
| (h) No comment  | 28 (56%) |
| 25. "Please list any suggestions for changing and/or improving the creative/adventure playground at your school."   |          |
| (a) More facilities and equipment allowing for increased activities, e. g. , climbing apparatus, water fountain   | 11 (22%) |
| (b) Improve the drainage situation  | 9 (18%)  |
| (c) Changes in the ground covers used   | 6 (12%)  |
| (d) Improve the tunnels or get new ones   | 6 (12%)  |
| (e) Allow children greater freedom, fewer restrictions in use   | 4 ( 8%)  |
| (f) More supervision needed   | 4 ( 8%)  |
| (g) Greater involvement of children at all levels of development of playground  | 3 ( 6%)  |
| (h) Suggestions to avoid vandalism  | 3 ( 6%)  |
| (i) Some better fencing or enclosure around the area  | 2 ( 4%)  |
| (j) Move to park playground from school playground  | 2 ( 4%)  |
| (k) No comment or none  | 24 (48%) |

Many of the suggestions were related to the difficulties with the mud and dirt which account for the largest group of problems with the playgrounds.

### C. Parent Questionnaire

Questionnaires were sent to the three schools in the study to be sent home with the pupils in Grades 1, 4, and 6 for their parents to complete. Questionnaires were completed and returned by 157 parents.

#### Summary of Parent Questionnaire Responses

1. "Are you aware of the existence of a creative/adventure playground at the elementary school in your neighbourhood?"

Yes	139 (89%)
No	18 (11%)

2. "Is your neighbourhood enhanced or detracted by the creative/adventure playground?"

Enhanced	78 (50%)
Detracted	3 (2%)
Neither enhanced nor detracted	40 (25%)
No opinion	16 (10%)
No comment	20 (13%)

Certainly the majority of the parents think that these playgrounds do not have a negative effect on their neighbourhoods, in fact half of the parents consider that the playgrounds are beneficial additions to their neighbourhoods.

3. "What problems, if any, has the creative/adventure playground created in your community?"

(a) None	35 (22%)
(b) Children bring home mud and sand; wet, dirty children with muddy, torn clothes	14 (9%)
(c) Abuse and some vandalism by older kids; hangout for older kids; opportunity for destructiveness by hoodlums	10 (6%)
(d) Bullying of smaller children by bigger ones, partly because of overcrowding which results in pushing and could be dangerous	8 (5%)
(e) Neighbours of school complain of noise from playground	6 (4%)
(f) Have been some accidents (falls, slivers, broken tooth)	5 (3%)
(g) No comment	85 (54%)

It would appear that the majority are not aware of or bothered by problems attributed to the playground.

4. "Do you favour creative/adventure playgrounds for elementary schools?"

Yes	121 (77%)
No	13 ( 8%)
No opinion	7 ( 5%)
No comment	16 (10%)

Parents, it seems, are quite strongly in favour of these playgrounds for elementary schools.

5. "Does the creative/adventure playground contribute to children's development?"

Yes	105 (67%)
No	12 ( 7%)
No opinion	20 (13%)
No comment	20 (13%)

Although two-thirds of the parents in the study think these playgrounds contribute to children's development, many others are uncertain about this issue.

6. "Please list any suggestions for changing and/or improving the creative/adventure playground."

- |   |           |
|---|-----------|
| a) Better ground cover arrangements than presently exist (many suggested more grass); too wet, muddy and dirty now; dirt and/or mulch not suitable                          | 20 (13%)  |
| (b) Increase amount of equipment and numbers of facilities, e.g., swings, slides, big muscle equipment such as ropes and ladders  | 19 (12%)  |
| (c) Need better drainage system in the area   | 10 ( 6%)  |
| (d) More supervision including after school hours and on holidays—for the sake of children's safety, to insure fairness to all in use, and for protection of the facilities | 6 ( 4%)   |
| (e) Suggestion regarding the locations, e.g., have the playground cover a larger area, move the playground to another area  | 6 ( 4%)   |
| (f) Plant more trees and other flora  | 4 ( 3%)   |
| (g) Enclose the area better with fences or trees  | 2 ( 1%)   |
| (h) No comment  | 100 (64%) |

ERIC The difficulties created by mud, dirt and wet weather again came to the fore in the parents' suggestions.

7. "What changes, if any, have you noticed in your child's behaviour which may be attributed to the creative/adventure playground?"

Positive Changes:

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| (a) Children have made gains in their development as individuals; children enjoy the playground and like to play there, e. g. , like the variety of activities; enjoy freedom and amount of activity; more adventurous and imaginative in play; more constructive play; "happy children" who "have fun" | 30 (19%) |
| (b) Children have made social gains, such as, play with and get along better with other children; learning to share and cooperate; enjoy playing with friends there; increased interest in social activities  | 13 ( 8%) |
| (c) Improved motor skills, such as coordination and balance   | 5 ( 3%)  |
| (d) No comment  | 93 (59%) |
| (e) None  | 27 (17%) |

A substantial number of parents have noticed appreciable positive changes in their children which they consider may be attributed to these playgrounds.

Negative Changes:

- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
| (a) Children (smaller ones particularly) are picked on, bullied, and sometimes hurt by bigger, older, more aggressive children which in turn creates fear in some children | 4 ( 3%)   |
| (b) Not suited to older children, just to smaller ones   | 2 ( 1%)   |
| (c) No comment   | 116 (74%) |
| (d) None   | 28 (18%)  |

By numbers alone the positive comments far exceed the negative ones. Parents, generally, feel positively about creative/adventure playgrounds.

8. "What restrictions, if any, do you place on your child when using the creative/adventure playground?"

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| (a) None  | 32 (20%) |
| (b) Sharing; taking turns; consideration for others; not playing too roughly; no fighting; no pushing | 14 ( 9%) |

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| (c) Specific restrictions about certain facilities or conditions, i. e., where and when to play and not to play | 13 ( 8%) |
| (d) Not to play there at certain times, e. g., after dark, or not too long after school                         | 11 ( 7%) |
| (e) Stay away from mud, or try not to get so dirty  | 8 ( 5%)  |
| (f) Use caution when playing, i. e., use reasonable safety rules and care                                       | 7 ( 4%)  |
| (g) Only with proper supervision (most specified an adult)  | 6 ( 4%)  |
| (h) No comment  | 74 (47%) |

Restrictions are fairly minimal, seem reasonable and are in keeping with responses made to previous questions.

9. "Please add any further comments you may have regarding the creative/adventure playground."

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| (a) Additions suggested (a few suggested facilities which would initiate greater creativity than those currently existing); needs expansion as it is overcrowded; needs a larger area                 | 15 (10%) |
| (b) Seen generally as a worthwhile idea and a good place for children; general enthusiasm; positive attitude  | 11 ( 7%) |
| (c) Some skepticism regarding the value of this kind of playground; negative feelings about it, e. g., not worth money spent on it; some aesthetic objections   | 9 ( 6%)  |
| (d) Objections to dirt created, scattered, and on children and/or their clothing; suggestions for more suitable kinds of ground covering to avoid dirt, e. g., clean sand; need for improved drainage | 8 ( 5%)  |
| (e) Should have some (or more) supervision, e. g., hire students in summer, or by Parks Board   | 7 ( 4%)  |
| (f) Mostly for small children; good for small children; keep for younger children   | 7 ( 4%)  |
| (g) Some resentment that only little children allowed to play there; think older children should have turn there, too, perhaps each should have specific times  | 6 ( 4%)  |
| (h) Concerns regarding safety, e. g., broken bottles  | 6 ( 4%)  |
| (i) No comment  | 97 (62%) |

The comments encompass many aspects of the creative/adventure playground. Most of the issues arose on earlier questions.

#### D. Questionnaire to Members of the Community

Ten questionnaires were sent to each of the three schools in the study which the principal was to arrange to have delivered to homes in the immediate neighbourhood of his school. These were to be returned to the School Board via mail by the residents. Of the thirty questionnaires distributed, ten (33%) were returned.

#### Summary of General Community Responses

It should be remembered when interpreting percentages that only ten people are involved.

1. "Are you aware of the existence of a creative/adventure playground at the elementary school in your neighbourhood?"

Yes	8 (80%)
No	2 (20%)

2. "Is your neighbourhood enhanced or detracted by the creative/adventure playground?"

Enhanced	4 (40%)
Detracted	2 (20%)
Neither enhanced nor detracted	1 (10%)
No opinion	1 (10%)
No comment	2 (20%)

3. "What problems, if any, has the creative/adventure playground created in your community?"

Noise	1 (10%)
None	5 (50%)
No comment	4 (40%)

4. "Do you favour creative/adventure playgrounds for elementary schools?"

Yes	8 (80%)
No	1 (10%)
No opinion	0 (0%)
No comment	1 (10%)

5. "Does the creative/adventure playground contribute to children's development?"

Yes	8 (80%)
No	1 (10%)
No opinion	0 (0%)
No comment	1 (10%)

6. "Please list any suggestions for changing and/or improving the creative/adventure playground?"

(a) Move to another part of school ground (so it will be less noisy and less of an eyesore)	2 (20%)
(b) Additions (old tractors)	1 (10%)
(c) No comment	7 (70%)

7. "What changes, if any, have you noticed in your child's behaviour which may be attributed to the creative/adventure playground?"

Positive Changes:

(a) Social gain—mingles better with children	1 (10%)
(b) Child enjoys going to school early to play there	1 (10%)
(c) None	2 (20%)
(d) No comment	6 (60%)

Negative Changes:

(a) None	2 (20%)
(b) No comment	8 (80%)

8. "What restrictions, if any, do you place on your child when using the creative/adventure playground?"

(a) Sharing; consideration for others	2 (20%)
(b) Safety considerations	1 (10%)
(c) Child too young to go back to play after school	1 (10%)
(d) None	1 (10%)
(e) No comment	5 (50%)



9. "Please add any further comments you may have regarding the creative/adventure playground."
- |  |         |
|--|---------|
| (a) Good for the children; children enjoy it; gives children somewhere to play       | 4 (40%) |
| (b) Adults have a generally positive feeling about it                                | 3 (30%) |
| (c) Locate somewhere else on school ground (so pre-schoolers can use it more freely) | 1 (10%) |
| (d) It is an eyesore   | 1 (10%) |
| (e) Noisy  | 1 (10%) |
| (f) Muddy, drainage problems   | 1 (10%) |
| (g) No comment   | 5 (50%) |

Even though there are far fewer responses involved, the attitudes of the people of the community seem similar to those of the parents, that is, generally positive, while pointing out some of the problems.

## II. Count of Children Using the Playground

As part of the evaluation of the usage of these playgrounds a count was made of children actually on the playgrounds of the three schools in the study. These were conducted during four periods of five minutes each on two given days. Both days were sunny, one in May, the other in June. Counts were made before school, at recess, at lunch time, and after school. The results are in Table I.

TABLE I: COUNT OF CHILDREN ON THE CREATIVE/ADVENTURE PLAY-  
 GROUNDS (TOTAL FOR THREE SCHOOLS) DURING FOUR  
 PERIODS OF FIVE MINUTES EACH ON TWO GIVEN DAYS

Time	Numbers of Children on Playgrounds		
	Day 1 (May)	Day 2 (June)	Average
Before school	168	120	144
Recess	299	243	271
Lunch time	304	138	221
After school	19	21	20
Totals for day	790	522	656

There were approximately 1,600 children enrolled in these schools at the time. However, for several reasons all of these children were not eligible for the enumeration, e.g., nobody above Grade 3, one sex per day in some sections, several classes absent from school that day. Even so, the above numbers suggest that these playgrounds are used by many children, at least during school hours. Relatively few children were on the playgrounds at the time of the counts shortly after school was dismissed. This does not appear to agree with the responses made in the student questionnaire (35% said they played there after school) and there are various factors that might contribute to this apparent discrepancy.

#### SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The foremost conclusion to be drawn from the evaluation is that those who participated in the study held positive attitudes toward the creative/adventure playgrounds. There are several points of view as to the nature of the values

of creative/adventure playgrounds, but most people think they have merit. Children, parents, school personnel, and people of the community are strongly in favour of these playgrounds. School personnel seem to be the least enthusiastic. Parents think these playgrounds are good even though they express displeasure over the condition of their children's clothes. Children, as might be expected, are less concerned about the dirt and are the most enthusiastic group about the creative/adventure playgrounds.

The most common suggestion was that there should be additions to the current facilities.

From the children's point of view, the forts are the most popular items and the sandboxes the least popular.

A few difficulties became apparent. Certain of these pertain more to some schools than to others, e. g., specific problems with supervision, dogs defecating in sandboxes and tunnels, and certain acts of vandalism.

However, other problems were more general. A common problem is deciding who can play there and when. Overcrowding and bullying (with some risk to safety) seem to occur often when total freedom exists. This has been resolved, at least partially, in different ways, e. g., boys and girls at separate times, no one above Grade 3 at certain times (which is resented considerably by many of the older children and by some parents).

The major problems are related to ground cover and drainage. There were many comments and complaints about mud on children and their clothes, and dirt being tracked everywhere. There was also some concern about the dangers

of injury from the wet, muddy playgrounds.

Good drainage of the area prior to the development of these playgrounds would be very worthwhile and of major importance in long range planning. This would seem to apply particularly in a wet area like Vancouver and would make the playgrounds more functional the year round.

Consideration is necessary at the outset of more suitable ground coverings plus anticipation of some maintenance of the ground. With much wet weather and with many children in a relatively small area, grass readily gives way to mud. Grass covered ground will likely need returfing periodically. Plain soil has been found unsuccessful. Concrete is dangerous. Bark mulch seems to provide many splinters as well as giving way to mud eventually, unless it is built up frequently. A combination of asphalt, grass, and sand is possibly the most successful arrangement.

Perhaps consideration should be given to using recent innovations such as artificial turf and rubber asphalt although these may prove rather costly.

The attitude expressed by one parent merits the consideration of all:

"It was discouraging at the start of the year to have bought several cute dresses for my 6 year-old to wear and constantly have her come home dirty with a hole in her leotards. Now I send her in slacks (especially on days when she takes her lunch). She doesn't dress very ladylike, but if I ask her what she thinks of the playground, her answer would be 'really neat!'. So maybe being clean and ladylike doesn't matter."