Designing Cities for Children and Families

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Where are children?

Meltzoff et al., 2009

- **Formal Learning Environments**
  - 0 - 5 K: 18.5%
  - GR 1 - 12: 7.7%
  - UG GRAD: 5.1%

- **Informal Learning Environments**
  - WORK: 100%
Why Design Cities for Children and Families?

• Environment affects health, well-being, physical and cognitive development (GDCI, 2020)

• SDG 11 – Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable

• Importance of social interaction and joint engagement

• Need for places to pause and stay (GDCI, 2020)
Playful learning

- **Free play**: child-led
- **Guided play**: child-led, adult scaffolded
- **Games**: adult designed/scaffolded, set rules and constraints for play
- **Direct Instruction**: adult designed/controlled, set constraints for activity

Balance of child-adult involvement and constraints
Design Principles for Playful Learning

1. Robust community engagement benefits everyone
2. Spark interaction between children and caregivers
3. Identify learning goals
4. Iterative process leads to better outcomes
Case Study

Urban Thinkscape

Belmont bus stop | Philadelphia, PA

Photo credit: Sahar Coston-Hardy
Targeting everyday spaces: Urban Thinkscape

- ↑ verbal engagement
- ↑ caregiver-child interaction
- ↑ language (overall)
- ↑ language (STEM)
Chicago, São Paolo, and beyond...
Who we are
A nonprofit that brings together educators, learning scientists, community organizers, and architects to create playful learning spaces

What we do
- Coaching and Design Review
- Technical Assistance and Design
- Training & Webinars
- Science Dissemination

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