



LET'S PLAY: INCLUSIVE PLAYGROUNDS

What's the Big Idea?

If all areas and activities are accessible, everyone can be included.

Curriculum Links

Science: structures

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Recognize and communicate the challenges that design can pose to accessibility.
- Learn accessible design components and apply them to a model using a checklist.
- Develop co-operative and responsible group behaviour skills through a collaborative and creative process.

Opening Motivator

Introduce students to Rick's story. Inform students that they will complete an activity to design a playground that includes all children in the fun.

Main Activity

As a class, brainstorm ways to make the playground more accessible for all children. Students fill out a mind map based upon this brainstorm. In small groups, students brainstorm ways they can make a playground more accessible, referencing a checklist to ensure they are satisfying all requirements.

Conclusion

Students create a Venn diagram of similarities and differences between their playground and an accessible playground, then create an illustrated wish list.





Lesson

Opening Motivator

1. Read the biography [Biography of Rick Hansen](#) to introduce students to Rick's story.
2. After introducing Rick's story, discuss the following questions.



Discussion Questions

- What challenges did Rick have when he left the hospital? How would your daily activities change if you had the same type of injury?
- How did Rick feel about not having the same abilities he had before his accident? How would you feel if you were not able to participate in some of your favourite activities?
- What things helped Rick move around? What things prevented him from moving around?
- What type of things did Rick enjoy? What type of things do you enjoy?

3. As a class or in small groups, create a same/different chart. After Rick had his accident, what things did he still like to do that other children also like to do (e.g. go fishing)? What things were different? Emphasize that we all have some similarities and some differences, and that we can all help one another with our challenges.



Discussion Questions

- How is our playground fun for a student with a physical disability, a student with a vision impairment or a student with a hearing disability?
- Is there anything we could add to make the playground more fun for these students?
- How is our playground dangerous for these students? How could we change this so that the playground would be safe for these students?
- What is the same for all children (whether they have a disability or not) (e.g. they like to play) and what is different for those with disabilities (accessibility needs)?



Main Activity

1. Tell students that they will work in small groups to design and construct models of accessible playgrounds. Project a copy of the Accessible Playgrounds Checklist ([p. 9-11](#)) and explain that this will guide the students in their building and that their final product will be marked according to this. As a class, go through the checklist to ensure that students understand the requirements and vocabulary.

2. Assemble students into small groups (3-4 students). Hand out student copies of the Accessible Playgrounds Checklist and building materials. Students work in their small groups to create a draft of their playground. Once the draft has been checked by the teacher, students begin work on their models.

When all models are complete, the class assembles together for a Gallery Walk. Stopping at each model, the group responsible describes their project and explains how it meets all accessibility requirements.

Once all models have been shown, the class joins together to discuss the experience of building and viewing these structures.

Teaching Tip

Examples of accessible playgrounds can be found on the Rick Hansen Foundation School Program's A Guide to Accessible Play Spaces: www.rickhansen.com/AccessiblePlaySpaces

Discussion Scenarios

1

It is the grade three sand castle competition at Spruce Elementary. All of the kids rush outside to assemble for the big event.

Nadine and Ahmed cannot participate today; the sandpit does not allow for wheelchair access. At Nadine's last school she could slide her wheelchair up to a sand-and-water table. She wishes Spruce had the same feature. Nadine and Ahmed cannot even watch because the only route to the sandpit is up a grassy hill without a pathway, and it is too muddy to try to wheel there.

Sam is feeling frustrated as he participates in the sand castle competition. He has autism and finds all the yelling and loud music distracting. The sun is so hot, and there are too many bright colours from the nearby playground and all of the different buckets and shovels. He wishes he could go for a quick break, but there are no shady and quiet areas at the playground. Instead Sam joins Nadine and Ahmed inside.

Mrs. Hawkins, the Principal at Spruce, is upset. She thought that hosting the sand castle competition would be an engaging final activity for the structures unit, but now three kids cannot participate. This inspires her to visit the School Board office to talk about a new playground. What should she recommend?

Let's make this playground accessible!

We can:

- create a pathway to all play areas that is flat and made of a material that will allow wheelchairs to travel on it;
- add a sand table that allows someone in a wheelchair to wheel under and play;
- create pathways to access green areas where there is shade;
- use muted colours for the playground and toys: beige, tan, brown, dark blue, dark green, grey, light blue, white;
- keep noise levels down by turning down or turning off the music.



Discussion Scenarios *continued*

2

Jordan loves lunchtime! After he eats he has so much energy, he cannot help but run to the playground when the bell rings. Today was especially exciting because it was the first day the new playground was open. As he ran up the new pathway to the playground, he fell when he tripped on a hole in the path. When he fell, he got a rock in his knee. Jordan has a visual impairment and could not see the path or the hole. How could this path be different so that Jordan could have reached the playground safely?

Let's make this playground accessible!

We can:

- create a pathway that is flat without any bumps or holes; use soft material like poured rubber, rubber tiles, or playground turf for the pathway;
- place a warning sign near holes or other obstacles. Make the sign a contrasting colour, like yellow as people with visual impairments can often see yellow best.

3

It is Mei-Lien's first day at a new school. She is six years old and loves to play on the playground with her friends. At recess, they go outside, but Mei-Lien cannot get to the play area because there is a border around it. There is a set of swings outside of this border, but they are all the same style and don't work for her when she gets out of her wheelchair. How could this playground be different so that Mei-Lien could have fun with her friends?

Let's make this playground accessible!

We can:

- remove the border around the play area;
- add swings with belts and back support, or ones where children can lie down.



Discussion Scenarios (continued)

4 Chloe has a new golden retriever puppy, Broccoli, and they love to visit parks together. Lately Broccoli has been jumping up on slides and going down them. It is very funny to see a dog sliding, but Chloe wishes she could join Broccoli on the slide. Most slides in Chloe's neighbourhood are made of plastic, and when she slides down them, they cause static electricity and this could ruin the cochlear implant that allows her to hear. One day Chloe's mom surprises her with a metal slide in the backyard. Chloe's

mom tells her that metal slides will not cause the static electricity, so Chloe and Broccoli can slide together. How could the local parks be different so that Chloe can always play on slides?

Let's make this playground accessible!

We can:

- make sure slides in local parks and play spaces are made of metal, not plastic.
- build a ramp so that students using wheelchairs can get onto the water castle;
- create shady areas that are on the same level as the rest of the playground or that can be reached using a path without stairs.

5 Harpreet is playing at the local park playground with his brother and sister on a sunny summer day. They have been on the play area for over an hour in the heat, so his brother and sister run over to the water area to cool down on the water castle. Harpreet is very warm but he cannot get onto the water castle using his wheelchair. The only shade is under some trees that are up a set of stairs. How could this park be different so that Harpreet was not too warm and so that he could play with his brother and sister?

Let's make this playground accessible!

We can:

- provide a transfer area for the water castle, that helps students get in from their wheelchair;



Conclusion

Students draw a Venn diagram, with similarities listed in the inner circle (our playground, an accessible playground), and create an illustrated wish list.



Discussion Questions

- What challenges did you encounter when you were building your playground?
- Would you have fun on the playground you constructed? What things would you enjoy or find frustrating? What is different about the playground your group constructed and the playground at our school?
- How did you feel when you were constructing your playground?

Online resources:

Many websites provide images, videos, or lists of requirements for accessible playgrounds.

Rick Hansen Foundation Accessible Play Spaces page:

www.rickhansen.com/AccessiblePlaySpaces

- Images and requirements

PTO Today:

www.ptotoday.com/pto-today-articles/article/26-playground-for-the-hearing-impaired

- Requirements for hard of hearing or Deaf students

Playworks:

<http://www.playworks.ca/what-we-do>

- Images and videos

Playworld Systems:

playworldsystems.com/inclusive

- Video of accessible playground including parent interviews

Accessible Playgrounds Checklist

| ACCESSIBLE PLAYGROUND REQUIREMENT | COMPLETE? |
|---|-----------|
| Layout | |
| 1. Pathways are wide enough to allow two wheelchairs to be next to each other and to turn around. | |
| 2. Pathways are flat, or have only a little hill, and are made of a material that is not bumpy and would not hurt to fall on (e.g. poured rubber). | |
| 3. All pathways are connected. | |
| 4. Colours are not overwhelming for the major play areas: beige, white, light and dark blue, dark green, grey, tan. Different colours for special features, especially yellow, which people with visual impairments can often see the best. | |
| 5. Plants that birds, mammals, and insects like to visit, planted at different levels so everyone can touch and smell. | |
| 6. Sunny and shady areas. Play and quiet spaces. | |
| 7. Ways to separate different play areas and the park from the street: walls, fences, plants. | |
| Amenities | |
| 1. Accessible parking near the park entrance/exit with signs, large print, symbols and sounds. | |
| 2. Unloading/loading area and bus stop near the park entrance/exit with spots to sit. | |
| 3. Picnic tables with lots of spots for wheelchairs. | |



Accessible Playgrounds Checklist *(continued)*

| ACCESSIBLE PLAYGROUND REQUIREMENT | COMPLETE? |
|---|-----------|
| 4. Washrooms that everyone can use: big stalls with handrails and sinks that allow a wheelchair to come close. | |
| 5. Lots of water fountains at different heights, which allow a wheelchair to wheel under and have levers and buttons to operate. | |
| 6. Trash cans that open with motion detectors and can be reached by people in wheelchairs. | |
| 7. Benches with room next to them for people in wheelchairs, and some that do not have arm rests so that people on wheelchairs can slide on. | |
| 8. Easy to find your way: signs with big and clear letters, Braille instructions, and audio guides. | |
| 9. Service animals allowed. | |
| Activities | |
| 1. Slides that are different sizes and materials. Metal slides for people with hearing implants. Matte (not shiny) slides for people with visual impairments. | |
| 2. Fun and adventurous slides that people in wheelchairs can access using a ramp. Sitting areas and transfer stations next to slides for people in wheelchairs. | |
| 3. Swings that have belts and back support or that people can use while in their wheelchair. | |

Accessible Playgrounds Checklist *(continued)*

| ACCESSIBLE PLAYGROUND REQUIREMENT | COMPLETE? |
|--|-----------|
| 4. Spinning activities that you can lay down, sit, or stand for, that require hands and no hands, and that people can use while in their wheelchair. | |
| 5. A maze or hide-and-seek area that has space for wheelchairs. | |
| 6. Monkey bars at different heights. | |
| 7. Sand tables with room for wheelchair to wheel up to as well as sand pits, or other activities that allow people in a wheelchair to use their arms. | |
| 8. Area for games such as wheelchair basketball where there is space to throw and move. | |
| 9. Fun activities that everyone can access, such as musical instruments, props, telescopes, talk tubes, pulleys to send things up and down, and activity panels. | |
| 10. Different materials for people to interact with: smooth, soft, hard, rough, grainy, and uneven. | |
| 11. A water activity that everyone can play with. | |
| 12. Safe and accessible ground near all play areas: poured rubber, rubber tiles, or playground turf. | |



Appendix A Biography of Rick Hansen, C.C., O.B.C.

The Early Years – A “Boy in Motion”

Rick Hansen was born on August 26th, 1957 in Port Alberni and grew up in Fort St. John, Abbotsford and Williams Lake (which are all towns in British Columbia). Rick was a regular kid who loved playing outside every chance he got!

Growing up in British Columbia, he had loads of outdoor space to explore; mountains, forests, rivers, and lakes. In fact, Rick loved being outside so much that his mom would often have to insist that he come in for dinner! He was truly a “boy in motion.”



Rick loved exploring and learning about his environment. He really liked fishing, so he learned all he could about the fish that lived in local waters near his town. Like a lot of kids, Rick also loved sports – any kind of sport but especially those that involved dribbling, throwing, hitting or kicking a ball around.

When he was 15 he went on a fishing trip with his friend Don Alder. After having a great time and catching lots of fish, the boys rode on the back of a pickup truck to get home. Suddenly the truck crashed and toppled over on the side of the road. During the crash, Rick was hurt and Don was not. Rick was paralyzed from the waist down. He had a spinal cord injury and he would never be able to walk again.

Rick didn't give up! He was in the hospital for seven months. While he was in there, he learned how to use a wheelchair.

This was a very hard time for Rick, but he continued to believe in himself.

After a lot of hard work and determination, Rick returned home to be with his family. There, with the encouragement of his friends, family and coach, he learned that he could still enjoy the things he loved – like fishing and sports – just in a different way.

Sports Career

When Rick finished high school, he went to university. Because he wanted to help kids be active and live healthy lives, Rick decided to study to become a Physical Education teacher. Some people thought that he couldn't do it because he used a wheelchair. Rick didn't let that stop him one bit! During university, Rick continued to play sports and even tried a bunch of new sports he had never played before. He joined a wheelchair basketball team at his school and that's where he met his good friend – Terry Fox.

Rick also really liked racing his wheelchair. He started entering different racing competitions and won many championships around the world. Rick trained very hard and eventually he participated in both the Paralympic and Olympic Games.

Making a Difference in the Lives of Others

Rick wanted to help others.

He had big dreams. One dream was to raise money to help find a cure for spinal cord injuries. The other dream was to help the world understand what people who use wheelchairs are capable of. So what did he do?

He decided to wheel his wheelchair around the world! Can you imagine how hard that would be? He wheeled through rain and snow and hot deserts. He wheeled uphill, downhill, and over

bridges. His hands were sore and his muscles were too. It took him two years, two months, and two days. His trip around the world was called the Man In Motion World Tour. When he arrived home to Vancouver, thousands of people welcomed him. His trip was over and had been very successful. Rick and his team of helpers raised 26 million dollars and showed people around the world what a person with a disability could achieve. Rick and his team used that money to help other people living with spinal cord injuries, to support research for a cure for spinal cord injury, and to help everyone live healthier lives. His journey inspired many people.



The End was Just the Beginning

Today Rick lives in Richmond, BC, with his family. His wife's name is Amanda and he has three daughters – Emma, Alana, and Rebecca. Rick is a great dad. He loves to spend time with his family and play sports with his girls. He even coached his girls when they played softball and volleyball.

Rick also enjoys coaching other teams. He has coached many teams, including wheelchair volleyball, wheelchair basketball, volleyball, basketball, and softball.

Even as a grown-up, Rick still enjoys fishing – it is one of his favourite hobbies! Rick likes

fishing so much that he even volunteers with organizations that help protect fish that are in danger – like sturgeon and salmon.

It has been more than 25 years since Rick started his journey to help people be healthy and to create a world where everyone counts. He is still working on his dreams and he has never given up. Since he started, he and his team have raised over 280 million dollars. As he says, “the best work is in front of us.” But he can't do it alone – he needs your help to make a difference!



Thousands assemble in Vancouver to thank and congratulate Rick upon completing the Man In Motion World Tour.

To find out more or download our resources, visit
www.rickhansen.com/schools, call **1.800.213.2131**
or email schools@rickhansen.com.



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