

Take A Walk on the Child Side

AIA Webinar presented October 24 2014

Questions, with responses, posed following the webinar:

1. Although it makes sense to use green guard certified materials and to minimize the "toxins" that come near our children. Is there a point in which we create an unrealistically pure environment that is not sustainable throughout the children's life? And in turn we effect their immune systems from developing against "toxins" that they will inevitably encounter in other areas of life?

It is not the intent to create a 'padded clean room' environment. Children develop naturally and deliberately from a trial and error approach to learning, and that will result in a bump along the way from which they will learn, and recover. The issue with toxins however is more sinister-you might not even know it is happening, and unfortunately many exposures are non-reversible with lifelong impacts. So the emphasis should be on removing any that can be removed, and maintaining that condition to the extent achievable.

2. FLW passed away in 1957 - could not have made the quote in 1966! Otherwise a very good presentation.

Of course, and thank you. My apology for the error.

3. I'm an architect and artist - is there a way exchange contact info - to collaborate on children's playgrounds? C. Noël Kennard, website: <http://cnoelkennard.com/home.html>

Noel I will add you to the mailing list for the Early Childhood Learning Environments Subcommittee, and share your interest with the committee.

4. Given parents' concerns about recent shootings, how do you balance transparency and plenty of glass with security concerns?

*I am not a subject matter expert on security with respect to an active shooter. From my anecdotal experience, children are at **far** greater risk of injury through abuse, whether from an adult (teacher, parent, 'other') or another child, than an intruder with intent to kill. Once inside, I don't know how to protect them without putting them in jail.*

5. How are children with physical disabilities accommodated, i.e. stimulating outdoor environments like the crushed granite path referenced in the presentation?

All these environments are intended to be 100% accessible or like activity is provided. Transfer stations are incorporated into the play structures, etc.

6. How can the environment reduce staff turnover?

These centers were designed and constructed under a corporate sponsor model, so that the children in the center are the children of the employees of the sponsoring corporation. The staff turnover referenced here is the corporate sponsor's staff-on site child care is proven to reduce (the sponsor's) staff turnover. Having a well-designed center that supports the caregivers appropriately certainly would also reduce turnover, but I don't have any research to prove that.

7. How much psf did this facility cost?

In the neighborhood of \$250/sf.

8. I have worked on several of these centers with a much more modest budget than you show here. Do you have ideas about what to keep and what might go in a smaller budget?

I think I would do everything I could afford to bring daylight into the building, especially in the classrooms. The classrooms illustrated run about 5% larger than state minimum standards, mostly to avoid problems with licensing approvals. Finishes are mostly paint, I would avoid wall coverings. Floor finishes are resilient, marmoleum/linoleum are preferred. Two things I generally won't accept in value engineering are plastic laminate counters for cabinets with child sinks (I specify a solid surface like corian), and I strongly recommend finger safe door hardware (continuous offset hinges with finger guards).

9. Since there are more goal keepers getting non-Hodgkin's lymphoma from synthetic turf it seems like you especially wouldn't want to use it with young children. Thoughts?

That is a concerning phenomenon. And without evidence to confirm or deny, the precautionary principle should be the guiding principle. This response from the webinar is news to me, and I've set about gathering as much information as I can to make an informed judgment. The other sport that should have shown some signs of a similar trend would be American football, in which I would expect to see many players with much higher degree of contact with the turf than goalkeepers. I would welcome any research you have on the subject.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Wells, AIA

Chair

Subcommittee for Early Childhood Learning Environments