

# Inclusive Design Essentials

We prioritize and plan model inclusive play environments by providing a robust variety of activities and design features that address the physical, social-emotional, sensory, cognitive, and communicative needs of all children, including those with disabilities. These inclusive essentials align with evidence-based design best practices to break down both physical barriers for access and social barriers to participate.



INCLUSIVE PLAY ESSENTIAL	FEATURES, BENEFITS & EXAMPLES	BENEFITS FOR THE WHOLE CHILD					
		PHYSICAL	SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL	SENSORY	COGNITIVE	COMMUNICATION	INCLUSIVE DESIGN PRINCIPLE
Music & Sound	Encourages collaboration, creativity and age-appropriate activities for multigenerational users at any developmental stage Examples: Xylophones, Drums, RotoGens, Sound Effects and Ambient Sounds, Talking Animals, etc.						1
Inclusive Artwork	Include artwork that celebrates differences and embraces diversity. Create awareness by including characters of various race, gender, age, ethnicity, culture, and ability						1
Dramatic Play	Encourages imagination, creativity, symbolic thinking, and social dialogue through pretend play Examples: Playhouses, Play Markets, Play Vehicles, Dress-Up, etc.						2
Communication	Encourages language skills through motivating, collaborative and reciprocal activities with friends and family Example: Talk Tubes						2
Looping Patterns	Supports intuitive play patterns so that children can successfully engage in repetitive, active play to develop skills Example: Steps or climbers should be positioned adjacent to slides to create a "looping" pattern						3
Active vs. Passive Play Settings	Enhances play experiences through well-organized, easy-to-recognize areas while avoiding user conflict Example: Position dramatic play activities near sand/water play, under decks, or away from high traffic areas.						3
Visual Supports	Strategically use color, patterns, textures, and pictures as visual cues to help organize activity areas so the environment is easy to understand Examples: Signs, Arrows, Color Coded Sections, Floor Graphics, Directional Cues in Artwork, etc.						3
Accessible Routes	Allows diverse users, adaptive equipment, and caregivers access to social and physical play throughout the environment. Examples: ADA Ramp, Transfer Decks, Wide Openings, Hand Rails, etc.						4
Multisensory Features	Sensory walls, activity panels, and music provide fun and often surprising auditory, visual, and/or tactile experiences and encourage learning through discovery and exploration Examples: Play Panels, Sensory Boxes, Tactile Sculptures, Scent Machines, etc.						4
Jump In Point	Offers passive areas for children to observe and understand the play activity prior to participating and helps draw them into active play Examples: Crawl-On Animals, Rocks and Logs, Crates, Benches, Picnic Tables etc.						5
Cozy Spot	Offers quiet or semi-enclosed places, such as under the deck or crawl tubes, where children can seek sensory relief and retreat until ready to engage in play Examples: Crawl Thrus, Nooks, Playhouse Interiors, etc.						5
Seating	Offers clear visibility and supervision of activity areas Examples: Benches, Chairs, Firepits and Logs, Picnic Tables, etc.						5
Cooperative Play	Reinforces positive interactions between children through dynamic and fun experiences as children work together to engage in the activity Examples: Interactive Games with Social Participation						6
Activities with Comfortable Reach & Approach	Provides adequate space around or underneath activities or counters to allow individuals using mobility devices to comfortably reach and approach facing forward Examples: Activity Panel, Consoles, Accessible Play Vehicles, etc.						7
Amenities	Offering amenities such as check-in areas within comfortable proximity to play positively enhances the experience of all visitors. If outdoors, integrate shade for comfort and to provide a balance of sunlight exposure and relief to environmental conditions						7

\*Please Reference PlayCore's 7 Principles of Inclusive Playground Design(r), developed in Partnership with Utah State University. Download the design guidebook for further details and examples at [www.playcore.com/inclusiveplay](http://www.playcore.com/inclusiveplay).