Introduction: Community Service Learning

**Spring Semester**

- Conduct case studies of successful designs
- Study developmental needs of children
- Participate in Earth Day
- Visit site and work with children
- Analyze site and program
- Create master plans
- Begin butterfly garden

**Summer**

- Organize gifting of “Miss Rumphius” books
- Finish planting butterfly garden
Objectives

- To support joyful learning and play through the development of concepts celebrating the site and region.

- To demonstrate an understanding of design sensitive to children’s developmental needs while promoting environmental stewardship.

- To apply knowledge and understanding to site design for elementary school-aged children, their teachers, and other users of the schoolyard.
Location of Turners Falls
Location of Hillcrest and Sheffield Schools
Sheffield School
• Grades 3-6
• Approximately 300 students.
Hillcrest School

• Grades K-2
• Approximately 200 students.
Site Analysis
Learning by the Yard: A Master Plan for the Sheffield
and Hillcrest Elementary Schools in Turners Falls, MA
Case Studies: Learning about schoolyard design and children’s needs

The Charles Dickens Primary School in Southwark, London was designed over two
phases by Theories Landscapes. Much like
the schools in Turners Falls, the design in-
cludes many art works done by the students
themselves.

The design called for a series of semi-
shestered and sheltered areas or towers.
The students’ works were incorporated into
the mosaic tiling in wall panels and seating.
These mosaic patterns are paired with color-
ful decorative metal gates and fences.

A nice part of this playground is that the
contractor was essentially the students.
Much of the work and pattern design was
done by the children, and Theories Land-
sapes was responsible for assembling
these components. This is a great example
of allowing the children’s work dominate the
design.

The total cost of the project
was £135,000 which is rela-
tively inexpensive considering
this playground is now a life-
long expression of the children
of the Charles Dickens Primary
School.

Love is in all things a most wonderful
teacher... -Charles Dickens
Learning by the Yard: A Master Plan for the Sheffield and Hillcrest Elementary Schools in Turners Falls, MA

Case Studies

The Edible Schoolyard

The Edible Schoolyard is a non-profit program located on the campus of Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School in Berkeley, California. The cooking and gardening program grew out of a conversation between chef and author Alice Waters, and former King Middle School Principal Neil Smith. Planning commenced in 1995 and two years later, more than an acre of asphalt parking lot had been cleared. A cover crop was planted to enrich the soil, and in 1997, the school’s unused 1930s cafeteria kitchen was refurnished to house the kitchen classroom.

Mission

The mission of the Edible Schoolyard at Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School is to create and sustain an organic garden and landscape that is wholly integrated into the school’s curriculum and lunch program. It involves the students in all aspects of farming the garden—along with preparing, serving, and eating the food—as a means of awakening their senses and encouraging awareness and appreciation of the transformative values of nourishment, community, and stewardship of the land.

Garden

The Edible Schoolyard garden is located on the eastern side of the school, looking over the campus, the San Francisco Bay, and the Golden Gate Bridge. An acre of beds is planted with seasonal produce, herbs, vines, berries and flowers and surrounded by fruit trees. Pathways wind through the beds to the ramada, seed propagation table, tool shed, chicken coop, and pizza oven. Students and adults work together to prepare the beds, sow the seeds, transplant, compost, water, weed, and harvest.

Kitchen

The Edible Schoolyard kitchen is housed in a colorful bungalow that sits at the gardens southern border. Warm, bright and cheerful, the kitchen is a backdrop for enthusiastic students who view the garden through the north-facing windows—making the fact connection between seasonality, plants, and food.

Classroom

The classroom, kitchen, and garden form a triad of educational experience. Lessons taught in the classroom are enriched by hands-on garden and kitchen activities, while concepts that arise in the kitchen and garden are meaningfully discussed in the classroom. The settings are most productive when linked, and foster students’ multi-leveled understanding of the natural world. Teachers provide students with direct instruction in support of kitchen and garden activities, such as plant structure and function, composting, vermiculture, and vocabulary. Because all students participate in The Edible Schoolyard, teachers reference garden and kitchen experiences to activate prior knowledge and support the teaching of key concepts.
SECONDARY CASE STUDIES

SOUTHSIDE PARK, SACRAMENTO, CA.

HIGHLANDS PARK, SAN CARLOS, CA.

LEFT: USE OF PLAYFUL SHAPES AND CHARACTERS.

RIGHT: VIBRANT COLORS USED FOR THE PLAYGROUND STRUCTURES.

USE OF MOSAIC TILE WORK
Case Studies

Camden Children’s Garden

Location: Camden New Jersey

Project Purpose: to create a place for young people to explore and discover the natural world as well as provide horticultural experiences for creative and imaginative play.

Context: The Camden Children’s Garden is set on the Southern New Jersey waterfront along the Delaware River which separates New Jersey from Delaware. Amenities and recreation near the site include the Aquarium, Tweeter Center, Battleship N.J., the Riversharks Minor League Baseball Team, and the historic section of Camden.

Although the garden is located in the thriving waterfront district, the whole of the city is in a state of industrial decline and has been listed as the most dangerous city in the United States as of 2004. This allows the Camden Children’s Garden to act as a beacon of light for parents to bring their children to a fun and safe place.

Project Design Intent: to educate children as well as adults about their environment in an imaginative and interactive way. The easy interaction with gardens is achieved by the use of small and large scale installations to create a sense of fantasy in the spaces as well as excite those entering the park from a distance. The use of different media and everchanging themes as you move through the park help to keep the visitor engaged and excited to see what is up ahead. The use of bright colors and textures thoroughly appeals to the tactile senses of children and adults alike.
Case Studies

Travis Elementary School: Dinosaur Park
Houston, Texas

The ‘Dinosaur’ park is successful because it works as both an urban public school playground and as a neighborhood park. The park is located 2.5 miles from Houston’s central business district. The ‘Friends of Travis’ formed in 1989 pulled together community residents to support the neighborhood school.

The school was selected by SPARK (School Park Program), a non-profit organization that attempts to make school playgrounds accessible to the community by using federal grant money, school district funds, and private donations to fix up playgrounds.

The dinosaur concept originated from students in grades K-5, who were asked to design their “ultimate playground.” Their ideas and input are reflected in the unique design of the park, involving artistic, botanical, archeological, and geological themes. The park was started in 1989 and major improvements occurred in 1992, 1998, 2002, and 2003.

In addition to planting many trees, installing a jogging track, and patting playground equipment, local sculptor, Paul Kittleson created the huge dinosaur skeleton and faux archeological dig out of concrete the phony bones can be climbed on, climbed under, or whatever else.
Case Studies

KITAGATA GARDENS
Location: Kitagata, Japan
Designer: Martha Schwartz
Built: 2000

- The design was innovative in that it relied heavily on landscape materials and public art. The landscape was used as an opportunity to keep the architectural connection to the surrounding buildings but also to keep the site very low maintenance.
- The park had an impact on the public perception of what a park should look like compared to traditional parks.
- The project overall was a test of how landscape can be implemented into a sustainable environment in Japan.
- This project is interesting because it was a test in "landscape in housing design" as all four buildings and the gardens were designed by women.
- The project aimed toward an educational goal of providing the children of the housing complex with interactive play areas that would spark their imagination by using abstract forms and colors to represent seasons, landscapes, and objects.
- Areas such as the 4 Seasons Garden use four Danken colored glass cubed-shaped rooms that exemplify colors and feelings that are associated with each season incorporating abstract educational values to the garden.
- Other areas such as the Willow Court, has a flooded pool planted with willows and other wetland plants and is surrounded by a boardwall. This provides an abstract representation of a wetland landscape native to this part of Japan.
- Kitagata Gardens is an excellent example of a non-traditional park and the values it can still hold for recreational and educational purposes for all ages.
Learning by the Yard: A Master Plan for the Sheffield and Hillcrest Elementary Schools in Turners Falls, MA

Case Studies

THOMAS PRINCE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
DESIGN BY: STEVEN STIMPSON ASSOCIATES

SIGNIFICANCE
The design of the Thomas Prince Elementary School in Princeton, Massachusetts by Stephen Stimpson, is the perfect model for a schoolyard study. The minimalist approach aims to transform the quality of the schools courtyard with simple gestures, which provide for a unique design. Using many of the principles for creating space and desire lines, an area where landscape architects excel, Stimpson is able to compose a landscape that adheres to the needs of the children attending the elementary school, while also providing for the functional needs of the school.

DESIGN PHILOSOPHY
The minimalist design philosophy used by Stimpson creates a garden for the school that shows “how space can be organized to create an experience”. With this as a defining feature, Stimpson conceived of a garden using simple colors and simple gestures to define space, frame views, and allure people into the garden. Broken down into two shaded sides, the design intends to make the courtyard feel longer because of its undulating qualities. Moreover, the shaded area at the entrance to the garden help to give a “sneak peek” view out from the building into the new garden landscape. Coupled with this, a dome sculpted from re-used rebar was strategically placed in the corner on the far end of the area to act as a focal point and draw people into the landscape. This dome carries historical significance because it is modeled after a Native American Quonset hut. Besides being the primary focal point visually, the dome is also a play area for children, showing the careful interaction between detailed design and intended use. Stimpson recognizes the different needs of the garden and developed a design language that “would speak to children without descending into cliche”

SPECIAL FEATURES
A major element of the design, as well as, a special feature was the use of light and shade to create different experiences. As stated by Stimpson, “The views penetrate through the paces from one into the next, from shade to sunlight, to shade”. Keeping with the theme of simple gestures that have powerful results. The two shaded sides do more for the landscape than simply provide areas for reprieve from the hot sun. Shade is used as a key element adding to the spatial qualities of the garden and providing for a range of experiences. Similarly, the dome is covered with vegetation creating different spatial qualities given the time of year.
University of Massachusetts Amherst
Landscape Architecture 497D:
Senior Studio Project, Professor Annaliese Bischoff
Learning by the Yard: A Master Plan for the Sheffield and Hillcrest Elementary Schools in Turners Falls, MA

Earth Day Parade: UMass students joining elementary school children in a parade
Earth Day Parade Destination: Program at Great Falls Discovery Center
University of Massachusetts Amherst
Landscape Architecture 497D:
Senior Studio Project, Professor Annaliese Bischoff
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Elementary student-designed mural gateway
The new walk and garden site
UMass students demonstrate how to plant donated forsythia shrubs
Butterfly garden planting at the new garden site
Students fly kites to celebrate planting success.
Beginning Design Program Requirements

• Create places for children to gather, garden, or other interactive plantings

• Create places for children to feel sheltered

• Use a native planting palette. No toxic plants!
UMass Student Design Proposals for the Schoolyard

“The Spiral and the Grid”

Leah Daignault and Lauren Toohey
Design Proposals for the Schoolyard

“The Giving Tree”

Danielle Mellett and Matt Benzie
Design Proposals for the Schoolyard

“The Giving Tree”
Upon graduation from Hillcrest students bring their tree over to Sheffield.

Danielle Mellett and Matt Benzie
Design Proposals for the Schoolyard

“Structured Forms, Free Forms”

Troy Olson
Jeff Donorama
Design Proposals for the Schoolyard

“Puzzle Pieces”

Jon Allard and
Jesse Harris
Design Proposals for the Schoolyard

“Transformations with Banners”
Chris Scheufler, Jaron Lyons, and Joe Coan
Some design details

Michael Lazar
Completing the Butterfly Garden Planting
Making the Schoolyard More Beautiful: Inspired by “Miss Rumphius”

- Ken Schoen of Schoen Books donates copies of “Miss Rumphius” to children at the school.
- Children read this story about making the world a more beautiful place.
- Chip Wood, the principal, gives students seeds to plant.
- Students plant seeds of native delphiniums to make the schoolyard a more beautiful place.