

SPARK CENTER NATURAL PLAYGROUND, Mattapan, Ma.

Project completed in collaboration with Studio G Architects and Johansson Design Collaborative



Project Information:

The SPARK Center, a program of Boston Medical Center, provides services and day care for at-risk children. The design team and staff generated educational goals for the new yard. Two key goals are to enable the children to explore, socialize and learn interactively in a natural environment and to expand the educational programs outdoors.

Young learners now have many ways to engage the environment through cooperative play opportunities. Children can assist in growing and harvesting vegetables, and can experience the tastes and smells of herbs planted along the paths. They can hone their gross motor skills running and rolling on the newly sculpted hills, and by jumping from one log to another. Dry sand and dirt play areas are enhanced with a water supply from a near-by spigot. Class lessons can take place in various seating areas or at the stage and fort.

Materials found on site, such as felled tree stumps and branches, were salvaged and re-used in the construction of the fort and climbing logs. The resulting design is a safe space where children with few opportunities to get out in nature can play and learn about natural systems.

Client: SPARK Center
Year Completed: 2010

