

## **Designing for social participation - a Universal Design approach to making playgrounds for all**

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**Introduction:** Playgrounds are common physical environments in communities, for children and should be a place for children to form friendships with other children in the community. For children with disabilities this is not always the case.

Environmental factors are the largest hindrances to participation for children with disabilities according to several studies. Playgrounds as a setting can restrict children with disabilities from playing.

**Objectives:** This presentation gives a background to designing for play, based on research with children with disabilities and their parents. Barriers and enablers are identified in designing, planning and providing for play. Implementation of a universal design approach is proposed as a key solution for making equal access to participation in play for children with disabilities a reality.

**Approach:** Designing for social participation involves a multidimensional approach with expertise needed from varied disciplines and from different levels of policy and practice: Landscape architects and town planners, occupational therapists and families of children with disabilities.

Results/Practice implication

The presentation is an attempt to exemplify what the different principals of Universal design (UD) could mean when applied to playgrounds. It is important to remember that UD is about flexibility in how the principals can be applied, it is not about different measurements.

**Conclusion:** Key to successful accessibility, usability and social participation, is designing for diversity, with appropriate play areas and opportunities in the playground. Accessible playgrounds are valued by children with disabilities and their families and is an important part of providing for the UN's rights of the child