

FROM IDEAS TO REALITY:

SUNNYSNOOK PRIMARY'S STUDENT-LED PLAYGROUND PROJECT



In 2023, Sunnysnook Primary School embarked on an exciting and innovative playground project aimed at giving their students a hands-on learning experience. Led by Katrina Hosken, the school's Deputy Principal, and a math's extension group, the project involved the students in every step of the design process.

Katrina reached out to Park Supplies & Playgrounds to assist with the playground project after discovering them at a North Shore Principals Association conference. Dan Burger, Playground Consultant at Park Supplies & Playgrounds said, *"We jumped at the opportunity to work with Sunnysnook Primary School on this project, I knew it was going to be an interesting project having the students involved in the whole process"*.

The school's main goal was to replace the existing playground, which was deemed too costly to maintain in the long run. Park Supplies & Playgrounds worked closely with the school and the students during the entire playground design process.

"The first session focused on explaining different types of playground designs and things to consider when designing a playground" Dan explained. The following sessions involved measuring out the playground space, placing the measurements of the playground equipment they wanted into the space and working on fall zones.

"Our students really led the whole process" Katrina recalls proudly. Dan popped in to visit and check in regularly and the students were able to call him and ask any questions they had.

The group then came up with a list of questions and surveyed the rest of the student body to find out what they would like to see in the playground. They took this feedback and integrated their ideas into the playground design.

"After receiving their playground design ideas, our Playground Design team took these ideas and designed the playground based on the student feedback" Dan explained.

The finished playground design was presented back to the students, and their next assignment involved a presentation of the playground design.

"Our students presented the playground design and explained the benefits of the new playground to the Board of Trustees and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) in order to gain their support and funding for the project". Katrina explains.

Once the playground project was approved, Katrina organised a visit for the students to the Park Supplies & Playgrounds factory. Dan said the whole Park Supplies & Playgrounds team enjoyed having the students visit, *"They [the students] learned about welding, bending steel, CNC machines, and how the playground goes from an idea to a design to a functional playground. The students loved it, and one of them even made a comment that the factory was like the Charlie and the Chocolate Factory"*.



The Whare Fort was one of the playground elements chosen by the students.



The Tower Spiral Slide, always a big hit in a school playground.



The Orex Spinner (also known as a Witches Hat).

Katrina stated *“The guys at the factory were amazing, they even talked to the kids about what maths they had to use to do their job”*. The specific equipment chosen for the playground included a high tower, spiral slide, abseiling wall, fireman’s pole, and a spinning netting tower (known as a witches hat). These elements were selected based on the students’ preferences and the balance between fun and physical activity.

Installation of the playground went smoothly, with Park Supplies & Playgrounds overseeing the entire process. The playground was completed and opened in the second week of the school year in 2024. The school blocked off the area during holidays to ensure a smooth transition.

The new playground has been a huge success among the students at Sunnynook Primary School. Katrina explained:

“Initially the playground was intended for the junior students, but the senior kids love it so much as well, we now have a roster that allows the seniors to have two days on the playground”. She also mentioned “The children that worked on the playground project have now gone to intermediate, but lots of them came back when it opened to play on it. They’re incredibly proud that they made this happen.”

When asked if she would recommend the Park Supplies & Playgrounds team, Katrina expressed *“I would definitely recommend them. They were all great, but Dan in particular was incredible, absolutely great with the students. He really valued what they had to say and gave them time and made them feel really important”*.

The Sunnynook Primary School Playground project, in collaboration with Park Supplies & Playgrounds, has not only provided the school with a new, engaging, and functional playground but also empowered students to play an active role in the design process, fostering a sense of ownership and pride.



The finished playground structure.

Keen to get your students involved in designing their next playground? We’re here to help every step of the way.



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