



# A HIGHER LEVEL OF INCLUSIVE PLAY<sup>®</sup>

IDEAS FOR BETTER  
PLAYGROUNDS.  
FOR ALL.

*LS*  
landscape  
structures<sup>®</sup>

# THE FACTS OF THE MATTER

People with disabilities are the nation's largest minority group, and the only one that anyone can join at any time.

**6.7  
MILLION**

**The number of school-age children with disabilities.**

*- U.S. Department of Education, 2019*

**1 BILLION+**

**The number of people with disabilities in the world.**

Nearly **15%** of the world's population.

*- World Health Organization, 2018*

**74%**

**of parents believe it's important for their children to play with a variety of kids, including those with disabilities.**

*- Landscape Structures Inclusive Play Survey, 2014*

**ARTICLE 31**

**Children have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities.**

*- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989*

**7 OUT  
OF 10**

**parents strongly agree that playground equipment should be designed so all children can play together.**

*- Landscape Structures Inclusive Play Survey, 2014*

**85%+**

**The number of adults with disabilities who report losing their jobs report doing so due to a lack of social skills.**

*- Elksnin & Elksnin, "Adolescents with Disabilities: The Need for Occupational Social Skills Training"; Exceptionality; Volume 9 No. 1 & 2; Pages 91-105.*

**NEARLY 40%**

of grandparents provide child care for their grandchildren.

**22%**

provide care 25+ hours a week.

- *Grandparents: A Critical Child Care Safety Net.*  
National Association of Child Care Resources & Referral Agencies

**1 IN 700**

babies are born with  
Down syndrome every year.

**1 IN 323**

children have cerebral palsy.

- *Centers for Disease Control and  
Prevention, 2018*

**NEARLY**

**26%**

of Americans have a disability  
and the prevalence of disabilities  
in adults increases with age.

- *Centers for Disease Control  
and Prevention and Disability  
& Health Data System, 2019*

**1 IN 59**

children have Autism Spectrum Disorder

- *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018*

**15% A YEAR**

Autism's rate of growth, making it the fastest growing disability

- *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014*

**500,000+**

troops have been wounded  
in recent conflicts.

- *Wounded Warrior Project*

**5% to 16%**

of children are affected with  
Sensory Processing Disorder.

- *"Sensational Kids:  
Hope & Help for Children with Sensory  
Processing Disorder,"*  
Lucy Jane Miller, Ph.D., 2006



# ACCESSIBILITY VS. INCLUSIVITY

In a survey we conducted with parents across the country, 57% mistakenly believed that playgrounds are required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to include elements designed for children with Down syndrome, sensory disorders, and visual and hearing impairments.

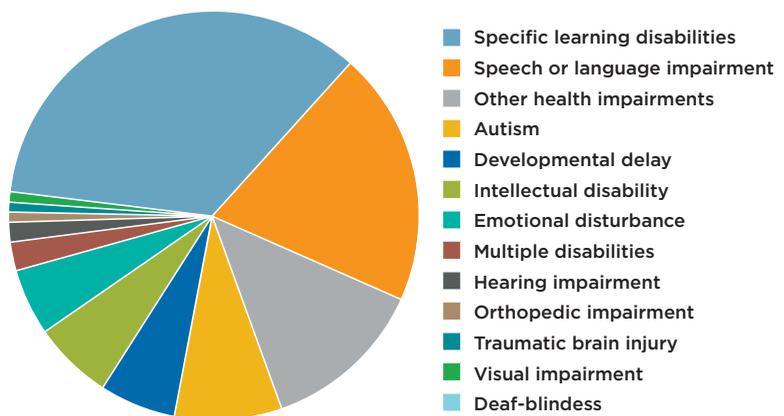
In reality, current ADA standards primarily require that playgrounds be accessible for those who use a wheelchair or other mobility aid.

We need to go beyond accessibility and design playgrounds that are truly inclusive.

## Students with Disabilities

There are many types of disabilities  
The **1%** (Orthopedic Impairments) that falls into the ADA target

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2019.



**What is an inclusive playground?** A universally designed, sensory-rich environment that enables all children to develop physically, socially and emotionally. An engaging place that provides the just-right level of challenge and offers opportunities to succeed. A well-designed place that addresses all levels of ability. A place that goes beyond minimum accessibility to create play experiences that meet a variety of needs and interests.

At an inclusive playground, children of all abilities can interact with each other and do what all kids want to do: play.

**A valuable asset** Investing in an inclusive playground can be a strategic boost for any community. Playgrounds that truly welcome everyone will attract countless visitors to your area.



## UNIVERSAL DESIGN

A process that enables and empowers a diverse population by improving human performance, health and wellness, and social participation.

— *Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access (IDeA Center), University of Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning*

## ROLL OUT THE WELCOME MAT

The benefits of inclusive playgrounds are far-reaching. They are also a welcome resource for parents with disabilities (wounded veterans, for example) and an aging caregiver population who want to interact with the children in their care.

You'll want to take a look at how accommodating your parking lots, restrooms and pathways are to people of varying abilities. That way, everyone can easily access your inclusive playground!

## WHY EMBRACE UNIVERSAL DESIGN?

Because it benefits everyone regardless of condition. Applying Universal Design means taking away barriers, both physical and social. It provides principles for thoughtful design and helps create a place where all can play, learn and grow together.

***“When children of any ability enter our playground, they are instantly engaged. The Landscape Structures playground speaks to every person, no matter what his or her ability level. It says, ‘I am here especially for you. Come try me out. We will have fun together! You will challenge yourself and you will succeed!’”***

*– Lucy Jane Miller, Ph.D., Founder of STAR Institute for Sensory Processing Disorder*

**Our design philosophy** Landscape Structures creates inclusive playgrounds featuring activities that are age and developmentally appropriate, sensory stimulating and universally designed. Our design philosophy is influenced by the tenets of Universal Design, a theory of design that strives to make environments more usable, safer and healthier for all.

Our collaborative process engages your stakeholders, interprets community needs and ultimately results in a design that reflects your vision. To this we apply our extensive experience with inclusive play, infused by our ongoing research into empirical evidence-based best practices.

This process creates a strong foundation for inclusive playground design, incorporating scientific findings into the play experiences themselves as well as the overall design.

**Sensory Play** Through sensory play, all children discover their world and how to be successful in it. The broad play experiences from sensory-rich playgrounds allow children of all abilities to integrate and develop their senses. The more they play, the more they develop skills necessary to engage, change and impact the world around them.

## THE SENSES AT PLAY

**Tactile**

**How the world feels**

**Visual**

**How the world looks**

**Auditory**

**How the world sounds**

**Vestibular**

**How you balance within the world**

**Proprioception**

**Awareness of how your body is positioned within the world**

**Motor Planning**

**How you move through the world**

*Motor skill development that helps children attain mastery, self-esteem and physical competence.*

**Social/Imaginative**

**How you engage with the world**

*This is a byproduct of the senses at play. Successful integration of sensory information from the world allows children to develop healthy social and imaginative skills, leading to healthy engagement with the world around them.*

# SENSORY PLAY BUILDS A HEALTHY FOUNDATION FOR EVERY CHILD.

Playgrounds can offer many opportunities for children to further develop their physical, cognitive and social skills through sensory play. An inclusive design includes a balance of play experiences that are beneficial to children of all abilities, at all stages of development and at all levels of sensory engagement.

**“The life of a child with special needs is changed by all of the folks who choose to say, ‘You matter, and I am going to take my creative energies and do something important for you.’ I am just grateful to everybody who puts their lives into making these kids’ lives better.”**

*– April Mills, Bremerton Beyond Accessible Play*



**SPINNING** Multidimensional movements like spinning and rotating supply children’s brains with valuable, complex vestibular and proprioceptive information. This connects input from head and body position in space, helping children maintain proper body posture and balance while they play.

Consider equipment that offers thoughtful benefits like high-backed support (like on the OmniSpin® Spinner) or convenient wheelchair access (like the We-Go-Round®). Both of these also provide opportunities for interchangeable roles and group interaction.



We-Go-Round®



OmniSpin® Spinner



Chill® Spinner

**SWINGING** The back-and-forth movement of swinging provides a child's nervous system with a wealth of visual, vestibular and proprioceptive stimulation as they learn how their bodies move in space and how much effort it takes to increase or decrease their speed.

Integrating many options for swinging offers lots of ways to build vestibular senses. For example, the Oodle® Swing and the Friendship® Swing are designed to encourage social play while swinging. And ZipKrooz® Assisted provides every child with the linear experience of flying.

*To see all of our inclusive play options, visit [playlsi.com/inclusive-play](https://playlsi.com/inclusive-play)*



Friendship® Swing



ZipKrooz® Assisted



Oodle® Swing

**MULTI-SENSORY PLAY** It's important to provide all children with the opportunity to develop their senses at the right periods of their lives in order to foster proper development.

For example, sensory play panels help children enhance their cognitive, tactile, sensory/motor, emotional/social and language skills with self-led exploration. The built-in elements on the interactive Sensory Play Center® encourage kids to explore a variety of textures, shapes, sounds, colors and imaginative moments.



Marble Panel® and Optigear Panel®

Sensory Play Center®



**TACTILE** A variety of tactile inputs helps children organize sensory information from the world around them. Manipulative media like sand and water pair creative play with an ideal sensory experience. And because they're fun, tactile play elements often help solo play progress into cooperative play.

*To see all of our inclusive play options, visit [playlsi.com/inclusive-play](https://playlsi.com/inclusive-play)*



Custom Sand Table



Custom Hippo Sprayer

**SLIDING** Sliding integrates multiple senses, including vestibular, tactile and proprioception. On the Rollerslide, the rollers provide a deep pressure tactile input that many children, especially those with sensory disorders, crave as a calming influence. Horizontal rolling like the Roller Table™ lets children slide back and forth on all sides of their bodies, which allows for proprioceptive and tactile stimulation, and challenges upper body strength.



Rollerslide



Roller Table™

**MUSIC** Music play is naturally calming and allows kids to feel successful. The easy roll-up access of the Rhapsody® chimes, metallophones and drums invites children of all abilities and families to make music together. The tuning of the melodic instruments makes every composition sound beautiful.

*To see all of our inclusive play options, visit [playlsi.com/inclusive-play](https://playlsi.com/inclusive-play)*



Cascata® Bells



Grandioso® Chimes

**SOCIAL/IMAGINATIVE** It's important to create opportunities for all levels of social interaction. Imaginative play is where children get to “try on” the many roles and activities of life. This helps develop “whole child” learning.

Components like the We-saw™ and Sway Fun® Glider encourage cooperation and build camaraderie as all play together. Components like the Cozy Dome® provide a place where children can slip away to explore quieter play adventures.



Smart Play® Market Cafe



We-saw™



Sway Fun® Glider



Cozy Dome®

**SAFETY, COMFORT AND ACCESS** The first step in building an inclusive playground is making sure it's accessible for all. By connecting play products and providing more equitable access with unitary surfacing and Double-Wide Ramps, children and adults of all abilities can reap the benefits of socialization and full participation on the playground.

It's just as important to create spaces that protect children from the elements, especially UV rays and high heat. CoolToppers® and SkyWays® shade products can be incorporated into the playground structure itself or as freestanding elements. *To see all of our inclusive play options, visit [playsi.com/inclusive-play](https://www.playsi.com/inclusive-play)*



Double-Wide Ramp



CoolToppers® and SkyWays® shade products

# INCLUSIVE PLAY IDEA GALLERY

Just as every child is unique, every playground should be, too.

The following playgrounds demonstrate that the opportunity for inclusive play can be achieved in many different creative ways, from big to small spaces (and anywhere in between), for budgets of all sizes. In each case, the result is A Higher Level of Inclusive Play®.

For more complete information about inclusive play design, see the **INCLUSIVE PLAYSPACE DESIGN: PLANNING GUIDE**.

## A Story about Hudson from his Mom

“A world where children with disabilities can play with able-bodied children, no one is excluded and all children can play together.

Now, it all makes sense. I never really understood why Hudson (*pictured at right*) has never enjoyed going to parks. Yes, it’s exhausting for us from having to lift him, but we always try to get him to go.

I’m always observing him. His therapist, too. It’s just hard for him. It’s also overwhelming and scary to him. He’s never really enjoyed going to parks until today.

Today, we were able to attend the grand reopening of Shane’s Inspiration Playground in Griffith Park.

Once again, he didn’t want to ‘go to the park.’ But as we pulled up, I told him, “Hudson, THIS park is for you. THIS park you can use your walker everywhere.’ He got sooooo excited and said, ‘Hurry, Mom, let’s go! Hurry, let’s get out of the car!’

Today was the longest we stayed at a park because he was so busy playing on the equipment independently and with no fear. I can tell he felt SAFE. He was able to be a kid. I was able to stand, watch and relax as he played ... for the very first time!

Little did we know ‘we are going to the park’ would turn into an amazing first-time experience. It introduced us to a whole new world that unfortunately Hudson has been missing. It’s an hour away but incredibly worth it.

From the bottom of my heart, I’m so beyond thankful for Inclusion Matters® by Shane’s Inspiration!

We need more parks like this. I now look at our local parks as parks that exclude. No more exclusion!!

He definitely left a happy boy. Hudson will be back!”

– Melissa (Hudson’s mom)



Proud to partner with:



**ANKENY  
MIRACLE PARK—  
ALL-INCLUSIVE  
PLAYGROUND AND  
MIRACLE LEAGUE  
FIELD—  
ANKENY, IOWA**

A partnership between the City of Ankeny and the Ankeny Kiwanis Club brought to fruition this welcoming community gathering place. Because of their work, more than 3,500 children with special needs throughout four counties now have a chance to play baseball and navigate through a fully inclusive, baseball-themed playground.



“For nine years of my kids’ lives I’ve had to sit on the sidelines, not able to participate. Now that I can, they want to come here every day.”

– A wheelchair-mobile Dad

Proud to partner with:



Cooke School serves students with cognitive, emotional and physical disabilities. Before this playground was installed, the student body didn't have a place to play outside. Now students even do their physical therapy on the playground and adjacent fitness area. The components were carefully selected to meet the many specific needs of their students, ensuring that everyone is able to explore the playground equally.



**“We’re able to use it as  
a teaching tool as well  
as a recreation tool.”**

*- Mary Meldrum, Principal*



**MADISON'S PLACE—  
WOODBURY,  
MINNESOTA**

This award-winning memorial playground is named after Madison who had spinal muscular atrophy. Her mighty approach to her short life is celebrated in this inspiring playground and adjacent splash pad. Elevated decks create quiet places below. Up above they lead to seven unique sliding experiences plus a cool sensory tunnel featuring colorful lighting and imaginative, manipulative play panels.



**“When you get kids together, they don’t look at each other differently. They’re just going out playing.”**

*- Dana Millington, Madison Claire Foundation*



**CITY OF  
PARKERSBURG  
SPLASH PAD—  
PARKERSBURG,  
WEST VIRGINIA**

When it comes to cooling off in the summer sun, this community believes inclusivity is an important quality-of-life issue. Supported by the city council and funded in great part by contributions from various agencies and philanthropic organizations, this extensive splash pad took three years to come to life. But it was worth it—they've seen a 2500% increase in park attendance since the splash pad opened.



**“Even though I am in a chair, I like to feel independent and do stuff on my own as much as possible. This park makes me feel free!”**

*- Cydne Roush-DeBerry, wheelchair user*



**H.O.P.E. PARK—  
McDONOUGH,  
GEORGIA**

The city of McDonough and H.O.P.E. Park, a McDonough-based nonprofit, worked together to bring an inclusive park to their community. H.O.P.E. stands for “Helping Other People Excel,” and that’s exactly what happens at this playground. Side-by-side play presents opportunities for social interaction and fun for all kids, even those as young as six months.



**“It breaks down barriers, teaches people not to stare and not to mistreat someone just because they’re different.”**

*- Eric “Wolf” Schuller, a young man with autism*



**NORTH MANKATO  
FALLENSTEIN  
PLAYGROUND AND  
MIRACLE LEAGUE  
FIELD—  
NORTH MANKATO,  
MINNESOTA**

This modern take on inclusion uses topography and unitary surfacing to make this space accessible and challenging on many levels. Slopes and berms provide sensory experiences as they lead kids from one play component to another. Even the custom hillside net climber incorporates topography that provides a unique and challenging play experience.



**“He feels like he’s just another child. He doesn’t feel excluded from things.”**

*– Grason’s Mom, mother of Miracle League player*

Proud to partner with:



**ROCKET'S  
UNIVERSE AT  
WEDDINGTON  
PARK—  
NORTH HOLLYWOOD,  
CALIFORNIA**

In this sensory-rich playground, kids explore the mighty galaxy. A SwayFun® Glider is reimagined as a rocketship and lets kids dial in their destination for take-off! Everyone is invited to feel the sensory-rich textures of the planets in the solar system. At the multi-height “moonscape” sand and water table, kids can create new worlds of their own. Custom DigiFuse® signage fills kids' heads with space knowledge.



**“It wasn’t until I was in my 30s that I got to experience swinging. Suddenly I turned into a kid again.”**

*- Amy Saffell, wheelchair user*

Proud to partner with:



**WOODRIDGE PARK—  
COTTAGE GROVE,  
MINNESOTA**

The largest inclusive playground in the state has something for everyone, including little ones from 2- to 5-years-old. Colorful surfacing provides pathways through the many sensory play areas, winding up and over differing heights of topography. Kids can zip and swing alongside each other, then head off to the Cozy Dome® “forest” for some alone time or to hang out with their friends.



**“The multitude of unique spaces, accessible layout and inclusive events creates play for everyone!”**

*– Molly Pietruszewski, Recreation Services Manager,  
City of Cottage Grove*





Since 1971, **Landscape Structures Inc.** has been the leading manufacturer of commercial playground equipment in the world. Our employee-owned company designs community and school playgrounds that encourage kids of all ages and abilities to learn persistence, leadership, competition, bravery, support and empathy through play. We push the limits—of design, inclusion, play—to help kids realize there is no limit to what they can do today and in the future. For a better tomorrow, we play today.

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