

Peaceful
Playgrounds®

Beyond Busy, Happy & Good



Articles

By Melinda Bossenmeyer, Ed.D.



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Playground stencils: Beyond “Busy, Happy, and Good”.

An ever constant mantra in teaching is “what is the learning objective?”

When I was a principal, I remember an experience while observing a 3rd grade classroom. Students were digging in a sand bucket for a plastic dinosaur.

In California, dinosaurs are not in the 3rd grade course of study. Sure the students were “busy, happy and good” during a dinosaur lesson. But when measured against third grade learning outcomes this activity clearly falls short. I know that dinosaurs are intriguing. However, my role as a principal was to see that students were “learning”. The lesson might have fit into a larger study of habitats but this was neither the aim nor the objective of the lesson. You get the idea. “Busy, happy and good kids” may not be learning.



The same philosophy can be applied to most school experiences so that we capitalize on the time students are learning. Well designed playgrounds can contribute to and become an outdoor learning environment or even an extension of the classroom without structuring or mandating what children must do at recess. (We, at Peaceful Playgrounds, completely disagree with this approach.)



Playground designs (like those offered by Peaceful Playgrounds) enhance the play environment. They provide unstructured opportunities for academic skill enhancement. Some markings present an opportunity to acquire motor skills, as well as, acquiring part of the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity a day. A distinct added bonus is that children are having fun!

Playground designs with an academic focus include the alphabet grid and number grid where children practice letters and spelling on the alphabet grid. The number grid is used for numeracy like adding or jumping the numbers in order.

Some designs that help with motor skill development are the midline jumping grid, and the skipping grid. The midline-jumping grid is a lead up activity to jump rope

which teaches controlled and rhythmic jumping. The skipping grid teaches students the step-hop sequence and provides visual cues which help some students to understand both the foot pattern and the rhythm.

Another important issue to consider is, “Will these markings help children to be more active?” A jump rope area is a very active area while a picture of a bear looks nice it does not have educational, fitness, or game benefits.

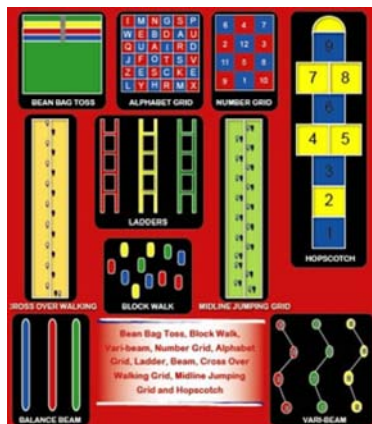


Next time you are thinking of improving your playground ask yourself these four basic questions: 1) what will children learn as a result of this marking activity? 2. Will this contribute to their overall fitness? 3. Is there an academic benefit? 4. Does the marking reinforce a motor skill? & 5. What are the game possibilities with this marking.

Skipping Track QR Code

Look beyond if children are busy, happy and good. Examine each design with a thoughtful eye for additional benefits.

If you need assistance and perhaps you are not sure what to add on the playground don't hesitate to give us a call. Peaceful Playgrounds emphasis is on getting the most for your investment through enhancing children's health, academic skills and/or increasing “physical activity.”



[Peaceful Playgrounds Outdoor Motor Learning Lab for Preschool- Grade 3](#)