

The importance of play

Stage 2 (Years 3-4) Lesson Plan

Children will use their creativity to design a dream playground that is inclusive, sustainable, safe and fun!



What does UNICEF do?

UNICEF is the world's largest children's charity working to protect children, globally and here in Australia. We help children realise their full potential by providing access to clean water, lifesaving vaccines, quality education and health care. We ensure every child is safe and protected from harm and we're always there during times of emergency.

UNICEF and the importance of play

Play is an important part of children's learning and growth – it's how they explore their environment, practice developing skills and bond with the people around them.

Did you know play is actually a right? According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, every child has the right to rest, relax, play and take part in cultural and creative activities.

UNICEF champions the transformative power of play for children in Australia and overseas. Unfortunately, many children around the world lack access to play opportunities, particularly those affected by malnutrition or living in challenging circumstances. UNICEF works to address these challenges through initiatives like repurposing materials for play, promoting access to safe play spaces and advocating for every child to have the opportunity to play, as a fundamental right and crucial tool for learning, health and development.



Activity Overview

In this hands-on, creative task, students will work individually, in pairs, or in small teams to design their Dream Playground. They will explore how to make their playground fun, inclusive, safe and sustainable, considering the needs of all users, including children with disabilities or sensory needs. Students will begin by brainstorming key design features, then bring their ideas to life using a medium of their choice—drawing or sketching on the UNICEF “Design a Dream Playground” worksheet, building 3D models with recycled materials or LEGO, or creating a digital version using Minecraft Education. Throughout the activity, students will reflect on how play supports health, happiness and learning, while also making connections to the Children’s Right to Play (Article 31) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This task promotes creativity, empathy, problem-solving and collaboration, while reinforcing the importance of play for every child.

Mapped Curricula Outcomes in Appendix at the back.

Materials Needed



Digital Screen with internet connection to watch a short video.

LEGO Build the Change | Playful Cities:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oeonxL4coTk&list=PLzfcpK7Y8rTc1yCOWRXtGsV8FRi3wZmb&index=3> (2:00 Sec)

NOTE: Preview the video to ensure it's appropriate for your students.



UNICEF Student Worksheet: Design a Dream Playground.



Markers, pencils, crayons for planning design.



Optional

- LEGO
- recycled craft materials (boxes, cardboard, glue, etc.)
- access to devices with Minecraft Education or TinkerCad

Learning Intention

We are learning how to:

- Design a fun and inclusive playground that supports health, happiness and safety.
- Work together to solve problems and share creative ideas.
- Think about different needs people have when they play.

Success Criteria

I can:

- Plan and describe features that make a playground fun, safe and fair for everyone.
- Include ideas that support different users, such as ramps, quiet spaces or nature zones.
- Use creative materials or digital tools to build or draw my design.
- Explain how play helps people stay healthy, happy and connected.

Lesson Structure

Activity 1: What is Play and Why Does it Matter?

Start by asking students:

What is play? Why do you think it's important?

- *Introduce the idea that all children around the world have the right to play, no matter where they live. Play is more than just fun — it helps us grow, learn and stay healthy.*
- Watch this short video together:

LEGO Build the Change | Playful Cities

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oeonxL4coTk&list=PLzfcpK7Y8rTc1yC0WRXtGsV8FRi3wZmb&index=3>

Talking Point: The Right to Play and the SDGs

- *Explain that play is so important, it's actually recognised by world leaders in a global agreement called the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. These 17 goals aim to make the world safer, fairer and healthier for everyone by 2030.*

Play supports several of these goals, including:

- **Goal 3 – Good Health and Wellbeing:** *Playing keeps our bodies active and our minds happy.*
- **Goal 4 – Quality Education:** *Through play, we learn, imagine and solve problems.*
- **Goal 10 – Reduced Inequalities:** *Every child deserves the chance to play, no matter their background.*
- **Goal 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities:** *Cities need safe, green places for children to play.*

So when you play, you're doing something powerful — you're helping make the world a better place!

Activity 2: Dream Playground Planning

Let's plan your Dream Playground!

Start by brainstorming together as a class. Ask students:

"What makes a playground fun, fair and friendly for everyone?"

Write their ideas on the board so everyone can see and build on each other's suggestions.

Here are some example responses students might share:

- "Everyone gets a turn on the equipment."
- "There are spaces for kids of all ages and abilities."
- "People use kind words and include others in their games."

- “The rules are fair and everyone follows them.”
- “There’s room to run, climb, sit quietly or play ball games.”
- “We help people who are hurt or feeling left out.”
- “There are shady spots so no one gets too hot.”
- “You can play alone or with others – both are okay.”
- “No one laughs at or excludes others.”
- “It’s clean and safe, so everyone feels comfortable playing.”

Design Thinking: Questions to Consider

As students begin to consider their own dream playground (individually or in groups), guide their thinking with these questions:

- ***Can kids of all abilities enjoy this space?***
- ***Is there a quiet or calm space for kids who need a break?***
- ***Are there natural elements like trees, plants, or shade?***
- ***Is it built using sustainable or recycled materials?***
- ***How does the space encourage kindness, fairness and fun for everyone?***

Encourage creativity while reminding students that great playgrounds are **inclusive, safe and welcoming for all**.

Activity 3: Build & Create Your Dream Playground

Now it’s time to turn your ideas into a design!

- **Show students the “Design a Dream Playground” worksheet** (UNICEF).
Explain how they can use the worksheet to plan and **draw their dream playground or list the features they want to include**.
- Students can **work individually or in pairs** to complete their design.
- **Give each student a worksheet** and some time to plan and sketch their ideas.

Extension Activity: Bring Your Playground to Life!

Once students have finished planning, invite them to **build or create a model** of their dream playground using a medium of their choice:

- **Build with LEGO or other construction toys**
- **Use recycled materials like boxes, bottle tops, or paper rolls**
- **Create a digital version in Minecraft Education**

Encourage students to think about the features that make their playground fun, inclusive and sustainable — just like you discussed in the earlier activities!

Activity 4: Share, Reflect and Connect

Let's celebrate your amazing playground ideas!

As a class, have a group discussion and think about these questions:

- **Why is PLAY important for all kids?**
Encourage students to share their thoughts and build on each other's ideas.
- **Which Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) does your playground support?**

Goal 3: Good Health & Wellbeing – Kids stay active, healthy and happy

Goal 4: Quality Education – Kids learn new skills through play

Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities – Everyone can join in, no matter their background or ability

Goal 11: Sustainable Cities & Communities – Safe, green spaces that help nature and people

Don't forget!

Children have a right to play.

Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child says:

All children have the right to rest, relax and play.

[See link](#) to the child friendly version of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Ask:

- ***How does your design help make sure every child can enjoy play?***

Extra Extension Challenge

If you had access to **Minecraft Education, TinkerCad, or LEGO**,

- What would you add or build next to make your playground even more fun, fair and exciting?

Assessment:

Formative:

- Observe students during group discussions and planning activities
- Look for evidence that students can explain:
 - Why play is important
 - How their design supports *inclusion*
 - Links to relevant *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*

Summative:

- Review each student's completed design (drawing, model, or Minecraft build)
- Assess their ability to communicate their design decisions through:
 - A short presentation, or
 - A written/digital reflection explaining the features, purpose and goals of their playground

Follow-Up Activity:

• Celebrate Student Work

Display playground designs in the classroom, library, or a shared school space to showcase student ideas and promote conversations about inclusive, sustainable play.

• Home Connection

Encourage students to share their design and learning with their families.

Prompt discussion at home with a reflection question such as:

"Why is play important and how can we make sure everyone gets the chance to play?"



More Teacher Resources and Lesson plans
are available on UNICEF Australia's website
unicef.org.au/teacher-resources

Appendix: Alignment to Curriculum

	NSW Curriculum	Australian Curriculum Version 9
Syllabus Area:	PDHPE (2024) Science and Technology (2024)	HPE, Design and Technologies,
Sub-topic:	• Identity, health and wellbeing. • Self-management and interpersonal skills. • Design processes and digital systems are used to create solutions.	• Personal, social and community health. • Technologies and society. Generating and designing. • Evaluating
Syllabus Outcomes / Content Descriptors:	A student PDHPE PH2-IHW-01 explains how related factors influence identity, health and wellbeing PH2-SMI-01 explains and applies self-management and interpersonal skills in a range of contexts. Science and Technology ST2-DDT-01 uses a design process to create products to address user needs or opportunities	Years 3-4 students HPE AC9HP4P05: describe how valuing diversity influences wellbeing and identify actions that promote inclusion in their communities. AC9HP4P10: investigate and apply behaviours that contribute to their own and others' health, safety, relationships and wellbeing. Design and Technologies AC9TDE4K01: examine design and technologies occupations and factors including sustainability that impact on the design of products, services and environments to meet community needs. AC9TDE4P02: generate and communicate design ideas and decisions using appropriate attributions, technical terms and graphical representation techniques, including using digital tools

Links to General Capabilities:**Critical and Creative Thinking**

- Generating imaginative ideas for playground features.
- Solving design challenges like inclusion, safety, or sustainability.
- Evaluating and improving designs using peer feedback.

Personal and Social Capability

- Working in pairs or teams respectfully.
- Sharing ideas and listening to others.
- Considering different needs (e.g. wheelchair users, sensory-friendly spaces).

Ethical Understanding

- Designing fairly for all users, including children of all backgrounds and abilities.
- Understanding fairness, access and equity in shared spaces.

Intercultural Understanding

- Recognising that playgrounds can reflect cultural diversity.
- Including design ideas that draw from different community traditions or games.

Literacy

- Communicating ideas through visual representations and explanations.
- Using subject-specific vocabulary like “inclusive,” “sustainable,” “access,” and “features.”

Numeracy *(optional – if measuring or using scale)*

- Estimating size, space and layout when designing playground areas.
- Using spatial reasoning for 3D models or Minecraft builds.

ICT Capability *(if using Minecraft or design apps)*

- Using digital tools to plan and build a virtual playground.
- Exploring how technology can solve real-world design problems.

Student Work Sheet

Design a Dream Playground

Plan Your Playground!

Name: _____ **Team Members** (if any): _____

Your Mission:

Design your *Dream Playground* that is **fun, fair, safe** and **inclusive**.

Use your imagination and think about kids of **all abilities and backgrounds**.

Step 1: Brainstorm Ideas

What can kids do in your playground? Circle or write your ideas:

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| ☒ Slide | ☒ Swings | ☒ Climbing wall | ☒ Water play |
| ☒ Trampoline | ☒ Garden | ☒ Quiet zone | ☒ Sand pit |
| ☒ Sensory path | ☒ Treehouse | ☒ Bike track | |
| ☒ Other: _____ | | | |

Who is your playground for? Tick all the boxes that apply.

- ☐ Children who use wheelchairs
- ☐ Children who need quiet spaces
- ☐ Children who love nature
- ☐ Children who want to explore
- ☐ Other: _____

How is your playground good for the planet?

- ☐ Shade from trees ☐ Solar lights ☐ Recycled materials
- ☐ Garden or green space

Other: _____



Sketch your playground design here:

(Add labels to show special features!)