



Dobbs Elementary Before



Dobbs Elementary After



Hope-Hill Elementary Before



Hope-Hill Elementary After



Evidence-Based Benefits for Students

- Engagement with nature is linked to **reduced stress and anxiety** and **more impulse control** in children and youth and may contribute to childhood and later life mental health.
- Play and learning in natural environments tend to promote **increased physical activity, improved motor skills and decreased sedentary time**.
- Nearby nature bolsters children's **resilience in the face of adversity**. Children in natural environments tend to engage in more frequent **positive social interactions** and in constructive, associative and cooperative play than in built environments.
- Greener schools have **higher attendance** rates, a predictor of academic success.
- Spending time in nature helps students **focus their attention**, increases **enthusiasm for learning**, and **boosts academic performance** in multiple subjects.



Participatory Design at Columbia Elementary



Participatory Design at Stoneview Elementary



Participatory Design at Woodward Elementary



Participatory Design at EL Miller Elementary



DCSD Community Schoolyards Timeline

- **August 2021** – Columbia Elementary community schoolyard vision plan begins, with letter of support from DCSD superintendent
- **July 2022** – DeKalb County Commissioner Jeff Rader commits funds to engage schools in his district in a community schoolyard effort
- **August 2022** – DCSD board members, district leaders, and DeKalb County government officials meet at Columbia Elementary to review the community schoolyard vision plan and discuss expanding the community schoolyards program elsewhere in the district
- **December 2023** – DCSD and TPL sign an MOU agreeing to work together to design and build community schoolyards, including one at Columbia Elementary which already has a design
- **February 2024** – TPL begins a still-ongoing series of monthly meetings with DCSD Facilities staff to plan schoolyard execution
- **July 2024** – DeKalb County Commissioners vote to allocate \$600,000 in ARPA funding to Trust for Public Land to design and build 4 community schoolyards in county commission districts 2, 4, 5, and 6; funds will expire September 30, 2026
- In collaboration with DCSD staff, TPL engages principals, students, and community in schoolyard design at
 - **Fall 2024:** Woodward Elementary; construction documents regularly shared with DCSD for review and finalized Sept 2025
 - **Spring 2025:** Stoneview Elementary; construction documents regularly shared with DCSD for review and finalized Dec 2025
 - **Fall 2025:** E. L. Miller Elementary; construction documents regularly shared with DCSD for review and finalized April 2026
- **August 2025** – Construction permit approved for Woodward; issuance pends on DCSD naming the construction contractor
- **September 2025** – Construction documents finalized and permit issued for Columbia; it will expire in 6 months if construction has not at least started; DCSD staff plan to identify a contractor before signing the permit form
- **November 2025** – DCSD staff determine that a construction permit won't be needed for Stoneview or Miller
- **December 2025** – DCSD staff receive bids within budget for Woodward construction, make plan to package with other schoolyards
- **April 2026** – TPL seeks extension for Columbia's expired permit; extension pends on DCSD staff naming the construction contractor
- **June 2026** – MOU between DCSD and TPL has expired; DCSD board votes to extend the MOU through March 31, 2027