



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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Space to Grow partners unveil new Piccolo School of Excellence permeable schoolyard



(From L to R): 37th Ward Ald. Emma Mitts, MWRD President Kari K. Steele, Piccolo School of Excellence Principal Dr. Heather Pusatcioglu, CPS Network 5 Deputy Chief of Schools Dr. Tiffany Brown, and Openlands Vice President of Community Conservation Daniella Pereira celebrate the new schoolyard at Piccolo School.



Openlands Vice President of Community Conservation Daniella Pereira, 37th Ward Ald. Emma Mitts, CPS Network 5 Deputy Chief of Schools Dr. Tiffany Brown, Piccolo School of Excellence Principal Dr. Heather Pusatcioglu, MWRD President Kari K. Steele, and students celebrate the new schoolyard at Piccolo School.

A West Humboldt Park neighborhood school community is benefiting from a unique Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) partnership that converts an older asphalt playlot into a new dynamic playground and learning space designed to mitigate flooding and improve area water quality.

Space to Grow partners with the MWRD, Chicago Department of Water Management, Chicago Public Schools, Healthy Schools Campaign and Openlands joined students, teachers and school leaders at the Brian Piccolo School of Excellence, 1040 N. Keeler Ave., on Oct. 17, to celebrate a new schoolyard.

“We are thrilled that in addition to all of what is below the ground that you now have a beautiful space to play above the ground. Thank you to all of the partners and the entire school community who helped build and will maintain this beautiful space,” said MWRD President Kari K. Steele. “We are not only offering a

new schoolyard to play on, but an education in green infrastructure to protect your community.”

It is the first of four \$1.5-million schoolyards that the Space to Grow partnership is set to unveil this October following a busy construction season transforming schoolyards into vibrant play and learning places that can also store significant water through permeable surfaces. Piccolo’s schoolyard can hold 155,201 gallons of stormwater per rain event and includes an artificial turf field, basketball court, porous playground surfacing, a nature play area, several rain gardens, and an outdoor classroom.

Piccolo marks the 31st schoolyard completed by Space to Grow partners. By the end of 2022, the partners will have completed a combined 34 schoolyards that can capture 6,536,570 gallons, equivalent to 9.9 Olympic-sized swimming pools, or 130,731 bathtubs per rain event.

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Space to Grow partners unveil new permeable schoolyard, *cont.*



Students enjoy the new schoolyard at Piccolo School of Excellence.

Space to Grow schoolyards encourage physical activity, outdoor learning, environmental literacy and engagement with art, while addressing neighborhood flooding issues and engaging the community. The projects reduce flooding, reduce basement backups, reduce the load on the combined sewer system, and educate students and neighbors about green infrastructure techniques and purpose.

“We thank our Space to Grow partners for their collaboration and continued support of this wonderful program that promotes outdoor learning and activity and combines it with a stormwater management initiative that protects the whole community,” said MWRD Chairman of Finance Marcelino Garcia. “Congratulations to the students and faculty at Piccolo School on their new schoolyard.”

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Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

Established in 1889, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois. Learn more at mwrld.org.