

The Sun

June 23, 2008

Report Finds City Schools Suffer Playground Deficit

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Special to the Sun

New York elementary schools are woefully lacking in outdoor play spaces, with nearly half of all schools having no playground for recess, and schools in minority communities are the worst off, a new report released yesterday by state Senator Jeffrey Klein finds.

Mr. Klein introduced a bill that would ban the construction of any school without a playground and prohibit current schools from using yard space for any purpose that would result in less room for play areas.

On Wednesday, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing children in New York public schools with a safe place to play, Out2Play, will open a new playground at P.S. 142 on Manhattan's Lower East Side. The playground will include a basketball court,

kickball diamond, and a play structure with a handicap ramp.

"We go to schools that either have nothing in their lot or have old, outdated, and potentially unsafe equipment," the founder and executive director of Out2Play, Andrea Wenner, said. The design process, she said, is collaborative: Principals, parents, students, and members of the community all choose the theme and elements of a new playground.

Since it started in 2005, Out2Play has built 15 new school playgrounds using public and private donations, including sponsorship by four borough presidents and a number of City Council members. By September, it will add 26 more play spaces. With this year's projects, Ms. Wenner estimates Out2Play will have provided play spaces for more than 30,000 children.