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## Nonprofit group gives jungle gyms to four Queens schools

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Farriella for News

**Andrea Wenner of nonprofit Out2Play shows off new jungle gym at Public School 81 in Ridgewood.**

The monkeying around might slow down when school begins, but Queens children can look forward to at least one thing this fall - new jungle gyms.

A nonprofit group has outfitted four borough schools with new playgrounds - a welcome gift at a time when schools are being forced to tighten their belts.

Out2Play, which started as a business school project three years ago, has been building and revamping playgrounds in poorer neighborhoods. It ventured into Queens for the first time this summer.

"It wasn't the highest-need area, so we initially weren't as focused on that," said Andrea Wenner, who recently showed off two soon-to-be playgrounds at Public School 81 in Ridgewood.

The organization built 14 playgrounds last year in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Manhattan with \$2.5 million.

This year, a budget of \$6 million - mostly from lawmakers' discretionary funds - brought 26 new playgrounds to city-owned spaces.

"We definitely wanted to make the program citywide, so this year we really expanded our outreach efforts to include all the boroughs," Wenner said.

When City Hall authorized its 2009 budget of \$59.1 billion in June, the Council restored \$129 million in school spending cuts that had been proposed by Mayor Bloomberg. But many schools still face tough choices.

Wenner's goal - a plan she created while she was a graduate student at Columbia University - is to outfit 120 schools with play spaces by 2011. She has 79 left to reach that goal.

"The idea is to get them open by the fall," she said. "We usually start in March or April and just continue to build throughout the summer."

In the vast concrete space behind PS 81 on 559 Cypress Ave., workers recently lowered a chess table into cement. A block away, behind a shabby brick annex on Seneca Ave., a colorful metal structure with monkey bars, slides and balancing games filled the small yard.

Some of the features on the set are for pint-sized players only. But nearly every aspect of the playground's design was approved by the kids in the school.

"Slides, they always want slides," said Wenner, noting that students complete surveys on what they would like to see.

Out2Play does not get money from the city Education Department but the city School Construction Authority oversees all project designs and installation, so another kid favorite - swings - are out for liability reasons, officials said.

New playgrounds are also set to open this fall at PS 12, on 72nd St. in Woodside; PS 134 at 109th Ave. and 203rd St. in Hollis; and PS 153, on 60th Lane in Maspeth.

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