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70 schools to get new playgrounds

By [Miriam Kreinin Souccar](#)

Published: January 8, 2010 - 12:05 pm

The run-down empty lots that surround many public schools across the city are about to get a facelift.

The Department of Education has signed an agreement with Out2Play Inc., a nonprofit that builds playgrounds at New York City schools, to create new playgrounds at 70 schools throughout the five boroughs. The DOE has committed \$12 million for the effort and Out2Play is responsible for raising an additional \$6 million. The first 30 playgrounds are expected to be completed within a year and will cost an average of \$225,000 each.

Converting the underused space into playgrounds contributes to the PlaNYC goal of having every New Yorker live within a 10-minute walk of a park or playground. PlaNYC is the city's initiative to create more open spaces and reduce carbon emissions by 30% by 2017.

"Thanks to Out2Play's efforts to transform vacant schoolyards into vibrant playgrounds, thousands more of our students now have access to safe outdoor space," Chancellor Joel Klein said. "This partnership ensures that many more children will have the opportunity to get the exercise and physical activity they need during the school day."

Out2Play, which was started four years ago by Columbia MBA graduate Andrea Wenner, has already raised \$20 million and built 80 playgrounds at New York schools, transforming nearly 1 million square feet of unused lots into play spaces. By contracting out and building a number of playgrounds at once, and devoting 97% of its annual budget to the projects, Out2Play has been able to work at a fast pace. The DOE funding will help Ms. Wenner achieve her organization's goal of transforming 150 empty schoolyards.

"Every day there are new studies that point to the fact that children need more opportunities for physical activity," said Ms. Wenner, executive director of Out2Play. "This money is going to go a long way in ensuring that the children who come through these schools every year will have a place to be active, to play and to have fun."

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