



Roadmap

Towards a Green Playground



Colofon

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Table of contents

Introduction	4
Roadmap	5
1. Starting up	6
1.1 Idea	6
1.2 Supporters	6
1.3 Preconditions	6
1.4 Vision	8
1.5 Finding funding	9
2. Ideas and design	10
2.1 Selecting a designer	10
2.2 Participating	12
2.3 Creating a wish list	15
2.4 Drafting the design	15
2.5 Finalising the design	15
3. Execution	16
3.1 Requesting quotes	16
3.2 Construction	16
3.3 Festive opening	17
4. Usage	18
4.1 Playing and learning	18
4.2 The Green Living Room	20
4.3 Management and maintenance	20
Frequently asked questions	22

Introduction

Your playground could do with a (green) makeover. But where do you begin? How much time do you need? And which steps will you need to take? This roadmap will guide you on how to turn a paved playground into a growing and flourishing one. You do not have to go through the steps in this plan chronologically. You can take the steps in a different order, for instance if plenty of funding or a design is already available. Use the steps that are most useful and relevant for you! To be able to do this make sure you read the reading guide below. Make sure you invest sufficient time in a preparatory phase and engage relevant stakeholders in this phase before you actually get started. Think carefully about what your vision for your green playground is and how the playground can continue to be well used and maintained in the future. Good luck!

Want to know more?

IVN programma's primair onderwijs
Groene Revolutie Zeeuwse Schoolpleinen
Groene Revolutie Zuid-Holland

www.ivn.nl/primair-onderwijs
www.groenerevolutiezeeland.nl
www.groenerevolutiezuidholland.nl

Reading guide

Reading guide: Throughout the document, we share tips, useful downloads and links to more background information. Are these of interest? You can easily find what you are looking for by using the icons below.



Tips

Downloads



Movies

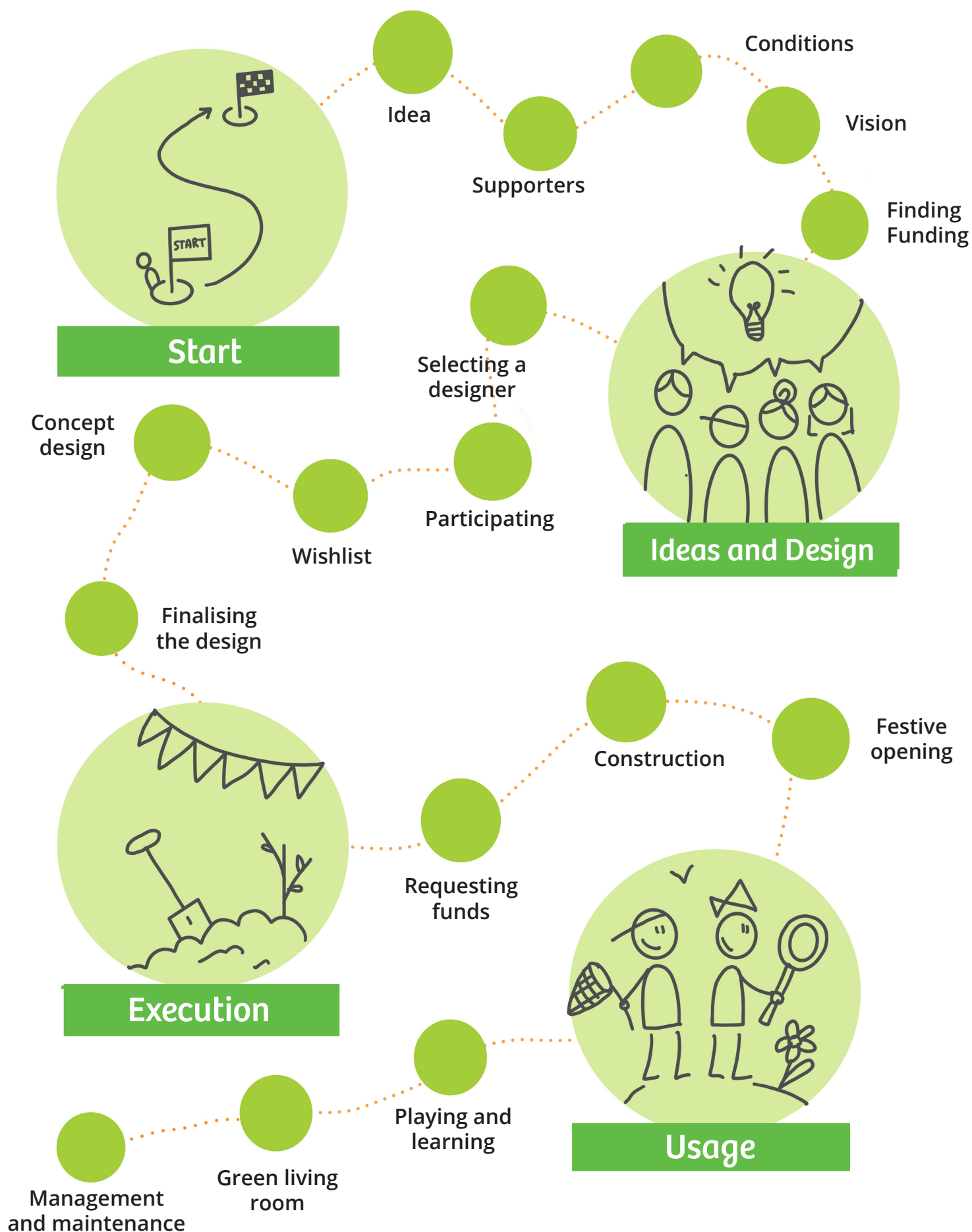


Reading tips



Webshop

Roadmap Green Playground



1. Starting up

1.1 Idea

'Greening' the playground starts with the desire and initiative of a teacher, parent, headmaster or pupil. Enthusiasm to get started is the first step!



Inspirational film 'Groene Revolutie Schoolpleinen Zuid-Holland'
www.bit.ly/groenerevolutie

1.2 Supporters

Creating a green playground is not something you can do on your own. Gather together a group of enthusiastic people to get started. For instance, teachers, parents, pupils and environmental or community volunteers. By involving other people from the community and having them think along about the new playground, you will create involvement and a sense of ownership.



- [What is a green playground?](#)
- [Examples of a green playground design](#)

1.3 Preconditions

A successful outcome requires more than just money, a good design and sufficient commitment. Research has shown that the process itself is one of the most important factors in making a green playground successful. This involves good preparation as well as the support and involvement of different stakeholders (from within and outside of the school).

In addition, think in advance about how you want to use the playground (e.g. for outdoor education or for engagement with the neighbourhood) and what that means for management and maintenance. It is also good to think about how you want to shape the design process. A participatory process with all relevant stakeholders is a success factor.



Make sure you know (and agree with key stakeholders) what you want to achieve beforehand. Based on this, you can decide if you can already start working on a green playground or if you are not ready yet.



Make sure you pay enough attention to the preparation and don't immediately start removing the paving slabs!

What do you need for a successful green playground?

- ☐ Vision (see 1.4)
- ☐ The support and capacities of parents, the educational team and the neighbourhood (see 2.2)
- ☐ Child participation (see 2.2)
- ☐ A plan for outdoor education (see 1.4 and 2.2.2.)
- ☐ A financial plan for construction
- ☐ Orderly finances (see 1.5)
- ☐ An elaborate plan for maintaining the playground (funds, planning and backup) (see 4.3)
- ☐ Time

1.4 Vision

Before you start the design phase, it is important to reflect on your vision and motivation for a green playground. Make sure you clarify what is desired early on.

Questions that you can ask yourselves in order to formulate a wish list include:

- Why do we want a green playground?
- Do we want to tackle the whole area or just part of it? Playground equipment, a vegetable garden, space for animals?
- Are there any elements or equipment that you can/want to keep or reuse?
- Is or will the playground be accessible for the neighbourhood?



- Whitepaper: The value of a natural, healthy outdoor space around schools
- Factsheet The playground as a place for exercise and learning
- Do's and don'ts with a green playground

Vision of the educational team

With the educational team, review the school's vision as a whole and how it can translate to the playground. If necessary, specify the vision together so that outdoor education and the use of the green playground also become a structural part of it. By shaping the vision with the teaching team, you also create immediate support for it. For more tips, see section 2.2.2.



Watch the video by De Lanteerne in Nijmegen to see a great example of using a green playground as a rich learning environment. The headmaster explains how this playground stemmed from an educational vision.
www.bit.ly/lanteerne



1.5 Finding funding

If you really want to make something of your new playground, it's going to cost money. In the Dutch context we assume a minimum of €30,000, but be aware that it will cost more if you decide to tackle the entire process and change the playground completely. This €30,000 only covers the construction, materials and execution, and not the participation and design process, outdoor lesson training, etc.

There are all kinds of ways to get funding for the playground. You may have already received funding from the municipality, school board, foundation or regional/federal government, but you can do more.

Discuss funding with the designer

Let the designer think along to see how you can cleverly rearrange the playground to do more with your budget.

Own resources

Check with the school board to see what resources are available. Map out which funds have been earmarked for major maintenance of the playground and the replacement of playground equipment, for instance.

Fundraising actions

Organise actions to raise money. For instance, collecting bottles for which a deposit is paid ('statiegeld'), doing a charity run or washing cars.



Document full of tips on fundraising for green playgrounds.



Funds

For more information, see the fundraising document and funding application template.

Sponsorship

Another option is to look for sponsors. They can offer help in various ways: financial help, volunteer work or the provision of goods. Perhaps businesses or parents would like to sponsor trees, plants and flowers in the playground.

Contributions in kind

You can also receive non-financial help. For example, by contacting a grower/garden centre and asking if they have trees and plants that they are no longer able to sell.



Funding application template

2. Ideas and design

Making a good design is quite difficult. A professional designer can help you with this. But what else should you think about during the design phase?

- Inspire stakeholders with good examples or excursions, for example
- Gather all ideas from pupils, teachers, parents and local residents
- Set priorities (what needs to happen and what would be nice)
- Create a clear brief for an appropriate design

2.1 Selecting a designer

Decide who will create the design. It is important to choose a designer who has experience in constructing green playgrounds and who can also guide the participation process.

Below is an example of a list of designers that you can fill in to help schools get started.



Name	Organization	Website	E-mail

Design conditions

- It is important that the design contributes to a natural playing and learning environment that satisfies:
- • A rich play area with space for free play for children and room for nature to develop.
- • A playing and learning environment with a natural character.
- • A design, construction and maintenance that happen as much as possible with participation from children, teachers and parents.
- • Bonuses: Also think about how to open the playground up to the neighbourhood and how all local residents can be included during the design phase.



Download a sample 'Terms of Reference' for designers [here](#)

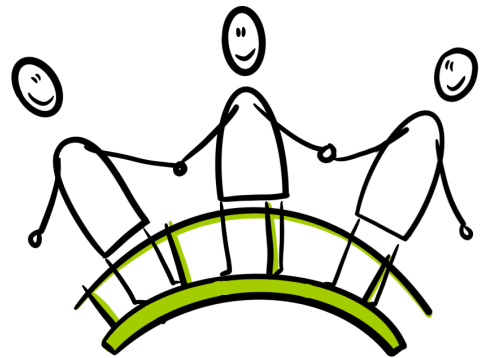


- Have the designer also ensure a corresponding management/maintenance plan and a logbook underpinned by a risk analysis.
- Have the designer also guide the process with the contractor, if possible.
- Some designers have a network of suitable contractors to build the playground. Make sure these contractors are experienced in natural playground design.
- Give the designer a clear financial framework.



2.2 Participating

Include users and stakeholders in the playground development process. Tell them why you want a green playground, and above all, get everyone involved! In this way, you will create support, a sense of ownership and perhaps even maintenance personnel for the playground!



2.2.1 Participation of children, parents and local residents

	Children	Parents	Neighbourhood
Why?	• Fun • Educational • Increases involvement and ownership	• Creates support • Creates awareness of the importance of a green environment • Increases involvement	• Increases a sense of ownership of and care for the playground • It's their playground too
What is important?	• Involving stakeholders early on • Inspiring • Not creating false expectations	• Involving stakeholders early on • Communicating the benefits of a green square for children's development • Giving space for parents' concerns and engagement in conversation • Providing a framework for action: what can parents do?	• Ask about their wishes and concerns and connect with them • Emphasise the benefits for the neighbourhood • Keep communicating throughout the process • Involvement also provides opportunities for extra hands and eyes and you create a sense of ownership
Inspiration	• Download the lesson plan • Jantje Beton provides tips to collect children's ideas about a green playground	• Examples of involving parents (see FAQs at the bottom of this document)	

2.2.2 Engaging teachers

Involvement and support from the teaching team is important to make the green playground a success. Teachers can think about what pupils need and know where possibilities and opportunities exist for pupils to have learning experiences and develop healthily. This allows you to adapt the design to the needs of the educational team in advance, both for the playground as a play area and as an outdoor classroom. In addition, make agreements with the team on how you will actually use the playground. Example agreements can be found on the next page.





Possible discussion points

- How can you use the playground as a playful learning landscape?
- What type of play do you want to elicit or facilitate in the playground? Exploring or discovering, resting and creative play.
- How will we use the outdoor space? For which subjects?
- What learning objectives and playful, enjoyable learning opportunities for children are possible outside? Or what learning experiences do you want to shape by being outdoors?
- What does this mean for the wishes and requirements for the outdoor space? What would the ideal outdoor space look like?
- What barriers does the team experience?
- What is still needed in terms of competence development?



When discussing these questions, think mainly from the child's point of view. What makes them curious? How does a child intrinsically want to learn and explore?

Example agreements

☐

Each group goes outside ...hours per week for the subjects

☐

In this respect, the green playground plays the role of: *an outdoor classroom, a research object, a space to learn about/become familiar with real-life plants and animals, a space for movement, a space for learning through movement (language & maths)*

☐

Each month, the green playground is used for at least subjects.

☐

Monitoring of this takes place through: fixed moments of sharing experiences, keeping a list,

☐

For competence development of the team in using the green outdoor space in the curriculum, an outdoor lesson training course will be organised times per year/every years.

☐

In order to remove organisational obstacles, *a management and maintenance plan will be drawn up every months/years, the vision will be shared with parents and local residents and a schedule will be drawn up on the use of the playground for lessons*

2.2.3 Participation methods

Below, we share some tips with you on participation methods to gather ideas for a green playground.

Children

- Go on a field trip to another green playground, natural play area or nature area, such as a forest, beach, dune area or river area. Here, you can find all kinds of elements that could be deployed in a playground.
- Sandpit session. Create a sandpit in which pupils can design their own playground. With sand and soil, they can create height differences and loose materials such as twigs, moss and clay can serve as the elements in the playground. Add patches of blue fabric as well to serve as water.

Children, teachers or parents

- Go on an inspirational visit to a school with a green playground and take photos or make a list of the top 3 things that you like the most!

Parents or local residents

- Host an information session or brainstorming session or set up an idea box or wish tree.



Don't make children think in terms of equipment, but reflect more about how they play and in what kind of environment they play. You can encourage that by playing pretend about having a nice outing: 'We go on holiday and come across all kinds of beautiful things. What places are you thinking of?' For example, the forest, dunes, mountains, rivers. 'What do you do when you're there?' Building sand castles, climbing trees, building shelters, making dams, creating flower chains, etc.



[Download the lesson 'Ontwerples Groen Schoolplein'](#)

2.2.4 IVN offer

Outdoor lesson training

The IVN outdoor lesson training course gives teachers practical tools to work outside with language, maths, spelling, business or creative objectives. Attention is also paid to the organisation and didactics of outdoor teaching. By taking this training prior to or during the participation process, teachers can further fine-tune their wishes for the playground when conducting outdoor lessons. IVN provides outdoor lesson training on location in coordination with the school. The training takes place partly indoors and partly outdoors in the playground.

You can find more information about the outdoor lesson training at: www.ivn.nl/groenerevolutiezeeland/buitenlestraining-zuid-holland-of-zeeland

2.3 Creating a wish list

Collect all of the ideas and wishes in a document that the designer can use to draw an initial proposal. It helps to already include pictures in this, too, so that everyone has a clear idea of what is meant. Describe not only what objects you want, but especially what you want to do in the playground. The objects that are added should have a multifunctional character and should be able to be used by children in different ways.



Be clear:

- What are your dreams (great desires, but not necessities)?
- What are your preconditions (items that absolutely must be included in the plan)?

2.4 Drafting the design

Test the design with pupils, the educational team, parents and the neighbourhood.

- Recreate the draft design in a sandpit and hang the printed designs around it. In this way, you can engage with everyone about the draft.
- Invite everyone round a camp fire, offer herbal tea using herbs that will be grown in the playground and discuss the design together.
- Create an exhibition in the playground about the new design.
- Discuss the draft in class with pupils.

2.5 Finalising the design

After gathering feedback on the draft, a final design can be made. The plans are now in place! Turn it into a party and invite the neighbourhood and parents! You can also use this moment for communication purposes, for example by posting about it on the school app or in the newsletter. Now is also a good time to finalise finances.

Testing the design with external parties

- Get quotes in advance to check whether the draft design is actually feasible within the set budget.
- Have the design tested by an inspection body already, or get the designer to arrange this. Once you have chosen an inspection body, you are tied to them.



- Read the legal requirements for managers of playgrounds equipment [here](#).
- [Here](#) you can find further explanation on the inspection of a green playground. What is and what is not playground equipment?

3. Execution

3.1 Requesting quotes

You already asked for quotes from several landscapers for the draft design. For the final design, you should request quotes from some more parties as well. Have you chosen a landscaper? Now, the design will actually be made a reality. This is usually done with the help of a contractor or landscaper, but preferably also together with pupils, teachers, parents and (neighbourhood) volunteers. During construction, ensure proper coordination by deploying skilled supervision.



- Ask for quotes whereby the costs are itemised or specified by m²/m³.
- Approach 'green' contractors experienced in natural playground design
- Have the designer also provide a corresponding management/maintenance plan and a logbook underpinned by a risk analysis

3.2. Construction

Will a lot be changed in the playground, including major aspects? Then one option is to carry out the construction in stages. In doing so, please ensure that the pupils can still use (part of) the playground in the meantime. For children, it can also be fun to see how the playground takes shape! Of course, do ensure that the playground is safe and possibly offer an alternative location for children to play during construction. Don't forget to provide tasty food and drinks too. Everyone deserves that after the hard work!

You are laying the foundations for green playground enjoyment for years to come. Every year, you will see the playground change and develop



- Follow the process of construction. During construction, you can still influence the outcome. Maybe you want something slightly different from the design after all?
- Inspection! Arrange this for when the playground is almost finished, not afterwards!
- Involve the children in construction. They can help to sow seeds, for example, or weave willow huts.

3.3 Festive opening

When the green playground is ready, it should of course be celebrated. A grand opening will provide a joyful moment during which all involved can celebrate the achievement together. You may want to invite the press to capture the opening and the result of the new playground. Also inform IVN and the municipality so that they can pay attention to this.



Create a revolution song! Here you can find the Dutch song.

www.ivn.nl/groenerevolutie-zeeland/nieuws/zing-met-ons-mee-de-groene-revolutierap



4. Usage

4.1 Playing and learning

Would you like to teach (more) nature classes? Or are you looking for materials to match the nature lesson methods used at your school? We would be happy to help you get started via our lesson plans and teaching materials on all kinds of nature topics. See some examples here:

Theme	Age	More info
Outdoor lessons	All ages	Discover the outdoor lessons in our database. Here you can find all different subjects. All the subjects are suitable to teach outside and in nature!
Trees	All ages	Learn everything about the trees. This lesson is all about the different trees you can find.
Bees	All ages	Discover the wild bee! Where do they sleep, how do they survive and how many different species are there? You can find the lesson here!
Mushrooms	7 - 9	With this challenging lesson children learn everything about mushrooms.

4.1.1. Competence development

IVN Outdoor lesson training

A challenging outdoor lesson encourages exercise, contributes to educational goals and helps children to concentrate better in class. The IVN outdoor lesson training course gives teachers practical tools to work outside with language, maths, spelling, business or creative objectives. Attention is also paid to the organisation and didactics of outdoor teaching. IVN provides outdoor lesson training on location in coordination with the school. The training takes place partly indoors and partly outdoors in the playground.

You can find more information about the outdoor lesson training at: www.ivn.nl/groenerevolutiezeeland/buitenlestraining-zuid-holland-of-zeeland

4.1.2. Support

Nature and environmental education centres

Are you looking for teaching kits or supporting materials to accompany a lesson in your classroom? Or a fun field trip or outdoor lesson? Then, as a teacher, you can visit a nature and environmental education centre near your school. They have all sorts of things available for you, like plenty of teaching kits with fun and educational assignments but also individual equipment. For instance, litter pickers, magnifying glasses, mirrors, aquariums, scoop nets, binoculars and much more.

IVN Groene Schoolpleinenfonds

In 2022, 2023 and 2024, the Prince Bernard Culture Fund is making €25,000 from the IVN Natuureducatie Green Playgrounds Fund available each year for projects that promote the use of green playgrounds for nature and cultural education.

4.2 Green Living Room

In more and more neighbourhoods, green public space is becoming scarce. Playgrounds are present in most neighbourhoods and—if publicly accessible—can become a new meeting place and play area for local residents. As the neighbourhood's 'green living room', it can contribute to the well-being of local residents and function as a challenging environment where children want to play and exercise even after school, and where local residents can come together. Want to make your playground publicly accessible too? Then don't forget to involve local residents in the process: this increases involvement and a sense of ownership.

4.3 Management & maintenance

Green playgrounds are often vulnerable due to high play pressure. A management and maintenance plan is essential to the success of the green playground. In such a plan, the school can find information on what maintenance work needs to be done and by whom. The school should then consistently monitor how the playground looks.



[Read the publication](#)
'Management and maintenance
of a green playground.'



[Management and maintenance
planning template](#)



Let the landscaper draw up the
management and maintenance plan,
possibly in coordination with the
school.

Frequently Asked Questions

What does a green playground cost?

If you are having a green playground designed and built, a construction budget of €30,000 to €50,000 is a good start. Don't forget that there are additional annual costs for the management and maintenance of the playground.

What are the benefits of a green playground?

Nature-rich, green playgrounds are not only better for health, exercise and concentration, children also make more friends there and feel more confident. In a green playground, imagination and creativity are much more stimulated and there is much more camaraderie. A green playground also has effects on cognitive performance. For instance, the presence of greenery improves working memory and playing outside in a green playground makes it easier for children to keep their attention on the lesson material afterwards. A nature-rich playground is also good for moral development, as children learn to respect the environment, learn about environmentally conscious behaviour and create a bond with nature. All the positive effects can be read in the report 'De waarde van een natuurrijke, gezonde buitenruimte rond scholen', written by Jolanda Maas and Nicole van den Bogerd and commissioned by Jantje Beton and IVN Natuureducatie.

How can you involve parents in a green playground?

- **Inform:** Keep parents and local residents informed of developments during the process. This can be done through the newsletter or a notice on the website. This keeps them involved. Provide a fixed point of contact for parents to go to with comments or questions.
- **Think along:** Invite parents to an information evening to talk about the green playground. You can also combine this with a regular information evening, giving the project team space to talk about this. Give parents room to think along and invite them to help with various jobs in the green playground in the future as well.
- **Collaborate:** Once you are ready to build the playground, you can organise one or more volunteering days for parents. Invite them to do a defined task, and make sure the day is fun and celebratory. For example, provide lunch for all parents who come to help. That way, you increase the chance of them attending next time.
- **Volunteer:** You can always use helping hands in a green playground. Perhaps there are parents who would like to do more than just help during the joint volunteering days. For example, they could take on the maintenance of the playground, organise activities in the playground or perhaps even become part of the project team. It is nice for volunteers to have a single point of contact for all their questions.

Can I draw on the knowledge and experiences of others?

Look for a school in your community or neighbourhood with a green playground. Ask if you can visit sometime and if they would like to share their experiences! On our website, you can find all schools that have made their playgrounds green.

Isn't a green playground more dangerous?

Children are eager to learn, they want to explore and push their boundaries. While playing, they learn to assess risks and make choices. Facing and dealing with risks contributes to children's development. Carefully guiding risky play can give children room to experiment. In Martin van Rooijen's publication 'Risicovol spelen op het schoolplein', you can find tools to guide this in a responsible way. [Download the publication here](#). In addition, it has been found that there are fewer accidents in a green playground because children make more conscious choices.

However, supervising a green playground can be more challenging. The presence of shrubs, mounds or tunnels requires a different approach, as the children can play and hide in more places.



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