

Designing Schoolyards That Work

Schoolyards shape how students feel, connect, and engage—every day. Yet they remain one of the most underdeveloped levers for improving students’ experience of school.

Schoolyards for Thought works with schools, systems, and organizations to design schoolyards as integrated environments—aligning physical design with social and organizational conditions to support belonging, engagement, and mental health over time.

Led by Dr. Lauren McNamara, an educational psychologist and prevention scientist, this work brings a research-informed, systems-level approach to understanding how schoolyards function in practice.

How We Work Together

We partner with organizations at multiple levels to strengthen the impact of schoolyard environments.

System-Level Strategy and Advisory

Supporting school boards, governments, and organizations to:

- Develop policies, standards, and strategic approaches
 - Align schoolyard design with broader goals in well-being, equity, and engagement
 - Move beyond design to address social and organizational conditions
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Research and Evaluation

- Assessing schoolyard quality across physical, social, and organizational domains
 - Identifying gaps in access, inclusion, and experience
 - Supporting evidence-informed decision-making
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School and Community Partnerships

Working alongside schools and partners to:

- Redesign how schoolyards function day to day
- Strengthen supervision practices, access, and inclusion
- Align outdoor spaces with learning and development goals

Speaking and Professional Learning

- Keynotes and workshops that translate research into practice
- Supporting leaders and educators to rethink the role of schoolyards
- Grounded in real-world application and system-level thinking

What This Makes Possible

- Stronger student belonging and social connection
- Reduced conflict and exclusion
- Increased engagement in play and learning
- More equitable access to outdoor space, movement, and nature
- Improved mental health and overall well-being

Engage With Us

We work with educators, school systems, governments, and partners who are ready to rethink the role of schoolyards.

Let's design these everyday environments with intention.

Contact: info@schoolyardsforthought.com

Learn more: www.schoolyardsforthought.com