



## Westcott One of 5 CPS Schools Selected for Green 'Schoolyard Transformations' in 2019

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Project Manager Justin Rossman of Site Design Group explains the highlights of Ashe Elementary School's planned garden to Dean Alonistiotis, aide to MWRD Commissioner Kimberly Du Buclet. (Courtesy Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago).

A handful of Chicago elementary schools will receive major upgrades next year as part of a program aimed at improving outdoor learning spaces while also addressing flooding and other water management issues.

Five schools were selected earlier this month for participation in Space to Grow, an initiative that transforms Chicago schoolyards with the goal of providing kids in low-income neighborhoods with safe spaces to play and recreate.

The new "green schoolyards" will incorporate special surfaces and landscape features that help capture a significant amount of rainfall, resulting in less neighborhood flooding, according to a press release from the Metropolitan Water District of Greater Chicago. MWRD runs the Space to Grow program in partnership with Chicago Public Schools, the

Chicago Department of Water Management, the Healthy Schools Campaign and the environmental advocacy group Openlands.

Below is the list of schools slated for new schoolyards in 2019:

- Ashe Elementary School, 8505 S. Ingleside Ave.
- Nash Elementary School, 4837 W. Erie St., and KIPP Academy Chicago, 4818 W. Ohio St. (two schools, one campus)
- Ninos Heroes Elementary School, 8344 S. Commercial Ave.
- Webster Elementary School, 4055 W. Arthington St.
- Westcott Elementary School, 409 W. 80th St.



Students and teachers at Webster Elementary School in the Lawndale neighborhood review plans for a new schoolyard funded through the Space to Grow initiative. (Courtesy Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago)

Schools eligible for the program are located in areas identified by the city to be at high risk for flooding. Eligible schools must also be in need of a playground, have at least 30,000 square feet of available outdoor space and have no other major construction projects planned.

Since its creation, Space to Grow has completed transformations of 15 schoolyards that together have the capacity to capture nearly 2.8 million gallons of rainwater, equivalent to more than four Olympic-sized swimming pools, according to MWRD.

“Five new Space to Grow schoolyards across Chicago means new access to community green space, new school gardens and outdoor classrooms and new tools to address urban flooding, which is only becoming more common with climate change,” said Daniella Pereira, vice president of community conservation with Openlands, in a statement.

For more information about the program, visit [Space to Grow's website](#).

Contact Alex Ruppenthal: [@arupp](#) | [aruppenthal@wttw.com](mailto:aruppenthal@wttw.com) | (773) 509-5623

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