



Warwick Community School Early Childhood Playground & Discovery Yard Project *Updated May 26, 2026*

Our Why: The 25-acre woodland campus of the Warwick Community School is beautiful and invites students and adults to learn in and about nature. However, the current early childhood playground at the Warwick Community School has outdated and broken equipment and does not meet accessibility standards. We envision a playground that supports the social emotional learning of students through cooperative imaginative play. We seek to build a playground that lends itself to our nature-centered project based approach to teaching.

Objective: We seek to co-create an early childhood playground and discovery yard that is a community center for both the residents of Warwick and students attending the Warwick Community School. We envision a space that brings our homeschooling, private, public and choice students together to learn and to play. We hope it will be a meeting place where community members can gather and build relationships. Having such a community hub will be a tremendous asset in our rural town.

Our Evolving Design Principles

- **ACCESSIBLE** - All of our students, staff, caretakers and community members will be able to enjoy all aspects of the playground.
- **NATURE-CENTERED** - The playground will fit naturally and organically into the current space and build upon our beautiful woodland campus. It will incorporate gardens that support play as well as our developing farming and garden-to-table programming.
- **GREEN** - The construction materials will be safe and support our goal to be a school, district and town that is as green and sustainable as possible.
- **JOYFUL** - Like everything we do at WCS, we aim to provide students with joyful learning and play experiences. Students experience joy while doing real work and so our playground will incorporate natural materials and tools for children to use.

- OPEN-ENDED - The new playground will provide students opportunities to learn and play creatively, using their agency to imagine, adventure, take safe physical risks, learn and grow.
- MULTI-DIMENSIONAL - The playground will offer students places to view the landscape from above and below *and* the playground's components will have multiple purposes for both playing and learning, supporting our nature-centered project based learning units (especially topics such as engineering, biology and hydrology).
- COMMUNITY DESIGNED - Our community will be involved at every step of the way, from the envisioning to the building to the maintenance of our new space. It will be a space to gather, to play and to learn together. We are engaging the community through surveys, field trips to local nature-centered playgrounds and interactive visioning boards.

Emerging Vision

As we find new images that illustrate our vision, we are including them [here](#) or https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1OkICfeBn56xzaPRJ55ITMwhbfLoGHHxa5lUCSVHoDSE/e dit?slide=id.g39faba2c086_1_5#slide=id.g39faba2c086_1_5

Resources:

In addition to designing based on the hopes and dreams of our community, we are also learning from experts in the field of nature play. Our primary text for this project is [Nature Play at Home](#) by Nancy Striniste. Our primary experts are Colleen Kelley, who is the former Education Director for the Hitchcock Center for the Environment and Owen Wormser, landscape designer at [Abound Landscape Design](#).

What is the process & timeline from here?

This will be a three year process of gathering community input, designing, grant writing, fundraising, building and planting.

- Fall 2025 - Begin grant writing and fundraising.
- Fall & Winter 2025 - Visit models, discuss options, gather community input, flesh out the dreams of the staff, faculty, students, caretakers and community.
- Spring 2026 - Meet with town committees to gain feedback on our plans. Fund professional design of the playground based on design principles and community input via grants and fundraisers.
- Summer 2026 - Begin construction/building/planting Phase One.

We are grateful for the input and support from our community. If you have suggestions, please email them to superintendent@warwick-k12.us. If you would like to make a financial donation towards this project, we would be deeply grateful. Please find a link to donate via our sister non-profit, the Warwick Community School Foundation, at <https://givebutter.com/warwick-discovery-playyard-components-qyct17> or [here](#). Thank you!

Select Board Nature Discovery Yard & Playground Update
June 15, 2026

Why is this visit to the Select Board happening now?

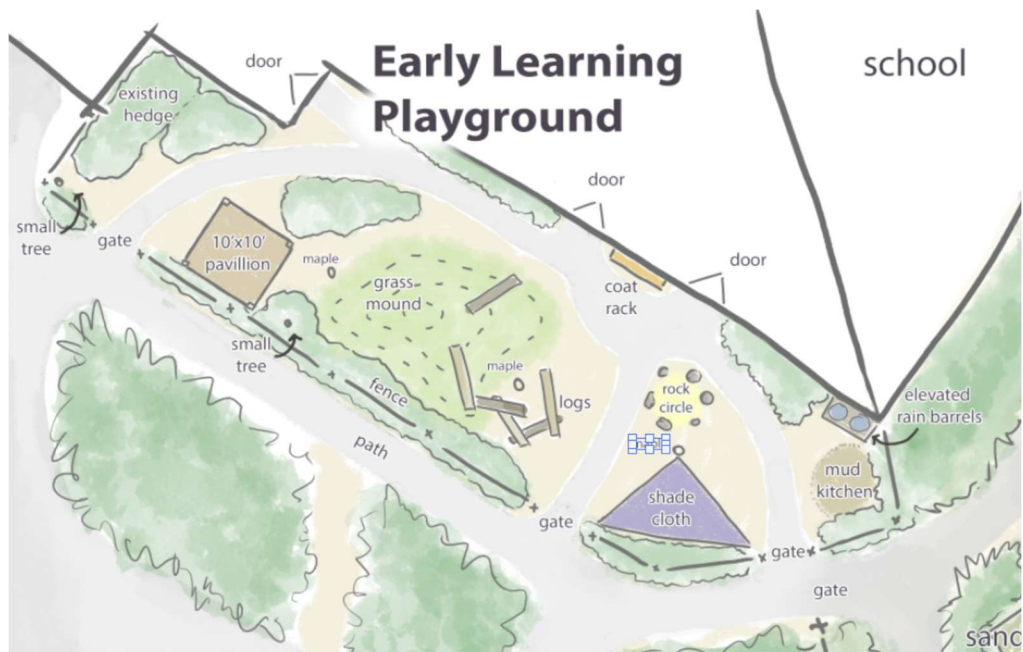
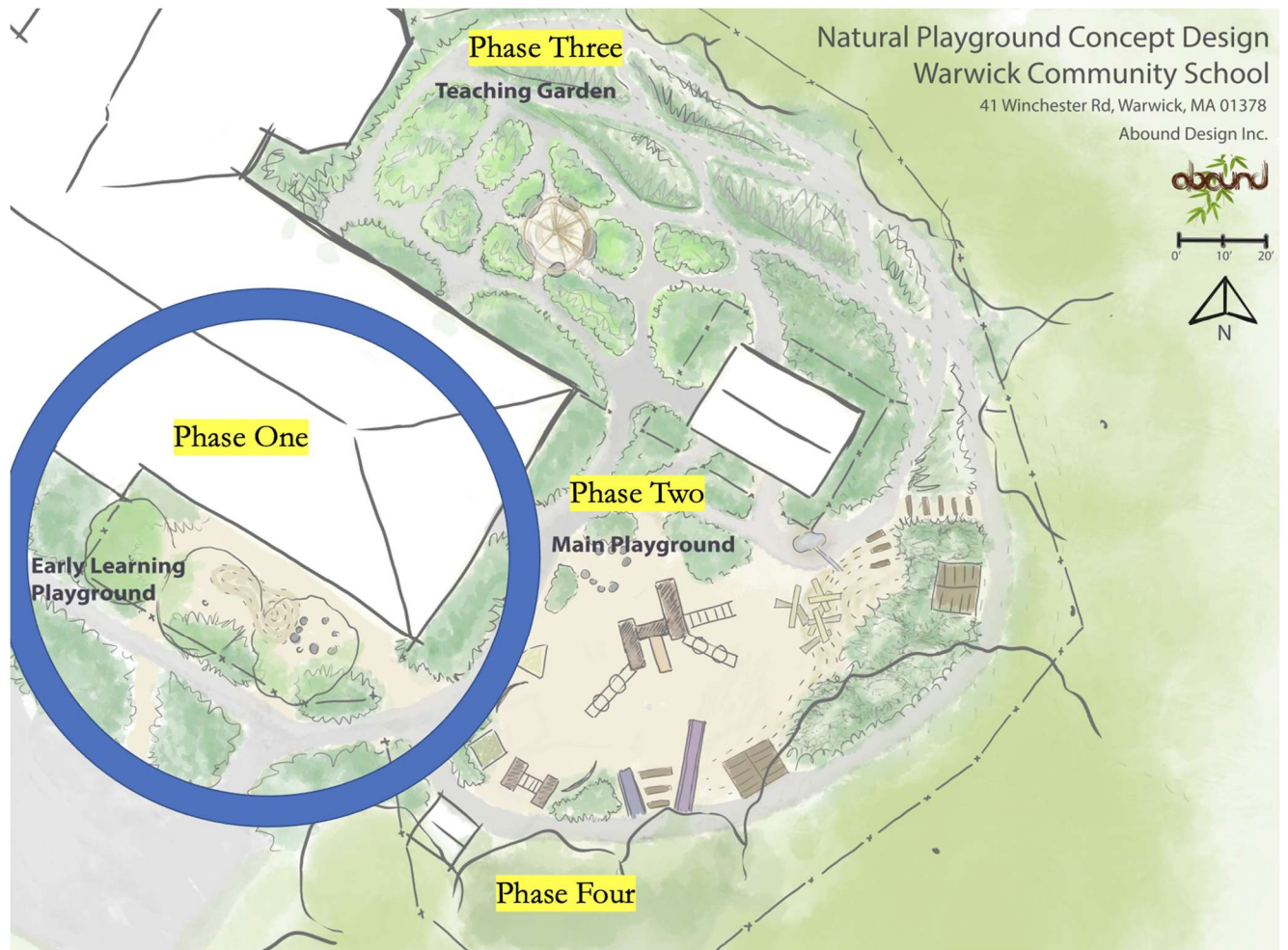
When the superintendent sought the Select Board's support for this project in the fall of 2025, the Select Board offered their support for the project and asked that she return at the beginning of each phase of work as it is about to launch to provide an update. Phase One of the four part project is launching later this week on June 17th. Landscape design work on Phase One will take place for the last two weeks of June and carpentry work will take place throughout the summer and finish before the start of the school year.

What has happened since the last visit to the Select Board?

- Students, caretakers, teachers, staff and community members' feedback has been gathered in many ways including varied presentations, surveys and community exhibits of the plans.
- Community field trips have been taken to visit other model playgrounds and nature discovery yards.
- The district has worked hand-in-hand with the Warwick Community School Foundation to fundraise and write grants for the project.
- The district has collaborated with Abound Design for the planning and design, as they created the nature discovery yard and playground that was closest to what we are envisioning.
- The district and Abound Design worked together to get permission from the Warwick Conservation Committee and has received support for Phase 2. No permission was needed for Phases One and Three. We are working on resubmitting a proposal for Phase 4 on June 24th.

What is happening in Phase One?

Phase One is the construction of the David Young Outdoor Preschool Classroom, which will be built outside of the preschool and kindergarten classrooms (in front of the school, to the right of the library). The preschool and kindergarten classrooms both have doors that open directly into this space. This area will be fenced in so that students can explore freely. It will contain outdoor seating for lessons, teaching gardens and a mud kitchen for mud and water play among other features. Unlike our current early childhood playground, it will be fully accessible. Components of this preschool play space will also include a log structure for climbing that will be incorporated into a small, grassy hill. Also, appropriately sized rocks that can be used for play as well as gathering space will be used. Shade will be created using sail cloths. The space will be surrounded by native plantings that will soften the space and provide a sense of being in a garden oasis. All natural materials will be used for all of the surfaces.



What will happen next?

- The foundation and district will continue to seek grants and philanthropic dollars for Phases 2, 3 and 4.
- As we did at Saturday, June 13th's community event at Town Hall, we will continue to seek community input and support in designing and building the remaining Phases.
- We will return to the Select Board with an update when our plans for Phase Two are complete.

- Respectfully submitted,



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Dr. Learned-Miller
Superintendent

Updated December 4, 2025

Our Why: The 25-acre woodland campus of the Warwick Community School is beautiful and invites students and adults to learn in and about nature. However, the current early childhood playground at the Warwick Community School has outdated and broken equipment and does not meet accessibility standards. We envision a playground that supports the social emotional learning of students through cooperative imaginative play. We seek to build a playground that lends itself to our nature-centered project based approach to teaching.

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What is the process & timeline from here?

We imagine this will be a two year process of gathering community input, designing, fundraising, building and planting.

- Fall 2025 - Begin grant writing and fundraising.
- Fall & Winter 2025 - Visit models, discuss options, gather community input, flesh out the dreams of the staff, faculty, students, caretakers and community.
- Spring 2026 - Fund professional design of the playground based on design principles and community input via grants and fundraisers. The fundraising and grant writing will be led by the district's sister organization, The Warwick Community School Foundation.
- Summer 2026 - Begin construction/building/planting.

We are grateful for the input and support from our community. If you have suggestions, please email them to superintendent@warwick-k12.us. If you would like to make a financial donation towards this project, we would be deeply grateful. Please find a link to donate via our sister non-profit, the Warwick Community School Foundation, here <https://givebutter.com/WCSF2025> Thank you!



Warwick Community School Early Childhood Playground & Playyard Project

Updated November 20, 2025

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What is the process & timeline from here?

We imagine this will be a two year process of gathering community input, designing, fundraising, building and planting.

- Fall 2025 - Begin grant writing and fundraising.
- Fall & Winter 2025 - Visit models, discuss options, gather community input, flesh out the dreams of the staff, faculty, students, caretakers and community.
- Spring 2026 - Fund professional design of the playground based on design principles and community input via grants and fundraisers. The fundraising and grant writing will be led by the district's sister organization, The Warwick Community School Foundation.
- Summer 2026 - Begin construction/building/planting.

We are grateful for the input and support from our community. If you would like to offer suggestions, please email Dr. Carole Learned-Miller at superintendent@warwick-k12.us. Thank you!

Updated November 17, 2025

Framing: The current early childhood playground at the Warwick Community School has outdated and broken equipment and does not meet accessibility standards. We are engaged in a communitywide process for reimagining and redesigning a new playground over the course of the 2025-2027 school years that supports the mission and vision of the school and district.

What is the process & timeline from here?

- Fall 2025 - Begin grant writing and fundraising.

- Fall & Winter 2025 - Visit models, discuss options, gather community input, flesh out the dreams of the staff, faculty, students, caretakers and community. [Here](#) is our initial deck to inspire conversation and visioning.
- Spring 2026 - Fund professional design of the playground based on design principles and community input via grants and fundraisers
- Summer 2026 - Begin construction/building/planting.

Design Principles

- ACCESSIBLE - All of our students, staff, caretakers and community members will be able to enjoy all aspects of the playground.
- NATURE-CENTERED - The playground will fit naturally and organically into the current space and build upon our beautiful woodland campus.
- GREEN - The construction materials will be safe and support our goal to be a school, district and town that is as green and sustainable as possible.
- JOYFUL - Like everything we do at WCS, we aim to provide students with joyful learning and play experiences.
- OPEN-ENDED - The new playground will provide students opportunities to play creatively, using their agency to imagine, adventure, learn and grow.
- MULTI-DIMENSIONAL - The playground will offer students places to view the landscape from above and below *and* the playground's components will have multiple purposes for both playing and learning, supporting our nature-centered project based learning units (especially topics such as engineering and hydrology).

We are grateful for the input and support from our community. If you would like to offer suggestions, please email Dr. Carole Learned-Miller at superintendent@warwick-k12.us. Thank you!

Early Childhood Playground Project

Faculty Meeting - October 31st

Framing: The current early childhood playground has outdated and broken equipment and does not meet accessibility standards. We seek to have a communitywide process for reimagining and redesigning a new playground over the course of the 2025-2027 school years.

What is the process & timeline from here? (High Level)

- Fall 2025 - Begin grant writing and fundraising.

- Fall & Winter 2025 - Visit models, discuss options, gather community input, flesh out the dreams of the staff, faculty, students, caretakers and community.
- Spring 2026 - Fund professional design of the playground based on design principles and community input via grants and fundraisers, including fundraiser at the Hitchcock Center.
- Summer 2026 - Begin construction/building/planting.

Design Principles

- ACCESSIBLE - All of our students will be able to enjoy all aspects of the playground.
- NATURE-CENTERED - The playground will fit naturally and organically into the current space and build upon our beautiful woodland campus.
- GREEN - The construction materials will be safe and support our goal to be a school, district and town that is as green and sustainable as possible.
- JOYFUL - Like everything we do at WCS, we aim to provide students with joyful learning and play experiences.
- OPEN-ENDED to allow students the agency, creativity to adventure, learn and grow.

Notes from teachers made in version above (11/3) and additional ideas:

- MULTI-LEVEL giving students places to view the playground from above and below and that the components have multiple purposes for play and learning, supporting our project based learning units.
- Incorporate OT and PT in visioning/planning
- Components that provide regulation support such as swinging and spinning (consider merry go round feature). Gravel, picnic tables, benches, swings, shade, accessible to strollers

Select Board Meeting - September 2025

What? The Warwick Community Elementary School, the Warwick School District & the Warwick Community School Foundation would like to partner with the Select Board and community to reimagine the early childhood playground for students in grades junior kindergarten through second grade over the next two years.

Why? The current early childhood playground has outdated and broken equipment and does not meet accessibility standards.

Timeline: We are especially eager to begin this redesign now as we now have an early childhood student who uses a wheelchair. Over the summer of 2025 our custodial crew worked diligently to build low-cost accessible ramps, a picnic bench and a sandbox, but we would now like to plan for a complete redesign that will benefit all of our school and town’s children. We anticipate this process will take place during the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 school years.

Funding: The district and the foundation will work together to fundraise and write grants to cover the costs of the early childhood playground.

What is the “ask” of the Select Board? We would like to partner with you to communicate about the project and involve community members in the visioning process. We may also ask for the Select Board at some points in the process to consider co-signing on grant applications so that funders can see that this is a town supported project.

What design principles are we envisioning?

- ACCESSIBLE - All of our students will be able to enjoy all aspects of the playground
- NATURE-CENTERED - The playground will fit naturally and organically into the current space and build upon our beautiful woodland campus.
- GREEN - The construction materials will be safe and support our goal to be a school, district and town that is as green and sustainable as possible.
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