

# Come Play with Us!

UPDATING OUR MAIN PLAYGROUND



**W**e have been running, playing, and making memories on our current playground since 2004 when our main administration and lower school building was opened. The design has served us well and now, 15 years later, playground design and purpose has evolved, just as we have evolved as a school. Now, we have an opportunity to imagine a whole new landscape for outdoor play at St. Mark's.

When our children go outside, it is not just recess. Outdoor play is an active form of learning that unites the mind, body, and spirit. Children express and work out emotional aspects of everyday experiences through unstructured play. When permitted to play freely with peers, children develop skills for seeing things through another person's point of view--cooperating, helping, sharing, and solving problems. Outdoor learning engages all the senses: smell, touch, and taste, and the sense of motion through space, which are all powerful modes of learning. Children develop their motor planning skills and strength, and have fun while being challenged physically.

St. Mark's recognizes the importance of outdoor play, which is why we devote a lot of time to it in our planning and scheduling as a school. All students at St. Mark's have dedicated outdoor play time each day, and Preschool 3s through 1st grade students go outside twice a day. Unlike some other

schools, our middle school students also have a dedicated time for outdoor play in their daily schedule. The majority of our students play and use the large playground and field space on the front of our campus.



## What kind of equipment are we getting?

Today's playground equipment can be non-traditional in look and feel and can be appealing in an entirely new way. After interviewing many reputable companies, St. Mark's is proud to partner with Kompan in this endeavor. Kompan designs equipment that offers tremendous play value and capacity, while also aiding in physical and cognitive development. Their unique designs are backed by a world-class warranty and over 40 years of experience and expertise. They are one of the only providers who not only create

and manufacture equipment, but run a play research program to ensure that their designs are innovative and inspiring.

## Why doesn't it look like "traditional" equipment?

Great quality play equipment invites children to problem solve and plan their movement. The current wisdom behind playground design no longer plans for one large structure. Smaller pieces of equipment encourage movement between structures, and can increase the playground's total capacity. Smaller structures also help us maximize our space.

## How much is this going to cost and how are we paying for it?

The current project's total price tag is \$461,497. This is a substantial long-term investment for St. Mark's.

After a successful fundraising year through the Annual Fund, and the UnGala, the school is able to substantially support this project through the operating budget, but that won't pay for its entirety. We asked for gifts specifically for the playground at the 2019 UnGala and Auction, when we announced a very generous match up to \$100,000 from an anonymous donor. We were pleased to raise an additional \$33,000. At this time, we are asking for more community support to make this project the best that it can be.