

Fiesta Schoolyards, powered by the Lindy Foundation

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Halfway to 100: Fiesta Schoolyards Transforms Its 50th Philadelphia Schoolyard, Earns City Council Citation

Lindy Foundation initiative, backed by Lindy Communities, is turning bare asphalt lots into places where Philadelphia kids play, learn and grow

PHILADELPHIA, PA – September 24th, 2026 – Across Philadelphia, too many children spend recess on cracked, empty asphalt. Fiesta Schoolyards, an initiative of the Lindy Foundation, is changing that one schoolyard at a time, and it just completed number 50. The milestone project at Swenson Arts & Technology High School in Northeast Philadelphia puts the program halfway to its goal of transforming 100 Philadelphia schoolyards by 2028.

City, school district and parks leaders marked the milestone September 22 at “Fiesta’s 50th: Celebrating Our Partners in Impact,” held at The Pyramid Club. During the program, City Council President Kenyatta Johnson surprised Fiesta Schoolyards Founder Elaine Lindy with a City Council Citation recognizing her “visionary leadership and enduring commitment to Philadelphia’s children and communities.”

Why Schoolyards Matter

A Fiesta Schoolyard replaces bare pavement with a mix of play and learning: painted games, racetracks, math mazes, U.S. and world maps, sundials, drums, gardens, performance stages and places to sit and gather. Each principal chooses the elements that fit their students.

The results show up in the classroom. Principals report that students come back from recess calmer and ready to learn, get into less trouble, and even invent new math games on the painted math mazes. At the Joseph W. Catharine School, staff reported that “scholars are happy and behavioral issues have decreased this school year.”

The impact reaches beyond the school day. Every Fiesta Schoolyard stays open to the neighborhood during daylight hours, giving children a safe, clean place to play after school and on weekends. A dedicated refurbishment fund, managed by the Fund for the School District of Philadelphia, helps keep each yard in good repair for years to come.

Just as important is the message a bright, cared-for schoolyard sends to students: they matter, and they deserve good things. School District of Philadelphia Chief Operating Officer Teresa Flemming has said the yards show that “every child in Philadelphia deserves beauty and opportunity.”

A Citywide Partnership

Speakers at the celebration included Associate Deputy Mayor Jessica Shapiro; School District of Philadelphia Deputy Superintendent of Operations Oz Hill; Alan, Frank, and Elaine Lindy, co-owners of Lindy Communities; and Fiesta Schoolyards Program Director Dr. Carletta Skipworth. Also in attendance were City Councilmembers At-Large Nina Ahmad, Katherine Gilmore Richardson and Isaiah Thomas; District 9 Councilmember Anthony Phillips; and Commissioner of the Department of Parks & Recreation Susan Slawson.

“The Fiesta team is deeply gratified by the turnout at the Fiesta’s 50th event Celebrating Our Partners in Impact, marking our transformation of 50 Fiesta Schoolyards in the City of Philadelphia,” said Elaine Lindy, Founder of Fiesta Schoolyards. “We’ve reached this milestone thanks to the combined efforts of Lindy Communities, the Lindy Foundation, our municipal partners, sponsors and vendors. We thank them all!”

Fiesta Schoolyards works hand in hand with the School District of Philadelphia and Philadelphia Parks & Recreation. Because its play elements are pre-approved by the School District, each project is faster and more affordable than a traditional schoolyard renovation, allowing the program to complete about 10 schoolyards a year. It has also expanded into city parks and playgrounds.

Lindy Communities team members joined the celebration, and Lindy employees volunteer at Fiesta Schoolyard builds, helping bring each new schoolyard to life.

The Next 50

Nearly 100 Philadelphia elementary schools still have schoolyards with little or no play equipment. Philadelphia public school principals interested in a Fiesta Schoolyard for their school are encouraged to contact the School District of Philadelphia’s Office of Capital Programs to express their interest.

Looking beyond Philadelphia, Fiesta Schoolyards’ long-term goal is to share its methodology so other cities can follow suit. Its step-by-step manual, including a “10 Easy Steps” guide, is already published at fiestaschoolyards.org for school districts and communities nationwide that want to bring the same transformation to their own schoolyards.

About Fiesta Schoolyards

Fiesta Schoolyards, an initiative of the Lindy Foundation, transforms Philadelphia’s public schoolyards from asphalt lots into vibrant spaces where children can play, learn and grow. Founded by Elaine Lindy, the program completed its first schoolyard in 2018 and its 50th in 2026. Learn more at fiestaschoolyards.org.

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From left to right, School District Project Manager, Michelle Jacobs; School District Capital Programs Senior Design Manager, James Rockar; Fiesta Schoolyards Executive Director, Dr. Carletta Skipworth; Principal Erica Green, Conwell Middle School; Fiesta Schoolyards Founder, Elaine Lindy; Principal Tammy Pierce-Thomas, Emlen Elementary School; Principal Alia Dickerson, J B Kelly School; Principal Dana Singletary, Feltonville Intermediate School; School District Deputy Superintendent, Oz Hill; and School District Facilities Manager Vernon Palmer



Fiesta Schoolyards receives a City Council Citation from City Council President Kenyatta Johnson. From left: City Council President Kenyatta Johnson; Fiesta Schoolyards Advisory Member, Lon Fredric Palitz; Fiesta Schoolyards Founder, Elaine Lindy; Fiesta Schoolyards Executive Director, Dr. Carletta Skipworth; City Councilmember Dr. Anthony Phillips; and City Councilmember Cindy Bass