



KaBOOM!: Building Communities One Playground at a Time

Final Evaluation Report

Asset-Based Community Development Institute,
Northwestern University

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June 2008



it starts with a
playground.



History and Background

- KaBOOM! has a great deal of anecdotal information and manages several activities to track our impact (revisits, post-build calls, ripple sharing, etc.)
- At the time of crafting the Going to Scale, we determined that we would conduct a bi-annual, objective impact study on our LEAD outcomes
- The focus of the Impact Study would be to assess how we are doing against our theory of change: 1) convening people around a common cause; 2) achievable wins; and, 3) cascading steps of courage and leadership
- In 2005 we commissioned ISKME for the first Impact Study, the study was narrowly focused and went very deep on a small number of partners (10)
- In 2007 we commissioned the Assets Based Community Development Institute (ABCD Institute) out of Northwestern University and we included some SEED builds in the study





The ABCD Institute Final Evaluation

The KaBOOM! Impact Study was led by Dr. Deborah Puntenney and began in May 2007. The executive summary and power point slides summarizing the study findings completed in June 2008 are included in this packet.

Method and Participants

Phase 1 focused on 32 community build projects (26 LEAD and 6 SEED). Interviews were conducted in person and over the telephone.

Phase 2 consisted of 78 participants: In this group there were 54 LEAD groups and 24 SEED groups. The latter group was comprised of organizations that built through use of KaBOOM! tools and no financial resources and those receiving challenge grants. Surveys were conducted over the telephone.

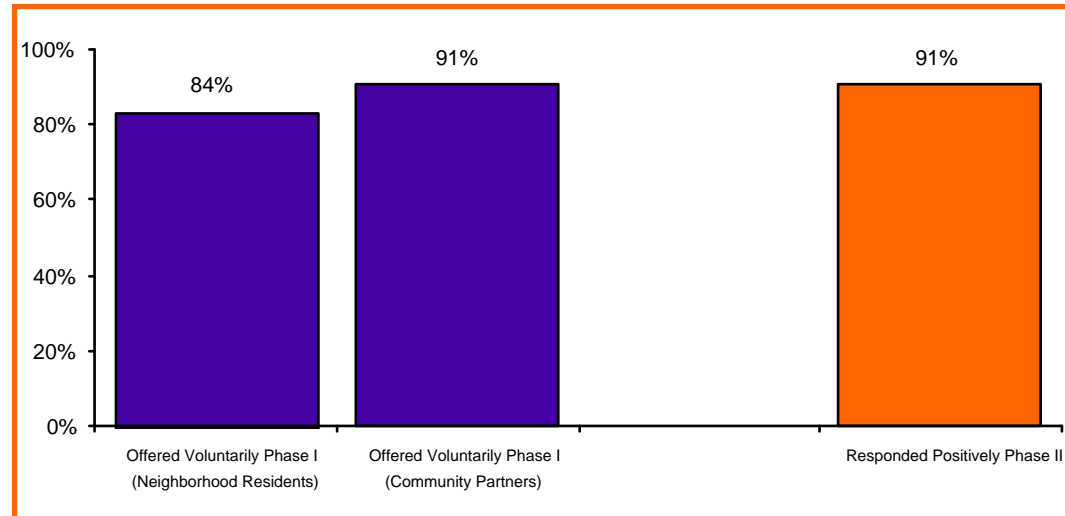
Survey questions for both Phase 1 and 2 were open-ended, the protocol in Phase 2 was refined based on narratives in Phase 1.





Community Relationships

Chart 1: The Playground Project Helped Strengthen Relationships Among People in the Community





Community Relationships

“Residents now know us better because we worked together on the KaBOOM! playground, and they are more receptive to working with us. We have programs that they bring their kids to now because they feel more confident about participating. It’s opened doors for us, and helped us get away from the skepticism that social services can face in a poor community.”

“We were able to build relationships with several sororities, certainly with Home Depot, and to make relationships with families that had children who would eventually come to our school. These are families of kids not here yet, who just wanted to see the place and see what the school community was like. We got more enrollments from that playground project, from people who were impressed with the way the community was behind the school.”

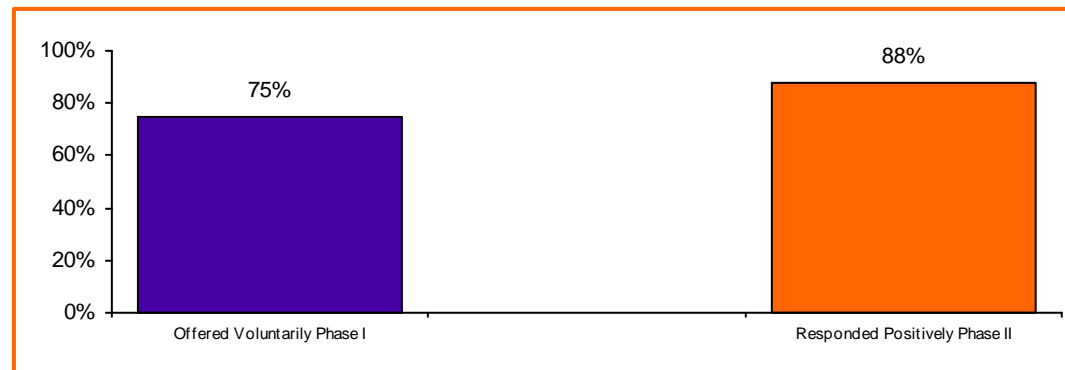
“We have a better relationship with the homeless shelter now, which is important because they are in the neighborhood. We have gotten to know the developer putting in new houses around here. We now know residents we haven’t seen in decades because they came out for the build and they now come over for things like memorials and baby showers. We know everyone now, and it is only because we looked up from what we were doing in order to build this playground.”





Community Confidence and Capacity

Chart 2: The Playground Project Increased Our Confidence and Transformed Skepticism into a Can-Do Attitude





Community Confidence and Capacity

“Before KaBOOM!, parents got frustrated with the fact that the only way to be involved was to go out to fundraise, and they never seemed able to get enough money together for a significant project. The success with the playground has produced a new, more positive attitude about their ability to get things done.”

“We built our confidence in being able to do something this big. Overcoming the negative sense that we couldn’t do it was important for us. The focus was always the same, get the playground and park finished, but we all worked together and made it happen.”

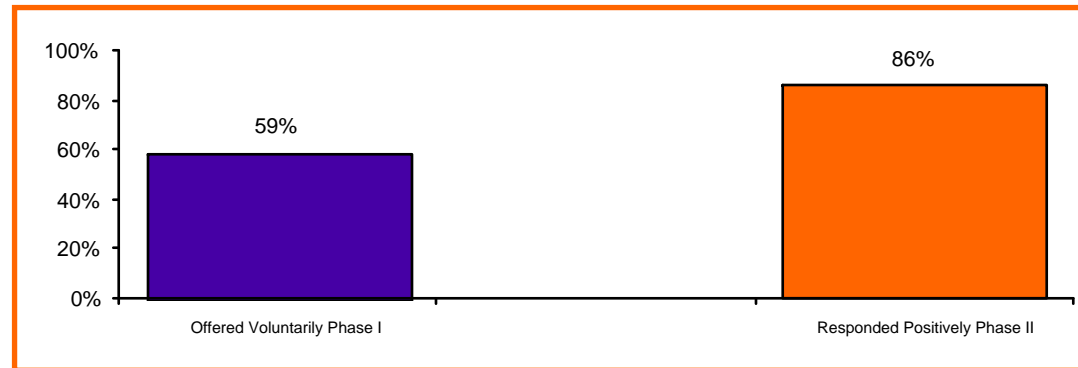
Parents now have more of an idea that they can succeed at something if they try hard. They have a daily reminder of what they did with the playground. The playground demonstrated that we can get something done ourselves; parents are more confident now about their own ability to make things happen.”





Community Confidence and Capacity

Chart 3: The Playground Project Showed us There is Power in Numbers; Power in Community



“The fact that we did it ourselves is huge; everyone felt great that we could do it, that by working together we could accomplish great things for our own community.”

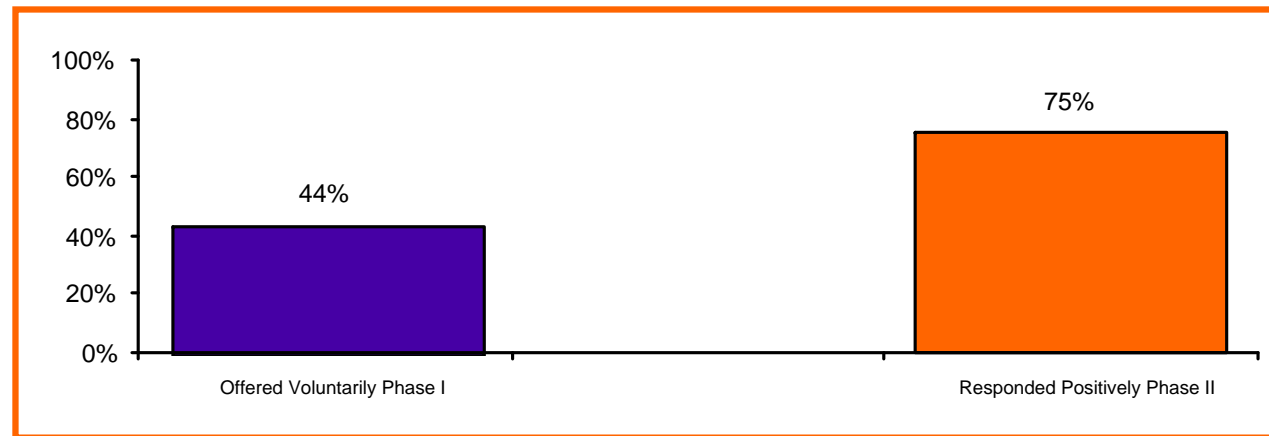
“I really think it gave our school a sense of pulling together. It cemented a lot that we didn’t have before. No matter how small each job on this project seems, all the small parts help make up a big whole. From the custodian emptying the trash to someone delivering a bottle of water to a worker on build day, all of it was important and it took all of us to make this happen.”





Community Confidence and Capacity

Chart 4: The Playground Project Uncovered Unknown Community Assets: People, Skills, and Resources



“We discovered new things about people who came to the build. A team captain would ask, ‘Who has done this before?’ and people would always step forward, and then get loaned to other teams where that skill was needed!”

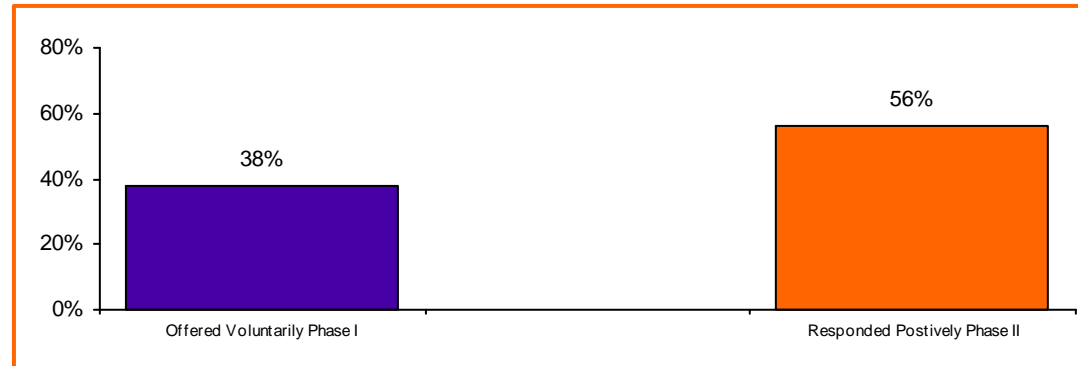
“A lawyer in town read about the KaBOOM! project, and he went to this school as a kid. Towards the end of money raising, he called me and made a \$5K contribution which enabled us to do lots of other things. Later, after the build, he came for a thank you party we held for all the people who helped and said, “What else can I do for this school?” Now he sponsors the breakfast program, where the kids who aren’t likely to get a good breakfast at home can come in early and eat.”





Community Confidence and Capacity

Chart 5: The Playground Project Expanded Our Capacity to Address Community Issues



“People now say, ‘What can we do?’ instead of ‘Who can do something for us?’ After the storm, the potential for failure was great, but the playground offered a big win and set an example for what local people could do.”

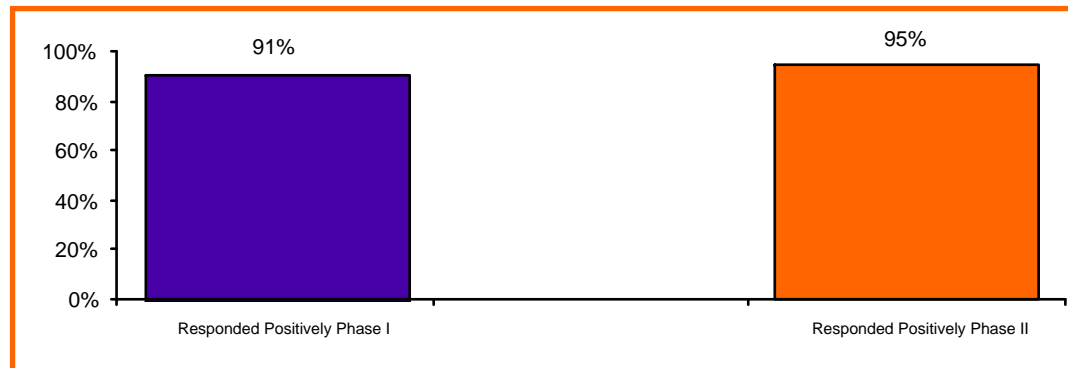
“Despite the way things are, you can rally together and change things. You don’t have to leave it to someone else; you don’t have to wait. It’s about changing the world, your kids can go out into the world saying ‘We built this playground, we acted, we changed something.’”





The Playground and the Community

Chart 6: The Playground Project Positively Impacted the Quality and Quantity of Children's Play





The Playground and the Community

“Mississippi just passed a law that requires 150 minutes of physical activity per week for every child in school as part of the state’s wellness policy. That is 30 minutes per day, or two 15 minute recess periods for our 535 students. With the new playground, we are now well positioned to provide good quality exercise in those play periods.”

“It is helping the kids do all sorts of things. The playground is used every single day. The kids are out there and playing hard all the time. There are more opportunities for physical activity of all kinds. The playgrounds were designed for kids of different abilities. For example, we have elements for kids with disabilities, etc.; everybody can play and interact with something.”

“The kids definitely tested the safety of this playground by jumping off the structure from every height, and not a single child got hurt. With the old playground, the teachers and school nurse were writing accident reports every day.”

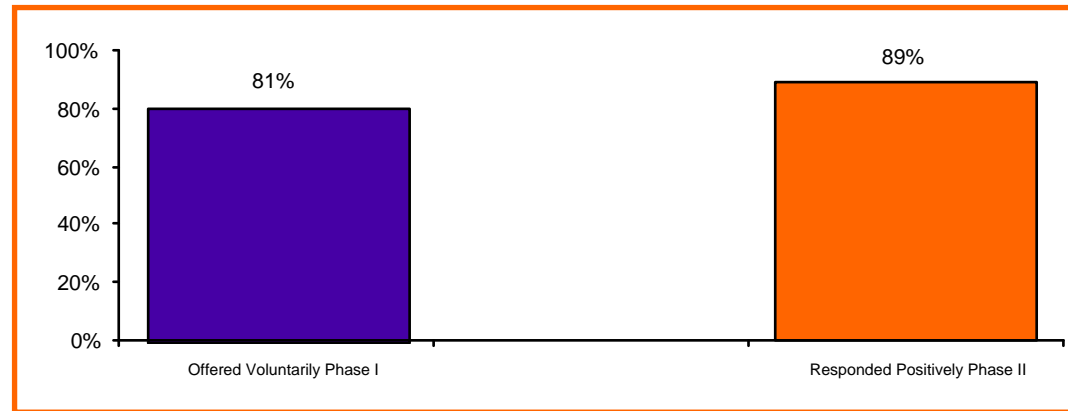
“The kids used to have 4-5 broken bones each year just from playing in the grass. Since we built the playground, there hasn’t been a broken bone, no contusions, no cuts, the safety has improved hugely.”





The Playground and the Community

Chart 7: The Playground Project Created Pride and Ownership in the Playground



“People take responsibility for this place. Park and Recreation officials have noticed and have said they wish all the other parks were this clean, that all the other communities took such pride in their play area.”

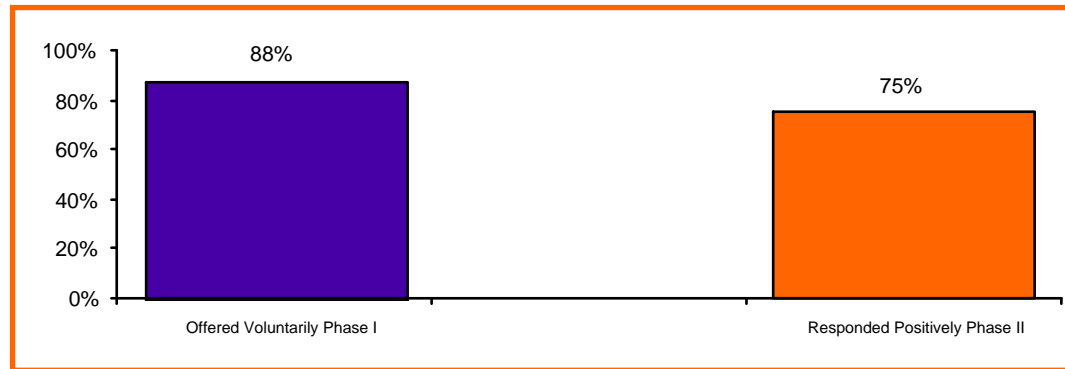
“The school takes primary responsibility for the playground of course, although the kids themselves take pride in it and keep it very clean.”





The Playground and the Community

Chart 8: The Playground is Regularly Used by the Larger Community



“Because the playground is in the town park, it has become the main draw for summer events—family and company picnics, reunions—three to four of these per weekend, and a lot of day camps take place in the park now.”

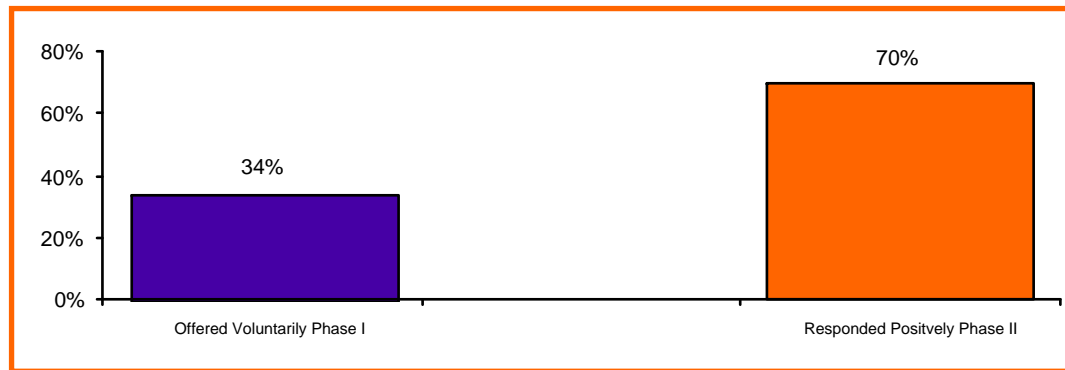
“The whole community uses it. The neighborhood is a corridor of 8 blocks surrounding us with no parks. So our park and playground are open for all the neighbors. When we did the build, we let everyone know there is a new park in the community. Even during school, the neighbors can get in and use it; after hours, people come, sit on the benches, use it just as a park. It’s a nice community space.”





Improvements in Community Desirability

Chart 9: The Playground Project Brought Visibility and Credibility to the Community



“We’re more united now; people all over Atlanta notice how together we are. We’ve developed the reputation of being organized and getting things done. This is new and can be attributed to what we learned from KaBOOM.”

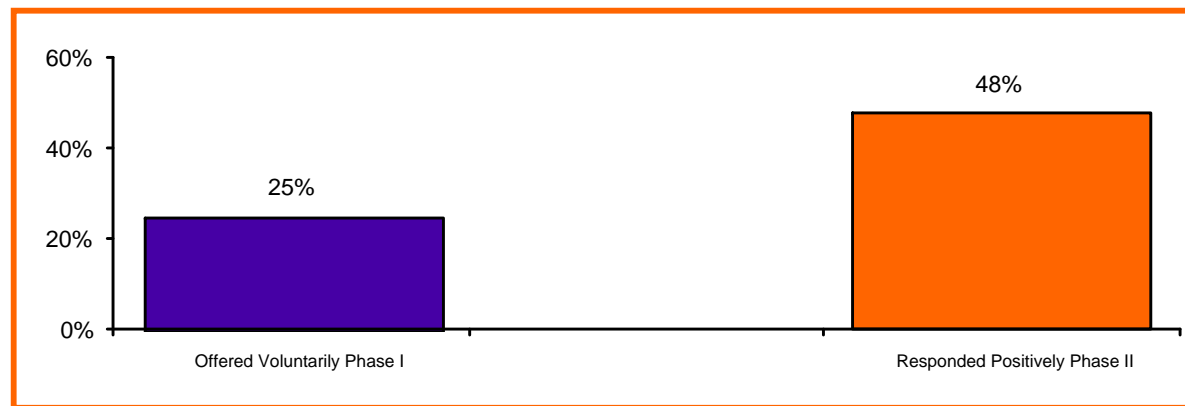
“Now it is a vibrant place, crowded all the time. Just yesterday someone told me that it’s a destination playground, with people driving in from other neighborhoods all the time.”





Improvements in Community Desirability

Chart 10: The Playground Project Produced a Signal for Other Investment in the Community



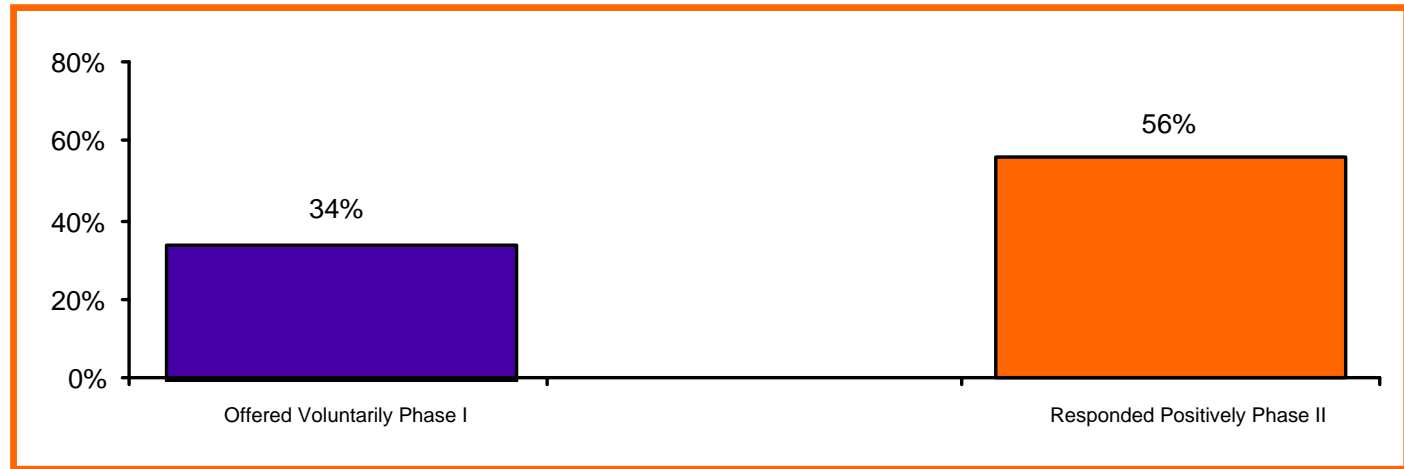
“The playground has been a catalyst for new building. Before, you would have seen dilapidated and boarded up buildings. Right after the playground was built, derelict buildings went down and lots were cleaned, and eight or nine brand new houses have been built.”





Improvements in Community Desirability

Chart 11: The Playground Project Created the Basis for Hope in Difficult Circumstances



“The playground is one of the reasons people have decided to come back to this neighborhood more than to some other places. While people are still struggling to get their homes back together, the playground stands like a bright beacon of hope that New Orleans will recover.”

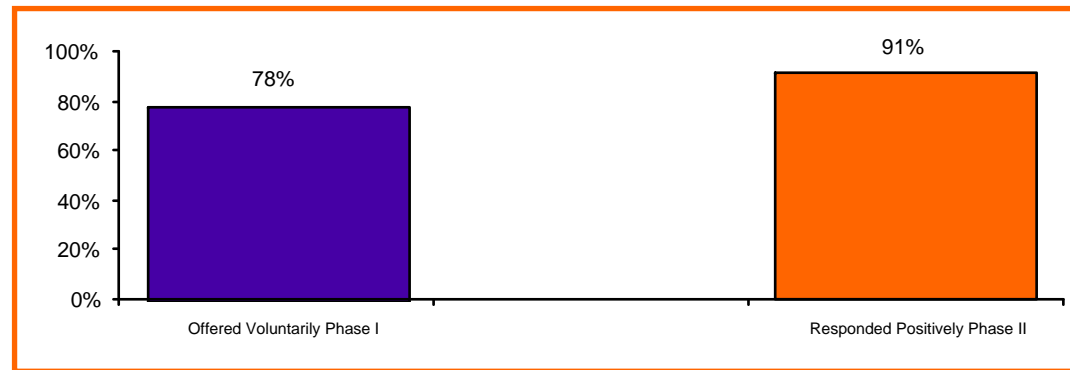
“New Orleans residents returning from places like Texas where they were relocated after Katrina are coming back to this neighborhood specifically, because of the playground and what it represents to the community.”





Confidence in the KaBOOM! Model

Chart 12: The Playground Project Showed us That the KaBOOM! Model Works, the Tools Work



“We apply the KaBOOM! principles to everything we do that requires advance planning and community involvement. It has been very positive for us and there is no doubt we will continue all of this.”

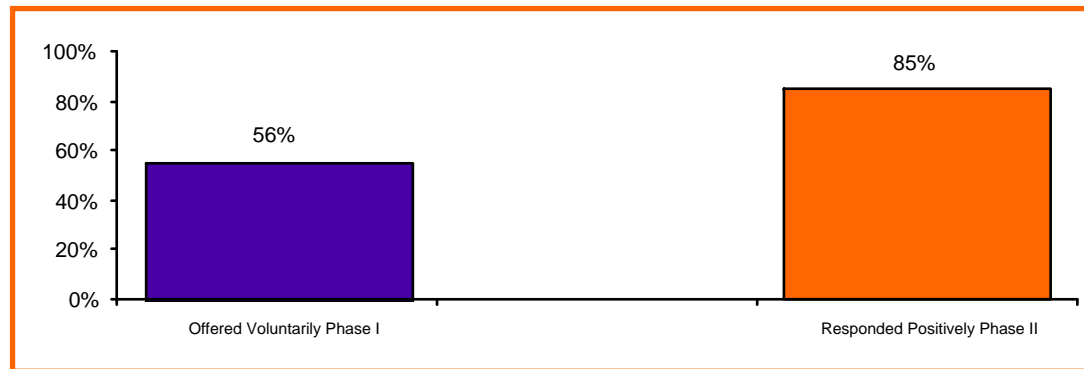
“The KaBOOM! process has become a model for doing things at this school. I’ve passed the Toolkit on to four other schools; people ask all the time how we did it and we hand them the Toolkit (and ask for it back!). We tell them about the process, tell them to go to the KaBOOM! website, go to U Play!.”





Confidence in the KaBOOM! Model

Chart 13: The Playground Project Showed Us That Doing Something for Kids is a Good Motivator



“When you create a project that focuses on kids, you can get communities to overcome suspicions, fears, and misconceptions about other people and work together.”

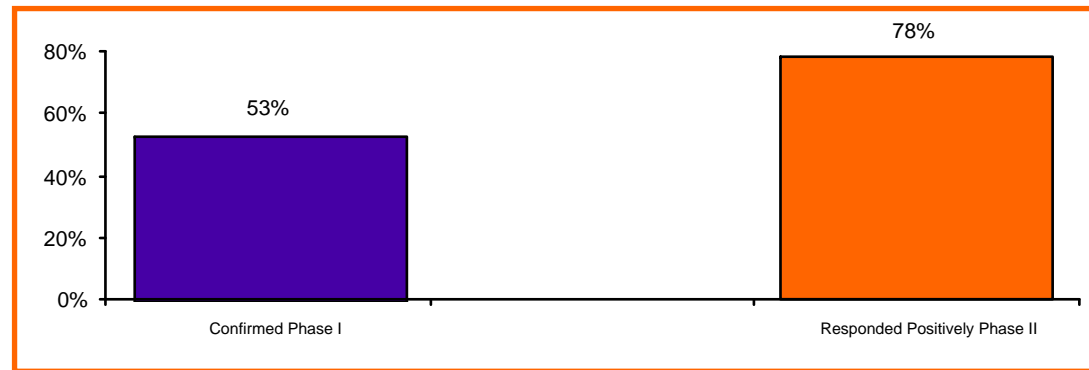
“The lesson is in the power of community and how strongly parents want to do something for their kids. The push and encouragement we got from the parents was important; it kept us going because we knew how important it was for them to do this for the kids.”





Confidence in the KaBOOM! Model

Chart 14: The Playground Project Prompts Others to Ask About Our Success



“I would recommend it to almost anyone. I’d tell them about the time commitment and I’d be honest with them about how much work it is. But there is no question that it’s worth it for getting the community to come together.”

“I get calls all the time and I pitch KaBOOM! left and right. I tell people, ‘Go after it with everything you’ve got.’”





Table 1: LEAD, Challenge Grant, and SEED Ratings

CATEGORY		LEAD (n=77)	CHALLENGE (n=12)	SEED (n=10)
1	The playground project helped strengthen relationships among people in the community	94%*	83%	90%
2	The playground project increased our confidence and transformed skepticism into a can-do attitude	90%	83%	90%
3	The playground project showed us there is power in numbers; power in community	87%	83%	90%
4	The playground project uncovered unknown community assets: people, skills, and resources	74%	83%	80%
5	The playground project expanded our capacity to address other community issues	56%	58%	60%
6	The playground project had a positive impact on the quality and quantity of children's play	95%	100%	100%
7	The playground project created a sense of pride and ownership in the playground	92%*	75%	90%
8	The playground is regularly used by the larger community	75%	75%	80%
9	The playground project brought visibility and credibility to the community	73%*	58%	70%
10	The playground project produced a signal for other investment in the community	53%*	42%	30%
11	The playground project created the basis for hope in difficult circumstances	53%	67%	70%*
12	The playground project showed us that the KaBOOM! model works, the tools work	91%	92%	100%
13	The playground project showed us that doing something for kids is a good motivator	86%	83%	90%
14	The playground project prompted others to ask about our success	77%	75%	100%*





ABCD Recommendations

The ABCD Institute concluded the study with a variety of recommendations to KaBOOM!:

- KaBOOM! needs to do more to support a community following the Build to foster the cascading steps of leadership into community action
- KaBOOM! needs to be explicit and clear in communications when inviting individuals to apply or to participate in KaBOOM! activities to prevent confusion about what *resources* they may be able to access
- KaBOOM! should consider making the on-line tools and the support to communities and individuals easier and more efficient

KaBOOM! is taking these recommendations under review and will be developing action plans to address these issues.



Thank you for our beautiful playground!

Thank you

I think we need a new playground because the hurricane messed up our playground. My friend will have fun there.

Alberto

new playground
new playground for me
when the
Pina was here it destroyed
the playground
not so fun and
I would like a new

Thank You

Dear Home Depot thank you for building the swings.

Thank You For The Playground

