

# Trees and Shade at Your School: Tips for Parents



Did you know that playground shade can keep play areas up to 20 degrees cooler? Or that planting trees on playgrounds can not only protect students from overexposure to the sun but also provide connection with nature, improve mental well-being and student ability to concentrate, and help to improve air quality?

Overexposure to the sun's rays in childhood – and sunburns – are a risk for skin cancer later in life. For parents looking to build more safety into their children's school playground, this tip sheet can serve as a guide.

## Develop a Concept

- Are you planning to request shade trees or a shade structure?
- Where on the playground and how many?
- Will irrigation be required?
- What sort of maintenance could be required?

## Secure School Support

- Secure support from the principal and the parent teacher organization (PTO).
- Talk to the school groundskeeper who will have to maintain trees or a shade structure.

## Talk to the School District

- Is there a facilities management or operations department that must approve the project?
- What funds are available to support this project? Are there capital projects funds or facilities improvement funds?
- What can the school district provide to support this project, such as planning, labor, funding, or other supplies?
- Is there a list of approved trees that are permitted to be planted on campus?

## Firm up your plan and ask for outside support

- Set a date for planting and installation.
- Make a flyer to promote your project and share it widely, including to parents, teachers, and community members. Include photos of the playground to show its current state and a link where people can donate to the project or sign up to volunteer with planting or installation.
- If you're considering trees, talk to your local city council or city manager and connect with the city's urban forester or forestry initiative. In addition to providing funding, these groups can advise specific types of trees that thrive in the local climate and provide shade.
- Reach out to nurseries, irrigation companies, or other professionals to see if they will donate or discount their services to support the project.
- Dermatologists, environmental groups, or others invested in increasing the tree canopy and protecting children from overexposure to the sun may also be sources of support for the project.