



# Green Schools for All: Equitable Funding and Expansion of Green Spaces across District Campuses

Passed September 27, 2022

(Res 002-22/23)

Whereas, In alignment with Los Angeles Unified School District's 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, the Board of Education and Superintendent are committed to creating environments where students feel safe, welcome, and excited to learn, and to a strategy that includes developing safe and sustainable green spaces, outdoor learning environments, and shaded areas at each school;

Whereas, The Los Angeles Unified School District has worked to provide equitable access to green spaces for its students through various projects, including the Sustainable Environment Enhancement Developments for Schools (SEEDS) Program and the creation of Nature Explore classrooms at our Early Education centers;

Whereas, Campuses can be greened through a variety of approaches, including, but not limited to: planting new grass fields, replacing paved surfaces with permeable surfaces that incorporate native and drought tolerant planting areas, installation of trees, creation of school gardens, and incorporating features that reduce the heat island effect;

Whereas, The District has expanded on these efforts to ensure family and community access to green schoolyards by partnering with the City of Los Angeles Recreation and Parks (RAP) to open Community School Parks, with four sites already established and the City of Los Angeles' commitment to build 30 Community School Parks by 2023;

Whereas, The Measure RR Implementation Plan, which guides the expenditure of \$7 billion in local bond funding, outlines a variety of planned investments in school facilities, the scope of many will include creating and/or expanding outdoor learning environments including, but not limited to, \$50 million for welcoming outdoor learning spaces; approximately \$200 million for playground and campus exterior upgrades; \$5 million for school-initiated SEEDS projects; and approximately \$100 million for the development of Nature Explore classrooms at our Early Education centers;

Whereas, The District anticipates additional funding for greening efforts following Governor Newsom's launch of the "Outdoors For All" initiative last year, which invested \$548.3 million in state grant funding (in addition to the \$1 billion-plus investment in the 2021 state budget for expanded park access) to build 112 parks in communities across the state and provide equitable access to outdoor spaces to all Californians;

Whereas, The State recently increased its investment to fund school greening beyond the initial proposal of \$50 million to \$150 million;

Whereas, The District developed a Greening Index that assigns a "green score" to help identify which schools are most in need of greening resources, to inform and direct our efforts to address inequities through targeted investments and additional resources, and to lay the groundwork for making important planning and funding decisions for future investments in greening campuses;

Whereas, Many equity gaps remain; according to the District's 2022 Greening Index of Schools, only 22 percent of the aggregate square footage of all school sites are considered "green" or natural space, with the median green space footage of sites is 14.7% and 235 elementary schools having 10 percent or less of their campus footprint considered green;

Whereas, In 2003, LAUSD became the first school district in California to adopt the sustainability principles and framework of the Collaborative for High Performance Schools (CHPS) for new schools and modernization projects, with 140 new school and modernization projects CHPS verified to date;

Whereas, Updated California-CHPS criteria (CA-CHPS v2.0) went into effect in Summer 2021, which includes a new criterion for new living schoolyards, outdoor classrooms & greenery;

Whereas, the District's Greening Program officially recommends that at least 30 percent of each school site be dedicated to green or natural space, in alignment with recommendations from CA- CHPS v2.0 and from Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), but only 16 percent of our District campuses (106 out of 671 sites, based on the Greening Index) meet that threshold;

Whereas, Based on these measures, 85 percent of our students attend schools with little or no tree canopies for shade, asphalt-laden playgrounds,, and minimal outdoor learning opportunities – well below the District's recommended greening ratio, indicating a need for the District to accelerate our existing progress significantly;

Whereas, Research has shown that green spaces on or around a school campus are positively associated with reductions in chronic absenteeism (MacNaughton et al., 2017), increased academic achievement (Wu et al., 2014), restored attention capacity, decreased stress levels (Li & Sullivan, 2016), as well as reduced mental fatigue and aggression (Schulman & Peters, 2008);

Whereas, Rising temperatures caused by climate change have necessitated responsive greening policies to urgently address conditions such as extreme heat and ensure that students across the District have access to shaded outdoor areas that provide cooler and greener spaces for students to learn, engage, and play every day; and

Whereas, Equitable access to green spaces aligns with the Board-approved Strategic Plan and the 2022-2023 Budget and its goal to identify \$50 million in projects to create outdoor learning spaces and other landscaping and greening upgrades, as well as the Board's approval of the resolution "Creating New School Gardens and Campus and Community-Shared Green Spaces to Provide Outdoor Learning Opportunities and Create Sustainable and Healthy Environments (Res 042-19/20); now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Governing Board of the Los Angeles Unified School District recognizes the proven benefits of green spaces for students' academic, health and social-emotional outcomes and commits to a long-term effort to ensure all school facilities have adequate nature-based, climate-appropriate green spaces where students recreate, play, and spend time, such as square- footage of grass, appropriate shade via tree-canopies, learning gardens, developmentally appropriate outdoor classrooms (e.g. Nature Explore Classrooms), and naturescapes;

Resolved further, That the Board adopts the current recommendation for 30 percent green/natural space on campuses as the minimum standard for all District schools and directs the Superintendent to develop a plan within 150 days to ensure at least 30 percent of the existing hard-surface schoolyard is converted into safe and

sustainable green space at all schools by 2035, to the extent feasible based on the physical constraints of individual campuses. The plan must:

- Include an analysis of how current and planned bond projects will help meet this standard,,
- Prioritize schools with the lowest green spaces/access to green spaces as determined by the District's 2022 Greening Index and in communities most affected by extreme heat and climate change, leveraging tools such as CalEnviroScreen and the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool,
- Prioritize efforts in Early Education Centers, Primary Centers, and Elementary Schools, where the need for green spaces is highest, and outdoor play is an essential feature of the instructional program, with a special focus on the elementary schools with 10 percent or less in green space,
- Be developed in collaboration with environmental experts, community-based partners, educators, students, and families, and include future opportunities for community input as specific site plans are put together to leverage stakeholder voice, promote environmental stewardship, and create learning opportunities for students and families,
- Include a staffing plan to ensure adequate maintenance of green spaces by District staff,
- Identify metrics and accessible ways to track progress towards greening goals, including heat reduction/shade, drought-tolerant planting, stormwater capture, and square footage of soft surfaces and planting on greened schoolyards, and
- Seek to address challenges in realizing greening projects, including barriers that pose additional burdens in terms of costs and time; and

Resolved further, That the Board directs the Superintendent to identify the necessary funding for greening projects to achieve the aforementioned goals by 2035, including bond dollars, general fund, and grants. For example, as new sources of funds become available, financial risk to the Facilities-managed bond program is significantly reduced, and/or significant costs savings are realized, that the funds be prioritized for additional projects that expand students' access to safe and sustainable green spaces at schools with the highest need for outdoor green space according to the Greening Index;

Resolved further, That any facilities projects that necessitate the disruption of existing concrete, asphalt paving or other hardscape, including asphalt replacement/repaving, portable building removal projects, and future Major Modernizations, also include the addition of green space or a natural space with the requisite shading to ensure measurable progress towards the District's adopted aforementioned minimum green space standard;

Resolved further, That the Board commits to ensuring that all future bond implementation plans measures shall include distinct greening programs as part of its effort to ensure the aforementioned minimum green square standard is met and maintained;

Resolved further, That the Board directs the Superintendent's Office to work with the appropriate departments to ensure that proper staffing and resources are allocated to research, identify and apply for local, state, federal and other grant opportunities that support the creation of sustainable green spaces and outdoor learning environments;

Resolved further, That the Board directs the Superintendent's office to deepen the partnerships with City and County officials to expand the community school parks program, significantly increasing the number of community school parks in the schools with low green space based on the District's 2022 Greening Index and in communities most affected by extreme heat and climate change, and explore other avenues to expand community access to schoolyards beyond traditional school hours; and, be it finally

Resolved, That the Board directs the Superintendent's office to work with the Office of Government Relations to ensure that the adequate funding for greening efforts and community school parks are a continued pillar of the District's advocacy efforts at all levels, including seeking potential solutions that better enable the District to realize greening projects in an accessible, equitable, cost-effective, and timely manner.