



GREEN SCHOOLYARDS GRANT PROGRAM

California's youngest residents are increasingly confronted with the challenges of climate change and the urban heat island effect. With approximately 5.9 million K-12 students attending public schools across nearly 130,000 acres of land in the state, a significant portion of these schoolyards remains unshaded and covered in asphalt. This lack of green space contributes to rising temperatures and limits students' access to beneficial outdoor environments. The need for sustainable and resilient school grounds is critical, as these spaces play a pivotal role in the health and educational experiences of our children.

The Green Schoolyards Grant Program, spearheaded by CAL FIRE's Urban and Community Forestry Program, is a transformative initiative aimed at addressing these pressing issues. This program is designed to protect and enhance the health, well-being, and educational opportunities of California's students, particularly those most vulnerable to the effects of rising temperatures and extreme heat. By investing in the creation of greener, cooler, and more dynamic school environments, the program not only combats the urban heat island effect but also fosters a range of educational and developmental benefits.

With an impressive \$121 million allocated specifically for school greening projects, the Green Schoolyards Grant Program has made substantial strides in reshaping educational landscapes across California. To date, the program has funded 29 K-12 school grants, impacting over 164 campuses statewide. These projects have transformed barren, asphalt-heavy spaces into vibrant green areas that offer tree shade, improve air quality, and create inviting environments for outdoor learning and play.

In addition to the school projects, approximately \$27 million has been dedicated to enhancing non-profit childcare facilities that receive government funding. This investment has supported 20 grants benefiting 41 facilities, broadening the scope of the program's impact and extending its benefits to younger children in early education settings.

Each project funded by the Green Schoolyards Grant Program includes features such as shaded playgrounds through trees, interactive garden spaces, and outdoor classrooms. These upgrades not only provide a healthier environment but also offer invaluable opportunities for nature-based, hands-on learning. Additionally, integrating stormwater capture systems into these designs helps manage runoff and supports local wildlife by creating habitats that attract pollinators and birds. Students engage with their surroundings in ways that boost environmental literacy, foster creativity, and develop essential social skills such as collaboration and problem-solving.

Through these green schoolyards, CAL FIRE is not just improving individual

school environments; it is contributing to a more sustainable and resilient future for California. By addressing the immediate needs of our students and preparing them for the challenges of a changing climate, the Green Schoolyards Grant Program embodies a forward-thinking approach to education and environmental stewardship.



Header Left: Campus corridor at Jackson Elementary has been turned into a green space with native plants and walking paths. Photo: Walter Passmore. **Header Right:** Corridor space between classrooms at El Monte City School campus transformed into a raised garden space for students to learn and interact with their environment. Photo: Henry Herrera. **Above:** Three-year-old tree planted along fence at Bassett High School. Photo: Walter Passmore