

Building Living Schoolyards

OUSD's Implementation and Partnership with ELP and Kaboom!

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**OAKLAND UNIFIED
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Community Schools, Thriving Students

Our Vision

All OUSD students will find joy in their academic experience while graduating with the skills to ensure they are caring, competent, fully-informed, critical thinkers who are prepared for college, career, and community success.

Our Mission

Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) will build a Full Service Community District focused on high academic achievement while serving the whole child, eliminating inequity, and providing each child with excellent teachers, every day.



Transformation of Schoolyards

OUSD is redesigning and realizing next generation schoolyards that provide dynamic joyful play spaces for health, wellness, and academic success.



Transformation of Schoolyards

We are integrating critical issues we need to solve at our schools into how we design our schoolyards moving forward:

- boosting mental and physical health,
- **improving children's educational outcomes,**
- creating opportunities for social and emotional development
- mitigating heat and pollution,
- and strengthening our community.



Transformation of OUSD Schoolyards

ACCESS TO JOYFUL PLAY



8,079 HOURS
PLAYED



14 SPORT
COURTS ADDED



10 PLAY
STRUCTURES
ADDED

NATURE & CREATIVE OUTLETS

17 MURALS &
GROUND ART

39 TREES
PLANTED

18 OUTDOOR
CLASSROOMS & GARDENS





Why Transform Schoolyards?

Living Schoolyards Policy & Guidelines

In 2019, we passed the Living Schoolyards policy and in November 2022, the OUSD Living Schoolyards Guidelines were published. Both the policy and guidelines drive our work today.

Living Schoolyard Goals	
Create Outdoor Environments Optimized for 21st Century Education	Increase Access to Park Space
Increase Children's Joy	Strengthen Community Engagement
Improve Students' Health and Wellness	Prioritize Equity
Create Vibrant Play and Social Environments	Strengthen OUSD's Environmental Resilience

State of Play Oakland by Project Play Aspen Institute

- **Oakland youth are less physically active than the nation.** Only 14% of youth in Oakland meet the 60 minutes of physical activity per day recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, below the national average of 23%. Oakland girls (9%) are less likely to be sufficiently physically active than boys (19%). Physical activity decreases as youth get older.
- **Access to quality parks is unevenly distributed.** Residents in Oakland neighborhoods where people most identify as a person of color have access to 66% less park space per person than those in predominantly White neighborhoods. Although 89% of Oakland residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park, the amenities and investments are much lower than comparable U.S. cities.

Research on Schoolyards Impact on Students

Living Schoolyard Longitudinal and Cross-Sectional Investigations (K-6)

- Living schoolyard implementation contributes to **significant academic progress**.
- Green renovations lead to **better utilization of play areas**.
- Previously sedentary during recess period are now **active**.
- Green space leads to greater **play equity & quality**
 - Girls will play actively just as much as boys on green space.
 - Green play areas are more conducive to small group activities, vigorous intensity activity, and **prosocial behavior**.
 - **Creative play** in green space is frequently synonymous with collaborative, non-competitive play.
- Antisocial interactions/**bullying decreased** by 40-50% after students were given time to adjust to the novelty.

Raney, Hendry, Yee, Am J Prev Med, 2019; Raney, Bowers, Rissberger, J Phys Act Health, 2021



OUSD Schoolyards Impact on Students

“The new play structure, multi-sport court, outdoor exploration areas and striping of games like hopscotch and a soccer pitch give students **lots to do during recess and something to look forward to each day**. Because there are so many different opportunities for play, students always have a **beautiful and engaging space** to be in. Being outdoors and playing has helped their **physical and social emotional well-being**. Students have **developed their social skills** tremendously. We are especially surprised and delighted by the positive impact the spinners have had on students. The spinners offer students a tangible and non-disruptive outlet to address sensory needs- **especially our students whose IEPs call for extra sensory outlets**. All of this has translated into **more grounded student behavior**, allowing students to be better **engaged in academic tasks in class** and to have **positive interactions with peers and adults**. School staff are now spending **less time mediating conflicts** between students and more time helping them **develop social, emotional and academic skills**.”

-- Hoover Principal, Lissette Averhoff

OUSD Schoolyards Impact





How to Transform Schoolyards

Program Improvements

Joyful Schools Facilities Rubric & Assessment

- Developed to rate each school on a scale by schoolyard element
- Allows for real-time comparison and ranking of schoolyard needs

Living Schoolyard Operations Team

- Building internal capacity to execute and maintain schoolyards
- Continuous learning through site visits, reviewing studies, etc

Living Schoolyard Project Plan

- Creating a central space for managing projects across sites and partnerships to identify challenges and opportunities
- Ongoing learning and record of how work is done to create multi-year plan

Example Joyful Schools Assessment Results

School	Projected Enrollment	Student Demographics	Living Schoolyard								
		UPP Rate	Play Structure	Play Matting	Schoolyard Ground Conditions	Play & Gathering Places	Nature Exploration Area	Outdoor Classroom	School Garden	Outdoor Dining/Student Seating Areas	Playground Shade
Bridges	412	99.8%	2	2	2	2	0	2	2.5	3	2
Lockwood STEAM Academy	555	99.1%	1.5	1.5	2	2	0	2.5	3	3	2
Global Family	404	99.0%	1.5	1.5	2	2	0	1	1	3	1
Esperanza	405	98.9%	2	1	2	2	0	1	1	2	0
PRIDE	288	98.4%	3	3	1	1	0	1	2	2	1
Highland	449	98.1%	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	0	2	2.5	3	2.5
Horace Mann	178	98.0%			1						
EnCompass (Woodland)	301	97.5%	1	1.5	2	3	2	2	3	2	2
MLK	295	97.3%	2.5	2.5	1.5	2	0	2.5	2.5	2.5	2
Garfield	472	97.3%	2	1.5	2	2	1	1	2	2	1
Markham	263	97.1%	2	3	4	4	4	2	3	2	2
Madison Primary	254	97.0%	2.5	3	1.5	2	0	2.5	2	3	2.5
Allendale	348	96.9%	2	2	2	1	0	2	2	0	1
Manzanita Community	316	96.1%	1.5	1.5	2.5	3	0	2	3	3	2
ACORN Woodland (Woodland)	259	96.0%	1	1.5	2	3	2	2	3	2	2
Reach	428	95.7%	1.5	1.5	2	2	0	2.5	2.5	3	2
TCN	266	95.7%	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2
Greenleaf	596	95.7%									
ICS	278	95.6%	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2

Key Features

Nature Exploration Area,
Gardens & Trees



Play Structure



Multisport Court



Murals



Ground Games



Partnerships & Grants

- Eat.Learn.Play. & KABOOM! committed to 25 schoolyards from 2023-2026 (doesn't include 4 completed before 2023)
- Trust for Public Land is in the process of completing the fourth living schoolyard renovation in Oakland
- CalFire grant received for 2 implementation sites and 14 planning sites (\$8 million)



Community Engagement Process

1. Site leader feedback about schoolyard elements and zones
2. Operations design team redesigns elements on schoolyard, reviewed by site leaders and district education specs
3. Community and students have design days to design their dream play structures
4. School community votes on final play structure design
5. School community designs rest of schoolyard elements through planning calls and additional engagement sessions (mural design, tree ideas, etc)
6. ~210 volunteers build the new schoolyard over three days
7. School community ribbon-cutting to celebrate new schoolyard





Results

Lockwood STEAM Before



Lockwood STEAM During



Lockwood STEAM After



Impact thus Far

- Decrease in disciplinary issues on schoolyards during recess, lunch and after school programming.
- Increased participation in sports for girls and more diverse group of students
- More diversity in activities/different types of activities on schoolyards
- Staff retention
- We are seeing some enrollment trending up at schools like Hoover and Lockwood however there are many variables that influence family enrollment choices.

Braiding Funding Sources






Addressing Climate Change

Research on Urban Heat Islands in Schools

- Children suffer the greatest consequences
- Heat and Pollution
 - ↑ heart rate & blood pressure
 - ↑ bronchoconstriction/asthma
 - Dehydration and overheating
 - ↓ exercise capacity
 - ↓ ability to concentrate/learn
- Possible Solutions
 - Paint/alternative materials on asphalt, trees, vegetation and pervious surfacing

To thrive at school, students need outdoor space that protects them from heat.



Playing outside in the heat can lead to dehydration, headaches, heat stroke, and other health impacts.


On the other hand, staying inside all day deprives them of important health and academic benefits of outdoor play.

Shade is the best solution.

By blocking sun from the body, shade can reduce heat burden by up to 70 F.

Grass stays cooler than asphalt with the same sun exposure...

...but shade can even cool down hot asphalt!



HEAT BURDEN, OR MEAN RADIANT TEMPERATURE, IS THE CUMULATIVE HEAT WE EXPERIENCE FROM THE AIR, HUMIDITY, RADIATION, AND MORE

THIS EXAMPLE SHOWS POSSIBLE HEAT BURDEN AT 1:00 PM WITH AIR TEMPERATURE OF 92 F

Heat Mitigation Strategies Utilized in Our Work

Different ground materials to decrease heat

- Remove asphalt where not needed and add pervious surfaces (engineered wood fiber, corkeen, park tread, decomposed granite, etc.)
- Sportcourt tiles and ground art decrease heat of remaining asphalt

Adding shade

- Every new play structure includes as many shade canopies as possible
- Trees are strategically placed and sourced to provide immediate and ever-expanding shade across the schoolyard

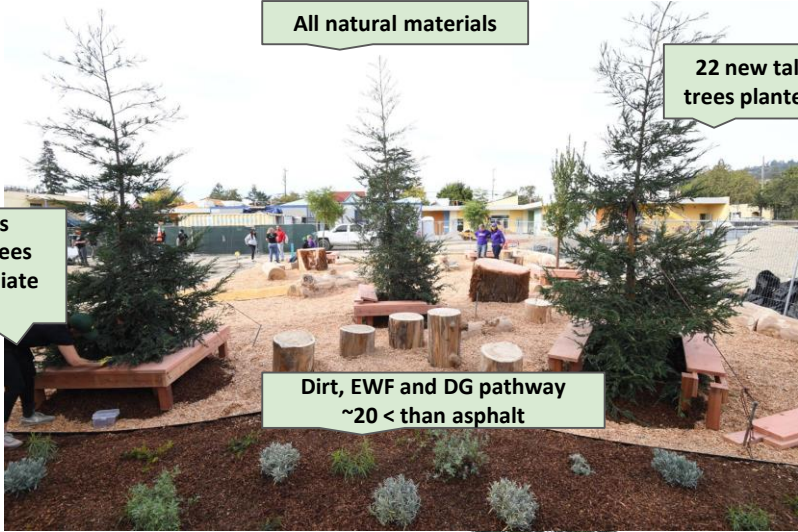
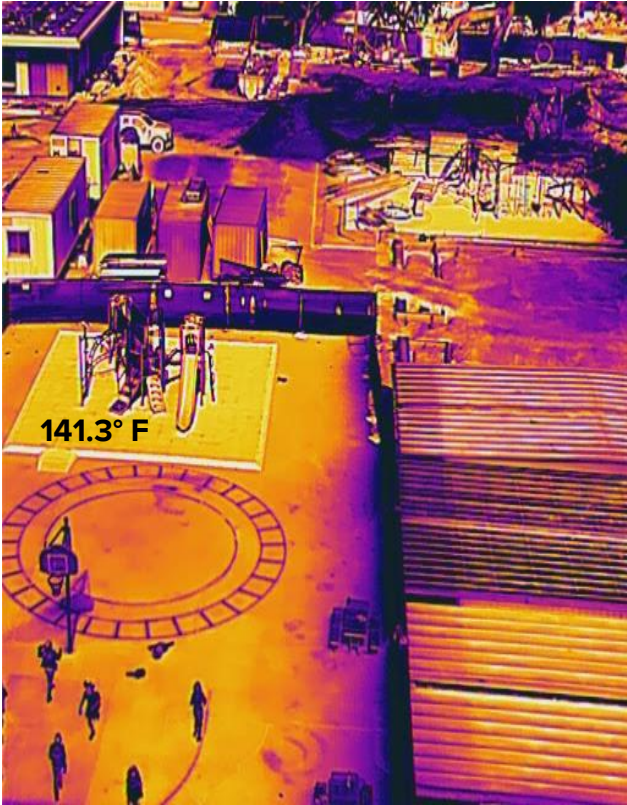


Trees & Asphalt Removal
Laurel Elementary



Shade structures with every new play structure
Global Family Elementary

Laurel Elementary Playground



Asphalt Removal

Whenever possible and particularly when asphalt is already in bad condition, we can replace it with pervious surfacing to mitigate heat and bring nature and safer surfacing into our schoolyards.



Budget and Capacity Considerations

- New capacity and training needed for:
 - surfacing materials upkeep to maintain safety and play quality
 - living elements such as trees requires investments in irrigation, care, and maintenance
- School supervision programming support to effectively use new play areas
- Expanding new ground surfacing and shade to all schoolyards





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