



# California Schoolyard Forest System<sup>SM</sup> Regional Leadership Institute for School Districts

## Southern California — 2024–2025

This program is designed to support administrative teams from school districts to become champions of vibrant, high-quality outdoor environments that protect PreK-12 students from extreme heat. The program will provide participants with the tools, dedicated time, networks, technical support, and resources needed to successfully design, implement, maintain, and use schoolyard forests at scale, with a focus on equity and sustainability.

## Program Components

### Cohort Workshops

The program centers around a series of four day-long professional development workshops. Participants will learn about best practices for schoolyard forest design, implementation, maintenance, and use and will build an understanding of the key components of a robust schoolyard forest system. Each session will include work time for teams to craft a shared vision and strategy for schoolyard forests in their district.

### District Action Plans

Each team will develop an action plan to strategically shift district policies, systems, and practices to support the long-term success of schoolyard forests across their districts. Our flexible framework will meet districts where they are, identify and prioritize areas for change, and provide a roadmap that districts can follow beyond the timeframe of the program.

### Schoolyard Tours

Two optional day-long tours will provide inspiration, a chance to learn about real examples of successes and challenges, and an opportunity to share promising practices for scaling schoolyard forests districtwide.

### Tailored Support

Green Schoolyards America staff will meet with each school district team on a regular basis to help districts develop their action plans and deepen their engagement with schoolyard forest and green schoolyard ideas, methods, and strategies.

### Regional Network

This program will include school districts from across Southern California with a wide range of experiences and contexts. Teams will be encouraged to explore this diversity, get to know their colleagues, and learn from one another. In addition, Green Schoolyards America

#### WHAT IS A SCHOOLYARD FOREST?

Schoolyard forests are climate oases—groves of trees on school campuses designed to benefit students during the school day. They protect students from extreme heat and provide gathering spaces that students and staff can use for learning, play, rest, physical activity, and social engagement.

will bring in and help to connect districts with local experts who can continue to support their efforts beyond the Institute.



## Dates and Locations

The Leadership Academy will begin in Fall 2024 and run through Spring 2025. Exact dates will be determined once the cohort is selected. The full schedule consists of:

- Four day-long workshops (in September, November, February, and April)
- Two optional day-long tours
- A kick off gathering and closing celebration
- Monthly team calls
- Two optional professional development sessions for facilities staff and/or educators

In-person events will be hosted throughout Southern California within Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Los Angeles counties.

### ABOUT US

This institute is hosted by Green Schoolyards America, as part of The California Schoolyard Forest System™ (CASFS). The CASFS was founded by Green Schoolyards America in collaboration with the California Department of Education, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), and Ten Strands.

Funding for the initiative was provided by a grant administered by CAL FIRE's Urban and Community Forestry Program and private philanthropy.

## Join Us

### Eligibility

We are looking for school district teams that:

- can commit for a period of one school year—and are also willing to advance the work long-term;
- ideally include three to four senior district staff members with decision-making authority from the superintendent's office, facilities, health, and instruction/curriculum departments;
- have a desire to bring schoolyard forests to their district and implement greening at scale;
- are interested in children's health and wellbeing, improving academic outcomes, and protecting their community from climate change; and
- are willing to commit staff time across departments, including between events, to advance the work.

### Participation Stipend

Green Schoolyards America will provide up to \$10,000 in funding for selected participating districts to cover certain costs needed to allow district staff to fully participate in the Institute. The funding will be disbursed in two installments tied to certain milestones of participation.

### Enrollment Process and Timeline

- Submit district interest form
- Green Schoolyards America will schedule calls with prospective districts through May 2024
- Districts that are selected for the program will sign a participation agreement, ideally by June 2024

For more information, contact:

Mikaela Randolph  
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, REGIONAL PROGRAMS  
mikaela@greenschoolyards.org

Or visit our website:

[greenschoolyards.org/socal-institute](https://greenschoolyards.org/socal-institute)

