

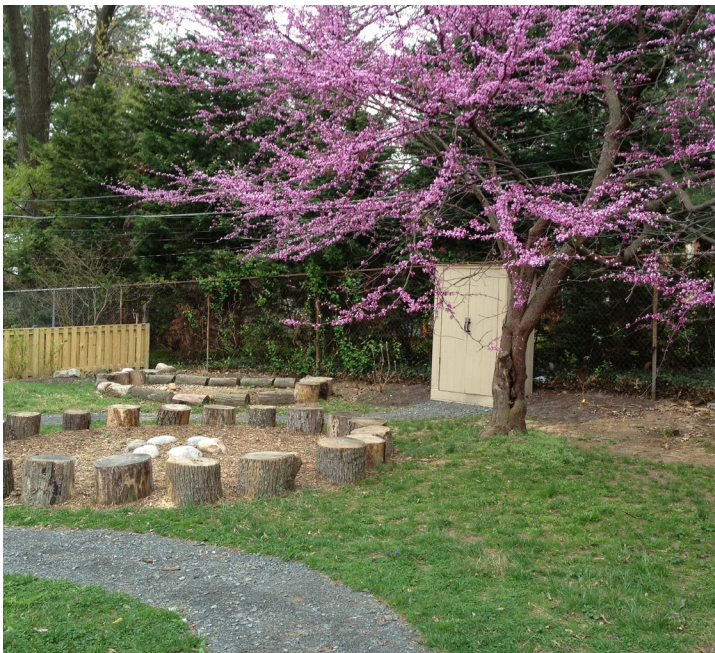


# Living Schoolyards

## STUDENT ADVOCACY KIT



Let's transform paved school grounds into park-like green spaces together  
[greenschoolyards.org](https://greenschoolyards.org)







## Dear Students (and Teachers),

**Have you ever been to a park or playground that really got you excited?** What made it so enticing and welcoming? Were there trees and plants? Was there water? Were there things to climb on and jump off of, and places to tuck into? What if your schoolyard was like a park?

**A living schoolyard is like a park.** They are places where students of all ages can learn about their local ecosystem and community in a hands-on way. When kids play on living schoolyards they get along better, fight less, and have fun playing in all sorts of ways, whether it is active and adventurous, calm and quiet, in groups or through solo exploration. Living schoolyards are good for our health and happiness and the health of our planet.

You can help change your schoolyard into a park-like space with support from your school. The **Living Schoolyards Act** is a bill (a proposal before the United States Congress) that will provide support and money to schools to redesign their schoolyards. But we need Congress to first learn about the importance of living schoolyards and then pass this bill. In this kit, we've included a **letter** for you to send to your members of Congress (Senators and Representatives). We hope that you will make the letter your own by adding your own ideas and information to it. You can find the address of your members of Congress here:

Senate: [senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm](https://senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm)

House: [house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative](https://house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative)

To support you, we have also shared some **examples of fun and welcoming living and green schoolyards** from across the United States and the world. In these schoolyards, you'll see different ways of playing and learning outdoors. We hope these examples will inspire your own ideas of what your schoolyard could look and feel like. We've included a **"Questions to Ask Yourself About Your Schoolyard" list** for you to take to school if you're inspired to learn more. Be sure to share this list with your teacher and principal.

We hope you enjoy this kit made just for you and that you have fun dreaming about and writing down your ideas for your schoolyard. Thank you for writing a letter to your members of Congress and making your voice heard!

Green Schoolyards America

[greenschoolyards.org](https://greenschoolyards.org)

P.S. Please share a copy of your letter with us!  
Email us at [letters@greenschoolyards.org](mailto:letters@greenschoolyards.org).



# LETTER TO CONGRESS

*This is a template.  
Please make a copy and make it your own!*



Dear Senator/Representative \_\_\_\_\_

I am writing to tell you about the **Living Schoolyards Act (S-4993)** introduced by Senator Martin Heinrich from New Mexico, and why schoolyards are important to kids like me. I hope you will decide to support the bill.

I am a (#) grade student at (x) school here in (city and state). Everyday I go outside to have recess on my schoolyard. It's all pavement and the only activities I can do are fast ball games. When it's hot out, which is more and more often, I get so tired and dehydrated as there are no trees for me to rest under. When I go outside to my schoolyard, I don't feel the love and care that I feel inside the school. I really wish we could have a beautiful park as our playground, with trees and other plants, a garden, or maybe some rocks or logs to hop along.

### Dear Students & Teachers

*Please make these two paragraphs your own. Describe what your schoolyard looks like, what kids can do there, and what you wish you could do. For example: You might wish you could sit under the shade of a tree, do science experiments, art projects, reading, writing, play and build things, grow food, eat lunch —all outside in your schoolyard.*

I have been learning about other schoolyards around the United States and the world and I have seen some really fun ideas. In some schools, there are ponds and forests, as well as streams and water play areas. There are big rocks to jump off of, slides along the hillsides, and swings of different types. And in some schools, I saw colorful gardens and big green trees shading the schoolyard where kids play.

Seeing these other schoolyards in other states and around the world makes me think we can do something different at my school. I am really happy to learn that the Living Schoolyards Act would give schools money to plan and build new schoolyards and students like me a chance to share our ideas. I hope you will support this bill so that my school can build a beautiful and fun place for me and my classmates to learn and play.

Sincerely,

Name

City, State





# Living Schoolyards Around the United States and the World

These are examples of living schoolyards from around the United States and the world. We hope the following photos will give you a sense of what **schoolyards can look like and do for students**, as well as some examples of schoolyard transformations from mostly asphalt to green park-like spaces.

## Schoolyard Transformations



These schools in the United States removed asphalt and reimagined their space with an outdoor classroom, plants, and natural materials.

## Outdoor Classrooms



These outdoor classrooms provide a place to learn outside and do hands-on or messy activities.

## Swings and Slides

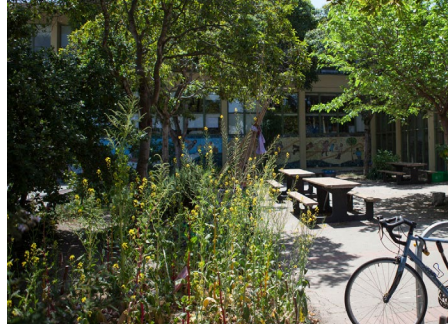


These swings and slides use natural materials and add a bit more whimsy to your play.



# Living Schoolyards Around the United States and the World

## Trees, Plants, and Rocks



The trees here provide shade for students while they are outside playing and the natural materials like rocks and wood allow more creative and adventurous play.

## Water and Nature-Play



The elements in these photos provide opportunities for students to work together and engage with the natural world.

## Cozy Sitting Areas



The elements in these photos provide opportunities for students to hang out quietly with a friend, calm down on a difficult day, or just have some down time.

# Questions to Ask Yourself About Your Schoolyard

## Do you go outside during the school day?

- Recess
- PE
- Lunch or snacks
- Lessons: science, math, social studies, or language arts
- Specials: art, music, library
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Is your schoolyard MOSTLY covered with (choose one):

- Pavement
- Grass
- Rubber
- Wood chips, dirt, or sand

## Are there trees in your schoolyard...

- ...that you can see from your classroom window?
- ...that provide shade when you're outside?

## Are there places in your schoolyard that are too hot?

- Yes
- No

## Are there places to ...

- Sit alone or with a friend?
- Sit with your whole class for a lesson?
- Eat lunch?
- Climb, run, balance, and jump?
- Build and create?

## Are there plants on your schoolyard that you can observe, touch, or smell?

- Yes
- No

## Are there gardens for growing food?

- Yes
- No

## Do you feel cared for and welcome in your schoolyard?

- Yes
- No
- A little

## What activities do you wish you could do in your schoolyard?

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## What are your favorite places in the schoolyard? Why?

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## What are your least favorite places in the schoolyard? Why?

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