

9/13/23

## Shade Update & Advocacy Opportunity from Boardmember Nick Melvoin

Dear parents and guardians,

It's hot this week, again. Many of you have asked what LA Unified is doing to address the heat on our campuses as we continue to feel the impact of climate change on our aging school infrastructure. I am writing to provide a brief update and share an **urgent opportunity for your advocacy ASAP**.

The District has been pursuing multiple measures to address heat in schools, but it has been challenging given many regulatory hurdles we face (for more info, [see today's Los Angeles Times editorial](#)). LA Unified has prioritized maintenance and repairs for air conditioning systems and improved temporary support when systems are strained. The Board has approved air conditioning in the last few schools that do not currently have any central HVAC systems. The District is quickly installing cooling units in school kitchens to ensure cafeteria worker safety and uninterrupted food service. Outside, the District is taking an "all options" approach that includes planting new trees, removing asphalt and replacing it with natural material, providing temporary misters on the playground, installing more water bottle filling stations to ensure students are hydrated, and repaving where appropriate with solar reflective "cool coat." Many of these strategies also help the District achieve its 100% sustainability goal, because we know how important it is for your kids to have a healthy, livable environment in which to thrive in the future.

One additional strategy for addressing heat is to erect shade structures, tarps attached to pillars that cover outdoor play areas. Last year, when I learned the cost of these simple structures, in the hundreds of thousands of dollars due largely to state regulatory barriers, [I wrote an op-ed](#) in the LA Times and worked with my colleagues and District staff to propose solutions. One result of that, SB 515 (Stern), is a simple bill that removes red tape and administrative barriers to help accelerate the construction of playground shading.

**If you are interested in supporting the District's work to improve shaded areas, there is an urgent opportunity now to make sure that this SB515 becomes a law.** Using the sample letter and submission instructions below my signature, please join Los Angeles Unified in urging Governor Newsom to sign SB 515 (Stern). You can copy and paste the below email (and can add personal details about your or your child's experience with extreme heat if you'd like) and then send that to [leg.unit@gov.ca.gov](mailto:leg.unit@gov.ca.gov) (more info below).

I share your impatience in seeing our schools cooled more quickly, and I welcome your suggestions, ideas, and concerns on this topic. We also need more state support to achieve our cooling goals, and appreciate your joint advocacy. Please feel free to reach out to my office at [bd4info@lausd.net](mailto:bd4info@lausd.net) and follow the Boards Facilities & Procurement Committee, which I chair, and its Greening Committee on our Board website.

Best,  
Nick

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**Parent Letter Text**

Dear Governor Newsom,

As the parent of a Los Angeles Unified School District student, I write in strong support of **SB 515 (Stern) School facilities: shade structures**, an important bill that will make it easier for school districts to build affordable, heat reducing, shade structures on school campuses.

**[Optional: Insert 2-3 sentences about your child's/children's personal experience with extreme heat at school.]**

Last year, the legislature recognized extreme heat as a serious and urgent threat and called on state agencies and departments to invest resources in increasing resilience to extreme heat. Shading is one additional tool in the greening arsenal that can make schools safer, healthier, more sustainable, and more resilient. Schoolyard shade structures can reduce the heat island effect and bring down ambient heat by 15 degrees altogether safeguarding children's physical and mental health and promoting educational progress.

**SB 515 (Stern)** streamlines the construction and approval process for installing schoolyard shade structures to address specific regulatory barriers that have made constructing low cost shade structures prohibitively expensive. This bill will accelerate the installation timeline and reduce construction costs so that schools can quickly improve outdoor play and learning environments for children.

Climate change and global warming have made it more difficult for children to reap the benefits of schoolyard activities. It is time to cut the red tape and embrace common sense climate solutions that provide students with access to greener, more resilient schoolyards and lasting protection from extreme heat.

For these reasons, I urge your signature on SB 515 (Stern).

Sincerely,

Parent Name

Name of School (Optional)

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMITTING YOUR LETTER**

The deadline to send your letter of support to the Governor's office is Wednesday, September 13. Email the letter to [leg.unit@gov.ca.gov](mailto:leg.unit@gov.ca.gov) with the subject line: Request for Signature: SB 515 (Stern) School Facilities: Shade Structures. Please send a copy to [advocacy@lausd.net](mailto:advocacy@lausd.net). If you have any questions, please contact Sasha Horwitz, Legislative Advocate for Los Angeles Unified, at [sasha.horwitz@lausd.net](mailto:sasha.horwitz@lausd.net).