

Appendix A: Guiding principles and priorities for investments into school grounds

Guiding Principles

Investments into school sites should:

- Be equitable – by prioritizing high-needs schools, ensuring projects meet AODA standards for accessibility, and creating the conditions whereby students with special needs can make full use of the outdoors.
- Reflect the developmental needs of students – by creating spaces that promote activity, imaginative play, socialization, and learning.
- Put students first – by focusing on projects that support students directly such as replacing deteriorating hard surface play areas and failing play equipment, and particularly if funding is limited, by putting less emphasis on replacing parking lots.
- Be environmentally sustainable – by seeking opportunities to invest in green solutions such as right-sizing asphalt areas when they are being replaced, directing storm water into infiltration galleries/tree groves, and making use of underground soil cells when planting trees in harsh urban environments.

Priorities

The priorities for TDSB-funded investments should include:

- Creating rich outdoor learning environments for kindergarten students at all schools.
- Making sure special-needs students can enjoy the benefits of the outdoors with their peers.
- Identifying and investing in school grounds with serious infrastructure deficiencies.
- Providing spaces for middle school students to help keep them at school during lunch breaks.
- Making log seating for outdoor classrooms.
- Investing in tree planting and maintenance particularly in schools and neighbourhoods with low levels of tree canopy and that are impacted the most from the urban heat island effect and higher levels of air pollution.
- Ensuring grass playing fields are well-maintained for multi-purpose play, including sports.
- Installing artificial turf at elementary schools where extreme intensity of use makes growing grass impossible and replacing the turf at the end of its lifecycle.
- Investing strategically in a small number of artificial turf fields at high schools to support physical education and athletics programs in underserved communities that are socially and economically-disadvantaged.