About Space to Grow

Space to Grow is managed by Healthy Schools Campaign and Openlands and is made possible through the financial support and partnership of Chicago Public Schools, Chicago Department of Water Management, and Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago.

HEALTHY SCHOOLS CAMPAIGN

Healthy Schools Campaign
Healthy Schools Campaign (HSC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to making schools healthier places where all children can learn and thrive. HSC believes that health and wellness should be incorporated into every aspect of the school experience. Founded in 2002, HSC advocates for children to have better access to nutritious school food, physical activity, school health resources and clean air to shape their lifelong learning and health. HSC facilitates collaboration among students, parents, teachers, administrators and policymakers to help prepare this diverse group of stakeholders to lead change for healthier schools at the school, district, state and national levels. Visit healthyschoolscampaign.org for more information.

Openlands
Founded in 1963, Openlands protects the natural and open spaces of northeastern Illinois and the surrounding region to ensure cleaner air and water, protect natural habitats and wildlife, and help balance and enrich our lives. Openlands’ vision for the region is a landscape that includes a vast network of land and water trails, tree-lined streets, and intimate public gardens within easy reach of every city dweller. It also includes parks and preserves big enough to provide natural habitat and to give visitors a sense of the vast prairies, woodlands, and wetlands that were here before the cities. Openlands believes that nature is vital to all people and that protected open space is critical for the quality of life of our region.
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Welcome!

Congratulations! Your school has been selected to receive a Space to Grow schoolyard transformation. Now what? This guide is designed to assist you and your colleagues throughout your participation in the program and to help navigate the schoolyard design, renovation and support processes. This guide also contains tips and resources you may find useful along the way.

What is Space to Grow?
Space to Grow: Greening Chicago Schoolyards is a unique partnership co-managed by Healthy Schools Campaign and Openlands to transform Chicago schoolyards into spaces that provide students, their families and the broader community with opportunities for active play and physical education, outdoor learning, gardening, environmental literacy and engagement with nature, while addressing neighborhood flooding issues.

Space to Grow brings together leadership and financial investment from the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD), the Chicago Department of Water Management (DWM) and Chicago Public Schools (CPS).

Why Space to Grow?
Space to Grow schoolyards support CPS' wellness, recess and physical education policies, which are intended to help create a culture of wellness at schools. Space to Grow schoolyards provide vibrant outdoor spaces for physical activity, recreation and play for CPS students and the entire community.

Space to Grow schoolyards have gardens, outdoor classrooms and other special features that function as an extension of the classroom—environments for both structured and unstructured learning. Recent studies have shown that simply spending more time outdoors and interacting with the natural world leads to lower stress levels, improved cognitive development and higher standardized test scores. Space to Grow schoolyards provide an important daily connection to nature and help facilitate a culture of wellness for entire communities.

Space to Grow focuses on schools and communities located in high-risk flooding areas, which means that basement flooding occurs more frequently in these areas than in other parts of the city. The schoolyard renovations transform traditional hard surfaces—such as rooftops, lawns, parking lots and asphalt playlots—into beautiful and functional spaces designed with special gardens, permeable surfaces and materials that absorb rainwater right where it falls to help prevent neighborhood flooding.

Schools can serve as the cornerstone of a strong and vibrant community. Space to Grow schoolyards support
entire communities by providing gathering spaces, recreational opportunities and community gardens for everyone to enjoy. Space to Grow partners provide support for engaging the community by hosting events and empowering the school community to use, maintain and take ownership of their schoolyard.

How Does Space to Grow Benefit Your School?
Your Space to Grow schoolyard is a major transformation—it’s not just a new playground, a garden or a turf field. It’s an investment of over $1 million for a comprehensive makeover that provides an entirely new outdoor environment for recess and physical education, enhanced opportunities for teaching and learning, increased environmental and nutrition awareness and community engagement.

In addition to a major physical renovation, Space to Grow partners provide a support system tailored to each school’s needs. This includes a schoolyard planning and design process that engages the entire school community to help design the new schoolyard; teacher trainings and professional development to help incorporate the schoolyard into lesson plans and the culture of the school; and community workshops and events to help bring the community together in support of the schoolyard and to educate about their schoolyard’s unique features.

What Are Your School’s Commitments to Space to Grow?
Your Space to Grow schoolyard will benefit your entire school and is a major investment in your community. To ensure the long-term success of your schoolyard, your Local School Council and school principal signed a Memorandum of Understanding that outlines the responsibilities of your school with regard to your Space to Grow schoolyard transformation. (A sample of this agreement is included in the Resources section.)

Responsibilities include:

- Allowing access to the community after school hours and on weekends
- Hosting and helping recruit participants for workshops, meetings and events
- Participating in the support programs provided by Space to Grow partners
- Maintaining the schoolyard, including the gardens
- Participating in networking events with other Space to Grow schools
- Fully meeting the CPS district health and wellness policies
SCHOOLYARD PLANNING + DESIGN
Engaging Your Community in the Design Process

No one knows your school better than you do. Your school’s students, teachers, staff, administration, parents and community members are all important members of the school community, and engaging these groups in the schoolyard design will help your school community take ownership of the space once it’s built.

The design and construction of your schoolyard should take 12-18 months. The buy-in and support from the entire community is an essential part of this process. To make sure your schoolyard design process is inclusive, fun and engaging, we’ve included information on how the process works and some tips and resources you might find helpful along the way.

New School Orientation

The schoolyard design process begins with an orientation. Space to Grow partners will host this orientation for all newly selected schools, where your school’s Space to Grow Committee will learn more about the Space to Grow program and your school’s role. It is also an opportunity for you to network with other schools.

THE SPACE TO GROW COMMITTEE

Each Space to Grow schoolyard is designed to meet the unique needs and priorities of the school community. The first step is an inclusive school/community engagement process to gather ideas, input and feedback on possible schoolyard elements and design options. This requires a strong presence from the entire school community, and the best way to achieve that is to establish a Space to Grow Committee that will assist with outreach and serve as liaisons to the broader school community. In the Space to Grow application, your school was asked to nominate a liaison from each of the following groups to serve on the school’s Space to Grow Committee:

- Students
- Teachers/Staff
- Administrators
- Parents
- Community members
- School Building Engineer
- Local School Council (LSC) members
- Wellness Champion (if applicable)
- Green Team Leader (TBD)
representatives from other Space to Grow schools, and to meet your Green Schoolyards Coordinator, who will become an important resource for your school. You will also schedule the first of a series of important meetings to take place at your school, and begin to develop an outreach plan for your school.

The Space to Grow Committee members will be the main points of contact for the Green Schoolyards Coordinator. They are the liaisons for the school community groups that they represent and will help coordinate and recruit for each of the school community planning meetings. The Space to Grow Committee should also attend each of the school community planning meetings. Once a final schoolyard design is approved, the Space to Grow Committee will meet monthly with the Green Schoolyards Coordinator until construction begins to ensure that the community remains engaged and is prepared for the opening of the schoolyard.

**SPOTLIGHT: JAMES WADSWORTH S.T.E.M. ELEMENTARY**

Students and faculty at James Wadsworth S.T.E.M. Elementary went above and beyond to make sure that every student’s voice was heard in the planning process. The school embarked on a design challenge—a school-wide project in which all students in grades K-8 came up with a design for their new schoolyard. The project kicked off by showing students a fun and dramatic trailer for the “Wadsworth Campus Quest.” The project was then incorporated into each grade’s curriculum, and adapted for the various age groups. For example, kindergartners’ designs were represented as drawings, while the 8th graders had to complete the entire engineering design process and represent their designs as 3-D models. Select designs were shared at the initial planning meetings.

**School Community Planning and Design Meetings**

Schoolyard planning and design takes place over a series of three important meetings at the school. The Space to Grow Committee will work with the Green Schoolyards Coordinator to schedule these for the best days and times that work for the school, to coordinate student and staff input, and to help with outreach to parents and community.

**First Planning Meeting - Open House Style**

The first planning meeting is a brainstorming session with a photo survey to gather ideas about what each group likes about their current schoolyard and what they would like to see new and different. The survey and the feedback received at the meetings will help prioritize the elements important to the entire school community. This feedback will be shared with the schoolyard design team so they can begin to develop a concept plan for the schoolyard.
Second Planning Meeting - Open House Style
At the second planning meeting, the Space to Grow partners and the schoolyard design team hired by CPS will return to present two initial design concepts based on the input from the first planning meeting. Participants will then have the opportunity to provide their feedback about the designs and their preferred concept, after which the design team will refine the concepts in response to the feedback from the school community groups. Typically, this happens over two meetings: one during the school day with school staff (during their lunch/free periods) and one after school that is open-house style for parents and community members. The Space to Grow Teacher and Student Liaisons will help coordinate the staff input as well as gather input from students.

Third Planning Meeting
After the second planning meeting, the Space to Grow Committee will meet with the Green Schoolyards Coordinator to review a final concept plan and to give final feedback before it is then refined and translated into construction drawings. This will be the first of two meetings with the Space to Grow Committee before construction begins, which will help the community stay engaged. These committee meetings will focus on:

- Communicating the final concept plan and timeline to the school community
- Establishing a green team
- Establishing a wellness team
- Establishing the schoolyard rules

Recruiting Participants for the Planning Meetings
Here are some ideas for the Space to Grow Committee to consider when recruiting parents and community members to attend schoolyard planning meetings. Space to Grow partners will provide messages, text, flyers and emails to assist with the following outreach efforts:

- Send home flyers with all students
- Give flyers to parents during dismissal
- Distribute flyers in the community around the school
- Post or share flyers at local parks and libraries
- Add the meetings to teachers’ weekly class newsletters
- Add the meetings to the main school newsletter
- Post flyers in local businesses and share with partner organizations
- Initiate a “robo-call” inviting families to the meetings
- Post the meetings on the school marquee
- Email school partners and contacts with invitations to the meetings
- Alert local partners and community organizations
- Invite the alderman
Schoolyard Construction
The ideal time for schoolyard construction is during the scheduled summer break, and will likely take place from late June until early October. However, the timing depends on several factors, including the final design, weather and budget. During construction, the affected areas will be inaccessible to the school; the CPS construction team will work with your school’s principal to make accommodations for parking and access to the school. The principal and the Space to Grow Committee should notify any other community groups or scheduled summer programs of the impending construction.

During construction, weekly construction meetings will be held at the school; these are initiated by the CPS Project Management Office (PMO) team. The principal (or a designated representative) is invited and encouraged to attend. These meetings will keep the school updated about the construction process, including any adjustments to the timeline or completion, and also provide an opportunity for the principal (or a designated representative) to convey any concerns or issues on behalf of the school and community.
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT + EVENTS
School and Community Engagement

School and community engagement is critical to keeping your Space to Grow schoolyard active and maintained. Healthy Schools Campaign and Openlands have a lot of experience engaging parents and community members in local schools and will partner with your team to ensure that there is a high level of participation in all aspects of Space to Grow. We will host several schoolyard events over the course of three years, including:

**Schoolyard Stewardship Days**
To facilitate a connection with the schoolyard and to engage the community, Space to Grow partners host student and community schoolyard stewardship days. This typically includes planting, weeding and mulching in some of the gardens, giving students the opportunity to be a part of the schoolyard build process and also inviting their families and community members to do the same. Bringing the community together to work toward a common goal of completing the schoolyard helps foster a sense of shared responsibility and ownership of the space.

The stewardship days typically take place in the fall, as soon as the schoolyard construction is complete and the site is open. Student planting days will take place over one to two days during the school week. Your Green Schoolyards Coordinator will work with the principal and others to plan the stewardship days. Space to Grow partners provide all of the supplies for each day and help coordinate invitations, outreach and logistics with the principal and Space to Grow Committee.

See the Student Planting Day Sample Schedule on page 33 for more details.

**Ribbon Cutting Ceremony**
Once the schoolyard is open, Space to Grow partners work with the school to host a ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the new schoolyard. The celebration is unique to your school and will include all the Space to Grow partners, elected officials and members from partner organizations, as well as your entire school community. Space to Grow partners will coordinate the program, invitations and logistics with the principal and Space to Grow Committee.
Community Workshops + Education
An important goal of the Space to Grow program is to ensure parents and community members are educated about the benefits of the schoolyard for addressing neighborhood flooding. The Space to Grow partners will host education events and workshops for parents and community members about the benefits of native landscaping, pollution and stormwater management, garden stewardship and birding. Typically, this includes providing free resources to participants, such as native plants, tree saplings and rain barrels - all of which help extend the collective impact of stormwater management beyond the schoolyard.
Ongoing Support Programs and Trainings

Your Space to Grow schoolyard is an important resource for the entire school community. The space is large and will contain many elements that the school is responsible for maintaining. Often, the best way to ensure the long-term management and success is to form teams of leaders to ensure that schoolyard use and maintenance transcends any turnover within the school or community. Space to Grow partners can help the school develop a Green Team and a Wellness Team and assist with providing tools, resources and action plans for those teams. Each school is unique, so other teams may be of interest, too!

Creating a Culture of Wellness
Before your schoolyard is installed, a member of the Space to Grow partners will meet with the principal and the school’s Wellness Champion to discuss wellness needs and initiatives and to develop an action plan for helping achieve those. This meeting usually starts with a review of the annual Healthy CPS Survey that schools complete. Based on each school’s wellness needs and initiatives, Space to Grow partners can connect schools with resources and other partners that can provide targeted support and assistance in these areas, such as incorporating physical activity or nutrition education into the school day.

Professional Development for Teachers
Healthy Schools Campaign and Openlands provide a free professional development (PD) program for all teaching staff at Space to Grow schools. This includes an intensive workshop right when the schoolyard is opening, followed by booster sessions via webinar or in-person trainings. Both organizations host free workshops throughout each school year and will invite school staff to participate in those as well.

The PD program offers CPDUs to participants and is designed to ensure all teaching staff at Space to Grow schools have the context and resources for using the schoolyard as an extension of the classroom. PD topics include incorporating physical activity and nutrition education into the classroom, breaking down barriers for teaching outdoors, incorporating nature-based education—including stormwater management and STEM aligned lessons and curriculum connections. Every Space to Grow school teacher will receive a toolkit with sample lesson plans and other resources to leverage the outdoor space for teaching and learning and supporting a culture of wellness.
Garden Planning and Management
Your new schoolyard will have many gardens, such as native gardens, rain gardens, research gardens and/or edible gardens. These spaces are not only beautiful, but they also help manage the stormwater. It’s important that the school community helps to establish and maintain these gardens alongside the Schoolyard Maintenance Team. Space to Grow partners will host several events and opportunities at the schoolyard for learning about garden maintenance.

The entire school community will be invited to participate and encouraged to help plan the school’s gardens, especially any edible gardens. Space to Grow partners will provide workshops and trainings to help the school community get started and learn how to maintain the gardens.

Schoolyard Best Practices
While the workshops and support from Space to Grow partners will provide you with plenty of ideas and resources for how to use the space, we’ve included some ideas and best practices for maximizing the benefits of your Space to Grow schoolyard:

Give students a tour of the schoolyard
Students will be very excited to use the new schoolyard, and it’s important that everyone respects all of the new features. A walking tour of the schoolyard will familiarize students with all of the new features and convey the appropriate behavior for each area.

Remind students to respect the gardens
Exploration in the gardens is encouraged as it fosters a strong bond with nature. School staff should remind students always to enter the gardens carefully to avoid stepping on plants or to use designated pathways in the garden.

Create a schoolyard use schedule
Your Space to Grow schoolyard will have many exciting and important features, such as outdoor classrooms and/or turf fields. If those spaces are close together, consider creating a schedule for recess and outdoor classroom use to avoid potential conflicts that may occur if PE or recess is happening at the same time as reading in the outdoor classroom. See a Sample Schoolyard Use Schedule on the following page.
The CPS Wellness Policy recommends a minimum of 20 minutes of daily recess for all students, which should occur before lunch. If your outdoor classroom is located near the area where recess will occur, avoid potential conflicts by scheduling outdoor instruction around the recess schedule.

Below is an example of a weekly sign-up sheet teachers could use to schedule class time in the outdoor classroom for each day. Of course, if your outdoor classroom is not located near the recess area, then teachers and staff are encouraged to sign up to use the outdoor classroom during all hours of the school day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUTDOOR CLASS TIME</th>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>TUESDAY</th>
<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
<th>THURSDAY</th>
<th>FRIDAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00 – 8:30</td>
<td>Ms. Williams, Room 107</td>
<td>Ms. Rose, Room 102</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30 – 9:00</td>
<td>Mr. Roberts, Room 205</td>
<td>Ms. Taylor, Room 307</td>
<td></td>
<td>No outdoor class due to bad weather forecast.</td>
<td>Ms. Daisy, Room 111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 – 9:30</td>
<td>Mr. Roberts, Room 205</td>
<td>Mr. Davis, Room 103</td>
<td>Ms. Taylor, Room 307</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mr. Edison, Room 305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30 – 10:00</td>
<td>Ms. Daisy, Room 111</td>
<td>Mr. Edison, Room 305</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mr. Edison, Room 305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 – 10:30</td>
<td>Mr. Locke, Room 115</td>
<td>Mr. Edison, Room 305</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mr. Edison, Room 305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 – 12:30</td>
<td></td>
<td>Recess</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30 – 1:00</td>
<td>Ms. Smith, Room 214</td>
<td>Ms. Sanders, Room 210</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mr. Sullivan, Room 301</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 – 1:30</td>
<td>Mr. Eli, Room 303</td>
<td>Ms. Sanders, Room 210</td>
<td>Mr. Waters, Room 207</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mr. Sullivan, Room 301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30 – 2:00</td>
<td>Mr. Eli, Room 303</td>
<td>Ms. Garcia, Room 105</td>
<td>Mr. Waters, Room 207</td>
<td>No outdoor class due to bad weather forecast.</td>
<td>Ms. Shareef, Room 208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00 – 2:30</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ms. Caldwell, Room 202</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ms. Shareef, Room 208</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Maintaining a Fun and Safe Schoolyard

Your Space to Grow schoolyard will bring major transformations and include some unique features—such as specific types of gardens and permeable surfaces—that may be new or unfamiliar. Space to Grow partners can provide guidance and resources to help your school maintain these new features and ensure long-term sustainability of your new schoolyard. Following are some ideas to ensure your schoolyard is well maintained over time.

Stewarding Your Schoolyard

Your school should establish a “green team” to assist with the long-term stewardship of the schoolyard. A successful Green Team might include school staff, students, parents and neighbors. The Space to Grow Green Schoolyards Coordinator can assist your Space to Grow Committee in establishing this new team at your school and help recruit four to six individuals to participate. Green Team members should be willing to help support the schoolyard and activate the schoolyard with positive, fun activities and events, as well as steward some of the gardens.

Green Team volunteers do not need prior gardening experience, though it’s recommended to try recruiting at least a couple of members with prior knowledge of plants and gardening. For example, a science teacher, a student with a known interest in botany or a parent who maintains his or her own garden at home would be ideal people to recruit. Members of the Green Team will be responsible for scheduling, organizing and keeping up with the edible and/or research gardens. The Space to Grow Green Schoolyards Coordinator is a valuable resource and will work to support the Green Team leader in establishing the team and addressing issues that arise.

The Green Team should be responsible for the following:

- Attend Space to Grow garden trainings and workshops
- Ensure your school participates in the CPS Eat What You Grow training
- Schedule and organize garden workdays at your school
  - Work days can include harvesting, planting, weeding, watering, mulching and other general garden maintenance
  - Follow the Watering Guide & Schedule (found in the Resources Section)
  - Create a process for garden adoption during the summer (when applicable)
  - Monitor the garden’s success using your Garden Tracker (see the following)
- Help ensure consistent participation on the Green Team (e.g., recruiting new members, keeping members informed, creating schoolyard events that include the
Coordinate with the school and community to activate the schoolyard with art and other activities

Coordinate with the school’s facility management team to ensure consistent communication and stewardship of the schoolyard

Common Green Team Responsibilities
Following are common gardens and other elements often found in a Space to Grow schoolyard that your Green Team could be responsible for stewarding. Your schoolyard may or may not include all of these features; if you need help with features in your schoolyard not listed here, please contact your Space to Grow partners.

Raised Vegetable Garden Beds
Most Space to Grow schoolyards include raised garden beds for growing fruits and vegetables. These gardens support nutrition education and a culture of wellness by introducing kids to healthy food through the growing process.

Schools with edible gardens should attend the “Eat What You Grow” certification training offered annually by the CPS Office of Student Health and Wellness. This certification ensures proper handling of the produce grown at the school to allow for its consumption inside the school.

Research Gardens
Being outside and experiencing nature exposes students to real-world situations that can support academic performance, knowledge and foster interest in becoming citizen scientists and environmental advocates. Your new gardens can be integrated into your curriculum to spark curiosity and questioning and expose students to the scientific process and data collection. Space to Grow partners can support your school with STEM activities.

SPOTLIGHT: VIRGIL GRISsom ELEMENTARY
One of the first Space to Grow schools, Virgil Grissom Elementary in Hegewisch, created a great way to take care of the gardens during their very first summer—by hosting community gardening days. The Garden Team decided to host bimonthly community gardening days in the schoolyard for the entire summer. They used social media and word of mouth to spread the word about meeting in the garden every second and fourth Monday evening to do garden maintenance. Students, teachers, administrators, parents and community members all came out to help water, weed, harvest and clean the gardens. They had a lot of fun, and neighbors who had lived in the community for years were able to meet for the first time. These community gardening days helped get the maintenance work done, while bringing the community closer together.
and other outdoor and nature-based learning.

**Summer Gardening**

Summer vacation can present a challenge for school gardens, since many of the teachers, school staff and students who work in the garden during the school year may not be around during the summer months. It is so important to welcome and engage the surrounding community in the schoolyard and establish relationships where community members can help care for the space when school is out of session.

As each school year comes to an end, the Green Team should consider making arrangements for the schoolyard gardens to be adopted by local families and community members. Here are some tips for keeping the community involved in the garden over the summer:

- **Community groups and summer programs** — Are there any local community volunteer groups or summer programs near the school? Summer school students or local high school students? Consider reaching out to them to include weekly tending of the gardens as a part of their summer programming.

- **Parents and students** — Invite school families who live close to the school to work in the gardens weekly or biweekly over the summer.

- **Community members** — Invite neighbors who may not have a direct connection to the school to participate, too. Start by inviting people in the neighborhood who already garden at their homes or who are frequent users of the schoolyard.

Once the Garden Team has found interested volunteers, consider creating a calendar that shows who will be working in the garden on which days and at what times. If there are any issues in the garden, the volunteer should communicate those to the Garden Team leader.

**Garden Tracker**

The Green Team might consider creating a Garden Tracker, which is like a journal that helps track all the important documents and activities associated with your garden. It should be kept in a place where it’s accessible to the entire Green Team and should be used to keep track of the garden’s successes and challenges. The Garden Tracker helps keep the Green Team up to date on the happenings in the garden. Below is a list of details you can include in your Garden Tracker:

- Schoolyard design and list of plants and trees
- Pictures of your garden
- Copy of the Watering Guide and Schedule
- Record of any monetary costs associated with the gardens
- Reports of trash, vandalism/graffiti
- Record of which vegetables are planted and where
- Record of when the vegetables were planted and harvested
- Record of wilting, dead or damaged plants. If there is a science teacher on the Garden Team, this is a great opportunity for lesson integration and scientific observation.
- Notable weather patterns
Long-Term Schoolyard Maintenance
The school’s facility management team is essential to the sustainability of your new Space to Grow schoolyard. This team should include the school’s facility manager, lead custodian, and building engineer.

Prior to the schoolyard opening, a construction close out meeting will be held by the CPS Project Manager and will include the construction contractor, the architect of record, your school’s facility manager, building engineer and lead custodian. It is essential for your facility management team to participate, and the Green Team leader is encouraged to participate as this meeting will identify roles and responsibilities for each maintenance item, review any specialized operations and maintenance (O&M) of the schoolyard and identify any new equipment needed for this maintenance.

The following sections identify the common elements often found in a Space to Grow schoolyard and a preview of the O&M that your facility management team will be responsible for maintaining. Your schoolyard may or may not include all of these features; if you need help with features in your schoolyard not listed here, please contact your Space to Grow partners.

Native Gardens + Trees
Space to Grow schoolyards include new trees, shrubs and plants native to the Chicago region. The trees, shrubs and plants will be planted during construction and will need to be maintained so that they can survive. It will take a few years for these trees, shrubs and plants to establish and will need to be maintained from bud break to first frost yearly. These living systems will help the green stormwater infrastructure function but only if properly cared for. Maintaining native landscapes requires specialized training, and the facility management team may need to contract with a knowledgeable landscape vendor for the first three years to ensure proper establishment.

Permeable Pavers
Your schoolyard may have interlocking stone or concrete pavers with gaps between each paver that allow water to filter through into a reservoir below the schoolyard, rather than pooling at the surface. These pavers create areas that can capture rainwater right where it falls, and prevent runoff from overloading the sewer. In order for the permeable pavers to function properly, they need to stay clean.

The pavers should be swept periodically to prevent them from becoming clogged with dirt, weeds, or other debris that would block water from filtering through. When working in a garden near permeable pavers, it is important to take precautions to prevent garden soil and debris from clogging the pavers, such as covering the pavers closest to the garden work area with tarps.

Turf Field
Your school may have a turf field made up of plastic fibers and a sand-based infill. Unlike natural turf, artificial turf is highly permeable, so water will pass right through the field surface and into a reservoir below, ensuring that
the field is ready for use shortly after a heavy rain.

Best practices for artificial turf field use:

· Do not chew gum on the field
· Keep the field free of organic materials (leaves, dirt, weeds, feces)
· Keep dogs and other pets off of the field
· On very hot Chicago days, test the surface temperature of the field before use as it may become very hot; on those days it may be best to limit activity to early morning or evenings when the sun is not as strong

Rubber Play Surface
Your Space to Grow schoolyard will likely include new play equipment with a poured rubber play surface. Like many of the other new surfaces on the schoolyard, the playground surface is permeable and has a reservoir below it to capture rainwater. Due to its permeability, it is important to keep the rubber surface free of dirt and debris, so the water can filter efficiently. The rubber surface is bouncy, and will lessen the impact of a fall. The surface is wheelchair accessible and very durable.

Maintaining Safe Spaces
A common concern raised during the community engagement process is safety. School community members want to know that their new schoolyard will be a safe space for everyone to enjoy. Once the schoolyard is installed, it is up to the school and community members to make the schoolyard a safe space by taking ownership and engaging the community. Here are some tips and examples for making your schoolyard safe and accessible:

Build community support for your schoolyard
From the very first planning meeting, Space to Grow helps build community support for the schoolyard by making sure everyone is aware of the program and has the opportunity to be involved in its creation. From there, Space to Grow partners and the school host a series of community events, creating multiple opportunities for building support within the school and the surrounding neighborhood. This is important because when people know what to expect, they feel safer and more comfortable with the change.

Populate your schoolyard
Make a targeted effort right away to ensure that a lot of people are using your new space in healthy and positive ways. This includes having recess outside, hosting after-school activities in the schoolyard, and asking parents to commit to watching children play in the schoolyard before and after school. The initial activity in the schoolyard will set the tone for the space going forward. Those first few weeks after the schoolyard is installed will be critical in determining how the space is used and viewed by the community in the future.
Create a positive environment
A vibrant schoolyard with lots of students, teachers, families and neighbors using the space in positive ways—playing sports, using the playground, gardening, etc.—will prevent negative influences from entering the space. The best way to create a safe space is to ensure that your entire school community takes ownership of the schoolyard and keeps an eye out for each other.

Incorporate art into the schoolyard
Art is highly encouraged, especially an art project or program that is responsive to and reflective of the school community. Space to Grow partners can connect your school or community with other partners that conduct public art projects, but the school should feel free to engage with local artists or other partner organizations to incorporate art into the new schoolyard.

Maintain your schoolyard
Engage the community in caring for the schoolyard, making sure that everyone is doing their part to keep it clean and beautiful. This includes creating a successful Garden Team and constantly spreading the message to the school and surrounding community to respect the schoolyard. Keeping the schoolyard free of trash and the gardens free of weeds and taking care of the play equipment helps make people feel welcome and safe and sends a positive message about your schoolyard.
Space to Grow
Memorandum of Understanding (SAMPLE)

Space to Grow: Greening Chicago Schoolyards is an initiative to transform Chicago schoolyards into green spaces that provide students, their families and the broader community with opportunities for active play, and outdoor space for physical education, learning, gardening and environmental education, while addressing the city’s stormwater management and basement flooding needs. This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishes the obligations and commitments of the schools selected to receive a Space to Grow schoolyard.

Our school agrees to:

1. Create a STG Committee who will serve as the liaisons between STG partners and the school community. The committee will work with STG partners from design through completion and beyond to integrate the schoolyard into the school culture in ways that can survive changes in leadership or staffing.

2. Work with Space to Grow partners to fully meet CPS’ health and wellness policies, including the Local School Wellness Policy, Healthy Snack and Beverage Policy, and the Physical Education Policy. This includes maintaining an active Wellness Team.

3. Grant community access to the schoolyard after school and on weekends to support the health and wellness of community and family members. Schoolyards may not be locked during nonschool hours.

4. Recruit for and coordinate schoolyard planning meetings that will allow school staff, students, parents and community members to provide input and ideas on how the schoolyard design can best fit the goals and needs of the school and community.

5. Work with Space to Grow partners to plan and host school and community events and a ribbon cutting ceremony. (Event costs will be covered by Space to Grow.)

6. Participate in free professional development provided to teaching staff by Healthy Schools Campaign and Openlands; the trainings are designed to fully incorporate the new schoolyard into lesson plans and school culture and support wellness initiatives at the school. This consists of one mandatory full day of workshops for teaching staff, an interactive tour of the new schoolyard and additional support as needed.

7. Agree to host, recruit for and attend ongoing workshops and events for parents and community members to learn about the health and wellness, garden and environmental benefits of the schoolyard.

8. If requested, participate in a research and evaluation plan that involves the school and community. This could include research to determine physical activity among students before and after the schoolyard is built, evaluation of community use of the site, and research connected to monitoring stormwater capture.

9. Participate in Space to Grow networking opportunities for Space to Grow schools to come together to learn, network and strengthen relationships. In addition, participate in schoolyard tours for partner organizations or media inquiries.

10. Be responsible for the ongoing maintenance and stewardship of the schoolyard and gardens. Space to Grow partners may provide resources, training and support for how to maintain the special features of your new schoolyard, but will not be responsible for the ongoing maintenance of your schoolyard, including the gardens.

11. Work with managing partners to recognize financial supporters of the Space to Grow initiative on schoolyard signage and elsewhere.

12. If required or requested, work with Space to Grow partners to identify or secure additional sources of funding.

This MOU is at-will and may be modified with the mutual consent of the participating school and Space to Grow Managing partners (Healthy Schools Campaign and Openlands).
Watering Guide

Watering the gardens and landscape in your schoolyard is essential to the long term health and success of your garden. A designated champion (usually a garden team leader or a facility management team member) should be responsible for ensuring that the schoolyard plants are watered regularly. The school is responsible for managing this as soon as the schoolyard is turned over after construction, unless notified otherwise by the CPS PMO team.

Watering Your Gardens and Trees

In-Ground Plantings
Successful watering takes time. Spraying the plants from above will not provide adequate water; rather, you must soak the soil surrounding the base of the plants. Expect to water the in-ground plants for 10-15 seconds each, depending on their size (larger plants will need more water). Only water the roots of your plants; the leaves, stems and flowers of a plant do not need to be watered. Plants should be deeply watered on a daily basis for at least the first two weeks after installation. After the first two weeks, watering can be decreased to once or twice a week.

Your schoolyard likely has native gardens or rain gardens that have perennial plants, which means you only need to plant them once and they will grow back every year. It is crucial to keep an eye on the amount of water the plants are receiving the first year (especially during the summer) so that their roots begin to grow in the new soil. As always, exactly how much and how often the gardens need to be watered depends on many variables including soil type, air temperature, maturity of plants, types of plants, rainfall, sunlight, wind, garden surface and mulching.

You can use the Watering Schedule on the next page to help gauge your watering needs. After the first couple of years, well-established plants may only need to be watered during dry weather.

You can also use the yardstick test: To see if you have watered long enough, or if it is time to water your plants, insert a yard stick into the soil as deep as the plant’s roots. If you pull the yard stick out and soil is attached to the stick, then you have watered thoroughly. Remember that watering will be dependent on rainfall and the weather (such as the amount of sun and wind that removes water from the soil), so if you are unsure whether your plants need water, do the yardstick test. If the soil is dry an inch below the surface, then you should water your plants.

Shrubs and Trees
Shrubs and trees that have been planted within the past three years need to be watered weekly. Each should receive 10 gallons of water. If using a hose, time out how long to fill a 5-gallon bucket, and multiply that by two to get watering time. (Usually 30-45 seconds per bucket or 60-90 seconds per tree). Slowly soak the area around the base of shrubs and trees, allowing the water to travel deep down to the root ball. Deep soakings are preferred versus frequent shallow soakings. Be patient! Dumping an entire bucket at once will result in the tree getting only a fraction of the desired water needed. If the weather brings you more than 1 inch of rainfall, then your shrubs and trees have been watered for that week. Consider purchasing a rain gauge in order to measure how much water your garden is receiving.

Watering is the highest priority during the summer months. During hot, dry periods, water your trees with 15 gallons of clean water per week. This is the equivalent of running a slow running hose near the base of your tree for three minutes, filling a 5-gallon bucket with holes in the bottom three times, or filling a 15-gallon watering bag installed around your young tree once weekly. Do not pour used cleaning water on your trees.

Raised Garden Beds (Edible Gardens)
When watering seeds and seedlings, the soil around the seeds should be damp, not waterlogged. Be careful not to flood the area that was just seeded because the seeds may move from their intended locations by the water. It is best to use a spray bottle or hose nozzle that has a misting setting when watering seeds.

Your raised beds may have an irrigation system already installed; if so, you only need to hook up your hose to the drip irrigation system. If you have raised garden beds without an irrigation system, simply water with a hand sprinkler. In the beginning, water the beds so that the soil surface is moist most of the time. The amount of water necessary to keep the soil damp depends on what type of plants are in your garden as different plants need different amounts of water to survive. Check the beds daily to ensure that the soil surface is damp for the first few weeks. Simply stick your finger in about an inch deep, and if still wet, you do not need to water.

As the fall growing season continues, the gardens will need less frequent watering. To help retain moisture, mulch can be used in between plants.
Watering Schedule

The following schedule will be helpful for the first year of your gardens. The schedule assumes that your gardens will be planted in October. If you need additional assistance or an adjusted schedule, please let your Green Schoolyards Coordinator know.

OCTOBER

**In-ground plantings**
- Deeply water on a daily basis for the first two weeks after being planted.
- Water once a week the rest of the month.

**Shrubs and Trees**
- Slowly soak shrub and tree roots every other day for the first two weeks after being planted.

**Raised Garden Beds**
- Check the beds daily to ensure that the soil surface is damp for the first few weeks.

NOVEMBER THROUGH FEBRUARY

- No watering necessary.
- The raised beds should have crops that can survive the winter and resume growth early spring.
- Native plants will go dormant for the winter; they may look dead, but they are alive.
- Be sure the gardens have a thorough covering of mulch to protect them from the cold.
- Beware of using salt in the schoolyard during the winter months as salt residue can severely damage plants; consider sand or calcium chloride for safer alternatives.

JUNE THROUGH SEPTEMBER

**In-ground plantings**
- Be sure the plants get 1-2 inches of water every week, either by rainfall or hand watering. Conduct the yardstick test to make sure the plants have enough water. Depending upon the weather, you may need to water as often as every other day.

**Shrubs and Trees**
- Be sure each plant gets 10 gallons of water a week either by hand watering or receiving 1-2 inches of rainfall.
- In extremely hot weather increase to 15 gallons per week per plant.

**Raised Garden Beds**
- In the middle of summer, deep watering 2-3 times per week is recommended.
- Raised beds will dry more quickly than in-ground beds and need to be monitored more closely.

MARCH THROUGH MAY

**In-ground plantings**
- Be sure the plants get 1-2 inches of water every week, either by rainfall or hand watering. Conduct the yardstick test to make sure the plants have enough water.

**Shrubs and Trees**
- Be sure each plant gets 10 gallons of water a week either by hand watering or receiving 1-2 inches of rainfall.

**Raised Garden Beds**
- Frequent but light watering in the beginning of spring. As the season goes on, check the soil surface before and after school on warmer, sunnier days to make sure soil hasn’t dried out.
Watering Tools Checklist

The following tools will ensure that you are well equipped to successfully water your gardens. This checklist will also ensure that your Green Team knows what tools are available to them and where to find them. You should forward a copy of this checklist and information to your Green Schoolyards Coordinator. If you need any assistance, information or instruction about watering your garden, contact your Green Schoolyards Coordinator.

**REQUIRED**
- □ Hose (be sure it is long enough to reach all of the plants)
- □ Spray nozzle with a soaker pattern (to soak other in-ground plantings)
- □ Water key

Where is the equipment stored?

**RECOMMENDED**
- □ Multiple hoses and nozzles
- □ 4-way splitter (for raised beds with an integrated irrigation system)
- □ Two 5-gallon buckets or watering bags for trees
- □ Rain gauge

If your water source needs additional equipment (i.e. water connection, key to access it, etc.), please identify:

Who keeps track of this equipment?

Name:

Phone:
### Student Planting Day Sample Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>GRADE LEVELS</th>
<th>ROOM NUMBERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30-9:30 a.m.</td>
<td>7th &amp; 8th</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30-10:30 a.m.</td>
<td>6th &amp; 7th</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30-11:00 a.m.</td>
<td>4th &amp; 5th</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00-12:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30-1:30 p.m.</td>
<td>4th &amp; 5th</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:45-1:30 p.m.</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30-2:15 p.m.</td>
<td>1st &amp; 3rd</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00-2:45 p.m.</td>
<td>2nd &amp; 3rd</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Room numbers and grade levels are included as examples only. Times will vary according to your school’s schedule.*

### Preparation
- Create a schedule for teachers to sign up to bring at least one class out for 30 minutes to one hour (see sample schedule above).
- Your Green Schoolyards Coordinator will work with you to identify how many classes can be accommodated outside at once and what the tasks will involve.
- Email schedule to the Green Schoolyards Coordinator.
- Recruit at least three additional adults to oversee small group work.
- Schedule a rain date.
- Remind students the day before to dress for outdoor work, which means wearing clothing and footwear that they don’t mind getting dirty.
- Discuss the overall plan of the planting day with students beforehand. Consider showing them a map of the schoolyard and pointing out which areas they will be working in.

### Planting Day
- Students will assist in planting and mulching the raised vegetable beds and some of the in-ground plantings. Specific work will depend on the group’s age. For example, older students might help shovel soil into the vegetable beds, while the younger students might plant small potted plants and seeds.
- Space to Grow staff will explain and demonstrate the tasks.
- Teachers and adult volunteers will assist and supervise small groups of students as they work.
- Volunteers should be instructed to arrive a few minutes early and be prepared to work in the garden.
- Teachers are expected to actively participate. This is not a free period.
- All tools, gloves and materials will be provided by Space to Grow.