

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Dec. 3, 2024

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\$1 Million CAL FIRE Grant to Help Lynwood Unified Combat Climate Change, Foster Green Schools

LYNWOOD, CA – Lynwood Unified School District, in partnership with environmental nonprofit TreePeople, has been awarded a \$1 million CAL FIRE Green Schoolyards grant to transform three of its campuses into greener, more sustainable spaces.

The ambitious project includes planting 110 trees and 1,800 California native plants and removing over 40,000 square feet of asphalt to create new green spaces at Abbott and Lindbergh elementary schools and Vista High School. Tree planting is set to begin in spring 2025, ushering in a new era of sustainability for Lynwood schools.

“We’re planting more than just trees – we’re planting a future,” Assistant Superintendent of Business Services Gretchen Janson, Ed.D., said. “This project is an investment in our students’ well-being, their future and the environment, creating spaces where both minds and nature can thrive.”

The revamped outdoor areas will feature shade trees, drought-resistant vegetation and canopy coverage to mitigate heat and improve air quality. These enhancements are designed to reduce urban heat and improve air quality, particularly in areas near freeways – where pollution is a significant concern and a key factor in selecting these sites for the project.

With guidance from TreePeople, each campus has developed a concept presentation outlining project goals, current campus conditions, material choices and planting strategy. In addition, community workshops with students, staff and families were held to gather input and create a cohesive wish list reflecting the unique needs and aspirations of each school community.

“It was incredibly important to gather feedback from our community and ensure we incorporated everyone’s ideas,” Lindbergh Elementary School Principal Jasmin Harris said. “We’re excited to see the first elements of the project begin in the new year, and we can’t wait for our students to experience the positive impact it will have on our campus.”

The elementary schools’ wish lists include revamping multipurpose gardens, adding raised planters and planting trees in key areas, such as shade zones and student dismissal areas with seating. Vista High School plans to expand the outdoor chess area with additional seating and plants, replacing the existing shade

structure with natural shade for gatherings and events, and creating an edible habitat garden with seating for relaxation and decompression. The project is scheduled to be completed by fall 2025.

“Schools in communities like ours are often seen as concrete jungles, but at Lynwood Unified, we are committed to changing that narrative by creating greener, more vibrant campuses,” Superintendent Gudiel R. Crosthwaite, Ph.D., said. “We’re dedicated to ensuring equity by transforming our schools with trees, grass and gardens that enrich our students’ learning environments. Together with TreePeople, we are creating a model for the world, demonstrating how schools can lead the way in environmental stewardship and community well-being.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

LUSD_TREEPEOPLE_1: Lindbergh Elementary School students and parents provide input for their campus community wish list during a focus group with TreePeople in February 2024.






LUSD_TREEPEOPLE_2: Lindbergh Elementary School principal Jasmin Harris and TreePeople representatives collaborate with staff regarding the school’s new upgrades during a focus group in February 2024.

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The mission of Lynwood Unified School District, the model urban school district, is to ensure each student fearlessly achieves their highest academic and personal aspirations while contributing to a diverse, global society through an evolving system distinguished by:

★ *People of great character who inspire and lead by example* ★ *The instilling of courage to be creative* ★ *The transformative uses of technology*
★ *Safe and clean environments* ★ *The inclusion of all voices in our community through equity, access and justice*

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