TOYOTA | EVERGREEN
LEARNING GROUNDS
Imagine your city with nature

Shade for Kids: Fact Sheet 3

Built Shade

Build it and they will come! Students flock to the shade of a large canopied tree. The same is true for a shade structure. Shade structures can be built to accommodate outdoor classrooms, small groups or individuals. In primary areas they can be built to feel more like a fort, where little bodies can climb and explore in a safe and shady environment. Here are some ideas for your school ground. Use them alone, in combination with trees or as an interim solution until your trees mature.

Permanent Structures

Permanent structures are meant to last for at least 10 years. They are typically made up of a roof and a supporting structure.

1. Gazebos

Gazebos can be built in a variety of shapes and sizes: hexagonal, rectangular, square, octagonal or a local theme such as a long house. Leave the sides open or enclose them. Add vines or plant shrubs around the perimeter. Add art and wind chimes and other elements for learning and fun!

Photo: Evergreen

2. Sun Shelters

Full-size sun shelters (like the ones in public parks) are not common on school grounds, but can provide enough room for an entire class to gather outdoors.

3. Pergolas
Pergolas are an attractive alternative for entryways, paths and passive play areas. They can be covered by vines or lattice to increase their sun protection.

Photo: Heidi Campbell

Temporary Structures

Temporary structures like tents, shade sails and umbrellas can be dismantled or adjusted and are more practical and cost-effective than permanent structures for short-term shade.

Photo: Safoura Moazami

Shade sails are prefabricated systems that can be used to provide shade cover over play structures and entryways. The durable fabric provides 90 percent protection from UVR. They come in triangular and square shapes to suit the needs of different areas. Although they are

gaining popularity in Australia, their use on school grounds appears to be limited to passive play/gathering areas near buildings (i.e., daycares, sand play areas, courtyards, entryways) or over play structures, since they need a secure base such as a building or post on which to be mounted.

- Shade Sails Canada, a supplier in Orillia, Ontario, is currently entering the market and provides engineering and installation. www.shadesailscanada.ca

- Play Shade, a company in Australia sells ready-to-install tensile structures that come in a number of shapes including a pagoda, bandshell, pow-wow and cone. www.playshade.co.uk

Provide umbrellas over tables and benches on school grounds, especially in outdoor courtyards where students may sit for lunch or studying. Ask local restaurants for donations and decorate umbrellas to fit the theme on your school grounds. Umbrellas can be easily taken down and stored when not in use to reduce vandalism and weather damage.

Selecting the right shade structure for your project

Here are a few guiding questions to help your selection.

- Will the structure provide the type of shade required at the right time of the day and year?
- Does it allow for the type of activity taking place near or under it?
- Does it provide an adequate amount of shade for the number of users near or under it?
- Have potential sources of damage been considered (i.e. vandalism, storms, strong winds)?
- Does it provide at least 94 percent protection from UVR?
- Will it cause any safety concerns (i.e., wires/poles that could be tripped on)?
- Does it meet structural codes for the intended use?

To Minimizing Vandalism

- Select sturdy materials
- Keep covers high (i.e. at least 2.5m at low points for standing structures and higher than the tallest adult standing on the top platform of a play structure).
- Keep poles 1m away from fences, walls, roofs, trees and other structures that can be climbed.
- Do not place tables and chairs directly under the edges of structures.
- Use shelters that are difficult to take down and/or steal.

(From Greenwood, J.S., G.P. Soulos, and N.D. Thomas. *Undercover: Guidelines for shade planning and design*)

Resources

Greenwood, J.S., G.P. Soulos, and N.D. Thomas. *Undercover: Guidelines for shade planning and design*. Sydney: NSW Cancer Council and NSW Health Department, 1998.

Build It, Plant It, Dig It, Paint It: Design Ideas for the Outdoor Classroom. 2001, Evergreen.

Designing for Shade and Energy Conservation. 2004. TDSB and Evergreen.

Evergreen's website: www.evergreen.ca

Playshade: www.playshade.co.uk
Sun Safety for Kids: www.sunsafetyforkids.org/shade.htm