

Steps to Starting a Campus Improvement Project for Parent Groups:

The members of many PTAs often want to participate in efforts to improve the physical school site in ways small and large. However, it is important that before any type of project or program is undertaken, that members of the school PTA follow these steps:

1. **Talk to the Principal First:** If a project has the potential to change, enhance, remove or alter the physical part of school building, grounds or property in any way, the PTA should consult the school's principal before beginning to discuss any plans, contacting the school district or beginning to fundraise. If the project is related to regular maintenance that should be occurring at the school, the principal can help find information out about why the work has not been completed, or when it is scheduled to be completed. The principal may also have important historic information about the project that could be critical to planning. It is important to find out the window of opportunity for when AUSD is taking facilities change during the school year.
2. **PTA Committee and Chair:** If the Principal believes that this project is viable, then the PTA President should add it to the next PTA Executive Board meeting agenda. The project should be discussed at the meeting and a Committee should be convened with a Chair to project manage. It should be made clear that the project is in a vetting stage and that continuation depends on approval from AUSD Maintenance, Operations and Facilities Department (MOF).
3. **Facilities Form:** After getting approval from the principal, the PTA should request the principal fill out a facilities change request form. This should be done prior to any action because it will initiate the process of discussing the project with AUSD Maintenance, Operations and Facilities Department (MOF). The principal and the committee working on this project may not have all the answers to the questions on the form but they should submit it anyway.
4. **MOF Feedback:** Working jointly with the school's principal and with MOF to review the project will reveal if the project is viable, the questions that need to be answered, and the costs. This will require regular communication from the PTA Chair and consistent follow up with the principal. It is important to not make promises to the school community about the viability of a project until it is approved by MOF and funds are raised (if necessary).
5. **MOF Approval:** Once the questions are answered and funds are raised, the project can begin with MOF approval. It is important at this time to get a timeframe for project completion so that expectations are reasonable on all sides.
6. **Project Begins:** the District will issue a Notice to Proceed after completing all required documents. This may involve obtaining approval from outside agencies. The District will sign contracts and manage work done by outside firms or the District's staff. The site principal will be the main point of contact between MOF and the PTA.
7. **Volunteers:** It is tempting for many PTAs to solve issues related to campus improvement and maintenance by marshaling parent and student volunteers to do the work. However, in many cases, AUSD is held to contracts with bargaining units (labor unions) that may prohibit volunteers from doing work that falls under the umbrella of a union job description. In addition, PTAs should determine whether PTA's liability insurance would cover volunteers (and other third parties), and work done by volunteers. Lack of liability coverage may put the volunteers and AUSD at risk in case an accident happens at an AUSD site. Therefore, before volunteer work begins, it is important to clear it with AUSD and with the Principal.

8. **Fundraising:** Contractors and MOF will do their best to give cost estimates for a given project. MOF will provide cost estimate for work that has to be done by AUSD. However, costs can change during a project and this may require additional fundraising.
9. **Process Steps:** After you have done preliminary research regarding scope of work and projected cost, and the Principal has submitted a Facility Change Request From, expect the following:
 1. **Initial Project Response from AUSD:** Initial feedback will be provided and additional information may be requested to further evaluate the proposed project. All proposed changes to an existing school site or any District facility will be reviewed for each site's feasibility and will be prioritized by its safety and security impact, educational and instructional needs.
 2. **Project Approval:** Project approval would depend on the complexity, size and other unique factors of the project. For Example, a painted mural requires less time to review and approve as compared to a playground structure.
 3. **Project Schedule:** After the project is approved, a project schedule will be created documenting start and end date. The schedule will be created by the District or the PTA depending on who is performing the work.
10. **Timeline:** It is also a great idea to ensure that parents, teachers, students and staff are aware of the timeline and that the community is updated about the progress of the project regularly.

Types of Campus Improvement Projects

Over the years, PTAs have typically taken on projects that fall in the categories below. **If a potential project falls into the green and yellow areas below it does NOT mean that PTAs can proceed without the approval of the principal and MOF.** It just means that they are possible if the PTA follows the steps above. It does not mean that the principal and MOF are obligated to make them happen. It may be determined that even green or yellow light projects are not feasible for a variety of reasons.

Green - The project will likely be approved if the above steps are followed. However, a project in this category does NOT mean that it will be definitely be approved.

- Ongoing maintenance of an already existing garden
- Touch up of existing mural or art on walls of school (interior and exterior)
- Replacement of bulletin boards or other existing message boards
- Playground or sports equipment that is not permanent

Yellow -This means that depending on the project, there is some precedent for Principals and MOF approving similar projects. This does NOT mean that the project will definitely be approved.

- Permanent athletics or sports structures (eg: new basketball hoops, soccer goals, or improvements to baseball diamonds)
- Benches or seating. Note that seating must be purchased through AUSD's furniture vendor and installed by MOF. It cannot be built or purchased by PTAs.
- Permanent Signage or Banners or banners that will be hanging for long periods of time
- Small school gardens without large structures attached to them
- Sheds on grounds (for storage or gardening)
- Murals (on marine ply wood only)

- Tile Art (on marine ply wood only)
- Shelving or any type of large furniture in school or classrooms. Note that shelving may only be purchased through AUSD's furniture vendor and installed by MOF. It cannot be built or purchased by PTAs directly.
- Traffic calming efforts (eg: new signs, changes or additions to parking lots or drop off areas). In most cases traffic signs are installed and maintained by the City of Alameda.

Red - This means that the likelihood of a project in the below category being approved by the Principal and MOF is low. This is due to many factors, depending on the situation. If the PTA believes that one of the below is an important improvement that needs to be made to the school site, conversations with the school principal and AUSD should be initiated to find out if MOF can manage the project.

- Installation of any type of large outdoor or indoor structures (eg: shade structures, sheds, outdoor amphitheaters, statues) that will require approval by the California Department of State Architecture Office.
- Regular maintenance of school facilities or grounds (painting of interior or exterior walls, landscaping, replacing flooring or carpet, or light fixtures), these should be undertaken by MOF. If the PTA feels these are not happening in a timely manner, the Principal should contact MOF.
- Play structures are maintained and purchased by MOF.
- Security features such as locks, alarms, fences or other devices.
- Any kind of signage (temporary or permanent) that violates the [rules and regulations of AUSD](#).