



SANTA MONICA - MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Franklin Elementary Field

The district strives to balance all needs and concerns when making improvements at our schools. The primary goal when planning a sports field is to provide a durable, consistently playable surface that will allow students the opportunity to safely exercise and play.

When determining the specifications for the field there are many factors to consider beginning with the size of the Franklin campus. Based on the current enrollment of 600 students, it is half the size (5.6 acres) recommended by the California Department of Education (11.7 acres). This allows for only one field that is limited in size for the small campus. Best practice for a grass field is that it gets no more than four hours of heavy play per day and is rested for up to three months a year, preferably during the rainy season. The Franklin Field regularly receives up to ten hours of play per day and gets less than one month of rest in the summer. SMMUSD campuses become parks after hours through a Joint Use Agreement with the City of Santa Monica.

Walking the Franklin field, you find bare patches with hard dirt and other areas with thick grass and mud. This inconsistent playing surface potentially causes injuries. While some professional athletes prefer to play on grass, the fields they play on are reserved for games manicured by a trained staff of lawn care specialists. There is no comparison between a professional grass field and the overplayed elementary school field.

This discussion must compare the overplayed, uneven Franklin grass field with a next generation of synthetic turf. Most of the information referenced by critics of synthetic turf is based on older generations of turf that used crumb rubber infill, caused more injuries, included toxic materials, and could not be recycled. Synthetic turf fields have been substantially improved since AstroTurf was introduced in the 1960s. Compared with the older turf products, this next generation turf is much safer and environmentally protective as a 2025 automobile is safer and less polluting when compared with a vehicle built in 1970.

The Franklin campus plan proposes using the next generation [TenCate Pivot Play](#) synthetic turf field or similar. The new system:

- has no infill materials. No more rubber, or even cork pellets;
- is made with plastics commonly used in children's toys, water bottles, food packaging, or sports shoes;

SANTA MONICA-MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Board of Education: • Alicia Mignano • Jon Kean • Maria Leon-Vazquez
Laurie Lieberman • Jennifer Smith • Dr. Richard Tahvildaran-Jesswein; Stacy Rouse
Superintendent: Dr. Antonio Shellon

- complies with California Prop 65 and international toy standards. Contains no lead, heavy metals, nor toxic substances;
- is manufactured without PFAs (“forever chemicals”) unlike most toothpaste, shampoo, beauty products and sports clothing;
- does not require pesticides and fertilizers that may leach into local watersheds like grass fields;
- can be cleaned with dish washing detergent when soiled with bodily fluids;
- causes the same statistical occurrence of injury compared with well-maintained grass fields. [A 2024 study has shown that the incidence of concussion on artificial turf are lower and less severe than on natural grass;](#)
- and is fully recyclable unlike previous synthetic turf systems

The primary difference is that a TenCate Pivot field or similar next generation field can be played from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., 365 days per year, rain or shine, on an even, well-maintained safe playing surface.

When it is as vital as ever to have children playing and exercising, providing more hours of safe play points towards choosing a synthetic turf field over grass. The health and safety of students and staff is our top priority.

A [Frequently Asked Questions](#) guide provides more information. See summary flyer below on page 3.

Warmly,

Carey Upton
Chief Operations Officer, SMMUSD

CAMPUS PLAN

TURF FACTS



Franklin Elementary School



Photos: Event at Will Rogers Learning Community on new synthetic turf

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Scan QR code or visit:
bit.ly/TurfFAQspring25
 for FAQs & more information.



- Franklin's limited space leads to heavy field use that grass cannot sustain, with up to 10 hours of play daily and minimal rest. A synthetic surface like TenCate Pivot offers a safe, durable, all-weather solution year-round.
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