

New York State Sun Safety Toolkit

preK-12



TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR PreK-12 SCHOOLS IN NEW YORK STATE

New York State



Cancer Consortium

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SECTION
1

INTRODUCTION



PURPOSE - The purpose of this toolkit is to provide school districts with knowledge, tools and resources to promote sun safety, discourage indoor tanning, and reduce skin cancer risk for Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) through 12th grade students and staff in New York State (NYS).

AUDIENCE - Those who influence school wellness including school administrators, coaches, school nurses, educators, Parent Teacher Association (PTA) members, and public health advocates.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS - This toolkit was developed by the Skin Cancer Action Team of the NYS Cancer Consortium.

The recommended tools and resources provided in this toolkit are based on findings and best practices from a NYS-funded program, called Cancer Prevention in Action (CPiA), that supported the adoption of sun safety policies and practices in community settings throughout NYS. For more information about CPiA, see Section 5: Impact Stories.

The NYS Cancer Consortium is a network of individuals and organizations who work together to reduce the burden of cancer by implementing strategies outlined in the NYS Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan.

Using This Toolkit

This toolkit includes information and resources to adopt and sustain sun safety policies and/or practices. You are encouraged to use the materials and information included in this toolkit in a way that will work best for your school.

Resources you may find helpful include:

- free, evidenced-based sun safety lesson plans
- sun safety funding and grant opportunities
- a sample sun safety policy and sunscreen permission form
- sample communication letters for parents and guardians, school staff, and school administrators.



More information about the NYS Cancer Consortium and how to get involved is available at: nyscancerconsortium.org.

SECTION 2

SUN SAFETY & SKIN CANCER PREVENTION

What Is Skin Cancer?

Skin cancer is a type of cancer that starts in the cells of the skin. There are three main types of skin cancer—basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, and melanoma. Of these types of skin cancer, melanoma is the third most common in the United States (U.S.) and causes the most deaths. While some people are at higher risk of skin cancer than others, anyone can get it.¹

What Causes Skin Cancer?

Most cases of skin cancer are caused by too much exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation (rays). UV rays are an invisible kind of radiation that comes from the sun or indoor tanning. UV rays can cause permanent damage to your skin.²

Who is Most at Risk for Skin Cancer?

The top risk factor for most types of skin cancer is exposure to UV rays; however, some people are more likely than others to develop skin cancer. You may be more at risk for skin cancer if you have: blonde or red hair, blue or green eyes, fair skin, freckles, multiple moles, personal history of sunburns, a personal or family history of skin cancer.²



How Can I Prevent Skin Cancer?

The best way to prevent skin cancer, including melanoma, is to practice sun safety. This means protecting your skin from UV rays from the sun or an indoor tanning device. Follow these simple steps to protect your skin:



AVOID UV RAYS. Avoid sunbathing and indoor tanning.



COVER UP. Wear a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, and other sun protective clothing when outdoors, such as a long-sleeved shirt.



USE SUNSCREEN. Apply broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher.



FIND SHADE. Use shade, especially during midday hours when the sun's rays are strongest (10AM-4PM).



Start sun protection habits at an early age. Skin damage from UV exposure adds up over time, increasing the risk of getting skin cancer when we age.³



What is Indoor Tanning?

Indoor tanning means using a UV radiation device, such as tanning beds, tanning booths or sunlamps. Indoor tanning exposes users to high levels of UV rays which are even more intense than natural sun exposure. Tanning devices are a known risk factor for melanoma.

Why Is Practicing Sun Safety Important?

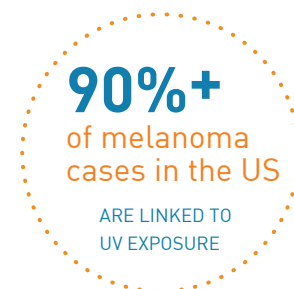


SKIN CANCER IS THE MOST COMMON CANCER IN THE U.S.

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the U.S., outnumbering all other cancer diagnoses combined. About 1 in 5 Americans will develop skin cancer during their lifetime despite it being a largely preventable disease.⁴

SKIN CANCER IS LARGELY PREVENTABLE

More than 90% of melanoma cases in the U.S. are caused by UV rays from the sun or indoor tanning devices. By reducing UV exposure and practicing sun safety, many skin cancers, including melanoma, can be prevented.³



EXPOSURE TO UV RAYS IN CHILDHOOD INCREASES SKIN CANCER RISK

Exposure to UV rays from the sun early in childhood increases the risk of developing skin cancer later in life. Just one blistering sunburn during childhood can double a person's lifetime risk of developing skin cancer. Practicing sun safety early can help children reduce lifetime sun exposure and the risk of developing skin problems later in life.⁵

UV RAYS ARE A CONCERN ALL YEAR ROUND

UV rays from the sun can reach you on cloudy and cool days, as well as bright and sunny days. Clouds do not offer protection from UV rays and UV rays can reflect off surfaces like water, cement, sand, and snow.⁶



Clouds do not block the
sun's harmful UV rays.

There is no such thing
as a "healthy tan."
Tanned skin is
damaged skin.



TANNED SKIN IS DAMAGED SKIN

Skin damage adds up with each sunburn or tan and may one day result in skin cancer. Even if a sunburn or tan fades, the damage caused by that tan or burn does not, and the effects cannot be reversed. Avoiding UV rays from the sun, indoor tanning beds, tanning booths, and sunlamps is the best way to prevent skin cancer.³

Skin cancer affects all skin tones

Sun safety is important for individuals of all skin tones. People of all races and ethnicities can get melanoma. Although melanoma is less common in people with darker skin tones, they are often diagnosed when the cancer is more advanced, resulting in worse outcomes.⁷

**EVERYONE
UNDER THE SUN
NEEDS PROTECTION.**
It's a fact. Skin cancer
affects people of
all skin tones.



Melanoma in New York State (NYS)



Melanoma is the least common of the three main types of skin cancer, but it causes the most deaths.

4,400

New Yorkers diagnosed with melanoma yearly

350

New Yorkers die from melanoma yearly

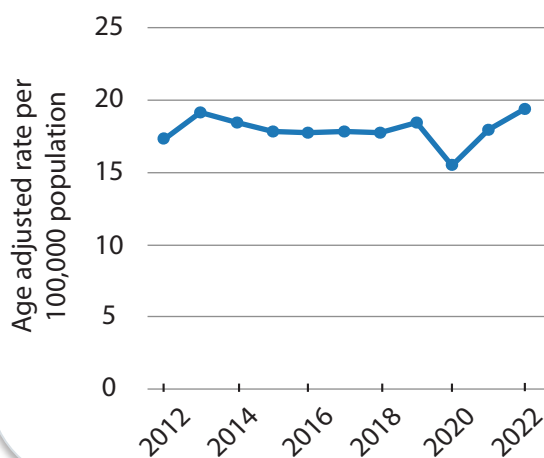
7th

most common cancer diagnosed in NYS

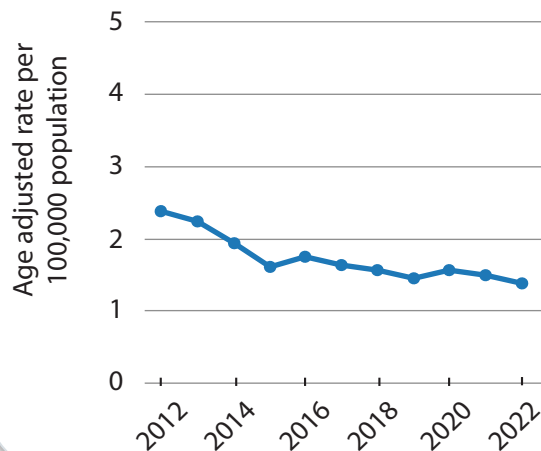
5th

most common cancer diagnosed among 20 to 34 year olds in NYS

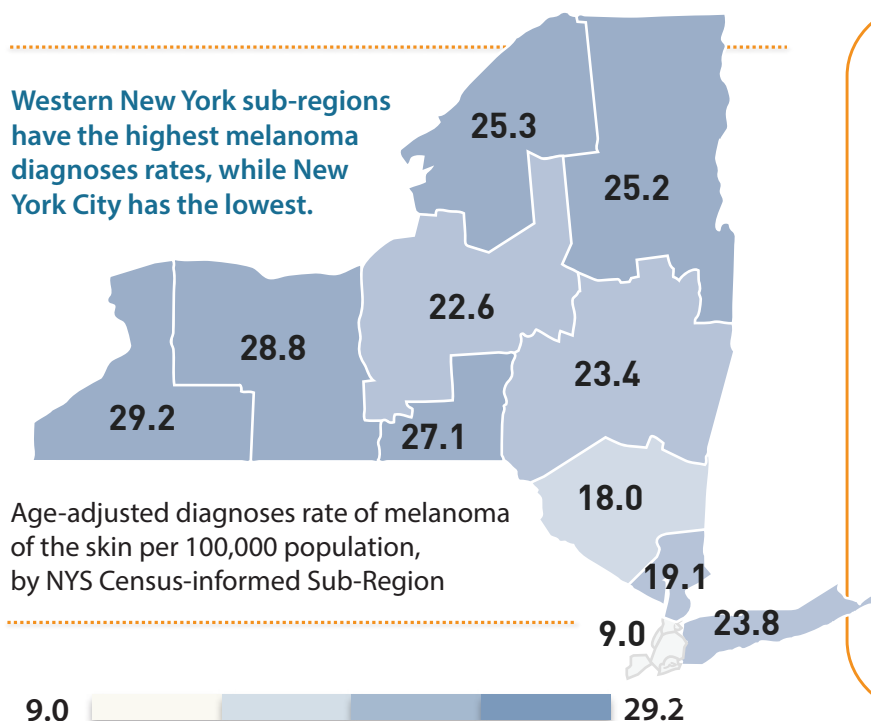
The rate of new **melanoma diagnosis** has remained stable



The rate of new **melanoma deaths** has declined significantly



Western New York sub-regions have the highest melanoma diagnoses rates, while New York City has the lowest.



Did You Know?

- ➔ Most people diagnosed with melanoma are non-Hispanic (NH) White.
- ➔ Hispanic, NH Black, and NH Asian or Pacific Islander people are more often diagnosed after spread has occurred.
- ➔ Most New Yorkers live more than 5 years after diagnosis, but survival is lower among NH Black, NH Asian or Pacific Islander, and Hispanic people.

What Do NYS Laws Say About Sun Safety?

NYS EDUCATION LAW SECTION 907

NYS Education Law Section 907 authorizes students to carry and apply FDA-approved, over-the-counter sunscreen in school with written permission from a parent or guardian. For students who are unable to physically apply sunscreen, unlicensed personnel may assist when directed to do so by the student, if permitted by a parent or guardian and authorized by the school.¹⁰

A Sample Parent/Guardian Sunscreen Permission Form (Appendix C) is included in this toolkit and can be modified for your school.

NYS PUBLIC HEALTH LAW SECTION 3555

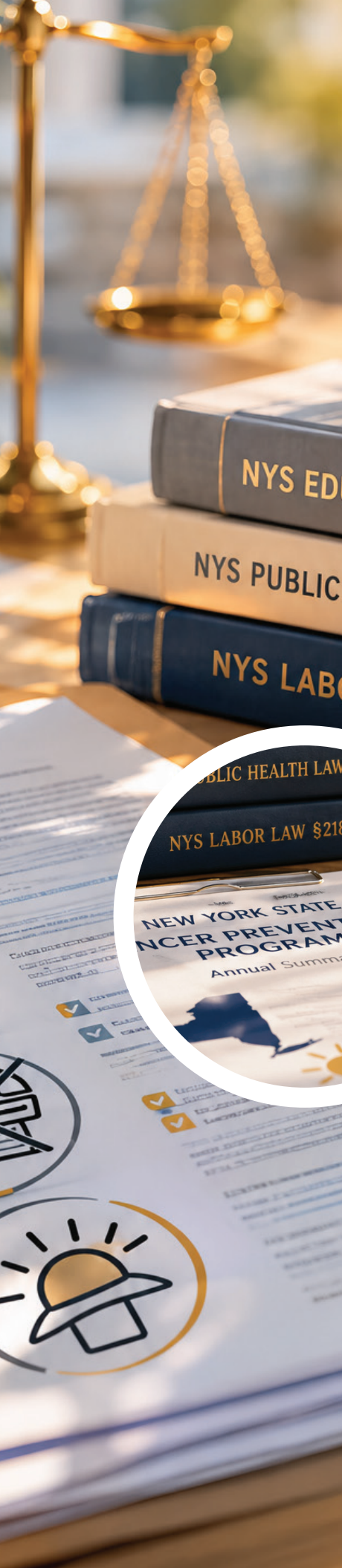
NYS has established strict regulations on indoor tanning to protect youth. Effective August 16, 2018, NYS Public Health Law Section 3555, prohibits individuals under the age of 18 from using indoor tanning devices such as tanning beds and sunlamps. For adults 18 years of age and older, tanning facilities are required to verify age using valid photo identification and must obtain a signed

acknowledgment that the individual has read the health risk warnings and agrees to use protective safety equipment, such as goggles.

In addition to age restrictions, NYS Public Health Law Section 3555 requires tanning facilities to provide safety information and maintain standards that reduce health risks associated with UV radiation exposure. Facilities must display warning signs, provide protective eyewear at no extra cost, and educate users about potential risks, including skin damage and increased risk of skin cancer.¹¹

NYS PUBLIC EMPLOYEE SUN SAFETY LAW SECTION 218-A

NYS Labor Law Section 218-A requires state agencies to provide sun safety education to public employees who work outdoors. The law is intended to increase awareness of the health risks associated with UV radiation exposure, including skin cancer and other sun-related illnesses. Agencies are encouraged to educate employees on protective measures such as the use of sunscreen, wearing protective clothing, and reducing time in direct sunlight. By promoting sun safety education in the workplace, this law supports the prevention of long-term health risks among outdoor workers in NYS.¹²





The Important Role of Schools

Schools can protect students and staff from skin cancer. Students and staff spend time outdoors at school when the UV index is highest, and activities such as recess and sporting events result in extended periods of UV exposure. Teaching sun safety behaviors, like wearing hats, using broad-spectrum sunscreen, seeking shade, and avoiding indoor tanning, can help students and staff reduce lifetime sun exposure and the risk of developing skin problems later in life.¹³

FAST FACTS

- Skin cancer is one of the most common cancers in people younger than 30 (especially younger women).
- Just one blistering sunburn during childhood can double a person's lifetime risk of developing skin cancer.⁵
- About 23% of a person's lifetime sun exposure happens by the age of 18.¹⁴
- Indoor tanning before age 30 increases the risk of melanoma by 75%.¹⁵

What Actions Can Schools Take to Create a Sun Safe Environment?

Implementing sun safety policies and/or practices in schools is a proactive way to protect students, staff, and families from the harmful effects of UV rays.

The following are examples of ways schools can implement sun safe practices:

- Adopt a sun safety policy!
- Increase access to and promote use of shaded areas.
- Encourage sun safety behaviors.
- Use evidenced-based education programs.
- Educate about the dangers of indoor tanning and sunbathing.¹³

BE SUN SAFE AT SCHOOL

- WEAR A HAT
- USE SUNSCREEN
- SEEK SHADE
- AVOID INDOOR TANNING

“

“In hindsight, sun safety should always have been part of the conversation, and we are proud to make it a priority in our schools.”

— **David Halloran**,
Superintendent of
Schools, Gloversville
Enlarged School
District

SECTION 3

School Sun Safety Policies

Sun Safety Policy Overview

By adopting a sun safety policy, schools can help make the healthier choice the easier choice for staff, students, and families.

What is a School Sun Safety Policy?

A school sun safety policy is adopted by a school to prevent skin cancer by outlining strategies the school will implement to limit student and staff exposure to UV rays. Strategies include supporting sun safety behaviors, creating environmental supports, such as pavilions and tents, to avoid overexposure to the sun when students and staff are outdoors, and providing key sun safety education and communication.

What is Included in a School Sun Safety Policy?

A school sun safety policy contains several components to communicate the terms of the policy and how it will be implemented. Components of a comprehensive sun safety policy include:

Sunscreen use: Allow students to carry and use topical, over-the-counter sunscreen products approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration with the written permission of the parent or guardian of the student.

Protective clothing/dress code flexibility: Allow and encourage students to wear sun protective clothing (wide-brimmed hats, UV-protective sunglasses, long-sleeved shirts and pants) during outdoor activities during the school day and after school.

Shade access: Optimize shaded areas for students and staff and encourage the use of shaded or indoor areas for congregation and recreation as appropriate.

Scheduling outdoor time around peak UV hours: Schedule outdoor activities before 10 AM or after 4 PM from March through October or increase the use of sun safety practices during these hours.

Education: Provide age-appropriate education at each grade level, pre-Kindergarten through 12, related to skin cancer. Include information about the harmful effects of UV radiation, including from indoor tanning, and recommended practices for preventing skin cancer at any time of the school year.

Communication: Provide a copy of the policy to all staff and contracted partners, agencies, or community-based organizations providing services to students (ex: afterschool programs, summer programs, etc.); and inform parents and guardians about the importance of preventing skin cancer and encourage families to reinforce sun safe behavior outside the school and to support the school's sun safety programs.



3. SCHOOL SUN SAFETY POLICIES



The Importance of Sun Safety Policies in Schools

Why are School Sun Safety Policies Needed?

School sun safety policies promote healthy habits early in life while reducing the risk of sunburns and future skin cancer. While some schools may encourage sun safety through informal practices, these efforts are often inconsistent and difficult to sustain over time. **Without a formal sun safety policy:**

- sun safety implementation may vary across classrooms, teachers, and school activities, leading to unequal sun protection for students and staff
- approaches to sun safety practices rely on individual awareness rather than clearly defined, school-wide expectations, and may be disrupted by staff turnover or changes in leadership
- sun safety practices are not always clearly communicated to students, staff, and families, limiting their effectiveness
- students may not receive consistent sun safety messaging or reliable access to sun protection measures.

What are the Benefits of School Sun Safety Policies?

School sun safety policies provide a structured, sustainable approach to protecting students and staff from UV exposure by ensuring that sun safety is integrated into the school's culture, rather than relying on individual efforts.

A formal sun safety policy:

- standardizes sun safety practices across the entire school or district
- establishes clear guidance and expectations for students, staff, and families
- ensures long-term sustainability, even as staff and leadership change
- provides accountability through defined implementation and monitoring processes
- supports alignment with state guidance and national public health recommendations
- fosters an environment where sun safety behaviors like using sunscreen, wearing protective clothing, and seeking shade are normalized
- reinforces the importance of sun safety as a component of student health.

By adopting a sun safety policy, schools can move from informal, inconsistent practices to a coordinated, school-wide approach that protects students and staff from overexposure to the sun and promotes lifelong healthy behaviors.



3. SCHOOL SUN SAFETY POLICIES

Adopting a Sun Safety Policy

How Can I Find Out If My School has a Sun Safety Policy?

Public school district policies are passed by a Board of Education and are often available electronically on the district's website, within the student handbook, or the board of education policy manual. A school district's sun protection or sunscreen policy may be a standalone policy or included within the school's existing wellness policies. To find your school's sun safety policy, search for terms on your district's website related to: "student health services" or "student wellness" or "administration of medication" (sunscreen is often included with inhalers, hand sanitizer, and emergency medicine).

What if My School Already Has a Sun Safety Policy?

If your school already has a sun safety policy, there may still be opportunities to update or improve the policy to ensure that sun safety practices are being promoted and implemented in a consistent and sustainable way. Use the School Sun Safety Assessment Tool (Appendix A) as a resource to review your school's current sun safety policies and practices and identify areas for improvement.

What are the Next Steps if My School Does Not Have a Sun Safety Policy?

Advocate for a school sun safety policy! Adopting a school sun safety policy is a multi-step process that requires planning, collaboration, and education across the school community. See the stepwise approach listed below and outlined in Section 4: Creating Sun Safe Schools for guidance and best practices to adopt sun safety policies and practices within your school building or district.



Step 1: Educate the School Community

Educate the school community about the importance of skin cancer prevention to build awareness and support for sun safety policies and practices.



Step 2: Educate School Decision Makers

Educate school decision makers about the importance of skin cancer prevention to obtain formal authorization to adopt a sun safety policy.



Step 3: Conduct a Pre-Assessment

Gather information about any existing sun safety policies and practices at your school before drafting a policy for adoption.



Step 4: Draft a Sun Safety Policy

Draft a sun safety policy specific to the sun safety needs and priorities of your school.



Step 5: Implement Sun Safety Practices

Provide environmental supports, educational resources, and communication and training as outlined in the policy.



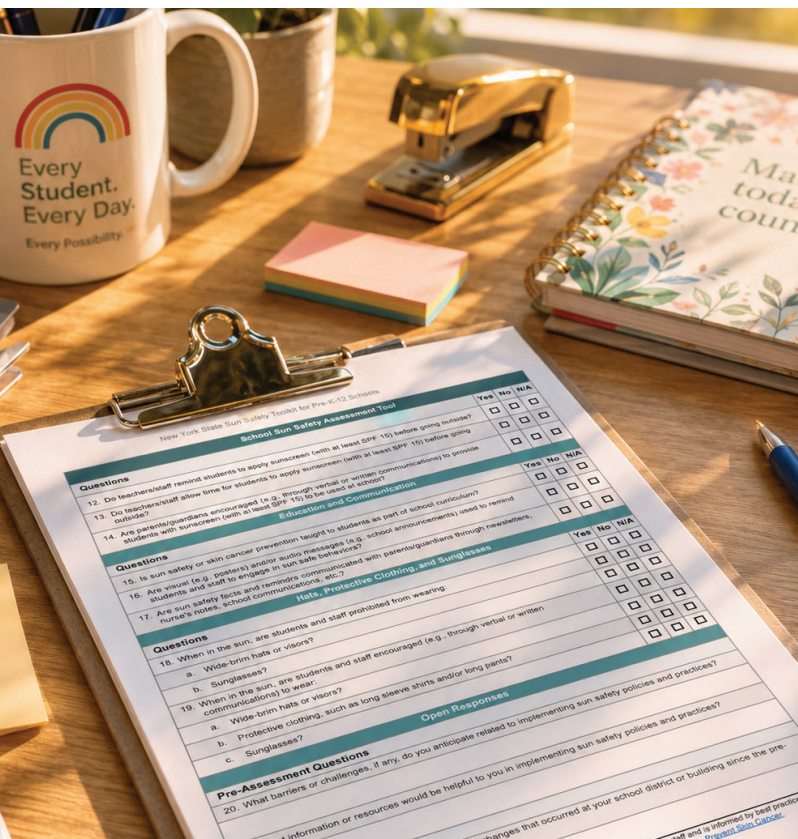
Step 6: Conduct a Post-Assessment

Gather information about your school's sun safety policies and practices after adopting the policy and implementing sun safety practices.



Step 7: Promote Success

Promote your school's sun safety success to continue to build community support for sun safety policies and practices in schools.



SECTION
4

Creating Sun Safe Schools





4. CREATING SUN SAFE SCHOOLS

Step 1: Educate the School Community

Educate your school community about the importance of skin cancer prevention to build awareness and support for sun safety policies and practices.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION GUIDANCE AND BEST PRACTICES

Use Targeted Messaging

Do your homework! Use information and resources specific to your school and region to create a compelling reason for why the school should adopt a sun safety policy. For example:

- Incorporate local skin cancer statistics within your messaging. Data sources such as community health needs assessments and the [NYS Cancer Registry](#) can provide health and skin cancer statistics specific to your region.
- Use information about the school community and environment to receive buy-in.
- Gather community feedback, such as student and staff surveys, to see if the school community is open and supportive of a sun safety policy.

Engage School Partners and Champions

Use school partners and champions to help advocate for a sun safety policy. Champions are people who use their networks and life experiences to engage their community. For example:

- Engage school health and wellness committees to advocate for a sun safety policy, such as school wellness committees that develop, implement, and monitor policies promoting student and staff health.
- Use staff, students, and families as sun safety champions who can explain the benefits of a school sun safety policy with their colleagues and peers.
- Present information about the importance of sun safety to school booster clubs and PTA to build awareness and support among students, parents and guardians, coaches and teachers.

Build Community Awareness and Support

Work together with school partners and champions to educate your school community about the importance of skin cancer prevention to raise awareness and support for sun safety policies and practices. For example:

- Provide sun safety information at school events, school meetings, and open forums.
- Discuss the benefits of sun safety policies and practices with students, staff and families, such as free access to sunscreen and adequate shade coverage on school playgrounds, sports fields, and courtyards.
- Write letters to the editor in local newspapers to highlight the need for sun safety policies in schools.
- Share the sun safety sample policy and school impact stories within this toolkit as examples of ways the sun safety policy can be integrated into the school's existing curriculum.



4. CREATING SUN SAFE SCHOOLS

Step 2: Educate School Decision Makers

Educate school decision makers about the importance of skin cancer prevention to obtain formal authorization to adopt a sun safety policy.

DECISION MAKER EDUCATION GUIDANCE AND BEST PRACTICES

Plan Your Approach

Use available information and resources to plan how and when to approach your school decision makers to advocate for a sun safety policy. To plan your approach, you may:

- identify the school decision-makers and understand their roles in the policy approval process
- engage school partners and champions to better understand the priorities and needs of the school community and build connections with decision-makers
- learn how the school's formal decision-making processes work so you can effectively advocate for a sun safety policy at the right time and through the appropriate channels.

Frame Your Message

When meeting with school decision makers, frame your message in a way that convinces them that the benefits of adopting a sun safety policy outweigh potential costs. To frame your message, you may:

- provide information about the important role school sun safety policies play in protecting students and staff from skin cancer
- bring a sample sun safety policy to provide an example of ways the policy can be integrated into the school's existing curriculum
- align the sun safety policy with the school's priorities of student health and wellness
- share success stories from other schools who have passed sun safety policies to address barriers or implementation concerns
- highlight that a sun safety policy ensures that sun protective practices are consistently supported across the school environment providing equal access to sun safety education and supports for all students and staff.



Who are School Decision Makers?

School decision makers are those who influence or make the policy decisions within a school district and typically include school boards, superintendents, and principals.



Know What to Expect

The school board of education may need to review the sun safety policy several times before it is adopted. Although adopting a comprehensive sun safety policy is preferred, it may not be possible due to your school's policies and regulations. If adopting a sun safety policy is not possible, you are still encouraged to incorporate sun safety education and practices in your school activities and lesson plans when possible.





4. CREATING SUN SAFE SCHOOLS

Step 3: Conduct a Pre-Assessment

Gather information about any existing sun safety policies and practices at your school before drafting a policy for adoption.

PRE-ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE AND BEST PRACTICES

Engage School Decision Makers and Staff

Conduct the pre-assessment with the help of school decision makers and staff who are knowledgeable about the school district or school building policy and practices.

Use the School Sun Safety Assessment Tool

The School Sun Safety Assessment Tool (Appendix A) is designed to assist you in assessing the policy and practices supportive of sun safety at your school district or school building. To conduct the pre-assessment, enter the date and school information on the tool and then check “pre-assessment” under the type of assessment. Next, read each question on the tool and record the appropriate response.

Use Results to Inform Sun Safety Practices

- Share the results of the pre-assessment with your school community and decision-makers to increase awareness about the need for a sun safety policy.
- Use the pre-assessment results to draft a sun safety policy specific to your school’s sun safety needs and priorities.

What is a Pre-Assessment?

A pre-assessment is a baseline assessment of your school’s existing policies and practices before drafting a policy for adoption. It can be used to identify opportunities for sun safety improvement at your school. Information gathered during the pre-assessment includes your school’s current use of shade and sunscreen, sun safety education and communication methods, use of protective clothing, and any anticipated sun safety barriers or challenges.



4. CREATING SUN SAFE SCHOOLS



Step 4: Draft a Sun Safety Policy

Draft a sun safety policy specific to the sun safety needs and priorities of your school.



DRAFTING A SUN SAFETY POLICY GUIDANCE AND BEST PRACTICES



Use a Sample Sun Safety Policy

The Sample School Sun Safety Policy (Appendix B) contains multiple sun safety components that, when combined, represent a comprehensive sun safety policy. Using a sample policy eliminates the barrier of needing to write a policy from scratch and allows for flexibility and customization based on the needs of your school.



Use Pre-Assessment Results to Inform Policy Components

Use pre-assessment results to inform whether to use the Sample School Sun Safety Policy in its entirety or select specific components. Although a comprehensive policy is preferred, adopting all components listed in the sample policy might not be possible. You are encouraged to customize the policy to meet your school's needs.



Use a Sample Sunscreen Permission Form

Use the Sample Parent/Guardian Sunscreen Permission Form (Appendix C) to receive permission for students to use sunscreen at school and modify it, if necessary, to make it easier for parents and guardians to submit.

To modify the permission form, you may:

- write the specific sunscreen brand that the school will provide on the sunscreen permission form and have parents and guardians check “yes” or “no” if they consent to their child using that brand of sunscreen, while also providing them an option to provide their own
- make the sunscreen permission form an opt-out permission form rather than an affirmative one
- include the sunscreen permission form in the list of required annual student registration materials.





4. CREATING SUN SAFE SCHOOLS

Step 5: Implement Sun Safety Practices

Implement environmental supports and educational resources as outlined in the policy.

EXAMPLES OF SUN SAFE ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORTS

Hats, Protective Clothing, and Sunglasses

Sun protective clothing such as hats, sunglasses and long-sleeved shirts and pants, help students to shield their skin from overexposure to the sun during the school day. To incorporate sun protective clothing into the school environment you may:

- update the dress code to allow students to wear hats and sunglasses during the school day, athletic events, and after school programs
- encourage students to wear wide-brim hats or visors, long-sleeved shirts and pants, and sunglasses through verbal or written communications
- modify school uniforms and physical education clothing to better protect students from exposure to UV rays
- add a wide-brimmed bucket hat with a brim that is at least 3 inches wide to the school supply list to help protect students' faces, necks, and ears.

Shade

Shade acts as a natural barrier that blocks or reduces direct exposure to the sun's intense UV rays. To incorporate shade into the school environment you may:

- install permanent shade structures like pergolas, canopies, or shade sails over playgrounds; pavilions for outdoor activities; and shaded covers for baseball dugouts
- use portable tents, shade canopies, or umbrellas for outdoor activities and events
- install UV protective window shades or apply UV-blocking film to classroom windows
- place play equipment and benches in shaded areas
- plant trees to create natural shade for a protective barrier from the sun.

What are Environmental Supports?

Environmental supports are physical modifications made to the school environment to make it easier for students to practice sun safety. Environmental supports such as shade, sunscreen, and sun protective clothing enable students to enjoy outdoor activities while minimizing their risk of sun exposure.





4. CREATING SUN SAFE SCHOOLS

Sunscreen

Convenient access to sunscreen encourages regular use and reduces the risk of sunburns for students and staff. Work with your school nurses and administrators to ensure sunscreen is being used in accordance with the school's sun safety policy and NYS Education Law Section 907.

To incorporate sunscreen into the school environment you may:

- install sunscreen dispensers
- use portable sunscreen dispensers and sunscreen pumps for outdoor activities and events
- provide free sunscreen packets at the nurse's office and at outdoor events
- require all student-athletes to have access to sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher during practices and games.

Signage and Reminders

Sun safety signs and visual (e.g., posters) and audio messages (e.g., school announcements) remind students and staff to engage in sun safe behaviors.

To incorporate signage and reminders into the school environment you may:

- hang sun safety posters in school hallways and classrooms
- add sunscreen reminders to field trip forms, sports permission slips, and school supply lists
- include sun safety reminders in morning and afternoon announcements
- include daily UV index on school morning show and weather announcements
- provide skin cancer awareness facts during skin cancer awareness month in May
- require teachers and coaches to provide verbal reminders to students to apply sunscreen and practice sun safety behaviors before going outside.



Scheduling

Students should be encouraged to seek shade and limit sun exposure during peak hours of sun intensity, between 10 AM and 4 PM, when UV rays are strongest.

To incorporate sun safe scheduling into the school environment you may:

- move outdoor activities (physical education classes, recess, and sporting events) to before 10 AM or after 4 PM when possible
- use increased sun safety protections when outdoor activities must occur between 10 AM and 4 PM such as using shade, taking breaks in the shade, providing verbal reminders to apply sunscreen, wearing sun protective clothing, and scheduling time into the activity to allow for sunscreen application
- stay indoors on days with a high UV Index.



4. CREATING SUN SAFE SCHOOLS

Sun Safety Curriculum

There are many educational programs to help educators teach students about the importance of sun safety, including information about the harmful effects of UV radiation and recommended practices for preventing skin cancer. See the list of free, evidenced-based sun safety educational programs and lesson plans below to easily incorporate sun safety into the school curriculum across all grade levels.

Grades Pre-K-1

Ray and the Sunbeatables®

Ray and the Sunbeatables® is a curriculum developed by the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center that educates children in Pre-K through 1st grade about sun protection and sun safety behaviors. Children meet superhero characters, Ray and the Sunbeatables, who have sun safe superpowers to protect against the harmful effects of UV rays. As a result of the curriculum, children will be able to express why sun protection is important and demonstrate how to protect their skin from the sun.

Access the curriculum at [Sunbeatables](https://www.sunbeatables.com).

Grades K-5

SunAWARE™

SunAWARE™ is a K-5 curriculum from the Melanoma Research Foundation that provides students with knowledge and habits to stay safe in the sun through interactive activities and lesson plans.

Access the curriculum at [SunAWARE](https://www.sunaware.org).





4. CREATING SUN SAFE SCHOOLS

Grades K–8

SunWise

SunWise is an environmental and health education program from the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) that teaches students in grades K-8 about sun safety, UV radiation, and stratospheric ozone. The program provides a toolkit with over 50 cross-curricular, standards-based activities that encourage students to explore, assess, and understand their natural environment and how it affects their health.

Access the curriculum at [SunWise](#).

Grades 2–5

Be Sunbeatable™

Be Sunbeatable™ is a sun safety program from Scholastic and the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center that encourages students in 2nd through 5th grades to be sun safe through nonfiction reading passages and science experiments.

Access the curriculum at [Sunbeatables](#).



Grades 6–12

Sun Smart U

Sun Smart U is a sun safety curriculum for middle and high school students developed by the Skin Cancer Foundation. The lesson plan features true stories from young skin cancer survivors, medically reviewed prevention guidelines, and handouts and activities, which can be taught in one or two class periods.

Access the curriculum at [Sun Smart U](#).

Grades Pre-K–12

SunSmart Lessons and Activities

SunSmart is an outdoor sports educational program from the Melanoma Education Foundation with lessons and activities for students of all ages. As a result of this curriculum, students will increase their knowledge of SunSmart behaviors to decrease their risk of skin cancer.

Access the curriculum at [SunSmart Lessons and Activities](#).





4. CREATING SUN SAFE SCHOOLS

Sun Safety Activities and Resources

In addition to sun safety curriculum, there are many activities and resources that educators can use to make learning about sun safety easy and fun for students of all ages. Use the list below for ideas to help get you started.



INTERACTIVE GAMES AND DEMONSTRATIONS

Develop interactive games and demonstrations to make learning about sun safety fun.

For example:

- Hold sun safety assemblies and presentations with sun safety quizzes and myth busting games, such as Jeopardy and sun safety “true and false.”
- Use a trivia wheel during sun safety games and activities to give away sun safety items such as SPF lip balm, hats, and sunglasses.
- Hold a sun safety fashion show where students and staff show off their sun safe fashion such as sunglasses, hats, and long-sleeved shirts.
- Provide sun safety activity books with word searches and coloring pages such as [Skin's Sun Safe Summer Activity Pack](#) and [Protect the Groms Workbook](#).



ART PROJECTS

Have students create art projects such as posters, drawings, or crafts related to sun safety.

For example:

- Decorate and tie-dye sun protective clothing such as long-sleeved shirts and bucket hats.
- Create “UV glow bracelets,” which are bracelets with beads that glow in UV light. These bracelets demonstrate that UV radiation is present even though it can't be seen and serve as a reminder to apply and reapply sunscreen.
- Hold sun safety poster contests and provide sun safety items as awards.



BOOKS

Provide books that promote sun safety in your school classrooms, library, and book fairs.

For example:

- *Fun in the Sun* by David Catraw
- *George the Sun Safe Superstar* by Kathryn Clifford
- *Pete the Cat and His Magic Sunglasses* by James Dean
- *Pete the Cat at the Beach* by James Dean
- *Sophie the Sun-Safe Surfer* by Dr. F.E. Frater
- *Molly Doesn't Want to Wear Sun Lotion! A Story about Sun Safety for Young Children* by Kat Arksey
- *Max and Mila at the Beach: A Sun Safety Guide for Kids* by Ms. Amalyn Persohn Martin
- *The Sunbeam Explorers: A Global Sun Safety Safari* by Nahleh Koochak
- *Captain Sunblock: Saving the Day Under the Sun* by Hamara Health





4. CREATING SUN SAFE SCHOOLS

POSTERS AND VISUAL REMINDERS

Use free posters and infographics to create a visual reminder for students that encourage sun safe behaviors.

Examples include:

- [Sun safety videos, posters and brochures](#) from Sun Protection Outreach Teaching by Students (SPOTS) for preschool and elementary students.
- [The Truth about Tanning Infographic](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for middle and high school students.
- [Preventing Skin Cancer Infographic](#) from the American Cancer Society (ACS).
- [Skin Cancer and Sun Protection Infographics](#) from the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD).



PEER-LED SUN SAFETY GROUPS AND EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

Create student-run wellness groups and educational campaigns where students can influence their peers to practice sun safety.

For example:

- **Hold a “Say No Way to Indoor Rays” prom challenge** where students sign no indoor tanning pledges to discourage indoor tanning among high schoolers.
- **Create sun safety social media campaigns** such as Project Sun Safe Staten Island (@projectsunsafesi) where students create skin cancer risk reduction Instagram content.
- **Create student-run wellness groups** and committees that educate students about the importance of sun safety and encourage them to be health and wellness ambassadors.
- **Incorporate sun safety messaging**, reminders, and education in existing student-run groups such as the school’s student newspaper.

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“Adopting a sun safety policy was a straightforward decision that reflects our commitment to student health and safety.”

— David Halloran,
Superintendent of
Schools, Gloversville
Enlarged School District



Project Sun Safe Staten Island

A Peer-Led Sun Safety Education Program



Project Sun Safe Staten Island was a peer-led, social media-based initiative that ran from 2021 to 2025 designed to improve sun safety knowledge and behaviors among Staten Island youth. It was run by Columbia University's Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Center (HICCC) under the CPiA grant.



This initiative invited local teen health ambassadors from Staten Island high schools to develop sun safety social media posts. The teen ambassadors researched a sun safety topic and then, with support and approval from Project Sun Safe advisors, designed sun safety educational messaging that was posted on Project Sun Safe's official Instagram page (@projectsunsafesi). The posts featured creative graphics and reader-friendly information that addressed topics such as the dangers of tanning and UV light exposure; sun protection myths for people of all skin tones; and local sun safety measures around Staten Island.



In addition to the social-media campaign, Project Sun Safe also provided peer-led educational assemblies about sun safety in schools.¹⁶ These educational efforts, combined with the passion and enthusiasm from students, resulted in the adoption of sun safety policies at New Dorp High School Athletics Department in 2023 and Michael J. Petrides School in 2024. Project Sun Safe not only taught teens about important sun safety practices but empowered them to become educators and role models within their peer groups and provided them with valuable life skills such as leadership and teamwork.¹⁶

As of September 2024,
Project Sun Safe Staten Island has had:



144 student ambassadors



250+ Instagram followers



100+ educational posts



4,000+ students educated



14 peer-led assemblies

4. CREATING SUN SAFE SCHOOLS



Gloversville High School Sun Safety Fashion Show

*A show
designed for
students by
students*

In April 2022, Gloversville High School,

in collaboration with St. Mary's Healthcare, held a sun safety presentation and fashion show for the entire student body and staff to raise awareness about skin cancer prevention and encourage sun safety behaviors.

The sun safety fashion show featured students and staff

as models who dressed up in sun protective clothing and demonstrated how to apply sunscreen products such as lip balm. Sun protective clothing worn during the show included wide-brimmed hats, sunglasses, long-sleeve shirts, pants, swimsuits, and related clothing that students can wear as they enjoy fishing, walking their dog, playing sports, biking, boating, swimming, and hiking on Fulton County's lakes.



The fashion show was a collaborative, student-centered approach where students actively participated in every

aspect of planning, rehearsing, and implementing it. The idea for the fashion show originated from the high school honor roll students who acted as sun safety champions by using their influence to engage fellow students in practicing sun safety. The honor roll students asked music students to make playlists with songs to play throughout the

show and art students to design signs for models to hold. An art teacher developed a class project for students to create signs for the fashion show that contained sun safety messaging such as, "Seek Shade," "Use the UV Index," and "Love the Skin You're In."



Pictures of the fashion show were shared with parents, students, and the community in the Gloversville Enlarged School District's newsletter, social media pages, and on the district website. As a result of hosting the fashion show, 689 high school students were educated on the importance of

practicing sun safety, and a video of the fashion show was produced and is available to share with Gloversville High School students as sun safety education for years to come. The fashion show was attended by NYS Senator James Tedisco who awarded the Gloversville Enlarged School District with a Certificate of Merit for their work to prevent skin cancer through sun safety education.





4. CREATING SUN SAFE SCHOOLS

Sun Safety Training and Communication

It is important to provide regular communication about the school's sun safety policy with the entire school community, including staff, students and families. Use the resources below in your communication efforts.

EDUCATING AND TRAINING STAFF

School administrators will notify staff about the sun safety policy and communicate sun safety guidelines on a regular basis. Examples include:

Formal Channels and Communications

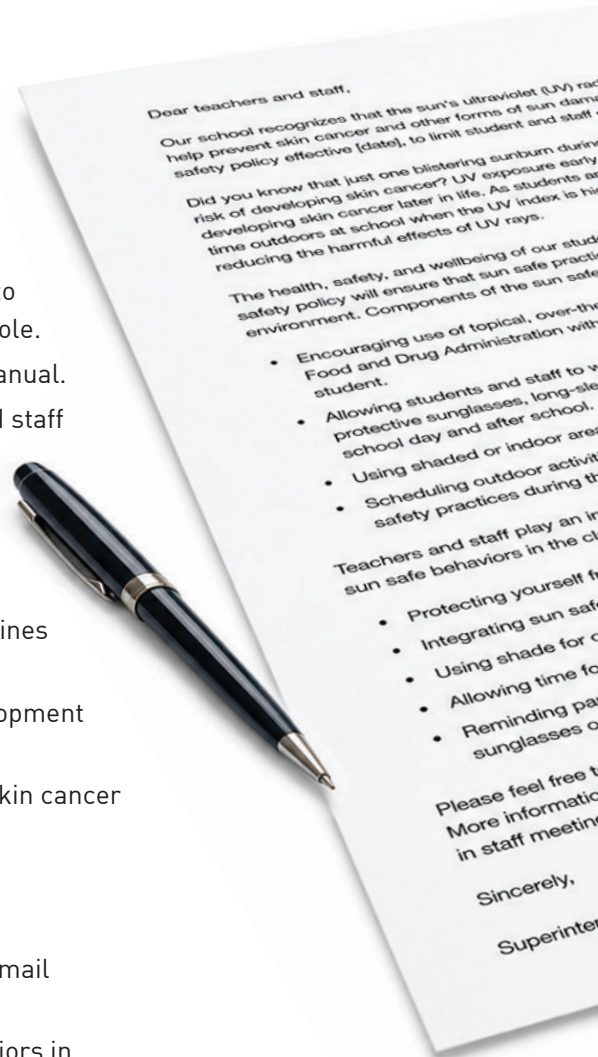
- Use the Sample Communication Letter to Teachers and Staff (Appendix E) to draft a notification to all district staff about the sun safety policy and their role.
- Add the sun safety policy to student and staff handbooks and the district manual.
- Provide information and reminders about the school's sun safety policy and staff requirements in new staff orientations and staff meetings.

Trainings and In-Person Events

- Provide annual sun safety trainings to staff on how to practice sun safety behaviors, encourage sun safety behaviors with students, and follow guidelines within the policy.
- Integrate skin cancer prevention education into existing professional development activities.
- Organize a skin cancer screening event for school staff that provides free skin cancer screenings and sun safety educational materials.

Reminders and Reinforcement

- Reinforce sun safety guidelines through school announcements, posters, email notifications, text alerts and school portals.
- Spotlight staff who are practicing sun safety, encouraging sun safety behaviors in students and/or teaching sun safety lessons and activities as an opportunity to share sun safety ideas and celebrate success.





4. CREATING SUN SAFE SCHOOLS

“The sun safety show at LGES was a big hit. Our staff and students enjoyed the assembly, and students were able to learn about sun safety in a fun way!”

-Jim Conway Lake George Elementary School Principal

TIPS FOR REACHING PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

The district will inform parents and guardians about the policy and how they can support and reinforce sun safety practices at home.

Examples include:

Formal Channels and Communications

- Use the Sample Communication Letter to Parents and Guardians (Appendix D) to notify parents and guardians about the sun safety policy and how they can encourage sun safety behaviors at home.
- Add the sun safety policy to the student handbook and the district manual.
- Require parents and guardians to submit the sunscreen permission form in annual registration materials.

School Newsletters

School newsletters can provide regular, ongoing sun safety communication with parents and guardians. Newsletter items may include:

- brief, actionable sun safety tips, particularly during warmer months
- reminders about the school's sun safety policy and practices
- skin cancer awareness facts during skin cancer awareness month in May
- spotlights of students and staff who are leading sun safety activities
- success stories of sun safety activities and events.



Take-Home Materials

Take-home materials provide less frequent but more detailed guidance for parents to save and refer back to. Take-home materials may include:

- sun safety tip sheets
- infographics of daily sun protection behaviors.

School Supply Lists

Adding sun protection items on school supply lists is an effective way to encourage parents to purchase them and normalize their use. Supplies may include:

- broad-spectrum SPF 15+ sunscreen
- wide-brimmed hat
- sunglasses
- sun-protective clothing.





4. CREATING SUN SAFE SCHOOLS

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“The partnership with CPiA and work we have done around sun safety has been amazing. We have developed a policy, enacted education programs and implemented the use of sun safety equipment across our district. The comprehensive approach has truly benefited our school community!”

- Kyle Manny

Director of Athletics,
Lake George Central
School District

In Person Activities and Events

PTA meetings, back-to-school nights, and open houses provide opportunities for direct, in-person sun safety communication. Conversations may include:

- a brief overview of sun safety practices and an opportunity to answer parent questions
- highlights of key components of the school's sun safety policy.

Permission Forms

Permission forms provide direct sun safety communication to remind parents and guardians to provide sun protective items and normalize their use. To maximize the visibility of the permission form you may:

- add sun protective clothing, such as wide-brimmed hats, sunglasses and broad-spectrum sunscreen on field trip permission forms
- require the sunscreen permission form be submitted with school registration materials
- include with sport permission forms to remind parents and guardians to have their child apply sunscreen before outdoor activities and sporting events.

Online and Digital Reminders

Online and digital reminders can streamline sun safety communication to parents and guardians in a fast and convenient way. Reminders may include:

- sun safety resources, educational materials, and awareness messages to parents and guardians in the parent portal and on the school's social media platforms and websites
- text alerts on days with a high UV index to prompt parents to apply sunscreen to young children, or remind older children to wear sunscreen, and encourage the wearing of sun protective clothing for both.





4. CREATING SUN SAFE SCHOOLS

Step 6: Conduct a Post-Assessment

Gather information about your school's sun safety policies and practices after adopting the policy and implementing sun safety practices.

WHAT IS A POST-ASSESSMENT?

A post-assessment is an assessment of your school's sun safety policies and practices after a sun safety policy is adopted. A post-assessment gathers the same information that was collected during the pre-assessment and is used to identify changes in sun safety policy and practices after policy adoption.

POST-ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE AND BEST PRACTICES

Engage Decision Makers

Conduct the post-assessment with the same school decision makers and staff that helped with the pre-assessment. If that is not possible, conduct the post-assessment with school decision makers and staff who are knowledgeable about the school district or school building policy and practices.

Use the School Sun Safety Assessment Tool

Use the same School Sun Safety Assessment Tool (Appendix A) that was used for the pre-assessment. To conduct the post-assessment, enter the date and school information on the tool and then check "post-assessment" under the type of assessment. Next, read each question on the tool and record the appropriate response.

Use Post-Assessment Results to Inform Sun Safety Practices

- Compare the results of the pre- and post-assessments to understand the changes that were made in the school as a result of the sun safety policy and the impact the policy is having on your school community.
- Use the post-assessment results when you update or review your sun safety policy to identify opportunities to improve sun safety practices and supports.
- Celebrate success! Share the results of the post-assessment with your school community to increase awareness about the benefits of having a sun safety policy and to build support for additional sun safety practices.



"This work reflects our commitment to aligning policy, practice, and partnerships to support student health and well-being. By embedding sun safety into our programs, facilities, and communications, we are taking a proactive approach that benefits our entire school community."

- John Luthringer,
Superintendent of Lake George
Central School District.

4. CREATING SUN SAFE SCHOOLS



Step 7: Promote Success

PARTNER WITH STUDENTS, STAFF, AND FAMILIES

Create partnerships to promote your school's sun safety success and build community support for sun safety policies and practices in schools.

For example:

Draft Press Releases

Customize and submit the Sample Press Release template (Appendix G) to your local news outlet to announce that your school has adopted a sun safety policy.

Hold a Press Conference

Hold a press conference to celebrate a sun safety event, such as a ribbon cutting ceremony to open an outdoor pavilion, and invite the media and government officials to attend.

Leverage Social Media

Share pictures and stories of sun safety events and activities on the school district's social media channels, on the school district's website, and in school newsletters.

Identify Fundraising Opportunities

Share sun safety information with the school board, PTA, and school booster clubs to generate fundraising opportunities to support sun safety efforts.

Use Other Promotional Strategies

- Provide sun safety materials with the public at school events.
- Share sun safety updates and progress at staff meetings to celebrate success.
- Share your sun safety success with other NYS school administrators at conferences and meetings to motivate them to pass a sun safety policy.



CHAMPION SUN SAFETY POLICIES

School decision makers, such as school administration, principals and superintendents, can use their networks and influence to champion sun safety policy and practices with other school decision makers.

Examples include:

- Customize and send the Sample Communication Letter to School Administrators (Appendix F) to educate and empower school decision makers to adopt sun safety policies and practices.
- Share information and a link to this sun safety toolkit in emails, presentations, and communications with school decision makers.
- Present about your school's sun safety success and share this toolkit at school district meetings and state and regional conferences.

Through our collective efforts, sun safety can be integrated into daily routines and school policies, making sun protection a consistent and sustainable part of student health and wellness across NYS.

Sun Safety Policies in Action

From **October 2018 to April 2025**, Cancer Prevention in Action (CPIA) grantees supported the adoption of sun safety policies and practices in community settings within **17 counties**. As a result of these efforts, sun safety policies were adopted by **27 schools**, reaching an estimated **29,318 students**.

CPIA GRANTEES

- Broome County Health Department
- Columbia University
- Glens Falls Hospital
- Oneida County Health Department
- Population Health Collaborative
- St. Lawrence County Health Initiative
- St. Mary's Healthcare
- Stony Brook University



Sun Safety Policies in Action

Through the CPiA program, **24 of the 27 schools** that adopted a policy completed a pre- and post-assessment of their sun safety practices and had the following results in the areas of shade protection and scheduling, sunscreen and protective clothing, and education and communication.



EDUCATION & COMMUNICATION



Schools that incorporate sun safety or skin cancer prevention as a part of the curriculum **increased from 54% to 75%**.

Schools that provide visual and audio reminders to students about sun safety **increased from 0% to 63%**.

Schools communicating sun safety facts and reminders to parents **more than doubled, from 33% to 71%**.

SHADE PROTECTION & SCHEDULING



100% of schools report that teachers remind students to use shade during outdoor activities.

Schools that consider shade when planning outdoor activities rose from **57% to 88%**.

Schools that schedule outdoor activities during the school day to avoid times when the sun is at peak intensity **increased from 46% to 71%**.

SUNSCREEN & PROTECTIVE CLOTHING



Teacher reminders to apply sunscreen, teachers allowing time for applying sunscreen, and parent/guardian encouragement to provide students with sunscreen to use at school **doubled** from less than half of schools to almost all schools.

Encouragement of students to wear protective clothing including wide-brim hats/visors, long-sleeve shirts and/or pants, and sunglasses **doubled** from less than half of schools to almost all schools.





5. IMPACT STORIES | Sun Safety Policies in Action

The Gloversville Enlarged School District

A public school district located in Gloversville, NY that serves over 2,800 students in Pre-K through 12th grade.



What They Did to Improve Sun Safety Practices

In 2021, the Gloversville Enlarged School District (GESD) Board of Education passed a sun safety policy to help prevent skin cancer for students.

Policy implementation was supported by St. Mary's Healthcare. Efforts to educate students about sun safety behaviors included teaching Ray and the Sunbeatables®, an evidenced-based sun safety curriculum, in elementary schools and holding a school assembly for high school students with a sun safety presentation and fashion show.

Strategies to create environmental supports included installing sunscreen dispensers and sun safety signage for the sports complex; using pop-up tents to increase shade during off-site school activities; and providing an outdoor classroom at the high school to increase shade for outside instruction.

The sun safety policy was promoted to students, families, and the community at the district's annual open house, in the district's newsletter, and on the GESD social media pages. The district promoted their outdoor classroom by opening it with a ribbon cutting ceremony that was attended by students, parents, faculty, the GESD Board of Education, community leaders, government officials and the media.

The Impact

As a result of passing a sun safety policy, the GESD now considers shade when planning outdoor activities, and when possible, avoids scheduling outdoor activities between 10 AM and 4 PM when the sun is at peak intensity.

Parents and guardians are encouraged to provide students with sunscreen to be used at school with written permission, and teachers allow time for students to apply sunscreen before going outside. Students are now encouraged to wear sun protective clothing when they are in the sun. The GESD uses the outdoor classroom several times throughout the school day for outdoor instruction and has built a sign-out system for the outdoor classroom to allow use of the outdoor classroom for generations to come. As a result of their sun safety efforts, the GESD was awarded two Certificates of Merits from NYS Senator James Tedisco for their work to prevent skin cancer and for the outdoor classroom to increase shade.



At a Glance

Implemented sun safety initiatives throughout the school district, including:

- a sun safety presentation and fashion show for 689 high school students
- Ray and the Sunbeatables® for elementary school students
- sunscreen dispensers and sun safety signage for the GESD Sports Complex
- pop-up tents for increased shade
- an outdoor classroom for the Gloversville High School.



Awarded Certificate of Merit for their work to prevent skin cancer



Awarded Certificate of Merit for the outdoor classroom to increase shade



“Our sun safety efforts show that even small changes can have a real impact on protecting students.”

— **David Halloran**,
Superintendent of
Schools, Gloversville
Enlarged School District



5. IMPACT STORIES | Sun Safety Policies in Action

The Michael J. Petrides School

The Michael J. Petrides School is a public school located in Staten Island, NY that serves over 1,400 students in Pre-K through 12th grade.



What They Did to Improve Sun Safety Practices

In January 2024, the Michael J. Petrides School passed a sun safety policy to help prevent skin cancer for students.

The sun safety policy was championed by a student who learned about the importance of practicing sun safety by participating in Project Sun Safe, a student social media group run by Columbia University. Columbia University staff were invited to the student's school to provide skin cancer risk reduction programming and meet with the school principal regarding a sun safety policy.

As a result of this connection, a sun safety policy was passed. Efforts to educate the students about sun protection included holding a seminar for 114 middle school students to teach them about skin cancer risk reduction and Project Sun Safe. Strategies to create environmental supports included installing sunscreen dispensers, sun safety signage, and providing shade tents to increase shade for outdoor activities.



At a Glance

Implemented sun safety initiatives throughout the school, including:

- a sun safety presentation to 114 middle school students
- sun safety communications to students and parents
- sunscreen dispensers and sun safety signage
- pop-up tents for increased shade.

The Impact

As a result of passing a sun safety policy, shade is now provided at the school's physical education areas and sports fields, and reminders to engage in sun safety behaviors are provided to students through posters and school announcements. Sun safety facts and reminders are also communicated with parents and guardians through school communications such as newsletters. As a result of the sun safety seminar, 10 middle school students signed up to join Project Sun Safe.





5. IMPACT STORIES | Sun Safety Policies in Action

Lake George Central School District

The Lake George Central School District is a public school district located in Lake George, NY, that is comprised of two campuses, the elementary school with 285 students; and the junior/senior high school with 288 students.



What They Did to Improve Sun Safety Practices

In August 2023, the Lake George Central School District (LGCSD) passed a sun safety policy to help prevent skin cancer for students. The sun safety policy is bundled within the district's wellness policy.

Policy implementation was supported by Glens Falls Hospital who provided education and environmental supports. Efforts to educate elementary students about sun safety included implementing sun safety into the school curriculum; adding sun safety books to the school library; incorporating sun safety activities at field day, such as students designing and wearing their own bucket hats; and holding a sun safety fashion show.

Efforts to increase access to sunscreen included adding sunscreen packets to athletes' bags, offering sunscreen packets on site in nurses' offices, and installing sunscreen dispensing systems on the elementary and junior and senior high school campuses. Efforts to increase shade included providing patio umbrellas at the tennis courts and at the outdoor dining and gathering spaces, pop-up tents for outdoor activities, and shaded athletic benches. The sun safety policy was promoted to students, families, and the community at the district's annual open house and through the district media, websites, and parent portals.

The Impact

As a result of passing a sun safety policy, the LGCSD now provides shade in outdoor areas such as playgrounds, sports fields, and lunch areas; considers shade when planning outdoor activities; and, when possible, avoids scheduling outdoor activities between 10 AM and 4 PM when the sun is at peak intensity. Parents and guardians are encouraged to provide students with sunscreen to be used at school with written permission, and teachers allow time for students to apply sunscreen before going outside. Students are now encouraged to wear sun protective clothing when they are in the sun. Sun safety facts and reminders are shared with students through posters and school announcements, and to parents and guardians through communications and nurses' notes.

At a Glance

Implemented sun safety initiatives throughout the school district, including:

- a sun safety fashion show for elementary school students
- sun safety books in the elementary school library
- sunscreen dispensing systems for the elementary and junior/senior high school
- sunscreen packets at the nurses' office
- pop-up tents and patio umbrellas at the tennis courts and outdoor dining spaces
- shaded athletic benches for the girls' and boys' soccer teams.





5. IMPACT STORIES | Sun Safety Policies in Action

New Dorp High School Athletics Department

New Dorp High School is a public school located in Staten Island, NY that serves over 3,000 students in 9th through 12th grade.



What They Did to Improve Sun Safety Practices

In May 2023, the New Dorp High School (NDHS) Athletic Department passed a sun safety policy to help prevent skin cancer for NDHS students with a focus on student-athletes. The motivation behind adopting the policy was to inform the student body on how to improve their health and reduce skin cancer risk.

The sun safety policy was championed by a student who learned about the importance of practicing sun safety by participating in Project Sun Safe, a student social media group run by Columbia University. The student worked together with the NDHS Assistant Principal for Health & Physical Education/Athletic Director to build awareness and support for the policy by organizing school assemblies and sharing sun safety information through school announcements and newspaper publications. The student was the editor of the school newspaper and published information about the policy several times to keep students informed. As a result of these efforts, a sun safety policy was passed and Columbia University provided policy support through holding school assemblies to educate the students about the importance of skin cancer prevention, installing sunscreen dispensers at the athletes' health facilities, and providing pop-up tents to increase shade for athletes on the field.

The Impact

As a result of passing a sun safety policy, shade is considered when planning outdoor activities and is now provided at physical education areas and sports fields. Reminders to engage in sun safety behaviors are provided to student athletes through posters and school announcements. Sun safety facts and reminders are also communicated with parents and guardians through newsletters. Students and teachers are more aware of the importance of using sunscreen and sun safety is practiced more in outdoor sports activities. Sun safety is also spoken about more often in the school community. Sunscreen usage has been incorporated into the team practices of athletes, and students who have darker skin tones are also now aware that they are susceptible to skin cancer. As a result of the school assemblies, students are more willing to practice sun safety and have even joined Project Sun Safe to advocate for their community.

At a Glance

Implemented sun safety initiatives throughout the school, including:

- a sun safety assembly to high school students
- sun safety communications to students and parents
- sunscreen dispensers at athletic health facilities
- pop-up tents for increased shade on sports fields.



SECTION 6

Funding and Grant Opportunities



Shade

THE AAD SHADE STRUCTURE PROGRAM

The AAD Shade Structure Program awards funding to public schools and community organizations to install permanent shade structures and signage. This grant aims to reduce harmful ultraviolet (UV) exposure by increasing access to shaded outdoor spaces, particularly for children. For more information, visit [AAD](#).

PROTECT THE GROMS PLAYGROUND SHADE STRUCTURE GRANT

The Protect the Groms Playground Shade Structure Grant provides funding to public and charter elementary schools and nonprofits in the United States to install shade structures. To qualify, schools must demonstrate a commitment to sun safety education and have an official sun safety policy in place. For more information, visit [Protect the Groms](#).

IMPACT MELANOMA SHADE PROGRAM

The IMPACT Melanoma Shade Program provides portable shade structures to communities and organizations to help reduce UV exposure in outdoor settings. For more information, visit [IMPACT Melanoma](#).



Sunscreen

THE SUPERGOOP! OUNCE BY OUNCE® SUNSCREEN IMPACT PROGRAM

The Supergoop! Ounce By Ounce® Sunscreen Impact Program offers sunscreen donations to public and private schools, as well as nonprofit youth organizations. Eligible groups can request sunscreen to support daily sun protection practices. For more information, visit [Supergoop!](#)

PROTECT THE GROMS BULK PUMP SUNSCREEN PROGRAM

Protect the Groms Bulk Pump Sunscreen Program provides bulk sunscreen dispensers to eligible elementary schools who demonstrate a commitment to promoting sun safety through education and protective practices. For more information, visit [Protect the Groms](#).

IMPACT MELANOMA PRACTICE SAFE SKIN

The IMPACT Melanoma Practice Safe Skin Program provides sunscreen dispensers and educational materials to schools and communities. The program promotes regular sunscreen use and raises awareness about the dangers of UV exposure. For more information, visit [IMPACT Melanoma](#).



Education

THE AAD GOOD SKIN KNOWLEDGE COMMUNITY GRANT

The AAD Good Skin Knowledge Community Grant provides community grants to community groups, schools, and after school programs to deliver a four-module lesson plan training to children ages 8-13 within their organization. For more information, visit [AAD](#).

THE WOMEN'S DERMATOLOGIC SOCIETY (WDS) PLAY SAFE IN THE SUN PROGRAM

The WDS Play Safe in the Sun Program provides free skin cancer screenings and sun safety education, resources and outreach to parks, schools, sporting events, and festivals nationwide. For more information, visit [WDS](#).

Appendix A

School Sun Safety Assessment Tool						
Assessment Overview						
School Name				Date		
Type	☐ Pre-Assessment ☐ Post-Assessment					
Written Policy						
Questions				Yes	No	N/A
1. Do you have a written sun safety policy that attempts to limit student and staff exposure to the sun? A written policy includes any written guidelines about the site's operations or expectations for staff, students, and/or families.				☐	☐	☐
2. Is the sun safety policy shared with all staff?				☐	☐	☐
3. Are parents/guardians given a copy of the sun safety policy?				☐	☐	☐
4. Are contracted partners, agencies, or community-based organizations providing services to students (e.g., after school or summer programs) notified of the sun safety policy?				☐	☐	☐
5. Do you review the effectiveness of the sun safety policy, including identifying areas for improvement and making revisions?				☐	☐	☐
Shade Protection and Scheduling						
Questions				Yes	No	N/A
6. Is shade considered when planning outdoor activities (e.g., moving physical education or sports events to shaded areas, moving activities indoors)?				☐	☐	☐
7. Do you regularly assess current shade (e.g., amount of shade, quality of shade, use of shade) to determine if and where additional shade is needed?				☐	☐	☐
8. Do you include plans for adding shade (e.g., planting trees, building structures) when developing new or remodeling existing school buildings or school grounds?				☐	☐	☐
9. Do teachers/staff encourage or remind students to use available shade during outdoor activities?				☐	☐	☐
10. Are outdoor activities (including sporting events, assemblies) during the school day scheduled, whenever possible, to avoid times (between 10 AM – 4 PM) when the sun is at peak intensity?				☐	☐	☐
11. Is shade provided at any of the following outdoor areas used by students and staff?				☐	☐	☐
a. Playgrounds				☐	☐	☐
b. Recess areas				☐	☐	☐
c. Physical education areas				☐	☐	☐
d. Sports fields				☐	☐	☐
e. Lunch areas				☐	☐	☐
f. Assembly areas				☐	☐	☐
g. Bus stops				☐	☐	☐
Sunscreen						
Questions				Yes	No	N/A

School Sun Safety Assessment Tool			
12. Do teachers/staff remind students to apply sunscreen (with at least SPF 15) before going outside?	☐	☐	☐
13. Do teachers/staff allow time for students to apply sunscreen (with at least SPF 15) before going outside?	☐	☐	☐
14. Are parents/guardians encouraged (e.g., through verbal or written communications) to provide students with sunscreen (with at least SPF 15) to be used at school?	☐	☐	☐
Education and Communication			
Questions	Yes	No	N/A
15. Is sun safety or skin cancer prevention taught to students as part of school curriculum?	☐	☐	☐
16. Are visual (e.g., posters) and/or audio messages (e.g., school announcements) used to remind students and staff to engage in sun safe behaviors?	☐	☐	☐
17. Are sun safety facts and reminders communicated with parents/guardians through newsletters, nurse's notes, school communications, etc.?	☐	☐	☐
Hats, Protective Clothing, and Sunglasses			
Questions	Yes	No	N/A
18. When in the sun, are students and staff prohibited from wearing:	☐	☐	☐
a. Wide-brim hats or visors?	☐	☐	☐
b. Sunglasses?	☐	☐	☐
19. When in the sun, are students and staff encouraged (e.g., through verbal or written communications) to wear:	☐	☐	☐
a. Wide-brim hats or visors?	☐	☐	☐
b. Protective clothing, such as long sleeve shirts and/or long pants?	☐	☐	☐
c. Sunglasses?	☐	☐	☐
Open Responses			
Pre-Assessment Questions			
20. What barriers or challenges, if any, do you anticipate related to implementing sun safety policies and practices?			
21. What information or resources would be helpful to you in implementing sun safety policies and practices?			
Post- Assessment Questions			
22. Describe any sun safety policy or practice changes that occurred at your school district or building since the pre-assessment that were not captured in this tool.			

The school sun safety assessment tool was developed by New York State Department of Health (DOH) staff and is informed by best practices promoted through the CDC School Health Policies and Practices Study, and [the CDC Guidelines for School Programs to Prevent Skin Cancer](#).

Appendix B

Sample School Sun Safety Policy

Rationale and Purpose:

The <school district> ("District")'s Board of Education along with the New York State Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recognizes that the sun's ultraviolet (UV) radiation can cause skin cancer. To help prevent skin cancer, the District will support sun safety behaviors in students and staff; create environmental supports to avoid overexposure to the sun when students and staff are outdoors; and provide key sun safety education; and communication with students, staff and families. The Board directs that <school district> will implement the following sun safety policy.

Policy:

Hats, Protective Clothing, and Sunglasses

Students and staff will be allowed and encouraged to wear articles of sun-protective clothing including hats when outdoors, including during the school day, athletic events, and after-school programs. The District's Student Dress Code will continue to specify the type(s) of clothing and hats that are, or are not, permissible on campus. School administrators, teachers, and staff may assess physical education clothing to determine if and how they might be modified to better protect students from exposure to UV radiation. When students and staff are outdoors, they will be allowed to wear sunglasses, which protect the eyes from UV radiation. The District's Student Dress Code may specify the type(s) of sunglasses that are, or are not, permissible on campus.

Sunscreen

Students can carry and use topical, over-the-counter sunscreen products approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration with the written permission of the parent or guardian of the student. An annually updated record of this permission must be maintained by the school. Students will be allowed time and encouraged to apply sunscreen before going outside at school. Students who are physically unable to apply sunscreen may be assisted by unlicensed personnel when directed to do so by the student, if permitted by a parent or guardian and authorized by the school. The sunscreen must be used for the purpose of avoiding overexposure to the sun (during the school day, athletic events, and afterschool programs) and not for medical treatment of an injury or illness. Sunscreen cannot be shared with other students. Parents or guardians are responsible for providing the sunscreen to be used at school.

Shade Protection and Scheduling

School administrators, buildings and grounds personnel, and other District employees will consider the availability of shade when planning outdoor activities. Appropriate staff will optimize shade options for students and staff and will encourage the use of shaded or indoor areas for congregation and recreation as appropriate. Appropriate staff will also survey the school campus to identify existing shaded areas, and non-shaded areas where the addition of shade would be practical and desirable. Priority will be given to including ample shade in new construction plans and adding shade when remodeling school facilities.

As scheduling permits, outdoor activities will occur before 10 AM or after 4 PM during March through October. However, scheduling constraints should not reduce the total time students engage in physical education or activity.

Education and Communication

All District staff will be provided with a copy of this policy. Educators will be allowed to provide education at each grade level, pre-Kindergarten through 12, which relates to skin cancer, including information about the harmful effects of UV radiation and recommended practices for preventing skin cancer at any time of the school year. The program may use, but will not be restricted to, available curriculum and educational materials, and visual (ex: posters) and audio messages (school announcements) to remind students and staff to engage in sun-safe behaviors. The administration will evaluate and revise sun safety programs, as needed.

The District will inform parents and guardians about the importance of, and strategies for, preventing skin cancer. Communication will include, but will not be limited to, details of the District policy relating to hats, sun-protective clothing, sunscreen usage, and sunglasses. The District will also encourage families to reinforce sun-safe behavior outside the school and to support the school's sun safety programs. In addition, the District will provide notice of this policy to all contracted partners, agencies, or community-based organizations providing services to students (ex: afterschool programs, summer programs, etc.).

Policy Monitoring and Review:

The District will evaluate and revise this policy on an annual basis.

Reference:

Education Law, Article 19 Section 907

NYSED, [Updated Information Regarding the Use of Sunscreen](#)

Date Policy Adopted: <insert date here>

Date Policy Updated: <insert date here>

Appendix C
Sample Parent/Guardian Permission Form for Sunscreen Use

<School District and/or School Name>
Parent/Legal Guardian Permission for Use of Sunscreen
<2026-2027> School Year

Student Name:

Grade:

I give permission for my child to carry and use sunscreen that I have provided for school or on fields trips for the current school year. I affirm that my child understands the need for sunscreen and is able to use it appropriately. S/he will not share the sunscreen with others.

If my child is unable to physically apply sunscreen, s/he may be assisted by unlicensed personnel when directed to do so by the student and authorized by the school.

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature:

Date:

Please return this form to your child's school nurse. A record of this permission slip will be maintained by the school.

Appendix D
Sample Communication Letter to Parents and Guardians

Dear Parents and Guardians,

[School Name] recognizes that the sun's ultraviolet (UV) radiation can cause skin cancer. To help prevent skin cancer and other forms of sun damage, [School Name] has passed a sun safety policy effective [date], to limit student and staff exposure to UV radiation from the sun.

Did you know that just one blistering sunburn during childhood can double a person's lifetime risk of developing skin cancer? UV exposure early in childhood increases the risk of developing skin cancer later in life. As students and staff spend time outdoors at school when the UV index is highest, our school plays an important role in reducing the harmful effects of UV rays.

The health, safety, and wellbeing of our students and staff is our highest priority. The sun safety policy will ensure that sun safe practices are consistently supported across our school environment. Components of the sun safety policy include:

- encouraging use of topical, over-the-counter sunscreen products approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration with the written permission of the parent or guardian of the student
- allowing students and staff to wear sun protective clothing (wide-brimmed hats, UV-protective sunglasses, long-sleeved shirts and pants) during outdoor activities during the school day and after school
- using shaded or indoor areas for congregation and recreation as appropriate
- increasing the use of sun safety practices between 10AM and 4PM.

As a parent or guardian, you can help reinforce sun safe behaviors at home; this includes:

- talking to your child about the importance of practicing sun safe behaviors such as wearing hats, using sunscreen, seeking shade, and avoiding indoor tanning and sunbathing
- modeling and encouraging sun safe behaviors at home
- sending your child to school with sun protective clothing
- supporting our school's sun safety programs.

Please feel free to contact us at [phone number] or [email] with any questions you may have. More information about our sun safety policy will be shared throughout the year.

Sincerely,

[School Principal or Superintendent]

Appendix E
Sample Communication Letter to Teachers and Staff

Dear [School Name] teachers and staff,

[School Name] recognizes that the sun's ultraviolet (UV) radiation can cause skin cancer. To help prevent skin cancer and other forms of sun damage, [School Name] has passed a sun safety policy effective [date], to limit student and staff exposure to UV radiation from the sun.

Did you know that just one blistering sunburn during childhood can double a person's lifetime risk of developing skin cancer? UV exposure early in childhood increases the risk of developing skin cancer later in life. As students and staff spend time outdoors at school when the UV index is highest, our school plays an important role in reducing the harmful effects of UV rays.

The health, safety, and wellbeing of our students and staff is our highest priority. The sun safety policy will ensure that sun safe practices are consistently supported across our school environment. Components of the sun safety policy include:

- encouraging use of topical, over-the-counter sunscreen products approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration with the written permission of the parent or guardian of the student
- allowing students and staff to wear sun protective clothing (wide-brimmed hats, UV-protective sunglasses, long-sleeved shirts and pants) during outdoor activities during the school day and after school
- using shaded or indoor areas for congregation and recreation as appropriate
- increasing the use of sun safety practices between 10AM and 4PM.

Teachers and staff play an important role in supporting the sun safety policy and reinforcing sun safe behaviors in the classroom, this includes:

- protecting yourself from the sun by wearing hats and sunglasses and using sunscreen
- integrating sun safety lessons and activities into the school curriculum
- using shade for outdoor activities or moving activities indoors
- allowing time for students and staff to apply sunscreen before going outside
- reminding parents and guardians to provide students with sunscreen, hats and sunglasses on school permission forms and in regular school communications.

Please feel free to contact me at [phone number] or [email] with any questions you may have. More information about our sun safety policy and how it will be implemented will be provided in staff meetings and trainings throughout the year.

Sincerely,

[School Principal or Superintendent]

Appendix F
Sample Communication Letter to School Administrators

Dear [Colleagues/School Administrators]

We are pleased to announce that [School Name] has adopted a sun safety policy to limit student and staff exposure to UV radiation from the sun.

Too much time in the sun increases skin cancer risk. As a result of adopting a sun safety policy, [School Name] has implemented strategies to limit student and staff exposure to UV rays from the sun, including supporting sun safety behaviors; creating environmental supports; providing sun safety education; and providing sun safety communications to students, staff, and families.

Did you know that just one blistering sunburn during childhood can double a person's lifetime risk of developing skin cancer? UV exposure early in childhood increases the risk of developing skin cancer later in life. As students and staff spend time outdoors at school when the UV index is highest, schools play an important role in reducing the harmful effects of UV rays.

We encourage you to join us in our efforts to promote sun safety and reduce skin cancer risk by adopting a sun safety policy. Sun safety policies ensure that sun safety practices are consistently supported across the school environment and promote sun safety behaviors early in life - when UV exposure has the greatest long-term impact. By integrating sun safety into daily routines and school policies, schools can make sun protection a consistent and sustainable part of student and staff health and wellness.

For information on how your school can adopt sun safety policies and/or practices, the New York State (NYS) Sun Safety Toolkit for Pre-K-12 Schools provides knowledge, tools and resources to promote sun safety and reduce skin cancer risk for Pre-K-12 students and staff in NYS. Resources that you may find helpful include:

- free, evidenced-based sun safety lesson plans
- sun safety funding and grant opportunities
- a sample sun safety policy and sunscreen permission form
- a sample communication letter for parents and guardians.

Please contact me at [phone number] or [email] with any questions you may have. For more information about the toolkit, visit nyscancerconsortium.org.

Sincerely,

[School Principal or Superintendent]

Appendix G

Sample Press Release

[FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE]

[School Name] Adopts Sun Safety Policy to Protect Students and Staff

[CITY, State] — [Date] — In an effort to help prevent skin cancer, [School Name] is pleased to announce the adoption of a sun safety policy, effective [date], to limit student and staff exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun.

Too much time in the sun increases skin cancer risk. The sun safety policy outlines strategies [School Name] will implement to limit student and staff exposure to UV rays from the sun, including supporting sun safety behaviors; creating environmental supports; providing sun safety education; and providing sun safety communications to students, staff, and families.

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States. About 1 in 5 Americans will develop skin cancer during their lifetime despite it being a largely preventable disease. UV exposure early in childhood increases the risk of developing skin cancer later in life. As students and staff spend time outdoors at school when the UV index is highest, schools play an important role in reducing the harmful effects of UV rays.

[Add information about policy implementation activities, for example: To support policy implementation efforts, [School Name] [has provided/will provide] school assemblies to educate students about the importance of skin cancer prevention, visual and audio messages to remind students and staff to engage in sun safe behaviors, and portable sunscreen dispensers and shade tents for outdoor activities.]

[Add quotes from students, staff, families, or administrators here about the sun safety policy and implementation efforts.]

School sun safety policies ensure that sun safety practices are consistently supported across the school environment and promote sun safe behaviors early in life - when UV exposure has the greatest long-term impact. By integrating sun safety into daily routines and school policies, schools can make sun protection a consistent and sustainable part of student and staff health and wellness.

For information on how your school can adopt a sun safety policy, the New York State Sun Safety Toolkit for Pre-K-12 Schools provides schools with knowledge, tools and resources to promote sun safety and reduce skin cancer risk for Pre-K-12 students and staff across the state. Visit nyscancerconsortium.org to learn more.

About [School Name]

[Insert information about your school here.]

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