Message from our Board Chair:

Dear Friends,

I’ll never forget the first time I stepped onto a Playworks playground several years ago. Every single kid was playing; no one was sitting off to the side; there weren’t any apparent cliques. Everywhere I looked, kids were smiling and laughing. On playgrounds across Northern California, Playworks coaches create this exact environment—welcoming, fun, inclusive. And schools need our support now more than ever.

While many aspects of life have returned to some form of normal, the pandemic’s impacts are still felt strongly in schools, as kids experience the lingering effects of isolation and teachers grapple with their students’ social and learning deficits.

Frankly, play has never been more important than it is today. Through play, kids build friendships, develop confidence, and learn important conflict-resolution skills that serve them throughout their lives. And kids at schools served by Playworks get to play every single day.

I am inspired by our Northern California team’s dedication and perseverance through the pandemic, and proud to share that in 2022 we served more schools, expanded our team, and built a strong financial footing to support continued growth. And I am thrilled to welcome our new executive director for Northern California, Laura Medina Quintanar, who in her first sixty days has already brought so much enthusiasm, curiosity, and compassion to her role as our regional leader.

I hope you enjoy reading about our impact over the past year, and I invite you to contact me or another Playworker if you have any questions or are interested in further supporting our important work.

Playfully,

Nick Nieto
Chair, Northern California Advisory Board
OUR MISSION
is to improve the health and well-being of children by increasing opportunities for physical activity and safe, meaningful play.

OUR VISION
is that one day every child in America will have access to safe, fun, healthy play every day.

41,200 Students Served
72 Schools/Partners
59% of students qualify for free/reduced lunch
86% are students of color

OUR IMPACT
Every year, Playworks surveys our partner schools to learn about the impact of our programs and find ways to improve. Here are a few highlights from educators surveyed this year:

92% report that Playworks helps students develop the skills they need to succeed in their learning community

97% report that Playworks helps the school create opportunities for inclusion of diverse groups of students

85% of educators report that during learning time Playworks increase students’ ability to focus on class activities

96% agree that Playworks increases the number of students that are physically active.
Returning to the Playground

As school campuses reopened in 2021-22, Playworks staff focused on teaching – and re-teaching – basic life skills to students who hadn’t had the opportunity to play together for a year due to the pandemic.

Recess proved to be a particularly challenging time. Many kids struggled with cooperation, were overly physical with each other and generally needed support making connections with their peers. It was clear that healing from collective trauma and focusing on mental and physical health would need to be a huge part of returning to school. Playworks, with its emphasis on safe and healthy play, was uniquely positioned to support this transition.

Playworks staff worked to re-introduce foundational skills by focusing on games that promoted community building, connection and conflict resolution. To empower all children to participate fully, we prioritized teaching kids how to play in groups, rather than teaching many different games and even spent time going over the physical boundaries of the playground. With the support of the caring adults at our partner schools, we were able to once again transform school cultures, this time in a post-pandemic world.

By the end of the year, we were thrilled to see our school playgrounds once again filled with games, teamwork, leadership and most importantly, joy.
In the 22-23 school year we are excited to be piloting Relay, a new service offering where coaches rotate between 2-3 schools instead of being rooted on a single campus. This new model allows us to work with a greater number of students and helps us build sustainable service delivery in partnership with school staff.

Follow us on our social media to stay connected!
Thank You to Our Partners in Play!

Playworks Northern California extends immense gratitude to the generous support of all our individual donors and volunteers. Our impact is the result of our collective investment and commitment to Playworks’ mission to bring safe and healthy play to every kid.

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Auburn Union School District
Brentwood Union School District
Campbell Union School District
Cupertino Union School District
Davis Joint Unified School District
Dixon Unified School District
Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District
Hayward Unified School District
Monterey Peninsula Unified School District
Moreland School District
Mountain View Whisman School District
Mt. Diablo Unified School District
Oakland Unified School District
Pacifica School District
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Pleasanton Unified School District
Ravenswood City School District
Sacramento City Unified School District
San Francisco Unified District
San Mateo-Foster City School District
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South San Francisco Unified
Spreckels Union Elementary School District
Sunnyvale Unified School District
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Warriors Community Foundation

If you’re interested in collaborating or learning more about our partnerships, click here.

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