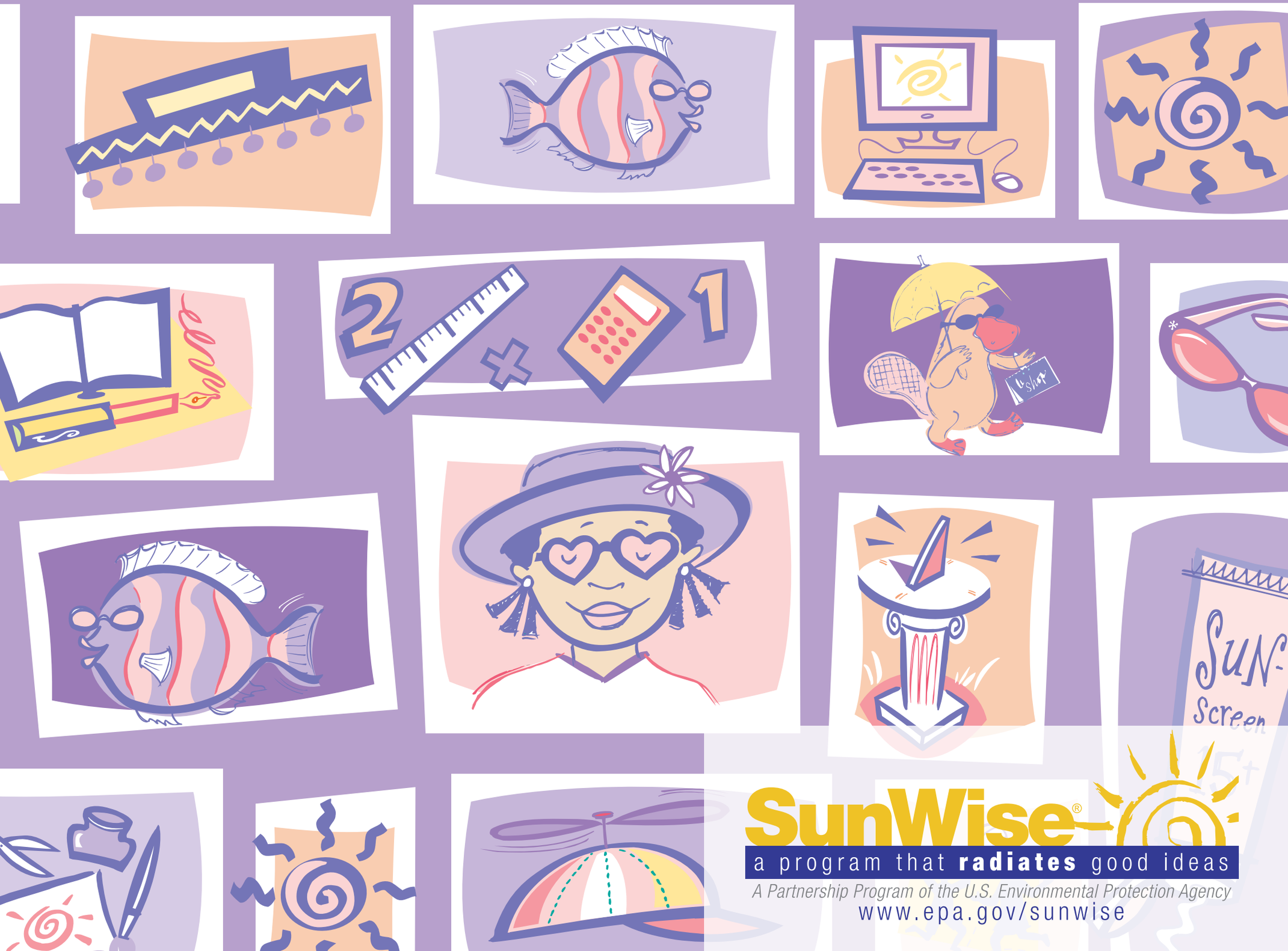
introduction



SunWise®

a program that **radiates** good ideas

A Partnership Program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

www.epa.gov/sunwise

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Why Sun Safety Education?

Overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation is the primary environmental risk factor in the development of UV-related health effects. With one in five Americans developing skin cancer, education about sun safety is a vital step toward reducing risk and improving public health. Children are of particular concern, since unprotected exposure to the sun during youth puts them at increased lifetime risk for skin cancer. Other adverse health effects resulting from overexposure to UV radiation include eye damage and cataracts, immune system suppression, and premature aging of the skin.

Overexposure to the sun is an important health issue for all skin types. Many people believe that only lighter-skinned people need to be concerned about these effects. Though it is true that darker skin has more natural pigment, which acts as a protectant, darker skin is still susceptible to many of the damaging effects of UV radiation. The risk of other UV-related health effects is not dependent upon skin type.

The good news is that UV-related health effects are largely preventable by instituting sun-protection practices early and consistently. Schools and teachers can play a major role in protecting children by teaching and modeling sun safety behaviors.

The SunWise Program

In 1998, after a successful collaboration with educators, medical professionals, environmental organizations, meteorologists, parents, and children, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) developed the SunWise Program to help educators raise sun safety awareness and foster behavior change. The program, designed to meet the diverse needs of schools and communities nationwide, helps students learn about the science of the sun, the risks of overexposure to the sun, and what can be done to protect themselves from the sun's harmful UV rays.

Recognizing the many issues schools and educators are asked to address daily, the SunWise Tool Kit provides maximum flexibility—elements can be used as stand-alone teaching tools or to complement existing classroom activities and/or school curricula.

The SunWise Tool Kit activities are standards-based, cross-curricular, and innovative in their design. They encourage students to explore, assess, and understand their natural environment and those factors that affect their health. They also encourage students to be physically active, while protecting themselves from UV radiation at the same time. Ultimately, students will develop skills that will help them think critically, work cooperatively, and solve problems creatively, thus enabling them to make sound decisions about their health and environment. Students and teachers alike will increase their awareness of simple steps they can take to protect themselves from overexposure to the sun.

The time commitment necessary to implement SunWise is minimal, while the potential payoff is enormous.

Please visit our Web site, *www.epa.gov/sunwise*, for additional resources, including computer-based overview lessons.

SunWise Recognition Awards

Shining Star Award

The SunWise Shining Star Award recognizes schools, organizations, and educators who are enthusiastically implementing the program in a variety of ways. Shining Star winners have shown a lasting commitment to sun safety education, either by:

- Adapting the SunWise Program in new and effective ways,
- Discovering unique ways to share the SunWise message in the community, or
- Implementing the program in multiple classrooms or grade levels.

Helios Leadership Award

The SunWise Helios Leadership Award is given to schools, organizations, and educators that meet all of the eligibility criteria for the Shining Star Award and have shown outstanding leadership in sun safety education either by:

- Instituting a policy to address sun safety that can serve as a model to others,
- Erecting a shade structure, or
- Addressing the issue of sun safety in a way that sets the educator/school apart from the Shining Star winners.

The Helios Leadership Award recognizes the organization and participating educator(s) who are most directly involved with achieving the program's success in their community.

Visit *www.epa.gov/sunwise* for nomination details.

SunWise Program Workshops

To maximize the impact of the SunWise Program, we have found that a teacher's workshop helps teachers and students fully benefit from the program activities.

Workshops include cross-curricular, standards-based lessons and activities that include cooperative learning and inquiry-based investigations. Participants will receive a free SunWise Tool Kit that contains teacher and student activity pages, background material, and a UV-sensitive Frisbee®. When exposed to UV radiation, the Frisbee will change color, providing a concrete teaching tool to illustrate the presence of UV rays.

Workshop Expectations

- Acquire background knowledge and develop an understanding of environmental concepts related to sun protection and ozone layer depletion.
- Participate in activities that enhance critical thinking, data collection, reading, problem solving, decisionmaking, and communication skills.
- Gain ideas and examples for the implementation of interdisciplinary lessons, team projects, and student service learning projects.

Tools for SunWise Living

EPA's SunWise Program can tailor an agenda to meet the needs of your workshop, from a 30-minute overview presentation to a day-long training session.

Please contact us at *sunwise@epa.gov* for additional information on how to organize a SunWise workshop.