

Adaptation and Building Resilience to Climate Impacts

WHY DOES THIS MATTER: Climate adaptation strategies help schools adapt and build resilience to the climate impacts ahead. Climate change will bring more frequent and intense extreme weather, including flooding, wildfires, hurricanes, and high heat. These events can cause schools to close, disrupting student learning and school-based support. School districts that plan ahead for extreme weather by identifying local climate risks, creating plans for disruptions to learning, supporting the mental health of students, transitioning to green school yards, and serving as sources of energy and food during disaster will be more resilient to the impacts of climate change and can better support students and families.

KEY POINTS

- Schools can plan to provide support for students and families in the event of climate related learning disruptions
 - Extreme weather including flooding, wildfires, hurricanes, and extreme temperatures have already caused schools to close, disrupting student learning and school-based supports. School districts that plan ahead for extreme weather will be more resilient to the impacts of climate change and can better support students and families.
 - Districts that have plans for virtual learning and other supports will be better able to continue teaching and learning.
 - Districts that build capacity to support student mental health can help students recover and build resilience to climate impacts.
- Schools are centers of communities and can help our communities in emergencies
 - Extreme weather can cause power outages and damage homes and other community infrastructure. Schools are already centers of the community and provide students and families with access to important resources such as food and health care. Many schools already serve as emergency shelters. Those that use renewable energy such as solar panels coupled with battery storage — also known as solar microgrids — can continue operating even during widespread power outages. Schools then have the ability to provide critical resources such as food, shelter, electricity, and healthcare to the community. Districts that adopt renewable energy and work with local emergency preparedness organizations can help adapt and build resilience to climate impacts.
- Sustainable schoolyards can help reduce community heat and flooding
 - Extreme temperatures impact student learning and health. Schools sit on about 2 million acres of land nationally. Ensuring schoolyards are sustainable green spaces, rather than heat-trapping asphalt, can create healthy spaces for students to learn and play. These spaces have the added benefit of reducing community heat and flooding.

SCHOOL BOARD EXAMPLE: In the wake of devastating mudslides and wildfires, the [Santa Barbara Unified School District](#) is intentionally preparing schools to serve as community hubs in the event of power outages and extreme weather by installing solar-powered microgrids. Laura Capps, a former member of the Board of Education, was crucial in advocating for sustainability and climate action in the district both before and after the disasters.

