

Template School Board Climate Action Resolution

SCHOOL BOARD RESOLUTION ON CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY: A TIME FOR ACTION

Whereas, the Board recognizes that [School District] can fulfill its educational mission only when students and staff are provided with reliably safe, healthful, and supportive learning environments; and

Whereas, climate-driven conditions and weather events, such as extreme heat, drought, wildfires, superstorms, and floods, threaten the well-being of students, families, teachers, and staff, hinder the learning environment, force school closures and learning loss, damage District facilities, and degrade the quality of life in communities where students and their families reside; and

Whereas, worldwide scientific consensus affirms that Earth's climate is changing, and the change is caused mainly by the combustion of fossil fuels that emit carbon and other greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere, trapping heat and increasing average global temperatures; and climate change is causing extreme conditions and events to arise with greater frequency, severity, and duration; and

Whereas, today's children and youth, despite being least responsible for the causes of climate change, will confront its adverse impacts throughout their lifetimes, including hazards to their physical and mental health and impingement on their opportunities to thrive and prosper, and as it is the duty of today's adult generations, and our particular charge as educators and mentors, to prepare students to meet and surmount these challenges; and

Whereas, just as disruptions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic were found to amplify structural inequities in society and in education systems, so do the adverse health and learning impacts of climate change cause disproportionate harm to students and families in low-wealth communities, both urban and rural, and in communities of color; and

Whereas, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has set a goal to limit atmospheric warming to 1.5°C, and has estimated that, to achieve the goal, emissions of greenhouse gasses must be reduced to zero by 2050; and accordingly, the United States has pledged to reduce its emissions by half by 2030, using 2005 levels as the baseline, and to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, and the State of [State] has pledged to [corresponding State goals or targets — if applicable]; and

Whereas, modifications to infrastructure, buildings, and grounds can decrease a school's greenhouse gas emissions, enhance the school's readiness to maintain a safe and healthful environment under variable conditions, and enable the school to serve as a place of refuge for the community during extreme weather events and other emergencies, while reducing the long-term costs of operations and maintenance; and

Whereas, industry, civic society, and governments at all levels are striving to meet the challenges of climate change, thereby accelerating demand throughout the economy for workers and leaders with skills and knowledge pertaining to the climate and to sustainability, and calling upon the K-12 education system to prepare students for higher education, advanced training, and careers in emerging and expanding fields such as renewable energy; and

Whereas, school districts that plan and actively adapt to the impacts of climate change, both in their operations and in their educational programs, are better able to support students, as well as families and communities, to adapt and build resilience in response to climate-related experiences, and to teach climate science and provide meaningful student engagement with climate-related concepts, dilemmas, and solutions; and

Whereas, in context of the foregoing, the Board, recognizing its responsibility as stewards of public funds and resources, acknowledges the findings of research conducted by the National Institute of Building Sciences, which reported that for every \$1 invested to allay the impacts of climate-driven events such as fire, flood, and extreme winds, governments can realize returns up to \$6 in cost-savings associated with reduced property damage, loss, and recovery; and

Whereas, in context of the foregoing, the Board also recognizes its responsibilities to proactively express the mission and values of the District, to embrace and fulfill the District's role as a partner among institutions essential to community life, and to facilitate public decision-making that engenders consensus, reconciliation, and cooperation for the common good, thereby enabling the community as a whole to both mitigate and adapt to the hazards of climate change in ways that are effective, equitable, and consistent with the District's primary commitments to students' healthy development, learning, and access to opportunity.

Now Therefore, Be It Resolved, [School District] is committed to:

1. By [start of the second school year after the resolution is enacted], adopt appropriate measures and initiate routines to assess, monitor, and maintain the healthfulness of each school's physical environment and its conduciveness to students' engagement and learning, including such factors as indoor air quality and thermal comfort, and to assess and promote students' resilience in the context of climate change, including such factors as access to qualified mental health professionals, opportunities to explore and learn in natural landscapes, and experiences of connection with adults and youth in the community who are engaged in creating solutions to climate-related challenges.
2. Increase reliance on power from clean, renewable sources, including, to the extent possible, electricity generated by equipment installed on District property, by 50 percent by the [five to seven years after the resolution is enacted] school year, using [school year in which the resolution is enacted] as the baseline; and power District operations exclusively with electricity from renewables by [10 to 12 years after the resolution is enacted].
3. Install electric equipment — including HVAC systems, water heaters, and cooking equipment — as part of any new construction or renovation of District buildings, and in operations such as groundskeeping on District properties; and, proactively marking opportunities within the life-cycles of such equipment, replace all fossil fuel-dependent equipment in existing buildings or used in operations and maintenance with electric equipment, completing this process by [15 to 20 years after the resolution is enacted].
4. Select zero-emission vehicles for purchase or lease whenever a suitable vehicle exists for a District need and wherever necessary infrastructure (e.g., electric vehicle charging stations) is accessible or can be readily developed, or, if these conditions are not met, select vehicles with the lowest-possible emissions; and transition the entire District vehicle fleet, including District-owned and contracted vehicles, to zero-emissions vehicles by [10 to 15 years after the resolution is enacted].
5. Reduce the total area of school grounds that is paved or otherwise impermeable, increasing the area that is planted to sustainable, preferably native groundcover, and, by [seven to 10 years after the resolution is enacted], providing that no less than 30 percent of playgrounds and other areas where students most frequently congregate is shaded by trees or other sustainable cover to both reduce local heat impacts and improve water retention on site.
6. In District food services, by [three to five years after the resolution is adopted], reduce food waste by at least 60 percent, maximizing the portion of all remaining waste, including foodware, that goes to compost; and maximize onsite preparation of meals that are served fresh, rather than reheated, using produce that is locally sourced and minimally processed or packaged.
7. By [end of the school year after the resolution is enacted], [commission or update] a comprehensive plan for school safety and emergency responsiveness, ensuring that all schools are prepared both to safeguard the wellbeing of students and staff and to serve as centers of community resilience through extreme weather events and related crises, such as air made unhealthy by wildfire smoke, and to serve in all types of emergencies as places of resource, relief and recovery for students and families, teachers and staff, community members, and emergency responders.
8. Develop and/or select educational programs and instructional materials, provide teacher professional development, and, by [three to five years after the resolution is enacted], ensure delivery of equitable, standards-aligned, and grade-appropriate instruction across the curriculum that promotes students' understanding of the causes and consequences of climate change, provides opportunities to explore and enact climate solutions, and initiates pathways to higher education, training, and careers in fields that are pertinent to sustainability and climate resilience.

9. Prioritize equity and justice in the implementation of the foregoing commitments by using disaggregated data to inform need assessments, goal setting, and progress monitoring, and by considering the experiences and status of historically marginalized and systemically disadvantaged groups of students as a primary lens through which to evaluate results.

Be It Further Resolved, pursuant to the foregoing commitments, the Board directs the Superintendent to undertake the following actions:

- A. Convene a Task Force no later than [the end of the first full quarter after the resolution is enacted] to develop a comprehensive action plan to fulfill the commitments expressed in this resolution. Equity, as evidenced both in health protections and educational outcomes, should be a primary consideration in assessing baseline conditions and formulating the plan. The Task Force may also explore additional aspects of sustainability and climate resilience, including procurement, consumption and waste of paper and other materials, and water use. The Task Force shall include, at a minimum, principal, teacher, parent/caregiver, and student representatives.
 - i. By [nine months to one year after the Task Force is convened], present to the Board and the public a draft scope of implementation, taking feedback for refinement, and by [18 months after the Task Force is convened], present a complete action plan including:
 - a. interim objectives and methods for monitoring progress and ensuring equity;
 - b. estimates in regard to costs and potential sources of supplemental funding;
 - c. recommendations with regard to staffing and contracting to ensure that the Task Force and District staff are adequately resourced to fulfill their responsibilities under this resolution.
 - ii. Once a plan is adopted, the Task Force shall continue its activity, including semi-annual reports to the Board, until the Board is satisfied that the plan is fully implemented and the commitments expressed in this resolution are achieved.
- B. By [end of the school year after the resolution is enacted], [commission or update] an audit of greenhouse gas emissions resulting from District operations, including emissions that occur directly at sources that are owned and/or operated by the District (“Scope 1”), and emissions that result indirectly from the District’s operations, as through the purchase of energy from public utilities or the use of fossil gas-powered equipment by contractors to the District (“Scope 2”).
- C. By [end of the school year after the resolution is enacted], update the District’s master plans for facilities and grounds to align with the commitments above, including an assessment of vulnerabilities to extreme weather events and exposures to heat, particulate air pollution, and other environmental health impacts, and identifying priority sites for intervention to ensure health equity for the most vulnerable students.

In Testament to Which, the commitments and actions expressed in this resolution shall be considered as objectives within the Board’s performance evaluation of the Superintendent, and the Board shall dedicate its own attention and effort to fostering clarity, marshaling resources, removing obstacles, encouraging collaboration, affirming progress, and otherwise enabling the Superintendent, the Task Force, and District staff and partners to wholly and speedily fulfill the foregoing commitments.

EXAMPLE ADOPTED RESOLUTIONS:

- [Dallas ISD – Adopted February 2020](#)
- [Miami-Dade County Public Schools – Adopted April 2021](#)
- [Portland Public Schools – Adopted March 2022](#)
- [Salt Lake City – Adopted June 2020](#)
- [San Diego Unified School District – Adopted April 2023](#)

Please email info@undauntedk12.org when you introduce your climate resolution.