



**CLIMATE CRISIS  
RESPONSE, CLIMATE  
JUSTICE AND SUSTAINABLE  
PRACTICES POLICY**

2022-23 Annual Report



# Context

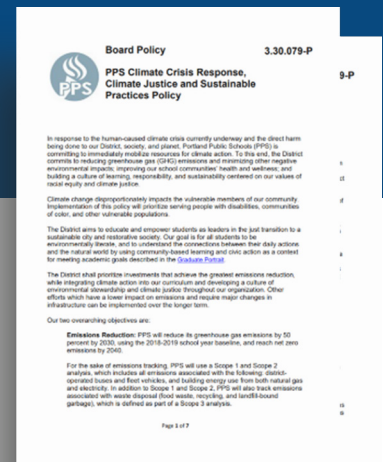
In March 2022, the PPS Board of Education (the Board) unanimously adopted the Climate Crisis Response, Climate Justice, and Sustainable Practices Policy (the Policy). This Policy commits Portland Public Schools to immediately mobilize resources to reduce its impact on climate change. In addition to responsibility for reducing and eventually eliminating district greenhouse gas emissions, the Policy includes a commitment to center frontline communities in building resources for climate resilience, developing a climate justice education, and working with students, parents, teachers, staff, and community partners as leaders in climate solutions.

The urgency of the climate crisis is felt deeply among our students, staff and community, characterized as an overwhelming anxiety of the existential threat of an unstable climate as well as through the trauma and lived experiences of navigating present-day extreme weather events. A national [2021 survey](#) found that over 60% of young people felt very worried or extremely worried about climate change, and that three-quarters felt that the future was frightening. This sentiment is echoed in conversations with young people around the District, as students continue to share that they cannot imagine a positive future in the face of climate change. In the last year, PPS students, along with students from around Oregon, have advocated in local and national platforms for public agency climate commitments to be backed with visible action, calling for a robust climate change

curriculum paired with mental health resources. This call to action is echoed by students around the nation as a [2023 Ed Week](#) survey found that students want to learn about climate change and connect to tangible action.

PPS has the opportunity to lead the nation in demonstrating a meaningful commitment to climate change both in our operations and in our classrooms. A climate justice education is justice-oriented, problem-posting, interdisciplinary, community-driven, hopeful and imaginative, and rooted in tangible action. This interdisciplinary and intersectional education supports the vision of the PPS Graduate Portrait, supporting the whole student in their education journey. This Policy prioritizes innovative emission-reducing infrastructure and connects students to place-based learning, through which PPS can show our students what a future of climate solutions looks like. With these Policy goals, PPS has the opportunity to reframe climate education to prepare students for a future where they can adapt and thrive despite a changing climate.

Fulfilling this vision requires District-wide collaboration, partnership and resources on climate action. While the Policy is not the first undertaking of climate action at PPS (some strands of work such as pursuing low-emission buses, installing energy-efficient infrastructure, intentionally reducing food waste, and teacher-led climate education date back decades), it provides a framework, structure, and prioritization from leadership for staff to



align District-wide coordination to meet this crisis with a cohesive and ambitious plan that sets the bar for holistic and justice-centered climate action nation-wide. This multifaceted Policy takes standard climate action plans to the next level in that the three Policy Pillars of reducing environmental impacts, improving health and wellness, and providing an effective environmental and sustainability education are not separate to the District's mission of providing a high quality education, but rather integrated as a strategy to achieve the Board goals of advancing academic milestones and student achievement, and to advance the PPS student outcomes envisioned in the Graduate Portrait.

The goals of this Policy are unprecedented for a school district, and therefore an unprecedented level of communication, resources, and collaboration across the District and with our partners will be required to fulfill our commitment to our students, parents, and PPS community. To initiate this strategic coordination, this foundational year since the policy passed has been characterized by a careful and intentional approach to Policy implementation that will lead to long-term, sustained, systemic action.

# Approach to Policy Implementation

In building out an implementation plan for the Policy, it is important to recognize that each Policy goal has varying levels of existing support and structures within the departments that oversee each strand of work. To illustrate the expanse of this work across PPS, below is a depiction of an organizational chart highlighting departments under the Policy Pillar that most closely aligns with their scope of work, recognizing that many of these departments oversee strands of work that actually overlap two or more Policy Pillars.

Some of these departments have more of a foundation of connecting their work to climate change and climate justice within their existing work plans than others. For some departments, alignment with Policy goals is more obvious and intrinsic to their mission, while for others this Policy may present a new way of thinking or require more support to build that connection. A primary action of this foundational year has been mapping out existing strands of work and building relationships with internal stakeholders to better understand the history, culture, and opportunities as it relates to the Policy.

## CLIMATE CRISIS RESPONSE, CLIMATE JUSTICE & SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE POLICY

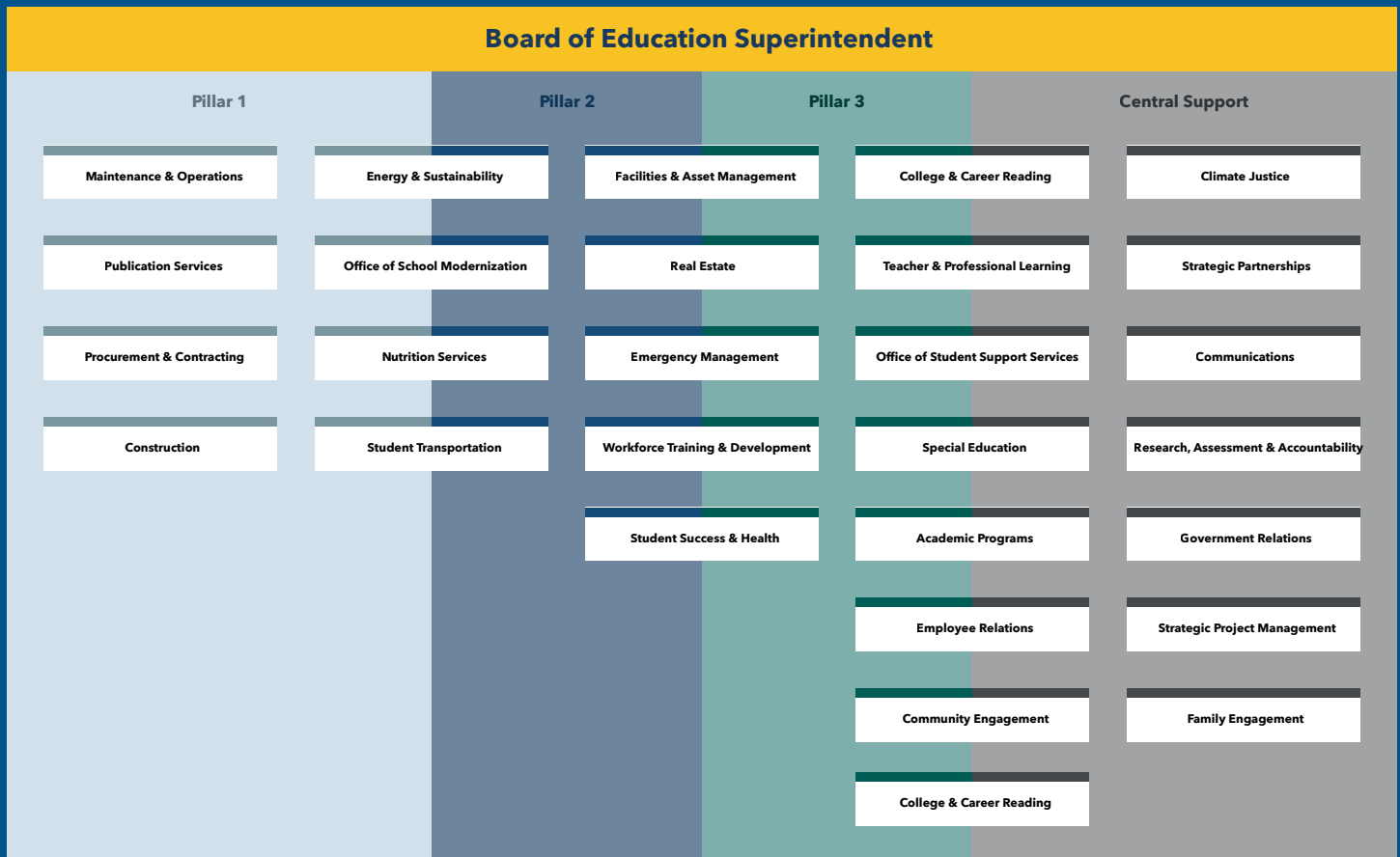
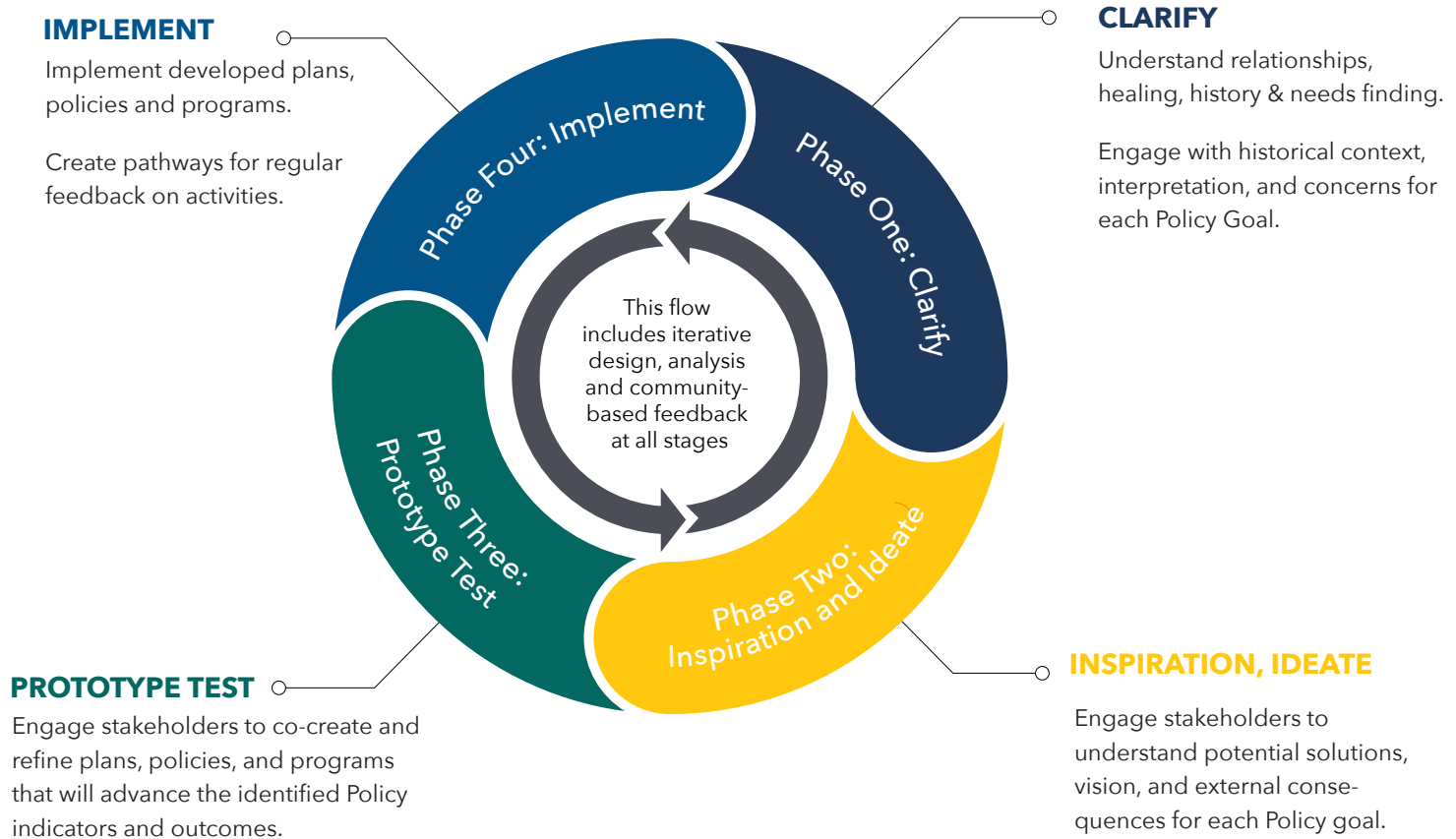


Figure 1. CCRP Internal Stakeholder Map

# CCRP Phased Policy Implementation Process



A phased Policy Implementation Process outlines the large-scale as well as department-specific implementation of the Policy across PPS. These phases are inspired by the design framework created by the PPS Innovation Studio in developing the Vision Plan for the Center for Black Student Excellence, a framework which centers equity and community-based design in developing the transformative culture shift necessary to meet the expectations of Policy activities and timelines.

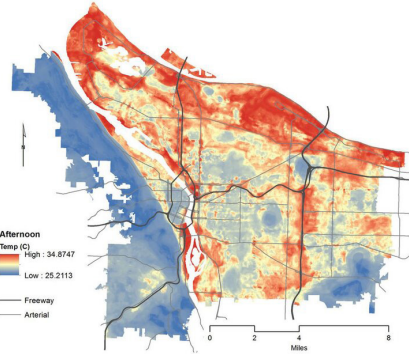
At a high-level, mobilizing the strands of work across the scope of the Policy follows these Phases, as outlined on the Policy Overview tab

of the [CCRP Progress Dashboard](#). The first foundational year of Policy implementation was characterized by Phase One: Clarify, primarily mapping out where this work exists currently and historically within the District to build relationships, understand how different communities have been historically engaged in climate action at PPS or harmfully impacted by climate change, and identify the gaps in tracking programs and accessibility to participation. Currently we are moving into Phase Two: Ideate, where we will engage stakeholders to define indicators and outcomes for the Policy as a whole in order to ensure we are measuring progress in a way that is aligned with the Policy

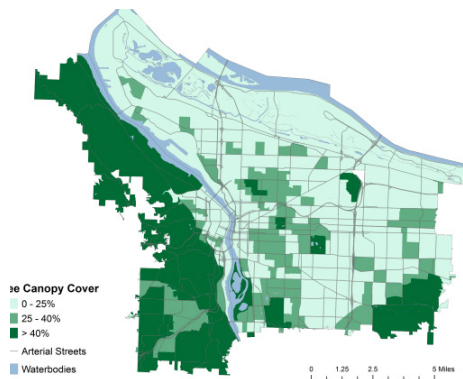
values. Developing tools to track those progress indicators (Phase Three: Prototype) and co-creating a vision for the plans, policies and programs that will advance those indicators and outcomes will define the work of FY24. With the feedback received through visioning and engagement strategies, FY25-27 will focus on Phase Four: Implement as we move forward with created plans and gain iterative feedback to adjust those plans as we analyze the success of the outcomes.



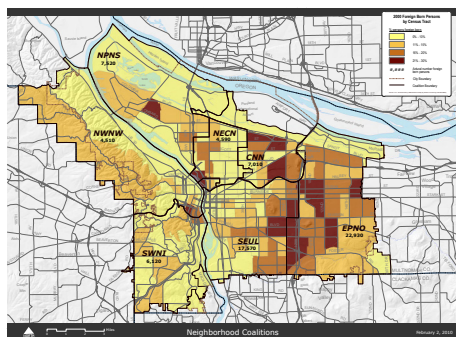
# Centering Climate Justice throughout Policy Implementation



<sup>1</sup>Temperature disparities across Portland. Source: Sustaining Urban Places Research (SUPR) Lab, Portland State University, 2018. Retrieved from Columbia Slough Watershed Council



<sup>2</sup>Tree canopy cover percentage across Portland, grouped by census block. Note the correlation between disparities in tree canopy cover and disparities in temperature shown in the map above. Source: Portland Parks & Recreation Urban Forestry, 2014. Retrieved from Columbia Slough Watershed Council



<sup>3</sup>Portland Plan: Poverty by Census Tract This map shows the percent of people below poverty level in each census tract in Portland, as well as the actual number of people in poverty in each area of Portland. The correlation between poverty, tree canopy, and extreme heat, and understanding the racial disparities within these areas, are an example of local climate justice issues.

Central to climate justice is the understanding that the effects of climate change more significantly and negatively impact vulnerable populations including communities of color, low income communities, and communities with disabilities, as well as developing countries and small island nations, despite these communities contributing the least to the problem<sup>1</sup>.

The term climate justice is preceded by similar terms, like environmental justice and environmental racism, which came about in the 1980's as environmentally hazardous initiatives were placed in poor, disabled, Black, Brown, Indigenous, and non-English speaking communities; communities that were considered disposable and had less social or capital power to fight back.

As PPS Spring Climate Summit keynote speaker Favianna Rodriguez put it, Favianna's message was overwhelmingly well-received by the PPS highschool students in attendance.

Our students have varying levels of direct experience with climate change, and some students understand intimately how inequity exacerbates the severity of environmental injustices. Some students have directly experienced inadequate shelter during extreme heat or ice events in Portland. Some

even have personal or familial connections to environmental disasters happening around the world, such as the challenges of a rising sea level or unprecedented storms in the Gulf of Mexico or the Pacific Islands. In learning how climate change is directly connected to systemic oppression, and honoring space for our diverse student body to share their own relationships with this issue and how they see themselves in a future of climate solutions, this framework helps advance the Graduate Portrait vision of students as transformative racial equity leaders as well as influential and informed global stewards.

It is imperative that we practice intentional and thoughtful stakeholder engagement to center the voices of those most impacted by climate change in developing solutions so that we may build a new system in which all communities can thrive. Over the next year and as more strands of work move into more advanced phases, staff will develop and implement practices that continue to center frontline communities and student voices, while engaging diverse stakeholder groups to increase partnerships in defining Policy progress moving forward.



**The current extractive economy is not sustainable, it requires the exploitation of life - exploitation of humans, animals and earthly bodies like oceans and forests - for the benefit of a privileged few. We must move away from the world view of extraction towards one of partnership, as Indigenous people have been teaching us for centuries. Colonization and racism caused the climate crisis.**

# Activities to Date, Fiscal Year 2022 - 2023

## Operationalizing the Policy- Foundational Work

Portland Public Schools is deeply committed to fulfilling each pillar of the Climate Crisis Response, Climate Justice, and Sustainable Practices Policy. The district created a new position, the Advisor for Climate Justice (filled by Kat Davis) to oversee the implementation of the Policy and bring many strands of work together into a cohesive vision. The Advisor for Climate Justice centers students and frontline communities through approaching work with a climate justice framework both within PPS and through our advocacy and partnerships at the local and national level. Officially hired in June, Davis's first action was to launch the Climate Crisis Response Committee, a community oversight committee that reports to the Board on progress of the Policy objectives, per Policy requirement. The committee consists of nine members, two of which are students, and over half of which identify as people of color. Each of

the committee members brings rich wisdom, experience, and passion to the District's Policy goals, and provides thoughtful partnership in working through the complexity of Policy priorities and how we communicate these priorities and our progress to the community.

To immediately mobilize on planning for climate action, PPS staff hired multiple evaluators this year, including Good Company, PAE, and ECONorthwest, to develop baseline data across Policy goals, understand the current state of work across the District, and efficiently and cohesively develop a vision and a plan for where and how to progress. These baselines will inform an evaluation framework to better track progress on the CCRP goals District-wide, create roadmaps for implementing each unique Policy pillar, and communicate that progress with transparency and integrity to our community. These foundational steps, in conjunction with launching the Climate Crisis Response Committee, pave the way for developing a system-wide

practice of centering climate justice in project management, data collection, and community engagement to advance Policy progress for years to come.

While there is much work to be done to meet the ambitious Policy goals, we believe that in Fiscal Year 22-23, PPS successfully and swiftly mobilized resources to set ourselves up for short and long term success in implementing the Policy. Strategically using one-time dollars, along with aligning Policy goals and objectives within existing strands of work across departments, staff have ensured that these next few foundational years will be a springboard for the successful and efficient implementation of the Policy over the next 20-30 years.





## Pillar 1: Reducing Environmental Impacts

### GOAL 1.1 REDUCE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS AND FOSSIL FUELS IN DISTRICT INFRASTRUCTURE

In order to meet the ambitious goal of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and other environmental impacts outlined in Pillar 1, PPS awarded a contract to Good Company to develop the baseline for GHG Emissions across all fuel sources and inputs District-wide, receiving our first comprehensive GHG Emissions Report in December, 2022 (APPENDIX B) along with a tool to manage the continuous collection of data for future benchmarking.

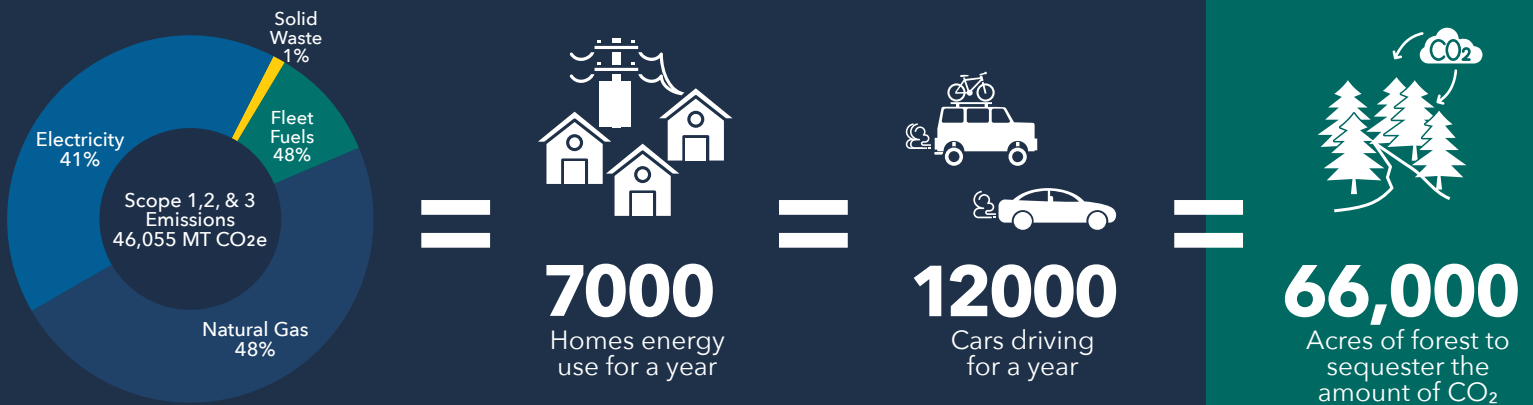
The high-level findings of this report show that 89% of GHG emissions come from building operations, with electricity accounting for 41% of emissions and natural gas accounting for 48% of emissions with fleet fuels accounting for 10% of emissions.

With this data, PPS can build a strategy to reduce GHG Emissions. Oregon public electric utilities are required to reach net zero emissions by 2040, which, if achieved, will make a large impact on the PPS GHG profile. However, PPS has a goal of reducing its emissions by half by 2030, meaning that the District must make significant strides in all areas that produce emissions. Understanding these internal and external goals, PPS can target strategic energy efficiency and renewable energy projects alongside continuously working toward the goal of phasing out all new and existing gas-power infrastructure and equipment by 2050.

While these goals are clearly defined at a high level, PPS faces unique complexities and challenges when prioritizing projects at the site level

to meet these GHG goals including limited funding, building age, climate resilience, centering frontline communities, and continuing to balance investment in fleet and waste reduction goals. To ensure a comprehensive approach to the GHG emissions goal, PPS deployed a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a Decarbonization Implementation Roadmap, which will provide a robust analysis of potential pathways forward to reaching our GHG goals centered on transforming structures for racial equity and increasing equitable access to facilities resources, while also ensuring that innovative energy-efficient infrastructure can design learning experiences that promote self-directed, future-ready learning. The scope of work in the Decarbonization Implementation Roadmap will be the primary objective of Goal 1.1 in FY24.

### Portland Public School emissions are roughly equivalent to:



## GOAL 1.2 REDUCE EMISSIONS THROUGH OPERATIONS AND WASTE

Reducing disposable materials through decreasing landfill waste has a relatively low impact on total PPS Greenhouse Gas Emissions (1%). However, community advocacy shows that waste reduction through recycling, food scrap collection, and transitioning to reusable materials is an important cultural value of our community. In addition, research shows that participating in waste reduction activities offer a tangible way for any age group or ability to develop a sense of efficacy and participate in climate action.

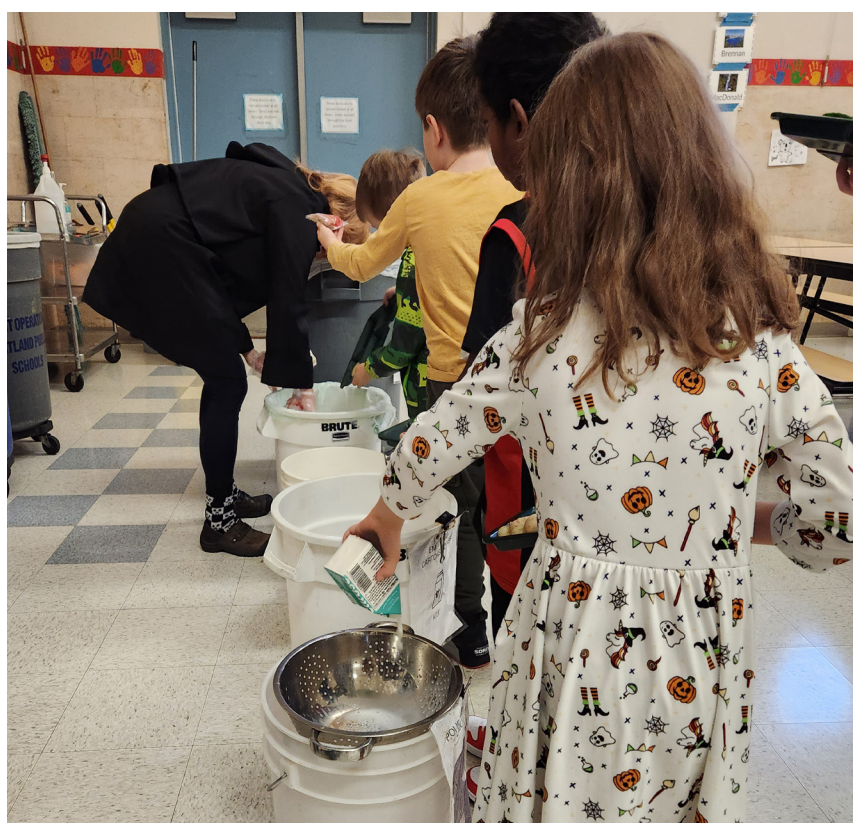
In the spirit of partnership and collaboration, PPS Nutrition Services and the FAM Energy and Sustainability team have connected with multiple community partnerships which actively engage students and community in connecting waste reduction to the curriculum and support waste reduction<sup>4</sup> efforts in schools. Partnerships with organizations like Oregon Green Schools, EcoSchools Network, FoodCorps, Portland State University, and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality have helped push waste reduction forward in schools across the district. Nutrition Services has also implemented a variety of waste-reduction initiatives over the last 15-20 years, including but not limited to the adoption of permanent-ware trays<sup>5</sup> and cups in 2008, removal of straws in 2010, elimination of Styrofoam in 2014, and diverting organic kitchen waste starting in 2019. Some programs such as reusable utensils and “sharing/no thank-you” tables also began roll-out pre-pandemic, and are currently being re-implemented and expanded.

It is important to pair community-based intervention, engagement, and education with updated and standardized infrastructure, so PPS spent this year researching standardized bin and signage opportunities and gaining stakeholder input with the plan of investing in standardized hallway and cafeteria bins to pilot at prioritized schools in order to learn and establish best practices District-wide. Historically, it is difficult to determine the effectiveness of these interventions and updates due to the lack of available waste collection data. To better gauge the effectiveness and impact of all of these activities, this spring PPS finished installing sensors on over 400 waste dumpsters that will more accurately measure effectiveness of waste diversion programs and will also contribute to saving the

district money through right-sizing service. This ability to analyze data as well as creating a system of support for centralized communication, tracking and reporting of these impactful programs all contributes to a culture of embedding system-wide, data-driven continuous improvement practices at PPS.



<sup>5</sup>Reusable trays at Hayhurst Elementary.



<sup>4</sup>Students sorting food waste at Hayhurst Elementary



### GOAL 1.3 SEQUESTER CARBON THROUGH GREEN SCHOOLYARD INITIATIVES

The district wide Schoolyard Program ([overview](#)) provides a framework for 1) the planning, design, and construction of schoolyard projects, 2) stewardship efforts, and 3) outdoor learning in order to transform schoolyards into resilient, inclusive, sustainable, and equitable spaces. The Schoolyards Program supports a process to prioritize investments focusing on the District’s most vulnerable communities.

Increasing the ratio of green space versus paved space on our school properties can decrease the urban heat-island effect, sequester carbon, reduce storm-water runoff, and increase a sense of belonging, safety and wellbeing for students and staff.

In our commitment to increasing access to green space at schools, PPS is currently working on a Schoolyard Data Inventory to collect data from K-5 and middle school campuses. The inventory will measure percentage of paved and unpaved area, access to covered play structures, tree canopy, outdoor learning space, carbon sequestration, and accessible & inclusive play elements. This inventory will allow PPS to better define the standards for green schoolyards, create community-designed Vision Plans for high priority schools, and guide future capital investment to strategically and efficiently invest in equitable access to green schoolyards.

While PPS moves toward creating a system in which it can directly prioritize and support schools with the highest need for schoolyard interventions, many outdoor green school projects today are still designed and implemented by parents and community volunteers. To best support those initiatives, PPS has created [Schoolyard Project Design Guidelines](#) and a [Schoolyard Volunteer Project Guide](#).

### Key Schoolyard Program Outcomes:

- A. Reconnecting schoolyards to their communities
- B. Increasing carbon sequestration opportunities to address climate change
- C. Celebrating the cultural of each neighborhood
- D. Creating innovative avenues for participatory learning for students
- E. Increasing recreational opportunities for students
- F. Creating a site for learning and discovery for students





## GOAL 1.4 REDUCE EMISSIONS THROUGH FLEET AND ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Thanks to generous grant funding from PGE and Pacific Power, PPS welcomed two new electric school buses to the fleet this year, and is set to procure two more before the end of the calendar year. This is a meaningful step in the direction of transitioning the PPS-owned fleet away from fossil-fuels and toward electric vehicles. PPS Student Transportation is also finalizing a transition plan to guide the replacement of existing fleet with electric school buses to meet our ambitious GHG goals with a strategic framework that accommodates for the cost of that transition.

PPS also works to reduce single occupancy vehicle trips for student commutes through partnerships with TriMet and school communities.

All high school students receive a TriMet pass for the school year to encourage use of public transportation to commute to school and extracurricular activities. Our latest data, from the 2021-2022 school year shows that highschoolers swiped their TriMet passes over 700,000 times! For 2023, PPS has extended these passes to be available for students through the summer.

The district is also home to a growing number of walk and ride to school programs. Alameda elementary school received national press for its bike-bus in Fall 2022. Bike-buses and walking-buses were also organized by committed parents and teachers at a variety of other schools over the past 2 years.

In May 2023, 32 schools participated in a "Walk N' Roll" bike and walk bus for National Bike-To-School Month. PPS received a matching grant from Oregon Department of Transportation to hire a Safe Routes to School Coordinator to provide support and strategic coordination to expand active transportation and safe route options for schools, such as these Walk N' Roll. This spring, PPS welcomed Shane Nevius as the new Safe Routes to Schools Program Manager. These active transportation and Safe Routes to Schools programs support the PPS goal of contributing to community-based safety resources for schools and help to increase a sense of belonging, while reducing emissions from car trips.







### GOAL 1.5 INCREASE ENVIRONMENTAL-PREFERRED PURCHASING AND INVESTMENT

While most purchasing at PPS is decentralized, meaning that program administrators and school sites have autonomy over their spending, a coordinated effort has taken place to ensure that any new centralized infrastructure and equipment purchases are compliant with the Policy goals through an update of the District's Technical Design Standards. Further support for developing a guide for individual program administrators and school sites to use for environmentally preferred purchasing is identified as an opportunity for impact over the next few years.





## Pillar 2: Improve Health and Wellness

### GOAL 2.1 ADDRESS CLIMATE-BASED IMPACTS ON HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELLNESS OF STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES

Integral to the goal of wellness is a focus on local, organic, seasonal, plant-based, and minimally processed or packaged foods. Through its Wellness Policy (2006), Local Flavors program (2007), and the biennially awarded Oregon Farm to School Grant (since 2013), PPS Nutrition Services has been prioritizing local food for over 15 years. The department strives to innovate on its menu regularly from committing to local, unfrozen beef in 2015 to introducing locally sourced tofu meals in 2023. PPS' local food programs continue to expand: our amazing partners, Grow Portland and Growing Gardens, along with FoodCorps and a variety of afterschool SUN programs use school gardens to teach students how to grow food and connect outdoor learning and nutrition with PPS curriculum. Growing food and intentionally connecting to nature, culture and the community is essential for increasing equity in nurturing a sense of efficacy and belonging for our students.





## GOAL 2.2 SUPPORT FRONTLINE COMMUNITIES TO BUILD RESILIENCE FROM CLIMATE CHANGE INDUCED STRESSORS

It is important to not only reduce the impact of PPS operations on climate change, but to also ensure that the district and community are prepared for the new challenges of a changing climate. To better adapt to unprecedented inclement weather, PPS completed an updated Inclement Weather School Closure Policy to ensure the District is prepared for how to respond to severe weather events that go beyond snow including extreme heat, wind, ice, and power outages. In addition, PPS Risk Management finalized a Heat Illness Prevention Plan with corresponding Pepper training to specifically address the increase of extreme heat during the school year, especially considering that the majority of PPS buildings do not have air conditioning. Alongside this plan includes the distribution of Heat Index instruments to each school so that school administrators can have accurate information for their building conditions and can refer to the Heat Illness Prevention Plan accordingly.

In partnership with Multnomah County to complete an EPA Technical Assistance grant, PPS worked with local and regional governments to identify the unique opportunities and challenges of utilizing schools as cooling centers in the event of extreme heat through the creation of a Schools as Cooling Centers Playbook. This Playbook will better inform regional partners and school leaders on safety considerations and potential infrastructure updates that could better allow school buildings to be a place of refuge for community members in need during extreme heat.





## Pillar 3: Provide Effective Environmental and Sustainability Education

The development of Effective Environmental and Sustainability Education supports a high-quality, standards-based learning experience for students to engage with the cause, effects, and solutions of climate change regardless of their race, zip code, or income.

### GOAL 3.1 EMPOWER STAFF AS ALLIES FOR A HEALTHY CLIMATE

PPS is committed to life-long learning; we strive to ensure that teachers and staff have access to professional development and skills-building opportunities that connect their roles and responsibilities at PPS to solutions centered in climate justice. In February, 2023, the Office of Teaching and Learning partnered with CLEAR Environmental to host a professional development day for teachers to learn about connecting climate justice to the curriculum, and the opportunity to use PPS school sites, projects and policies as hands-on learning opportunities. This workshop included eleven teachers with representation from the sciences, socials students and language arts. To expand on this opportunity, a more in-depth workshop will be offered at the end of June for up to 90 PPS teachers that will allow teachers from any grade level or subject area to connect more intentionally with the principles of a climate justice education, and to co-create resources to use in their classrooms and share across the District.

In addition to coordinated professional learning, the Energy and Sustainability department has coordinated a cohort of passionate teachers and school staff called the School Sustainability Champions Network that are excited to learn about how to connect sustainable practices and climate action to their classrooms. The goal of this

network is to empower teachers with information, resources and support from the Energy and Sustainability department and the Climate Justice team to mobilize hands-on projects for their classes that move forward the tangible, site-based goals of the Policy.<sup>6</sup> Launched in Spring 2023 with a cohort of 29 teachers across the District, the 2023-2024 school year will operate as a pilot this centralized communication platform for collaboration and support on climate and sustainability initiatives, with the goal

of expanding such that each school will have an identified champion. Projects may include waste reduction, developing outdoor learning spaces, starting a walk/bike to school route, or hosting a student green club, and more. This program aims to provide professional learning opportunities not only for the staff who sign up for this program, but for those staff to be the champions of sharing this education within their buildings to their colleagues, students and community.



<sup>6</sup>Partial group photo of the School Sustainability Champions launch, Spring 2023



### GOAL 3.2 DEVELOP CURRICULAR LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND PRACTICE CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

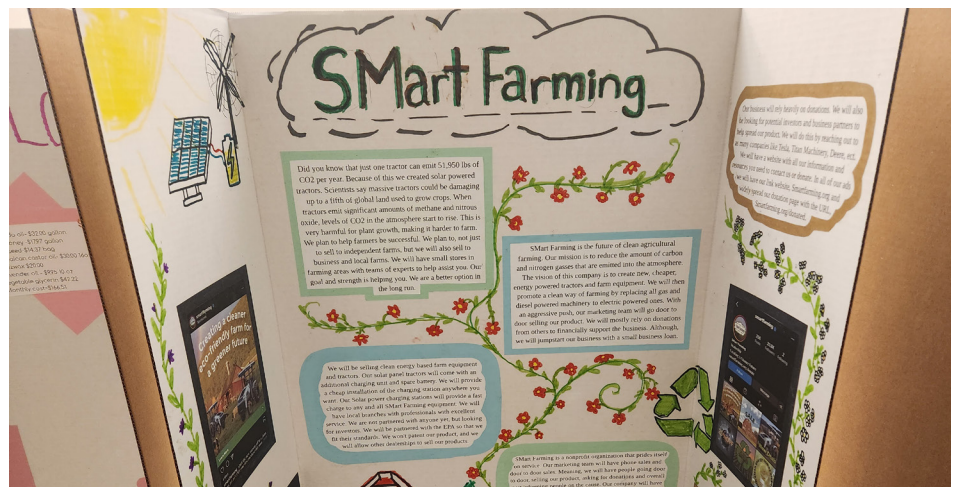
Thus far, PPS's biggest accomplishment in developing curricular learning around climate change has been through the creation of a high school Climate Justice elective.

The class highlights the intersections between climate change, racism, historic injustice, and colonialism through classroom and community centered project-based learning. Since it was created in 2020, the Climate Justice elective has been offered 21 times across 9 PPS highschools. Over 500 students have taken the course<sup>7</sup>.

Beyond the classroom, PPS works internally and with partners to give students opportunities to learn about climate justice through tangible, place-based solutions. Through a partnership with SAGE,

PPS sponsors two middle school Climate Solutions Fairs each year – one at Robert Gray<sup>8</sup> and one at Roseway Heights. Students are enthralled interacting with all of the hands-on educational materials that organizations bring to the event, representing everything from bikes

to food waste mitigation to wind energy. In the long term, SAGE's goal is for every Title 1 PPS middle school to be on a Climate Fair rotation, hosting a fair at their school once every three years so that every student gets to attend one while in middle school.



<sup>7</sup>An example of a student capstone project for the Climate Justice elective. Shared at the PPS Spring Climate Summit



<sup>8</sup>2023 Climate Fair at Robert Gray Middle School



At over 20 schools, PPS and its education partners provide hands-on food education programming in the classroom, garden, and cafeteria to deliver culturally responsive, curriculum-connected lessons, and implement best practices for social-emotional learning. PPS sees school gardens as a critical way to achieve this policy goal. The district currently has over 65 school gardens and partners with organizations like [Grow Portland](#), [Growing Gardens](#), and [FoodCorps](#) to provide year-round garden education programming. School gardening clubs and [SUN after school](#) programs also offer ways for students to engage with outdoor learning. Gardens at schools have several environmental and climate change resiliency benefits such as supporting students in re-acquiring food growing skills that can improve their mental health and provide a sense of resilience to climate-driven food shortages and inflation prices. In addition, learning to connect with and grow local food with organic growing practices reduces transportation emissions from participating in the global supply chain, contributes to better soil health, and minimizes the use of harmful chemicals that are traditionally used in industrial agricultural practices. These outdoor educational spaces are opportunities for students to gain a holistic understanding of environmental education taught through a lens of racial equity and social justice, while gaining practical life skills that they can take with them beyond graduation.

We've seen this year that participating in these climate projects and programs around the district can be contagious - when students, teachers, and parents see that something is happening at another school, they are inspired to create it,

too. Because of that, PPS celebrates and shares these successes in an award-winning monthly [Sustainability Newsletter](#) that reaches over 625 of our students, staff, and community members. The newsletter highlights initiatives from green schools and tree plantings, climate fairs, bike buses and bike repair classes, creative climate art workshops, and much much more. It's also a place where PPS can highlight the work of our partners and the amazing organizations across Portland making our city more equitable and green. Through the Newsletter, we continue to engage new audiences, celebrate successes, inspire our community, and join a growing city-wide conversation about the necessity for and action behind climate justice.





### GOAL 3.3 COLLABORATE WITH STUDENTS TO ENGAGE YOUTH IN HANDS-ON CLIMATE LEARNING, PREPARATION, AND PRACTICE

In the PPS Graduate Portrait, our commitment to our students is a vision in which our graduates are optimistic and future oriented, inquisitive, critical thinkers with deep core knowledge, and informed global stewards. We know that our students are passionate, driven, and have the capacity and drive to lead meaningful change. To support this pathway for growth and leadership, PPS is invested in providing tangible pathways for gaining efficacy for climate action and practicing advocacy at each level.

Thanks to the PPS Strategic Partnerships team for securing funding from PGE's Project Zero, PPS held a

tremendously well-received Spring Climate Summit, a day-long field trip for high school students from throughout the district. There were 9 out of 11 high schools present, as well as around 30 environmental, sustainability, and climate justice organizations present. Students heard from Shiva Rajbhandari, a high school student who was elected to the Boise School Board, with a campaign on climate change and mental health. Keynote speaker Favianna Rodriguez resonated with and inspired students as she talked about experiencing environmental racism and the power of art and storytelling for catalyzing a cultural response to climate change. Students had an opportunity to practice designing

their own advocacy campaigns and make their own art for social change. After this activity, five student leaders in climate action around Oregon shared their experiences in advocacy on a student voices panel. They shared the challenges of being engaged in advocacy work, how they stay grounded, and offered inspiration and support for everyone in the room. The remainder of the event was focused on connecting students to networking opportunities and practicing skills for turning their inspiration to action, including a breakout session meeting with local climate justice organizations, participating in tours of the new electric school bus, and workshops on climate anxiety, coalition building, and civic engagement.



# Opportunities for Continued Improvement

There are immense challenges to achieving PPS' climate goals, most notably making large-scale infrastructure change and coordinating the necessary community engagement within the confines of a strained budget. Beyond fiscal needs, challenges range from the minute details of implementation decisions to the big-picture complexities of a transformative culture shift and adding entirely new workflows within a very large organization. A few of the most critical challenges are outlined here:

1

## **Creating consistent, transparent, and inclusive community discourse around the complex decisions involved in Policy implementation.**

Tradeoffs are inherent to many of the goals in the policy. In some cases, those tradeoffs are explicit, such as adding air conditioning to new schools (a climate resilience imperative) versus decreasing carbon emissions. Other tradeoffs are implicit, such as prioritizing competing policy goals with limited funding. PPS staff is adamant about embracing these hard choices and making decisions that work for our entire community. The immediate challenge here is not necessarily the existence of tradeoffs, but the need for meaningful and accessible community conversations around these choices and around other complex decisions related to the implementation of this policy.

2

## **Mobilizing teams and resources within PPS to integrate policy goals into existing strands of work and adding scope as necessary.**

This includes building awareness of the Policy goals and implications on workload. PPS is made up of real people who are well trained in what they do; getting buy-in from those individuals to change their workflow and priorities takes time and trust. This process requires internal education, new language, shifting staff and fiscal resources, and prioritizing new goals. Our challenge, as the staff charged with implementing this policy, is how to mobilize and educate these teams in the complex subject of climate change, sustainability, and most importantly, climate justice. Incorporating these new ideas and objectives requires direct communication around expectations from high level leadership, understanding how these initiatives are in fact strategies for other PPS priorities, and the integration of entirely new workflows and internal partnerships. These changes, simply put, take time.



# Opportunities for Continued Improvement (continued)

3

## Balancing the urgency of the situation with the integrity of the process.

In order to center climate justice in how we advance our response to the climate crisis, we must have an intentional and deliberate approach to building decarbonization due to the complexity of our infrastructure needs; acting within the spirit of coalition-building and grassroots change; ensuring that changes happen at the speed of trust, with equity, regeneration, resiliency, and long lasting impact at the forefront. These are the differences between a sustainability plan and a climate justice plan. A climate justice plan does not only initiate projects, but does so with the vision of reversing historic and current injustices through process, community, and intentionality.

We believe that on-the-ground change should come from and represent the communities and culture within each school. Currently, there are more requests for community-driven projects at school sites than project managers within PPS can support. This may lead to a feeling that there are centralized barriers that prohibit community-based solutions. Given the scale of PPS, there may be a delay between when this planning is taking place and when actual changes are experienced at the site level. Doing this work will take time, a shift in project-based processes, and creativity.

4

**Finally, while we know that there is an incredible amount of climate work being done already across PPS,** we lack a centralized system for collecting data and communicating stories about climate action. Because of that, measuring baselines, setting SMART goals, and tracking and sharing progress toward those goals has proven to be a challenge. Another consequence of this lack of central coordination and communication is a lack of transparency about what work is being done, and with it an assumption that no progress towards climate action is being made. It is important to spend the next year filling the gaps around data collection in order to best represent meaningful policy indicators and outcomes, as well as to better connect the amazing innovation and creativity happening at the site level to the broader District-wide policy objectives. Creating a communication pathway to share solutions and resources for change among schools will foster more efficient and collaborative action and better inform how PPS can support these grassroots efforts and learn from the wisdom and leadership of our students, teachers, community partners and staff.



**We lack a centralized system for collecting data and communicating stories about climate action.**

# Strategic Direction

## Moving Forward

PPS has made significant progress over the past year to position itself to successfully implement a sweeping, complex, and emergent policy. There is more work to be done in order to give ourselves the best chance of success. These recommendations pertain to the next year of Policy work

1

### Coordinated and Effective Leadership

Initiate proposed [Climate Crisis Staff Advisory Group](#) to directly support and advise on cross-organizational policy decisions and provide a space for transparent and honest community conversations about tradeoffs inherent and connected to the Policy.

Establish a practice of strategic foresight and sustainable teaming structures to better coordinate and make more efficient the multiple initiatives that require a transformative shift district-wide as to how work is done.

Provide central communication and leadership support to ensure every department understands their role, understands the history of and need for the Policy, and understands the importance of centering climate justice and regenerative social principles as we implement the Policy.

2

### Inclusive, Collaborative, and Data-Driven Decision Making

Adopt a culture of data-driven decision making and enable PPS schools and departments to contribute to a centralized data tracking and reporting system for activities related to the Policy.

Define indicators and metrics for any Policy objectives that do not include clearly defined measures of success. With direction from PPS students, community, staff, and partners, and utilizing the District's growing quantitative and qualitative understanding of baselines, needs, and available resources, the District should ensure that every Policy objective clearly indicates how we will know we've succeeded.

Develop a robust, sustainable, and responsive community engagement program, in partnership with the Climate Crisis Response Committee, to help make progress on the complex decisions related to Policy tradeoffs.



# Strategic Direction

## Moving Forward (continued)

PPS has made significant progress over the past year to position itself to successfully implement a sweeping, complex, and emergent policy. There is more work to be done in order to give ourselves the best chance of success. These recommendations pertain to the next year of Policy work

3

### Strategic Advocacy and Allocation of Resources

Provide resources specifically for capital projects or strategic programs that directly support fulfillment of Policy directives such that these policy goals are funded and not in competition with funds already allocated to continue existing essential services or repair deteriorating infrastructure.

Successfully fulfill the scope of work with partners to complete a decarbonization roadmap for the district to help prioritize and plan for meeting our primary 2030 and 2040 carbon reduction goals.

A primary challenge to moving the Policy forward and meeting our carbon reduction goals is funding. To advance this Policy at a pace that matches the urgency of the climate crisis, we must develop a multi-pronged approach to resources and the ambitious Policy goals. Expanded centralized support will ensure current or additional Policy solutions are sustainable and effective. Investments in PPS staff with expertise in public funding (e.g. local, state and federal allocations and discretionary funding) will be key to ensure capacity for strategically and skillfully pursuing opportunities, as well as private philanthropic monies.

# Conclusion

Portland Public Schools is made up of an ecosystem of passionate and dedicated students, parents, teachers, staff, community partners, board members and volunteers. This ecosystem cares deeply about the success of our students and future generations, and is committed to building new, equitable systems. The mobilization of effort around the Climate Crisis Response, Climate Justice, and Sustainable Practices Policy provides a clear pathway for designing a new way of operating as a district, as a community, and to become in right relation with our environment.

The 2022-2023 Policy Implementation scope of work has brought to light a wealth of activities that show a history of commitment to climate action. Despite significant work to be done, this year builds the

foundation for the road ahead and celebrates tangible policy progress. Since the Policy passed in March, 2022, PPS has seen new professional development opportunities for teachers, real-world, community based climate experiences for student learning, improved systems for waste reduction, expanded school garden education, and more efficient building operations.

With the resources available, the next year will continue to build the critical foundational infrastructure for long term Policy success while taking significant steps on the implementation of some of the most urgent and critical goals outlined in the Policy. With a focus on building effective pathways for accessible community engagement and transparent communication across the District on Policy progress and implementation

decisions, we will continue to build collaborative relationships with the PPS community, local stakeholders and partners, and local and statewide public agencies with shared goals. Moving forward, these partnerships will better elevate existing strands of work and fill the gaps for collecting data and telling the stories of the important work taking place at PPS.

While there are challenges ahead to meet the two overarching Policy objectives of reducing emissions and prioritizing engagement, resilience and wellness, leadership support of a cohesive and coordinated approach to this work will ensure that PPS sets the stage for how to develop a transformative, rigorous, and joyous approach to a climate justice education as we move forward together.

