

PPS Climate Crisis Response Policy 3.30.080-P V.19

In response to the human-caused climate crisis currently underway and the direct harm being done to our District, society, and planet, Portland Public Schools is committed to immediately mobilizing resources and taking action to restore a safe climate. To this end, the District commits to reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and minimizing other environmental impacts; improving our school communities' health and wellness; and building a culture of learning, responsibility, and sustainability centered on our values of racial equity and environmental justice.

The District shall prioritize efforts that have the largest environmental return on investment for immediate action, while integrating environmental sustainability into our curriculum and developing a culture of environmental stewardship throughout our organization. Other goals which have a lower impact and require major changes in infrastructure can be implemented over the longer term.

The District aims to educate and empower students to be leaders in creating a sustainable city and society. The District wants all students to be environmentally literate and to understand the connections between their daily actions and the environment by using the environment as a context for achieving academic goals and civic action.

Our two overarching goals are:

Emissions Reduction and Resilience: PPS will reduce its carbon emissions by 50 percent from 2010 levels by 2030 and reach net zero emissions by 2050 while making PPS systems more resilient to environmental impacts that are now unavoidable.

Engagement and Preparedness: All PPS staff and students will have opportunities to learn about and engage in climate solutions, climate change preparedness, and climate justice practices.

We will align our work with the U.S. Department of Energy's Green Ribbon School Pillars. In accordance with those pillars, PPS is adopting the following goals.

Pillar 1: Reduce Environmental Impact and Costs

Goal 1.1: PPS will design, construct, and operate new schools and renovations that are energy-efficient and high-performance – conserving energy while reducing GHG emissions. The District will:

1. Use appropriate industry standards (e.g. LEED Gold, Net-Zero ready) when designing new and modernized buildings.
2. Prohibit the installation of fossil fuel infrastructure (gas-fired equipment) in all new buildings and major modernizations from here on out. Phase out fossil fuel infrastructure (gas-fired equipment) in all existing buildings by 2050.
3. Increase energy efficiency and minimize the indirect use of fossil fuels.
4. Limit the amount of refrigerants used.
5. Transition to building materials that generate less carbon when produced and are more sustainable (e.g. green concrete).
6. Design buildings to recover quickly from climate impacts (fires, floods, landslides, heat).
7. Design, renovate, and construct new facilities to maximize resiliency to heat, smoke, flooding, and storms to protect district assets and provide community respite during climate related emergencies.
8. Include infrastructure for reusable trays, utensils, and milk dispensers at new schools and add infrastructure for reusable trays and utensils in schools where feasible.

Goal 1.2: PPS will maximize reductions in GHG emissions from district operations, maintenance, and facilities management. The District will:

1. Maximize efficiency in fuel, electricity, and water use. Projects must advance current energy efficiency goals.
2. Establish standardized systems for waste prevention, reuse, recycling, and food waste in all campuses.
3. Minimize disposable materials and fully utilize all materials before disposal.

Goal 1.3: PPS will maximize the carbon-absorbing potential of grounds and increase the ability of grounds to adapt to climate extremes. The District will:

1. Maximize onsite stormwater infiltration capacity using techniques such as installing bioswales, rain gardens, de-paving projects, eco-roofs, and other stormwater management measures, in preparation for intense rain and potential flooding, while maintaining accessibility for those who use wheelchairs or need other walking assistance.
2. Phase out gas powered equipment used for grounds maintenance.
3. Decrease water consumption and phase out the use of pesticides and herbicides.
4. Increase shade trees, pollinator habitats, and de-pave projects, with highest priority in low-canopy neighborhoods.
5. Establish maintenance plans to care school grounds, including through community partnerships and student stewardship programs.
6. Study risk maps of district-owned sites and populations most vulnerable to climate impacts, and plan ADA accessible grounds improvements accordingly.

Goal 1.4: PPS will minimize greenhouse gas emissions from student and staff transportation. The District will:

1. Evaluate bus routes annually to improve route efficiencies and capacities.
2. Transition PPS and contracted vehicle fleet to electric or low emissions, renewable fuels, based on a vehicle life-cycle evaluation of carbon impact.
3. Improve the “no idle” policy to lessen emissions for fleet vehicles, buses, and family cars at schools.
4. Establish incentives for staff to walk, bike, bus or telecommute, in order to reduce single-occupant car commuting.

Goal 1.5: PPS will reduce the demand for new materials and resources, and procure materials, products, and services in a manner that integrates climate considerations, fiscal responsibility, and equity priorities. The District will:

1. Where feasible, divest banking investments from fossil fuel industries.
2. Purchase products based on long-term environmental and operating costs and include ecological and resulting social costs in purchasing decisions.
3. Implement a life-cycle analysis tool or criteria to evaluate and prioritize products based on durability, reusability, locally made, sustainably produced, biodegradable, responsibly packaged, recycled content, and non-toxic.
4. Incorporate climate impact standards and climate justice standards in all purchases, contracts, and RFPs for services and goods.
5. Transition from virgin paper to maximum post-consumer recycled content paper goods.
6. Transition to electronic communication for the District, (e.g., internal memos, pay stubs, HR paperwork, contracts, and agendas).
7. Use bulk serving over single-use plastic packaging when possible.
8. Incorporate management of durable trays, utensils, collecting food scraps, and recycling into staff responsibilities.
9. Donate excess food that would otherwise be collected as food waste.

Pillar 2: Improve Health and Wellness

Goal 2.1: PPS will address climate-based impacts on health, safety, and wellness. The District will:

1. Include climate change impacts as a risk in district asset management and assess district properties at risk of flooding, landslides, and wildfire-related problems.

2. In consultation with labor organizations, implement health and safety standards to ensure a climate-safe work environment (protected from heat, smoke, and pollution).
3. Work with partners to promote safe routes to schools and invest in walk and bike infrastructure on school property.
4. Prioritize foods that are local, organic, seasonal, plant-based, minimally processed and/or minimally packaged, and lower embodied carbon while meeting requirements of the National School Lunch Program.

Pillar 3: Provide Effective Environmental and Sustainability Education

Goal 3.1: PPS will empower frontline communities to build resiliency from climate change induced stresses and support preparation for and recover from these events. The District will:

1. Identify and monitor climate trends and impacts on district families, especially groups vulnerable to impacts of extreme heat and poor air quality.
2. Develop and distribute accessible and culturally appropriate communications to help families understand, prepare for, and respond to climate impacts such as heatwaves, smoke, heavy rain, and flooding. For families in areas susceptible to flooding or heat-island effect, provide targeted information and resources.
3. Host climate related emergency preparedness event(s) for students, staff, and teachers.

Goal 3.2: PPS will empower all PPS teachers and staff as allies for a healthy climate. The District will:

1. Identify climate considerations of various roles and add climate justice responsibilities to job descriptions.
2. Provide learning opportunities for all staff on key aspects of climate science/climate justice, and the mobilization needed to respond.
3. Provide annual training to custodians, kitchen staff, teachers, principals, and all school staff related to climate impacts and solutions relevant to their job, establish accountability and integrate sustainable practices into each position.
4. Review and remediate inadequate capacity and compensation for staff taking on extra responsibility for climate crisis response efforts.
5. Increase capacity of school and district staff to respond to climate-related crises to safeguard lives, health, facilities assets, and environment.
6. Create a site-based staff leadership program to support sustainability efforts at their schools and receive a small stipend for the additional required work. This program will develop a network of on-the-ground implementers that serve to rally school efforts and keep a pulse on what is working at each school.
7. Support all schools in working towards participating in the Oregon Green Schools certification program.

Goal 3.3: With the help of BIPOC students and communities, PPS will develop curricular learning opportunities, so PPS graduates know the causes and consequences of climate change, understand climate justice, and have opportunities to practice climate solutions. The District will:

1. Consider climate science and anti-racist climate justice content (that includes representation of people with disabilities) before approving new curricula and/or teaching materials.
2. Offer climate justice learning opportunities that are culturally relevant, solutions focused, designed to build a sense of personal efficacy, focusing on individual behaviors and understanding ways to make changes in bigger systems.
3. Increase workforce training in living-wage green jobs, with special opportunities for students from frontline communities.
4. Develop and deliver content to help students understand, prepare for and respond to likely climate change impacts, with special support and resources available to schools serving the most vulnerable populations.
5. Provide student opportunities to learn about the global food production system, its carbon impact, and related issues like hunger and food waste.
6. Support partner organizations that provide hands-on, place-based, experiential climate education for students.

Goal 3.4: PPS will create opportunities for students to engage in hands-on climate learning, preparation, and practice on a regular basis at all PPS schools. The District will:

1. Support development of youth leadership and engagement opportunities around climate solutions.
2. Create meaningful opportunities for BIPOC and low-income communities to shape the development and implementation of climate related programs.
3. Support student-led climate justice, climate action, and climate resiliency initiatives.
4. Support student and staff participation in non-partisan advocacy to local, state, and federal jurisdictions for common sense climate policies.
5. Update school emergency response plans to address climate-related hazards, including flood, extreme heat, landslides, and wildfire. Plans should emphasize protecting and serving low-income populations, communities of color, and people with disabilities.
6. Treat the grounds and garden of each school as a learning space and involve students in nature-based grounds improvements and design.
7. Create annual District-level opportunities to exhibit student projects related to sustainability and climate action.
8. Support youth leaders in their ongoing and critical role in ensuring student engagement practices become standardized in District processes.

To be moved to the resolution:

Reporting and Communications

The Superintendent shall develop a plan to implement this policy. The plan shall establish metrics to evaluate progress on each of the above goals. The plan will include a communications strategy to:

1. Communicate progress on the goals of the plan.
2. Share climate justice awareness materials (i.e., video, website) with staff and families.
3. Continually revise the effectiveness of the district's Climate Crisis Response Policy Administrative Directive as needed to reflect changing realities and innovations.
4. Transmit official copies of this policy and progress reports via the District Clerk to: The Superintendent, the State Superintendent of Education, the Oregon State Board of Education, the Congressional Climate Solutions Caucus, the Oregon School Board Association, our state and national representatives, and all district staff.

Climate Crisis Response Committee

The Superintendent shall establish a Climate Crisis Response Committee (CCRC). The CCRC will include representatives from frontline communities, students, parents, teachers, scientists, administrators, businesses, environmental non-profits, and the PPS Climate Justice Committee. CCRC will provide regular progress reports to the School Board. A PPS administrative position will be created to help with implementation, monitoring and reporting.