



Call to Climate Action Resolution

Woodland Hills School District • Pennsylvania



**Coalition for Climate
Education Policy**

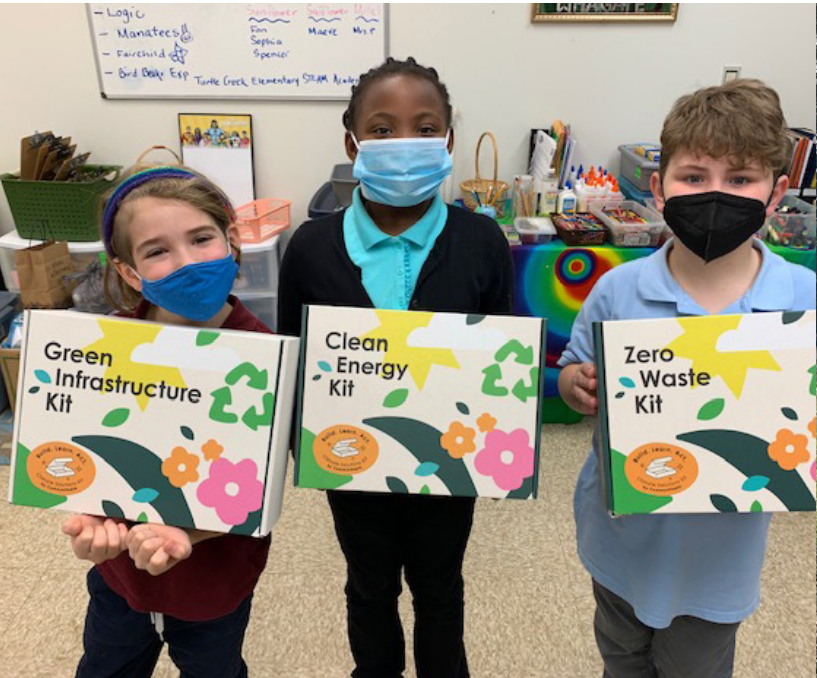
Advancing climate literacy for a just and sustainable future



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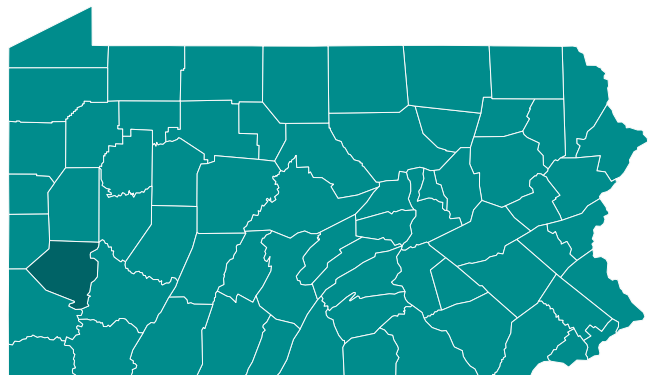
Executive Summary

Climate change education is moving forward in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. Woodland Hills School District near Pittsburgh has adopted a Call to Climate Action Resolution focused on educational and operational shifts for the district. This case study offers an overview and background of the resolution, and a glimpse into the impact it has had so far. Finally, it covers some specific challenges, lessons learned, and planned next steps for the Woodland Hills School District on its climate education journey.

Overview

In Pennsylvania, climate change impacts are expected to become more frequent and intense. Impacts including increases in annual precipitation and flooding are already felt by Woodland Hills School District (WHSD), and they add stress to youth and communities, and the infrastructure they rely on. A Call to Climate Action (Resolution 540.19) was implemented in 2019 in WHSD to address these problems and enhance climate literacy and advocacy in public schools. The resolution made WHSD the first district in Pennsylvania to implement a climate literacy resolution. It emphasizes the importance of engagement with the local community and policy-makers, and centers environmental justice and youth voice.

Policy Type: Teaching and Learning



Background

The Call to Climate Action Resolution was the result of the advocacy efforts of a Pittsburgh-based environmental nonprofit, Communitopia. Communitopia engaged students in a climate change workshop in which eighth-grade science classes at Woodland Hills Junior High School learned about climate change and climate solutions. During the workshop, students expressed concern for the future of the region and the planet; they wrote 27 letters to the school board demanding climate action in their school district. This student activism led to the passing of the resolution and establishment of a Climate Change Committee to oversee its implementation. Over 80 districts across the nation have passed similar climate action resolutions since 2017, but WHSD was the first to do so in Pennsylvania. The resolution was supported by community members and environmental advocates who recognize the urgent need to address climate change.



Approach

Woodland Hills Public School District resolved to engage in climate action in 4 ways:

1. Improving climate literacy and advocacy through curricular and educational opportunities.
2. Increasing the sustainability of facilities, operations, and transportation.
3. Promoting climate-friendly food services and food waste reduction programs.
4. Engaging in advocacy for “commonsense climate policies that protect current and future students.

Evaluation

The Call to Climate Action Resolution sparked the creation of a Climate Change Committee charged with developing an implementation plan, and monitoring and evaluating its progress. The Committee is up and running and is made up of school district representatives, student representatives, and Communitopia members. Monthly meetings and an annual deep-dive convening have been organized to discuss quantitative data (trees planted, carbon emissions, student involvement) and anecdotal data (teacher, student, and community feedback). The Committee then reports findings, accomplishments, and recommendations to the School Board.

Outcomes

WHSD had several exciting sustainability initiatives come from this resolution. One outcome was the development of a **Climate Action Plan** that is aligned with the goals and strategies included in the Climate Change Action Resolution. Three overarching goals, ten objectives, and fifty actions are identified that the district plans to pursue within the next few years.

Climate Action Plan Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Reduce carbon emissions from buildings, grounds, transportation and food through mitigation strategies.

- a. Objectives:
 1. By 2030, the district will aim for a 31.5% reduction.
 2. By 2040, the district will aim for a 66.5% reduction.
 3. By 2050, the district aims to be net zero.
- b. Strategies for achieving these objectives include energy audits, increasing school green spaces, providing carpool incentives, composting and food waste reduction programs, recycling programs, and more.

Goal 2: Increase educator participation in using and creating climate action units.

- a. Objectives:
 1. By 2030, 100% of educators will use a climate action unit and 30% will design their own.
 2. By 2040, 60% of educators will design their own climate action unit.
 3. By 2050, 100% of educators will design their own climate action unit.
- b. Strategies for achieving these objectives include:
 1. Introducing workshops for educators.
 2. Providing incentives or competition for teacher participation in professional development programs.
 3. Introducing the climate action plan into the classrooms and present on progress tracking.
 4. Commissioning a K-12 sustainability curriculum including online resources and textbooks.
 5. Establishing curriculum content and sharing it through teacher workshops and training.

Goal 3: Increase student engagement in climate advocacy.

- a. Objectives:
 1. By 2030, 20% of students will be engaged in climate advocacy.
 2. By 2040, 50% of students will be engaged in climate advocacy.
 3. By 2050, 80% of students will be engaged in climate advocacy.
- b. Strategies for achieving these objectives include:
 1. Creating climate action teams at every school.
 2. Introducing yearly grants for climate action projects.
 3. Organizing climate focused summits and field trips.

In addition to the Climate Action plan, the school district won the Best in Green Schools Award from the Green Schools National Network and Center for Green Schools in 2021. These climate action initiatives serve approximately 3,500 students and over 350 staff in the WHSD.

Lessons Learned & Next Steps

The implementation of this resolution did not come without challenges. A few of these challenges, solutions, and lessons learned are highlighted below.

1. The Climate Change Committee has a solid structure, but some challenges remain. Acquiring and maintaining Committee representatives has been more difficult than anticipated, despite the presence of financial incentives for teachers.
2. The implementation of climate initiatives is extremely difficult when test-scores and other competing demands are often higher priority. Finding ways to make the case for climate action is extremely important to moving this work forward.
3. Identifying dedicated school district staff and educators to champion climate action is essential, but sustaining this work becomes challenging when key champions retire or move on.
4. Quantifying carbon emissions proves to be more difficult than expected, requiring careful consideration and assessment methods.
5. WHSD educators primarily receive professional development (PD) hours through the school district, which reduces the strong incentive for additional PD hours with external organizations.
6. When learning standards are being redone, there is an important window for the integration of climate education concepts. Preparing for and capitalizing on these windows of opportunity is critical.
7. Communitopia has remained actively involved in the school district's climate action work, but to expand their impact to other districts, there will be a need to gradually transfer more responsibility to the school district.



Mapping the Landscape of K-12 Climate Change Education Policy in the United States
Full Report
May 2022

MECCE
MONITORING AND EVALUATING
CLIMATE COMMUNICATION
AND EDUCATION PROJECT

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Thank you to the Woka Foundation for their generous support of this report.

Does the Call to Climate Action Resolution support any of the recommendations from the Mapping K-12 Climate Education Policy Report?

Yes!

- Increasing the quality and quantity of climate change content in education.
- Include a stronger focus on climate justice, climate action, and Indigenous knowledges in all education policies.
- Providing policy support, such as funding, professional development, and staffing to help advance climate change education policy.

Resources

- [Call to Climate Action Resolution](#)
- [Woodland Hills School District Climate Action Plan](#)
- [Mapping the Landscape of K-12 Climate Change Education Policy in the United States Report](#)

Contact

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