

LOCAL K-12 CLIMATE ACTION PLAN: KEY QUESTIONS TO GET STARTED



Is your district ready to take action on climate change? This guide can help you ask questions to begin determining opportunities for your district to develop local K-12 climate action plans. Comprehensive local K-12 climate action plans should be based on a comprehensive needs and assets assessment of your local community.

Specifically, we provide some guiding questions as it relates to mitigation, adaptation and resilience, education, and equity. We hope these questions can help guide initial planning conversations, identify some existing resources, and lead to more robust planning in your community. As you support more robust planning, you should consider the implementation resources from organizations listed at the end of this guide.

MITIGATION: Transitioning to clean energy, clean transportation, sustainable food use, and building electrification.

QUESTIONS	YES	NO
Sustainability. Does my district or community have any existing sustainability plans?		
Infrastructure. Does my district or community have a policy to ensure new school infrastructure, renovations, retrofits, and systems replacements support healthy sustainable learning environments?		
Does my district ensure new building plans consider opportunities to make progress to net-zero energy?		
Does my district ensure new buildings, retrofits, and renovations are designed to optimize health and sustainability and utilize energy-efficient clean technology?		
Does my district utilize renewable energy? Are there opportunities to support schools in utilizing renewable energy like solar and geothermal?		
Does my district ensure major systems replacements (including HVACs) utilize clean, efficient, and sustainable technologies that support electrification?		
Are there state, federal, or other resources or community partners that can help my district support sustainable infrastructure?		

QUESTIONS	YES	NO
Transportation. Does my district or community have a plan in place to transition its school bus fleet to electric?		
As my district gets new buses or district vehicles, does it ensure those buses and vehicles are electric with zero-emissions?		
Does my district have a plan to build the needed charging infrastructure for electric buses and workplace charging?		
Are there state, federal, or other resources or community partners that can help my district support the transition to electric buses?		
Food. Does my district support sustainable food use?		
Does my district access locally-grown, sustainable food through local procurement or farm to school programs?		
Does my district support food donation or food rescue?		
Does my district support composting?		
Are there state, federal, or other resources or community partners that can help my district support the transition to sustainable food use?		

ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE: Supporting adaptation and resilience strategies.

QUESTIONS	YES	NO
Risks. What are the likely climate risks in my community?		
What are the things your community cares about and agrees are important to protect?		
How will climate risks potentially affect students, families, learning, and schools?		
Do climate risks differ by communities or schools within your district?		

QUESTIONS	YES	NO
Mental Health. Are there supports currently in place to meet students' mental health needs in the event of community-wide trauma from climate impacts?		
Does my district provide professional development for educators and school leaders to support student mental health in response to climate impacts?		
Are there supports currently in place for educators, school leaders, and other school staff to successfully implement trauma-informed practices?		
Are there state, federal, or other resources, or community partners that can help my district support student mental health to build resilience to climate impacts?		
Virtual learning. Does my district have a plan in place for virtual learning in the event of disruptions due to climate impacts?		
Does my district provide supports and resources to educators and families to help with virtual learning?		
Are there state, federal, or other resources, or community partners that can help my district support potential virtual learning in the event of climate-related disruptions?		
Green sustainable schoolyards. Does my district have a plan to transition schoolyards to green sustainable schoolyards?		
Are there schools or communities impacted by heat island effects or storm-related flooding that can benefit most from access to green sustainable schoolyards?		
Community Resilience Hubs. Are schools in my district equipped to be hubs of community resilience?		
Are there city/town, state, federal, or other resources, or community partners that can help schools in my district become hubs of resilience?		

EDUCATION: Supporting teaching and learning on climate change, climate solutions, and sustainability across the curriculum and across all grade levels.

QUESTIONS	YES	NO
Existing curricula. How, if at all, are climate change, climate solutions, and sustainability included in existing curricula?		
Are these topics taught across subjects and grade levels in a developmentally appropriate way?		
Does my district have an existing environmental literacy plan?		

QUESTIONS	YES	NO
Does my district currently support place-based or project-based learning related to climate change, climate solutions, and sustainability?		
Are there state, federal, or other resources, or community partners that can help my district develop curricula across subject areas and grades related to climate change, climate solutions, and sustainability?		
Professional development. How, if at all, does your district provide high-quality, embedded, and ongoing professional development to educators on climate change, climate solutions, and sustainability?		
Are there state, federal, or other resources, or community partners that can help my district support potential virtual learning in the event of climate-related disruptions?		
Does my district currently support educators in teaching related to climate change, climate solutions, and sustainability?		
Are there state, federal, or other resources, or community partners that can help my district support professional development for educators and school leaders related to climate change, climate solutions, and sustainability?		
Career and Technical Education. Does my district have career and technical education opportunities to prepare students for a clean economy, resilient and sustainable future?		
Is resilience and environmental sustainability integrated across existing CTE pathways?		
Does my district have existing CTE programs to prepare students for high-skill, high-wage jobs in the clean and resilient economy?		
Does my district partner with community colleges, apprenticeship programs, local businesses, and other community-based organizations to build pathways to high-skill, high-wage, in-demand jobs?		
Are there state, federal, or other resources or community partners that can help my district provide opportunities to prepare students for a clean economy, resilient, and sustainable future?		
Out-of-School Education. How, if at all, does my district partner with out-of-school education providers to increase access to informal learning opportunities that include climate change, climate solutions, and sustainability?		
Does my district currently partner with out-of-school providers related to climate change, climate solutions, and sustainability?		
Are there state, federal, or other resources, or community partners that can help my district build partnerships with out-of-school education providers to increase educational opportunities for students, teachers, and families related to climate change, climate solutions, and sustainability?		

QUESTIONS	YES	NO
Indigenous Knowledge. How if at all, does my district partner with local Indigenous communities, Tribal organizations, and Indian centers to integrate Indigenous knowledge into teaching and learning?		
Do these partnerships support holistic, community-based, culturally-relevant education related to climate solutions and sustainability?		
Are there state, federal, or other resources, or community partners that can help my district build partnerships with local Indigenous communities, Tribal organizations, and Indian centers?		

EQUITY: Advance equity by engaging and prioritizing students, parents, caregivers, families, and communities most impacted by climate change when developing a climate action plan.

QUESTIONS	YES	NO
Community Inclusion. How, if at all, does my district include students, parents/ caregivers, and community members--in particular Black, Latino, Asian American and Pacific Islander, and Indigenous perspectives, people with disabilities and low-income urban and rural perspectives--in decision-making?		
Do students currently have a voice in decision-making in my district?		
Are there communities we can better engage in decision-making related to climate action?		
Prioritize Equity. How, if at all, does my district ensure equitable resources, supports, and opportunities for Black, Latino, Asian American and Pacific Islander, and Indigenous students, students with disabilities and low-income urban and rural students?		
How, if at all, does my district ensure equitable access to healthy sustainable learning environments with sustainable infrastructure, transportation, and healthy food?		
How, if at all, does my district ensure equitable access to mental health supports, accessible virtual learning, green sustainable schoolyards, and community resilience hubs?		
How, if at all, does my district ensure equitable access to educational opportunities related to climate change, climate solutions, and sustainability?		
How, if at all, does my district ensure equitable access to career and technical education opportunities to prepare students for high-wage, high-skill jobs in the clean economy?		

Key Resources to Support Implementation

Now that you've asked some key questions, are you ready to go deeper? The organizations and resources outlined below provide implementation support that can be used in communities across the country. Importantly, this list is not exhaustive and rather provides a place to start. There are many organizations that work on these topics and we encourage you to seek out additional organizations and resources that can help you at the national, state, or regional level. The organizations are listed alphabetically.

MITIGATION		
Whole school sustainability	Center for Green Schools at the U.S. Green Building Council Collaborative for High Performing Schools Eco-Schools, National Wildlife Federation Green Schools National Network Green Strides	
Buildings and energy	Generation180 New Buildings Institute UndauntedK12	
Transportation	Generation180 VEIC - Electric School Bus Resources World Resources Institute	
Food	FoodCorps National Farm to School Network	
ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE		
Assessing Risk	U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit	
Student health	EPA Indoor Air Quality EPA Drinking Water Healthy Schools Campaign Healthy Schools Network	
Student Mental Health	CASEL Pure Edge	
Green Schoolyards	Children and Nature Network Green Schoolyards America Trust for Public Land	
EDUCATION	NATIONAL	REGIONAL/STATE FOCUS
K-12 Climate Change Education Support	AMS Education Professional Development CLEAN Network Climate.gov (NOAA) NASA Climate Kids National Geographic NOAA Office of Education NWF Climate Classroom Kids Share My Lesson: Climate Resources SubjectToClimate Wild Center's Youth Climate Program	Climate Generation (MN) CLEO Institute (FL) ClimeTime (WA) EcoRise (TX)
K-12 Environmental Education Support	EPA Office of Environmental Education North American Association for Environmental Education	Ten Strands (CA)
Career and Technical Education	The SEED Center SEI	Solar One (NY)