



Climate Action and Resilience Planning in California Public Schools (K-12): A Case Study of Los Angeles County

*Developed for
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“The Los Angeles fires threw schools into chaos, revealing their unpreparedness for the escalating challenges of the climate crisis. Schools need comprehensive disaster preparedness systems — not last-minute plans that put students and staff at risk.”

– Julie van Winkle, Vice President of the United Teachers of Los Angeles (January 2025)



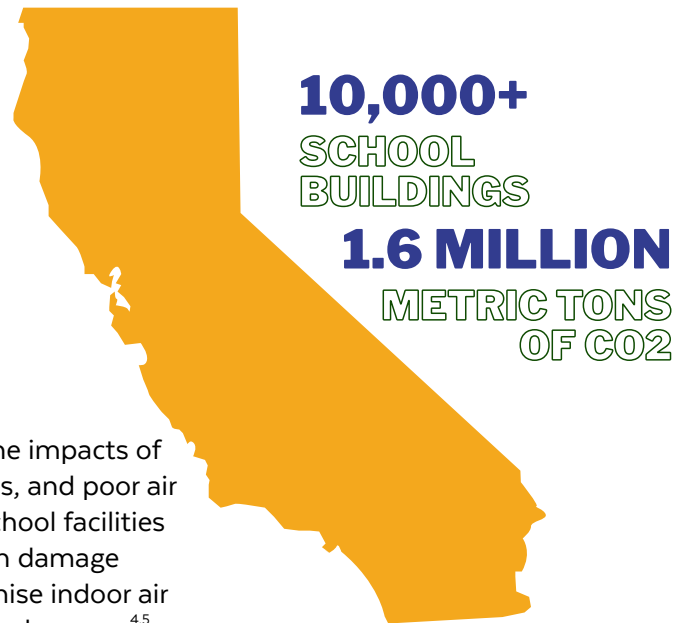
The 2025 Los Angeles fires forced our communities out of their homes and schools with no clear path to recovery. It’s an all too familiar trend, across our communities we see how wildfires and climate disasters hit Latina/o families and students the hardest. Whether it’s wildfires, poor air quality, or outdated HVAC systems at our local schools on a hot day, a Climate Action Plan can help address these challenges head on. It can serve as a critical tool to improve how schools prepare for, respond to, and recover from climate disasters. It’s time to take bold action and ensure our students are protected in the face of ongoing & future climate challenges using a Climate Action Plan.”



Vanessa Aramayo, CEO & President of Alliance for a Better Community

Introduction: Climate Action and Resilience in K-12 Schools

The education sector has a critical role to play in addressing climate change, yet K-12 public schools are often left out of climate action planning. These school systems are significant sources of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions,² and integrating them into climate planning could yield substantial environmental, health, and equity benefits. In California alone, there are over 10,000 public school buildings (spanning 730 million square feet) that contribute approximately 1.6 million metric tons of CO₂ emissions per year.³



School systems are also increasingly affected by the impacts of climate change. As extreme heat, flooding, wildfires, and poor air quality become more frequent and severe, both school facilities and students face growing risks. These hazards can damage infrastructure, disrupt school operations, compromise indoor air quality, and threaten student health and educational access.^{4,5}

Schools therefore have an opportunity to lead on both fronts: reducing their climate footprint while strengthening their ability to withstand and recover from climate-related disruptions.

These climate risks intersect with longstanding inequities. Under-resourced school districts are more likely to contend with aging facilities and limited capacity to invest in climate preparedness,^{6,7,8} restricting their ability to prepare for and recover from climate hazards. Because these districts disproportionately serve low-income communities and communities of color, including many predominantly Latina/o communities, students in these schools are more likely to experience unsafe learning conditions and prolonged climate-related disruptions.⁹ As climate impacts intensify, these inequities compound existing disparities in health and educational outcomes for students in historically marginalized communities.

Los Angeles County—home to one of the largest and most diverse student populations in the country, including a majority of Latina/o students—illustrates these challenges clearly. During the 2019 Saddleridge Fire, hazardous air quality exposed thousands of students to unsafe conditions as Los Angeles Unified School District delayed school closures, highlighting gaps in emergency preparedness and prompting public concern from teachers and families.¹⁰

In January 2025, wildfires in Greater Los Angeles damaged or destroyed at least nine school buildings and temporarily closed more than 1,000 schools across 26 districts, interrupting instruction for over 600,000 students.¹¹ These events, among others, have underscored the widespread impact of climate-induced disasters on school systems in California and across the United States.

Despite escalating risks, school climate action and resilience planning remain limited and fragmented. Many school districts lack the resources and policy support needed to develop comprehensive climate strategies. Using Los Angeles County as a case study, this report examines the district-level landscape of school climate action, highlighting the ad hoc and uneven nature of existing sustainability efforts. It concludes with key policy recommendations to support equitable climate action and resilience across California’s K-12 schools. With decisive action, California can ensure that its public schools are prepared for the realities of climate change and positioned to build a healthier, more resilient future for all students.

Current Advocacy Efforts

Recognizing these gaps, a growing state and national coalition of education and climate organizations have been working to advance school-based climate change policies. The Aspen Institute’s “This is Planet Ed” initiative (formerly K12 Climate Action) has elevated national discussions on the role of schools in climate solutions,¹² while Undaunted K12 has focused on local and practical measures such as school electrification and grant funding.¹³

Meanwhile, Ten Strands has spearheaded efforts to integrate environmental literacy into public education. They have launched the “Data Initiative for Environmental and Climate Action in California’s TK-12 Schools,” an effort to track district-level climate action and equity indicators.¹⁴ Momentum for school climate action is growing, with new research and advocacy pushing for stronger policies at the local, state, and national levels. The recently released 2025 book “Students, Schools, and Our Climate Moment: Acting Now to Secure Our Future” by Laura A. Schifter and Jonathan Klein highlights the urgent need for integrating climate action into education systems.¹⁵

Additionally, the Climate Ready Schools Coalition—which Alliance for a Better Community (ABC) is a member of—is advocating for California schools to serve as hubs of climate resilience, public health, and decarbonization. Currently, the coalition is asking Governor Newsom to provide “\$15M in one-time funding for a three-year program to build local capacity and provide regional support for County Offices of Education (COEs) to support school districts to respond to climate emergencies and plan and implement climate resilient school buildings and grounds.”¹⁶



The Need for School Climate Action and Resilience

Vulnerability of Schools and Students to Climate Impacts

Schools and children are at serious risk from climate change, especially in areas like Los Angeles County where climate-related disasters like wildfires and intense heat disrupt classes and endanger public health and safety. The toxic ash and dangerous air quality that followed the wildfires in Los Angeles are examples of how these occurrences frequently have cascading and long-lasting repercussions.¹⁷ Parents voiced concerns about the air quality when schools reopened and asked school officials to be more forthcoming about their risk mitigation and air quality monitoring procedures.¹⁸ Climate-related events can also increase mold growth in classrooms or contaminate school grounds with pollutant runoff and debris (Sheffield et al., 2017), further threatening student health and safety.



Climate-related hazards disproportionately affect low-income communities and communities of color across the United States, reflecting longstanding patterns of social and environmental injustice. In Los Angeles County, these inequities are especially pronounced. According to the 2021 Los Angeles County Climate Vulnerability Assessment (CVA), Hispanic and Latinx residents make up 48.5 percent of the County's overall population but 66.9 percent of residents in communities with high vulnerability to extreme heat—many of which also have large populations of school-aged children.¹⁹ These inequities are compounded by barriers to emergency services and adaptation planning. In past disasters, including the 2010 floods in San Pedro and Wilmington, many Hispanic/Latinx and undocumented residents relied on trusted community organizations rather than formal emergency shelters,²⁰ highlighting how language access, immigration concerns, and limited culturally responsive outreach can restrict access to public resources. When climate planning and emergency communication fail to account for these realities, Latina/o students and families face compounded risks during climate events.

Disparities in climate vulnerability are also reflected in school infrastructure conditions. Many schools lack the infrastructure and resources needed to withstand climate change impacts, including air quality monitoring networks, emergency preparedness plans, and functional heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems.²¹ In California's K-12 public school system, an estimated 15-20% of schools lack functioning HVAC systems, and an additional 10% require major repairs or replacement.²² Young children are particularly vulnerable to heat-related health risks due to their limited ability to regulate body temperature, and extreme heat can impair concentration and cognitive function among school-aged students—especially in schools without adequate cooling.²³ Schools without adequate cooling are disproportionately located in low-income communities of color, leaving these students especially vulnerable to the negative health and educational impacts associated with extreme heat.²⁴ Together, these challenges illustrate the urgent need for climate-resilient school infrastructure and planning.



Schools as Critical Players in Climate Action

Beyond their vulnerability, schools represent significant yet underutilized opportunities for climate action. The education sector contributes to greenhouse gas emissions through energy use, transportation, and outdated infrastructure, with over 100,000 public schools in the U.S. consuming substantial energy and operating the largest mass transit fleet in the country.²⁵ Despite these contributions, schools are often excluded from municipal climate action plans, leaving their potential for mitigation and adaptation untapped.²⁶

Integrating schools into state and local climate strategies would not only accelerate California's decarbonization goals but also ensure schools are positioned as hubs for community resilience.

“In recognition of the urgency to address climate change, cities across the United States have developed comprehensive climate action plans (CAPs). These strategic frameworks include mitigation measures, adaptation strategies, and resilience-building initiatives to advance solutions. These plans also facilitate cross-sector collaboration—between different sectors, like health, infrastructure, and government—to create a cohesive and robust plan for action. However, the education sector is often underutilized in these strategies, despite its critical role in supporting children, youth, and communities.” (This is Planet Ed)

Co-Benefits of School Climate Action

Investing in school climate action offers broad benefits beyond emissions reduction. For example, transitioning to electric school buses, modernizing HVAC systems, and greening school buildings can help reduce local air pollution, ultimately improving children's health and educational achievement, reducing absenteeism, and lowering operational costs.^{27,28}

Additionally, embedding climate education into school curriculum equips students with new knowledge or skills, preparing them for future professional opportunities in the green economy and fostering a generation of climate-conscious leaders.²⁹

Climate action in schools also presents opportunities to advance equity by prioritizing investments in underserved populations, including Latina/o communities, that are disproportionately affected by climate change.



The Case of Los Angeles County: Climate Vulnerabilities and School District Action



Lessons from Recent Climate Impacts

Los Angeles County is home to 80 K-12 public school districts that serve over 1.3 million students—of those students, over 65% are Hispanic/Latino and approximately 70% are considered socioeconomically disadvantaged.³⁰ Many of these students live in communities that face high exposure to extreme heat, wildfire smoke, and other climate-related hazards. This concentration of climate risk and socioeconomic disadvantage underscores the need for coordinated investment in sustainable, climate-ready school infrastructure.

As previously noted, the recent Los Angeles wildfires further exposed the vulnerabilities of the region's schools to climate-induced disasters. Schools across the county faced hazardous air quality, power outages, and delayed closures, putting students and staff at risk.^{31,32}

Local community advocates, parent leaders, and organizations, like United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA), had to advocate for district-wide closures, highlighting gaps in disaster preparedness and the need for proactive climate resilience measures.³³

Upgrading HVAC systems, integrating emergency protocols, and designating schools as community crisis hubs during extreme weather are critical steps to protecting students. Yet, chronic underfunding and limited policy mandates leave schools unprepared for worsening climate impacts. This recent wildfire illustrates the broader need for comprehensive school climate action and adaptation plans that include measures not only to mitigate climate change, but also to build school climate resilience to protect the health and well-being of students.

Understanding Climate Action in Los Angeles County Schools

To assess the current state of school climate action planning in Los Angeles County, we conducted a systematic review of publicly available information on district websites. Between January and March 2025, we examined the 48 unified school districts in the County to evaluate the presence of climate action and sustainability initiatives. Because this analysis relies on publicly available information, it only reflects what districts have formally documented and communicated online. While some districts may be undertaking internal climate-related initiatives not publicly reported, the presence (or absence) of publicly accessible planning documents is itself an important indicator of transparency and institutional commitment to climate action.

Our analysis of climate action within these unified school districts found that only two—Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District (SMMUSD) and Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD)—have published formal sustainability plans.^{34,35} While there is flexibility in what sustainability plans entail, these plans generally serve as comprehensive roadmaps for organizations or institutions to improve their environmental sustainability. A formal sustainability plan typically outlines clear goals, measurable targets, and strategies across key environmental areas such as energy efficiency, water conservation, green building, and sustainable transportation, among others. These plans also often include mechanisms for tracking progress, stakeholder engagement, and long-term implementation to ensure accountability and integration with broader institutional priorities. In the case of public school districts, a sustainability plan provides a structured approach to embedding environmental priorities within school operations, infrastructure, and curriculum.

Table 1 provides an overview of the key features of the SMMUSD and LBUSD sustainability plans. Notably, **none of the districts in Los Angeles County have publicly adopted a dedicated “climate action plan” or “climate resilience plan.”** While sustainability plans focus broadly on environmental priorities (sometimes including climate change), climate action plans (CAPs) are more explicitly designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and align with local or state climate change goals. Meanwhile, climate resilience plans emphasize adaptation to climate impacts, outlining strategies to protect students, staff, and infrastructure from extreme weather, wildfires, heat waves, and other climate-related hazards. The absence of dedicated climate plans reflects a broader trend in which school climate action remains fragmented, with limited policy guidance and inconsistent funding mechanisms.

Long Beach Unified School District: 2024 District-Wide Sustainability Plan

LBUSD’s District-Wide Sustainability Plan is a comprehensive roadmap to achieve clean energy goals by 2045 while enhancing resource efficiency and environmental education. The plan prioritizes greenhouse gas reduction through solar PV expansion, LED lighting, electrification of district operations, and water conservation. Equity and student engagement play central roles, with initiatives like an advisory committee composed of “students, teachers, educators, board members and parents, as well as a City of Long Beach representative and community members.”³⁶

Importantly, the plan is intentionally aligned with several of the District’s board policies (Board Policy 3510.1 Green School Energy & Sustainability Policy and Board Policy 0415 Excellence and Equity) as well as the District’s Facilities Master Plan and Vision 2035 Strategic Plan.³⁷ The plan also includes a structured implementation framework to ensure monitoring, accountability, and long-term sustainability across the District.

Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District: 2019 District-Wide Plan for Sustainability

SMMUSD’s District-Wide Sustainability Plan provides a strategic roadmap for integrating sustainability into District operations, facilities, and curriculum. The plan focuses on eight key areas: climate action, education and engagement, energy efficiency, water conservation, waste reduction, transportation, and green building. For each of the key areas, the plan identifies performance indicator metrics and measurable goals for 2020, 2025, and 2030; it highlights related existing initiatives in the District and recommended strategies to achieve the targets. While the plan did not include a comprehensive greenhouse gas (GHG) assessment, it does identify baselines for several of the sustainability focus areas (e.g., annual electricity consumption in kWh and annual water use in gallons) and recommends that the District conduct a GHG inventory for future plan updates. To help ensure financial sustainability, the plan also estimates some of the implementation costs of various sustainability strategies and provides recommendations for targeted funding mechanisms including grants, rebates, and partnerships.

Table 1. District-Wide Sustainability Plans within Los Angeles County

School District	Sustainability Plan	Key Features
Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD)	District-Wide Sustainability Plan (2024)	Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction Strategies: The plan includes a comprehensive GHG emissions assessment and outlines prioritized actions for energy efficiency, electrification, and waste management to achieve a 79% emissions reduction by 2045.
		Student & Community Engagement: The Climate & Sustainability Task Force (includes seats for students, teachers, parents, local government officials, and community members) and Green Schools Campaign (student-led sustainability group) empower stakeholders to participate in development and implementation of sustainability plan initiatives.
		Programmatic Strategies: Beyond emissions, the plan includes behavioral change programs, environmental literacy initiatives, and equitable campus greening efforts.
		Clear Implementation Framework: A five-step process (hiring a Sustainability Coordinator, setting key performance indicators, prioritizing actions, implementation, and monitoring) ensures plan accountability.
Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District (SMMUSD)	Districtwide Plan for Sustainability (2019)	Holistic Sustainability Approach: The plan covers eight focus areas (climate, education, energy, water, waste, transportation, food, and green buildings.)
		Measurable Performance Indicators: Key performance indicators and baseline metrics for energy, water, waste, and transportation are identified, with clear reduction targets for 2020, 2025, and 2030.
		Financial Planning & Grants: Funding mechanisms like utility incentives, grants, and partnerships are included to ensure financial sustainability.
		Emphasis on Sustainability Education: Environmental literacy and climate education are integrated into the curriculum through the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), professional development for teachers, and hands-on learning opportunities.



District-Wide Plans

These examples demonstrate that district-wide sustainability planning is both flexible and beneficial, yet remains the exception rather than the norm. However, the absence of a formal sustainability or climate action plan does not mean that other unified school districts in Los Angeles County are not engaged in sustainability efforts. In fact, both LBUSD and SMMUSD's district-wide sustainability plans acknowledge that many of their sustainability initiatives were previously implemented in an ad-hoc manner. For most school districts, sustainability and climate actions are scattered across departments, lacking coordination, and often driven by short-term funding opportunities. "Several of these programs and initiatives are already active, but have been deployed in an ad-hoc manner. This Plan aims to centralize these efforts under a single framework to further develop these initiatives into holistic programs." – LBUSD District-Wide Sustainability Plan (2024)³⁸

District-level plans serve as a critical tool to formalize and centralize sustainability efforts, ensuring consistency, transparency for parents and education stakeholders, long-term vision, and alignment with district-wide goals. For the many districts that have yet to develop comprehensive plans, similar opportunities exist to build upon existing initiatives and institutionalize sustainability or climate action as a core priority. Expanding these efforts across the County of Los Angeles and the State of California will require local and state support to ensure all school districts can implement climate resilience and sustainability strategies at scale.

School District Sustainability Initiatives

Despite the growing need for climate action in schools, the vast majority of school district websites in Los Angeles County make no direct mention of sustainability or climate initiatives. However, as mentioned above, sustainability efforts are often taking place behind the scenes— just not in a centralized or publicly accessible manner (such as a website or a downloadable report). Many of these initiatives are documented only in board meeting minutes or resolutions, which are not easily accessible to the general public. For example, Pasadena Unified School District's Board Resolution 2621 commits to expanding green spaces on campuses, yet this resolution is not readily found on the District's main website.³⁹ Similarly, the LAUSD Board of Education passed Resolution 038-24/25 in February 2025, "Strengthening Greening Initiatives through Community Partnerships," to promote climate resilience and sustainability by lowering costs for nonprofits in charge of greening initiatives on LAUSD campuses.⁴⁰

In November 2025, LAUSD adopted a resolution to address extreme heat by accelerating campus HVAC upgrades and climate-friendly technologies, developing interim cooling plans, and prohibiting artificial turf installations in elementary and middle schools.⁴¹ However, these board resolutions, and their respective initiatives, are not easily accessible on the District's webpage for their Eco-Sustainability Office. In other cases, sustainability projects gain attention through local media rather than official district communications. For instance, Pasadena Unified School District recently introduced electric buses and charging stations, a milestone covered in Pasadena Now but seemingly absent from the District's website.⁴²

Additionally, some school districts that lack dedicated sustainability or climate action plans (CAPs) have been included in their local municipality's CAPs, signaling some level of engagement in broader community climate goals. The lack of consistent reporting and transparency makes it challenging to assess the full scope of sustainability and climate actions across school districts in the region. Table 2 provides an overview of notable sustainability initiatives and projects across Los Angeles County's unified school districts, with examples from district web pages or media sources. While not an exhaustive list, this table highlights publicly available information on school district sustainability efforts, illustrating both existing progress and the need for greater coordination and visibility.

Table 2: Overview of Notable Sustainability & Climate Action Projects in Los Angeles County

Type of Sustainability Initiative	Description	School District Examples
Sustainability Office / Sustainability Committee	Establishing a dedicated office or committee within the district to coordinate sustainability efforts, engage stakeholders, and/or develop environmental policies.	Los Angeles Unified's Eco-Sustainability Office (ESO) leads initiatives in energy conservation, water stewardship, campus greening, waste reduction, and climate literacy to promote environmental stewardship and provide healthy, sustainable learning environments for all students.⁴³ Burbank Unified has a sustainability committee called the Superintendent's Environmental Action Committee (SEAC).⁴⁴ SEAC's webpage explicitly acknowledges the urgency of climate change, and its general roadmap includes a variety of environmental actions to help achieve sustainability. Culver City Unified has an Environmental Sustainability Committee (ESC) which was established by the School Board to recommend sustainability improvements, and the ESC is currently developing a five-year sustainability master plan.⁴⁵
School Bus Electrification	Transitioning school bus fleets from diesel to electric to reduce emissions, improve air quality, and lower fuel costs.	In 2024, 47 school districts in California were awarded EPA grant funding to help purchase electric or low-emission school buses. This included funding for Alhambra Unified (11 buses), Baldwin Park Unified (3 buses), Arcadia Unified (1 bus), Compton Unified (11 buses), Montebello Unified (25 buses), and Walnut Valley Unified (11 buses).⁴⁶ Los Angeles Unified has committed to fully electrifying its Sun Valley Bus Yard by 2026, including the purchase of 180 electric buses and related charging infrastructure.⁴⁷
Solar Projects	Establishing a dedicated office or committee within the district to coordinate sustainability efforts, engage stakeholders, and/or develop environmental policies.	Glendale Unified has implemented a multi-phase solar energy program, installing solar energy generation systems at over 20 school sites since 2012, funded through Measure S and Clean Renewable Energy Bonds (CREBs) to reduce energy costs, lower emissions, and provide shaded outdoor spaces for students and staff.⁴⁸

Table 2: Overview of Notable Sustainability & Climate Action Projects in Los Angeles County. CONT.

Energy Conservation	Implementing energy efficiency measures such as LED lighting, smart HVAC systems, and behavior-based conservation programs to reduce energy consumption and costs.	Covina-Valley Unified's energy conservation program, developed in partnership with the Cenergistic energy company, has reduced⁴⁸ energy consumption across its campuses, saving over \$1 million in utility costs and earning ENERGY STAR certification for twelve of its school sites. Glendale Unified has a districtwide "Energy Conservation Program" that reduces costs and environmental impact by monitoring energy use, identifying efficiency upgrades, and pursuing⁵⁰ alternative energy sources, resulting in a 20% utility cost reduction and cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 12,660 metric tons of CO₂.
School Greening	Expanding green spaces on school campuses by planting trees, adding gardens, and replacing asphalt with vegetation to improve air quality, reduce heat, and support student well-being.	Lynwood Unified, with support from TreePeople and a \$1 million CAL FIRE Green Schoolyards grant, is transforming three campuses by planting 110 trees, adding 1,800 native plants, and⁵¹ replacing 40,000 square feet of asphalt with green spaces to reduce heat, improve air quality, and enhance outdoor learning environments. Los Angeles Unified is currently investing over \$450⁵² million in school greening initiatives which includes new outdoor learning environments and the removal of approximately 30% of asphalt paving. The District's 2022 "Green Schools for All" board resolution sets a district-wide⁵³ minimum of 30% green space on all campuses by 2035 and prioritizes improvements at schools with the least existing green space.

Our analysis reveals that sustainability and climate action planning across Los Angeles County's unified school districts is fragmented and inconsistent. While some districts have taken leadership by adopting formal plans with clear goals, the majority lack comprehensive frameworks or publicly available documentation of their efforts. Many initiatives appear to be ad hoc, driven by individual schools or specific funding opportunities rather than a cohesive district-wide strategy. Without standardized reporting practices or centralized guidance, valuable efforts remain isolated, making it difficult to assess progress, share best practices, or scale successful programs across districts. This inconsistency highlights the urgent need for structured planning and policy support to ensure that all districts can effectively contribute to climate action and fully benefit from sustainable practices.

Conclusion and Recommendations

California's public schools are on the frontline of the climate crisis, facing increasing risks from extreme heat, wildfires, and poor air quality. While some school districts have made strides in sustainability, the overall approach remains fragmented across the state. The lack of centralized planning and reporting makes it difficult to track progress, secure funding, and scale successful climate action initiatives across districts. Without clear policy guidance and dedicated resources, many schools remain unprepared for the growing challenges posed by climate change.

Los Angeles County serves as a critical case study of this challenge. With 80 school districts serving over 1.3 million students, the county illustrates both the opportunities and barriers to implementing school-based climate action. While a few unified school districts, such as Long Beach and Santa Monica-Malibu, have developed comprehensive sustainability plans, the vast majority lack formal frameworks, leaving them without a clear roadmap for climate action and resilience. Without coordinated state support, many schools remain unprepared for the escalating impacts of climate change, particularly those in historically underserved communities that already experience disproportionate environmental and educational inequities. To address these gaps and ensure that all students—particularly those in historically underserved communities—have safe, sustainable learning environments, California policymakers must prioritize school climate action as part of the state's broader climate strategy. We recommend the following actions for local and state leaders in California:

1. Establish a statewide framework for school climate action.

The state should develop a standardized framework to guide school districts in creating and implementing climate action and resilience plans. This framework should provide best practices, accountability measures, and resources for climate action planning, ensuring that all districts—regardless of size or funding capacity—can take meaningful climate action. The Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) is mandated to provide such guidance and resources to local and county governments. OPR in partnership with the State Department of Education can provide school districts with similar assistance.



→ The framework should explicitly integrate principles of collaboration and community involvement in the guidelines for district climate action plan development. This could include mechanisms such as parent and student advisory councils, partnerships with community organizations and academic institutions, and opportunities for meaningful stakeholder engagement in decision-making. By embedding community voices into the planning process, school districts can develop more equitable, locally responsive climate strategies that reflect the needs and priorities of the students and families they serve.

→ The framework should also require districts to integrate linguistically accessible and culturally responsive communication protocols into their climate action and resilience plans. This will help to ensure effective outreach during extreme weather events or climate disruptions, particularly for disproportionately impacted communities, including Spanish-speaking and Indigenous populations.

2. Provide dedicated funding for school sustainability and climate resilience.

Many districts lack the financial capacity to invest in necessary climate upgrades. California should establish dedicated funding streams for school decarbonization, resilience retrofits, and sustainability initiatives. This could include expanding state grants for electric school buses, HVAC upgrades, solar installations, and green infrastructure projects, particularly those schools in environmental justice areas of concern.

→ This funding should support the deployment of comprehensive air quality monitoring networks in and around schools, prioritizing schools in communities disproportionately affected by wildfire smoke and other air pollution. Investments in indoor and outdoor air quality monitoring, along with ventilation improvements, would help districts proactively address poor air quality conditions, reduce students' exposure to harmful pollutants, and create healthier learning environments.

3. Require climate and sustainability reporting from school districts.

To improve transparency and coordination, school districts should be required to report sustainability initiatives and climate resilience efforts in a publicly accessible format. A centralized database at the county or state level could help track progress, identify gaps, and facilitate knowledge-sharing between districts.

4. Support capacity building and technical assistance for school districts.

Many districts lack in-house sustainability expertise. The state should invest in regional support networks, such as County Offices of Education, to provide technical assistance, professional development, and climate literacy training for school administrators and educators.



By taking these steps, California can position its K-12 public schools as leaders in climate action, ensuring that students not only have safe and healthy learning environments, but also that they gain the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate a climate-impacted future. Schools are more than just places of learning—they are community hubs that can drive resilience, sustainability, and environmental justice. State leaders must act now to integrate schools into the broader climate policy landscape and secure a climate-resilient future for California's students.



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