

OUSD Climate Emergency Action Resolution

WHEREAS, there is overwhelming scientific consensus that human activity, specifically the extraction and burning of fossil fuels, is the primary driver of the climate crisis; and that the resulting accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is causing adverse climate threats that are already impacting human and ecological health around the world;

WHEREAS, climate change is a generational justice, human rights, social justice, and equity issue; and “climate neglect” or “climate inaction” has resulted in real harm to the physical and emotional well-being of young people;

WHEREAS, California is already experiencing the devastating effects of climate change, including prolonged heat waves, drought, wildfires, sea-level rise, and a growing list of local species threatened by extinction;

WHEREAS, excessive heat, wildfire smoke, and power outages related to climate change will continue to negatively impact instruction in the Oakland Unified School District (“District” or “OUSD”) and can adversely impact the ability of OUSD students to learn in a healthy and safe environment;

WHEREAS, environmental racism has subjected Oakland’s Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) and low-income communities to more severe negative impacts on their health and well-being from air pollution and hotter temperatures caused by climate change;

WHEREAS, racist redlining policies have caused residents in East and West Oakland to be exposed to five times the toxic emissions levels compared to increasingly gentrified parts of Oakland, according to the Greenlining Institute, making community members more susceptible to asthma, other respiratory illnesses such as COVID-19, and premature death;

WHEREAS, nearly a third of asthma cases and other respiratory illnesses in California are due to poor air quality that is the result of burning fossil fuels and other pollution, and according to the California Department of Public Health, 18% of Oakland’s youth have asthma - which the US Centers for Disease Control has identified as a leading cause for school absenteeism and is associated with widening achievement gaps;

WHEREAS, the incredible urgency and magnitude of the climate crisis calls for immediate and bold leadership in all sectors of society, all institutions, and all elected leaders within the next ten years to mitigate irreversible damage to Earth’s life-sustaining ecosystems;

WHEREAS, the City of Oakland has joined the global effort to combat climate change by declaring a climate emergency in 2018 and committing to the 2030 Equitable Climate Action Plan goal to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 56% by 2030 compared to 2005 emission levels;

WHEREAS, the OUSD Board of Education (“Board”) recently passed Board Policy 6142.5 - Environmental and Climate Change Literacy, which recognizes that climate change is the greatest threat facing future generations, and that education plays a critical role in preparing future citizens to be actively engaged to create solutions to this crisis;

WHEREAS, the Board acknowledges that OUSD’s students and their community must be afforded genuine agency to help lead society’s commitment to, and implementation of, urgent climate action because student voice, student opinion, and student action are critical to effectively combating the climate crisis;

WHEREAS, the Board is committed to principles of equity, justice and inclusion, and transitioning to 100% clean energy, and expanding ecologically sustainable practices can help advance these goals by (i) saving money that can be invested into under-resourced schools, (ii) improving indoor air quality, which results in better learning outcomes, (iii) helping to address climate change, which disproportionately harms low-income communities and communities of color, (iv) creating multidisciplinary learning opportunities, and (v) expanding community resiliency;

WHEREAS, according to the American Red Cross, school facilities comprise over 50% of emergency shelters, and an investment by OUSD in solar plus battery storage could serve the dual purpose of keeping schools operational during power outages and expanding community resiliency during disasters;

WHEREAS, energy-related expenses are the largest non-personnel expenditure in school district budgets (according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency), and savings from energy costs can be redirected into classrooms and student learning;

WHEREAS, the District intends to build on the accomplishments of its ongoing efforts aligned with ecological sustainability, including but not limited to:

1. Designing and building ecologically sustainable schools and facilities by adhering to the Collaborative for High Performance Schools standards;
2. Investing in energy-efficient lighting and high efficiency building systems;
3. Installing 4.7 MW of solar photovoltaic systems installed at 16 sites throughout the District;
4. Becoming, in 2013, a priority school district with StopWaste in a Partnership Resolution that adopts the county's waste diversion goals;
5. Developing and implementing a comprehensive District-wide food share program and a donation program that provides surplus food to our students, families and communities;
6. Approving Board Resolution No. 1314-1109 - Authorizing and Approving Shared Operational Savings and Green Revolving Fund Program in Support of District-Wide Sustainability;
7. Adopting, in 2019, Board Policy 7110.1, Development of Living Schoolyards, which outlines the Board’s vision for all OUSD school grounds to have living schoolyards that

support 21st Century education, promote children's health, well-being and joy and function as ecologically rich community schools that connect children and their neighborhoods to the natural world right outside their classroom door, every day;

WHEREAS, the District has a long history of tackling society's deeply rooted systemic challenges through innovative and creative solutions that put students first, and thus OUSD is uniquely positioned to lead by example, establish bold goals, and adopt paradigm-shattering commitments to climate action that influence and inspire other organizations, school districts, and public agencies to prioritize climate action.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board declares a climate emergency and recognizes its direct and immediate threat to our students, families, schools, city, region, state, nation, and all of humanity;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Board hereby establishes the goal of achieving 100% clean electricity by 2030 and phasing out the use of fossil fuels by 2040, which is a bold step toward becoming a carbon-neutral school district - one that off-sets or avoids all carbon pollution generated by our operations;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board urges the Superintendent to establish an Interdepartmental Task Force of appropriate Department heads, or their senior deputies, led by the OUSD Energy & Sustainability Manager to draft a Climate Action and Sustainability Board Policy that describes a holistic and equitable sustainability planning process focused on the areas of energy, water, waste, transportation, facilities, schoolyards, purchasing, curriculum integration, climate adaptation, and the implementation of a sustainability revolving fund;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, If established, the Task Force shall meet on a regular basis during the policy development phase to collect relevant data, identify strategies, prioritize actions, set goals, and ensure accountability and also coordinate and publicly document interdepartmental sustainability efforts in collaboration with a Sustainability Advisory Council (outlined below). It is the expectation of the Board that, if established, the Task Force and Advisory Council collaborate closely to draft and present a Climate Action and Sustainability Board Policy to the Board for its consideration within one year of passage of this Resolution. Any Board Policy adopted by the Board to effectuate this Resolution shall include therein a requirement for an update to the Facilities Committee twice a year regarding progress towards the goals contained herein;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board also urges the Superintendent to establish a Sustainability Advisory Council that includes representation of OUSD families, teachers, students, environmental/climate justice representatives, and subject matter experts to help inform the creation and implementation of the associated Climate Action and Sustainability Board Policy and subsequent District-wide Sustainability Plan; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the District's final Sustainability Plan should acknowledge and align with the goals set forth within the District's existing ecological, financial and social sustainability related board policies, agreements and resolutions such as Board Resolution No. 1314-1109 - Authorizing and Approving Shared Operational Savings and Green Revolving Fund Program in Support of District-Wide Sustainability by establishing a revolving fund that captures financial savings from sustainability projects and reinvests in sustainability priorities, and with Board Policy 6142.5 - Environmental and Climate Change Literacy by identifying specific opportunities for student engagement in planning and implementation activities for the purpose of curriculum enhancement within and outside of the classroom;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Board encourages the Interdepartmental Task Force and the Sustainability Advisory Council if established, to seek partnerships with local student environmental and social justice groups, business leaders, nonprofits, and government agencies and organizations to promote climate education in District classrooms and ecologically sustainable practices in District operations, and to focus on climate-resilient District decision-making;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board directs the Superintendent to designate the OUSD Energy & Sustainability Manager as liaison to the City of Oakland's Environmental Service Division to coordinate any OUSD Sustainability Plan activities with the City of Oakland's Equitable Climate Action Plan;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Board commits to prioritizing the concerns of BIPOC and marginalized communities in the planning process and implementation of the OUSD Climate Action and Sustainability Board Policy and Sustainability Plan;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that climate injustice is racial injustice, and the Board believes that climate solutions must advance racial and environmental justice in alignment with the leadership of Black Lives Matter and the Movement for Black Lives;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board does hereby urge the United States Congress to take swift and effective action to fight climate change; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board directs the Executive Assistant & Parliamentarian to the Board to transmit official copies of this Resolution to the Alameda County Office of Education, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the President of the State Board of Education, the California School Boards Association, the National School Boards Association, the District's state and national representatives in Sacramento and Washington D.C., and the Schools for Climate Action campaign.
