

A Deeper Shade of Green



Sustainability Plan

Berkeley
PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Berkeley Unified School District

Berkeley Unified School District Sustainability Newsletter

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Dear BUSD Community,

The BUSD Sustainability Team is happy to introduce this first periodic newsletter to inform on advancement of its Sustainability Plan: A Deeper Shade of Green, as well as on other sustainability opportunities and news from time to time. Together, we can make a sustainable difference.

BUSD Sustainability Committee:

The second meeting of the BUSD Sustainability Committee was held, Tuesday, December 3rd. Attendees represented a wide array of sustainability stakeholders, including Berkeley High School student Green Team leaders, school waste reduction Teacher Leaders, parent Green Team members, and representatives from the City of Berkeley and local NGOs.

The group discussed updates to Sustainability Plan initiatives, including a thorough briefing on Nutrition Services' continued efforts to reduce single-use plastic and waste in general, along with some of the regulatory challenges it faces. Nutrition Services is in discussion with City of Berkeley regarding composting requirements. In addition, they are evaluating an innovative solution for the implementation of washing reusable dishware.

The meeting adjourned with a short brainstorming period on ways the BUSD community can support the eight sectors of the plan: Green Buildings and Materials, Transportation, Water, Energy, Waste, Food, Schoolyards, and Eco-literacy and Nature Based Learning, balancing short-term and long-term objectives.

Please contact sustainability@berkeley.net to contribute your support in advancement of one of the Plan sectors or for more information on past or future meetings.

District Sustainability Initiatives:

Sustainability Walkthroughs

Initial visits have been completed at eight school sites: Berkeley High School; Willard, King and Longfellow Middle Schools; and Malcolm X, Rosa Parks, John Muir, Washington and Cragmont elementary schools. Jefferson and Oxford Elementary are scheduled for this week. We are in the process of scheduling the remaining schools.

The walkthroughs have proven to be incredibly insightful. Many schools are already working and succeeding on a variety of waste reduction initiatives including student-led school-wide composting (Willard and Longfellow), development of a waste reduction video for school-wide viewing (Berkeley High), and a successful Garden Program at every elementary school where students learn about sorting and experience nature-based education on a bi-weekly basis. The Sustainability Team is working to make these and other successes visible to the greater BUSD community.

Staff and community members participating in the walkthroughs were also able to shed some light on challenges and opportunities for improvement. Below are some of the key findings:

1. *A need for designated communication channels within the BUSD community.* This Newsletter was created to help address that need. Regular updates on Sustainability Plan progress will be published on a monthly basis. The team is in the process of creating a District community forum via Google Groups. Community members can share ideas, offer support, get answers to questions and provide constructive feedback.
2. *Significant infrastructural needs.* Over the next two months major bin needs will be resolved. A system is being put in place for ongoing infrastructural requests.
3. *A need for lunch-time waste sorting monitoring in elementary schools, (in addition to tweaks to infrastructure) and culturally responsive, engaging education on waste impacts in middle and high schools.* Best practice documentation is being drafted for building a student Green Team and for training students for student-led monitoring. The Sustainability Team will support implementation of monitoring on site on a per need basis beginning in January. We are also exploring partnership opportunities for on site presentations on waste sorting. Further research is being done on the best ways to serve and engage diverse populations in waste reduction behavior at the middle and high school level.
4. *Challenges to sorting correctly for staff.* We partnered with the City of Berkeley to train staff at King Middle School on current sorting rules. We will continue to provide staff trainings at other District sites.
5. *The District continues to have challenges with phasing out single-use non-compostable dining ware.* The plates and trays currently in use are accepted for compost collection. Unfortunately, the City of Berkeley does not currently accept bio plastic dining ware for compost. Nutrition Services is working with the City to evaluate a suitable, cost-effective cup alternative meeting the City's requirements to ideally pilot in January. Meanwhile Nutrition Services is carrying out a cost/benefit analysis for establishing a creative dishwashing labor structure that would allow for a transition to reusable dishware.

6. *Challenges adopting classroom compost such as added labor and concerns of attracting pests.* A student-led model is by far the most sustainable. Teachers and students will be able to refer to best practice documentation once published.

7. *Significant opportunities for rainwater harvesting.* Some campuses already have storage tanks. There are opportunities for collection at other sites. Sites will be evaluated beginning in January for storm water management projects including rain gardens and bioswales.

8. *Additional opportunities for climate-based curriculum.* The District currently has consistent nature-based education through 8th grade in the garden program. There are additional opportunities for climate-based curriculum and outings particularly at middle and high schools. A wealth of climate-based curriculum resources exists through Strategic Energy Innovations, Lawrence Hall of Science, and others. Access to these resources will be made available on the District Sustainability page. The Team plans to meet with curriculum staff after the winter break to discuss the best ways to support integration, including the possibility of dedicated professional development time to climate curriculum implementation.

9. *A great need for institutionalization of process improvements and knowledge management to sustain current efforts and encourage stakeholder buy-in.* The documentation of best practices will help prevent “re-inventing the wheel.” Further efforts are being made to establish/facilitate appropriate communication channels within the BUSD community. Each school is encouraged to participate and support the implementation of sustainability initiatives. Attributing one professional development day annually to climate change education is suggested.

Waste and Water Auditing

A combination of visual and diversion audits will continue to take place through the end of the calendar year. These are foundational in the assessment of year-to-year progress in waste diversion. Results will be published on the District sustainability page to promote transparency, cooperation, and accountability.

Water auditing at each school will commence in the upcoming months to evaluate opportunities for efficiency and conservation. These results will also be posted to the sustainability webpage.

Green Cleaning

BETCO’s line of Green Seal Certified cleaning products is currently in use at Berkeley High School and has been identified for expansion to other sites! The products satisfy performance needs and cost restrictions, while creating healthier environments for young learners as well as staff. We are phasing in green cleaning products at all sites as existing inventory is depleted.

Nutrition Services

A number of changes have been implemented to reduce waste and mitigate carbon emissions:

- Cereal is now served only once a week to reduce utilisation of plastic bowls.
- Cardboard boxes supplying baked goods are reused.

- Baked goods are also sourced locally to minimize food miles and support the local economy.
- Compost, recycling and reuse are standard practices in the Central Kitchen.
- Meals are delivered to sites in multi-use containers rather than single use plastic.
- In transit, meals are covered with tight fitting reusable lids or parchment paper and foil rather than plastic wrap.
- Meals are produced from scratch.
- In-season local produce are privileged.
- Overages and scraps are utilized rather than discarded, increasing landfill diversion.
- A vegetarian entree is offered every day; virtually every week there is a day with uniquely vegetarian options.
- There is continued staff training and collaboration with other districts and companies to implement best practices for eliminating plastic and reducing the carbon footprint in general.

Upcoming Energy Conservation Competition

January will kick-off a District-wide energy conservation competition at each school! Students will lead campaigns to motivate their peers to reduce as much energy consumption as possible. The competition will span several months. Energy savings will be assessed, highlighting the direct relationship between behavior and energy use. The competition is intended to groom long-term behavioral change promoting conservation, as well as to identify areas of opportunity for greater energy efficiency. The District is expected to see cost savings associated with these efforts, while the greater East Bay community will benefit from reduced associated emissions.

Keep an eye out for communications on this event.

BUSD Gets Its First Electric Buses

Over the past half-decade, school districts across the nation have begun to experiment with electric transportation. Hundreds of Berkeley school children will soon be part of an exciting pilot in climate change mitigation. The first eight full-size electric school buses will soon be added to the District's existing bus fleet.



The larger Bluebird buses were delivered this summer. Once Facilities completes the necessary charging infrastructure and satisfies the required inspections/regulatory approvals, all eight buses will be on the road!

Smart Irrigation Controllers

The District has identified three sites at which to install smart irrigation controllers. These controllers use sensors, weather patterns and plant-care data instead of timers to optimize watering periods and frequency. Once in use, these controllers will further support water conservation efforts. Installation is expected to occur by spring of 2020.

The Berkeley High Community Theater Will Be Renovated as a Verified Collaborative For High Performing Schools (CHPS) Building

Facilities, Maintenance and Operations has drawn up plans to renovate the Berkeley High Community Theater. The renovated building will meet CHPS standards, but will also satisfy requirements to qualify as a CHPS verified building.

You might wonder what this means and why we care. The CHPS program was developed to ensure student and staff health, enhance learning environments, conserve resources such as energy and water, and reduce pollution and environmental degradation.

A building that is CHPS Verified requires high performance features realize the benefits associated with a high performance school. These include improved health, productivity, and student performance, decreased operating costs, and increased energy savings. The renovation of the theater will reestablish it as a space to support student functions and public performances.

Teacher Opportunity: Carton to Garden Contest

"The Carton 2 Garden Organization announces its re-purposing milk and juice cartons contest. Any K-12 teacher may apply for a chance to win one of the 15 prizes with a grand prize valued at \$5,000. Show us your students' creativity by re-using milk or juice cartons from your school cafeteria to either build or enhance your school garden. Educators can engage students in a hands-on experience creating teachable moments on environmental stewardship, sustainable packaging and healthy living. Each team must collect and use a minimum of 100 cartons in their project. We can't wait to see your students' creations—carton planters, garden art, scarecrows, window boxes, irrigation systems... The more creative, the better!"



Submission Deadline April 1, 2020

Plant-Forward Food: A Powerful Step Toward Climate-Friendly Schools

In an effort to take on the climate crisis, schools across the nation are installing solar panels and energy-efficient lighting, planting trees, and implementing recycling programs. This is a great start! However, schools must now turn their attention to one of the most powerful and cost-effective ways to slash their greenhouse gas emissions: changing school lunch.

To read more, check out the whole article: [*Plant-Forward Food: A Powerful Step Toward Climate-Friendly Schools*](#)