

Climate Change Action Plan Year-End Committee Report

July 2025 - June 2026

PGCPS

Table of Contents

Prince George's County Board of Education Members.....Page 2

Climate Change Action Plan Committee Members.....Page 3

Background Summary.....Page 4

CCAP Task Force Recommendations & Action Plan Progress Updates...Page 5

- Support Environmental Justice Through Climate Curriculum, Training, and Partnerships
- Reduce Carbon Footprint from PGCPS Buildings
- Commit to Renewable Energy Sources for a Net-Zero Emissions Future
- Commit to Low-Carbon School Transportation
- Reduce Food Waste and Grow Climate-Friendly Food
- Commit to Sustainable Materials Management and Procurement
- Commit to Climate-Resilient Land Management
- Lead by Example to Support Transformational Change

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July 2025 - June 2026

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- Sheila Jackson, Director/Department of Family and Community Partnerships
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- Traci Belton, Instructional Specialist/Curriculum and Instruction
- Treesa Elam-Respass, Science Instructional Specialist
- Van Rawls, Program Administrator and Instructional Supervisor
- William Alexander, Purchasing

Background Summary

On March 1, 2021, the Prince George's County Board of Education established the Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) Focus Work Group to develop a plan for creating and meeting climate action goals. Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) will work to meet U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) emission reduction targets by 2030 or 2040, depending on the target. To begin implementing the 58 CCAP items, the Chief Executive Officer created a CCAP Operational Committee, composed of PGCPS staff members who meet monthly to review each action item, share progress for each priority area, and discuss plans to continue moving the work forward. Additionally, eight priority area implementation work groups with technical expertise were established to execute tangible project tasks, which are reported on during the larger monthly Operational Committee meetings.

An annual report is published in July each year, as well as a mid-year update, to keep all stakeholders informed of our progress and ways they can support our continued work to reduce our carbon footprint. The report focuses on how a changing climate affects K-12 education and the actions needed to move toward a carbon-neutral future. PGCPS believes taking urgent action to combat climate change is critical to the future of our students and our community. The CCAP empowers our students, staff, and administration to work as partners with our county and state to bring about transformational changes and help create a future where we all benefit from healthy air, clean water, job opportunities, and safe places to live, work, and play.

The Department of Sustainability and Resilience (DSR) champions the implementation of the CCAP and drives sustainability ethics in the school district. DSR collaborates with the Board of Education, members of the eight CCAP Priority Commitment work groups, and community partners throughout the implementation process. The achievements and increased sustainability impacts to our district students were presented to the new Superintendent and the Board of Education members, which included progress with energy conservation measures and renewable energy generation, reduction of solid waste sent to the landfill through recycling and composting, and the launch of the new Sustainable Green Spaces for Community Benefit Program, which involves school yard enhancement projects and outdoor learning environments.

Though not all-inclusive, the 2026 CCAP Year-End Committee Report highlights some key accomplishments toward the CCAP implementation for the period of July 2025 through June 2026. For a full accounting of implementation progress and achievements to date, prior CCAP reports can be accessed here.

Priority Recommendation #1

Support Environmental Justice Through Climate Curriculum, Training, and Partnerships

This recommendation is important because the awareness that is gained through the education of our students, staff, and the community is the first step in creating understanding about climate change issues, critical thinking, and personal behavior change to do the right thing. This, in turn, leads to tangible actions for climate solutions.



Education

- Professional development was offered on multiple occasions throughout the school year to all PGCPS employees.

Incorporate Climate and Environmental Justice Curriculum into Learning Standards and Benchmarks

- Climate Change and Environmental Justice education was intentionally integrated into curriculum documents in the content areas of Dance, Visual Arts, P.E., and Montessori.
- Additional support was given to content areas looking to augment their curriculum.

Launch Annual Climate Ready Leadership Summit

- The Student Environmental Alliance Summit was held over two days for high school students across PGCPS. Day one was on April 10, 2026, at Bowie State University, and day two was on April 15, 2026, at Bladensburg Waterfront Park. Over 200 students attended each day.

Priority Recommendation #2

Reduce Carbon Footprint from PGCPS Buildings

Commercial building energy use is one of the largest contributors of greenhouse gas emissions at around 30% in Maryland, second only to the transportation sector. Decarbonizing our buildings through energy efficiency measures and sourcing clean, renewable energy to power our facilities will help reduce our carbon footprint.



Require Private Partners to Participate in All Rebates and Other Appropriate Financial Programs

- Rebate opportunities and application submittals are ongoing for all new construction, lighting, and HVAC. Sixteen (16) buildings have undergone full LED upgrades funded by rebates this year.

Collect and Disseminate Data on Building Energy Performance

- The Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) AOI.2 Decarbonizing Schools Grant awarded $143,000 to fund data collection and integration with the ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager, which is used for benchmarking and energy analysis. Following the contract renewal, the team is uploading historical data and tracking energy performance district-wide.

Consolidate PGCPS Administrative Buildings and Central Offices

- This transition is actively in progress. To upgrade our workspace quality and efficiency, we are relocating select offices and closing older facilities.

Priority Recommendation #3

Commit to Renewable Energy Sources for a Net-Zero Emissions Future

PGCPS has committed to developing all new construction with clean, renewable energy sources such as solar and geothermal. Clean renewable energy sources are not as carbon-intensive as energy from fossil fuels. As we increase our renewable energy portfolio, we get closer to net-zero emissions with the co-benefit of energy affordability, as renewables cost less to produce.



Install Solar Panels on PGCPS Property

- Three of the six PGCPS schools with solar installations were newly energized, including Hyattsville Middle School, Colin Powell Academy, and Sonia Sotomayor Middle School.

Sign onto Power Purchase Agreements for Off-site Renewable Energy

- A community solar power purchase agreement was signed to purchase 2.5 megawatts of power through a virtual aggregated net metering program.



Priority Recommendation #4

Commit to Low-Carbon School Transportation

Diesel engine buses, while cheaper on the front end, have pricey maintenance and fuel costs. The buses also may compromise the health of our students, especially those with upper respiratory ailments such as asthma. As PGCPS turns over its diesel engine fleet for cleaner alternative fuel-powered vehicles, long-term cost efficiencies will be realized, as well as a reduction in harmful tailpipe emissions.



Modify Bus Route to Fuel Use

- A system-wide audit was conducted, which identified and eliminated:
  - 3,000 stops
  - 200 routes

Electrify All Buses by 2040

- A Request for Proposal (RFP) was issued in the Spring of 2026 to install 32 total bus chargers—16 at Crossland and 16 at Greenbelt. Project costs are supported by a $1,626,560 grant awarded from the Maryland Energy Administration.



Priority Recommendation #5

Reduce Food Waste and Grow Climate-Friendly Food

In 2023, an estimated 40% of Maryland schools' cafeteria garbage was food waste. This includes both food scraps and uneaten food, with half of the waste being food scraps and paper trays. PGCPS is working to reduce food waste through composting and source reduction programs in schools.



Food/Waste and Increase Composting

- From July 2025 to June 2026, 453,469 lbs. of food scraps and other materials were diverted from the landfill via the PGCPS off-site composting program.

Implement Values-Driven, Climate-Friendly Food Service

- The Priority 5 Work Group is thriving and excited to achieve this goal. New partnerships and collaborations have been established with food system agencies, nonprofits, and PGCPS to bring resources, implement projects such as community gardens, and increase healthy and diverse food choices.

Food/Waste and Priority 6 01.b

- PGCPS is working toward increasing partnerships with community schools and food systems to strategically scale up programs that support fresh, tasty, healthy, and locally sourced foods for students, resulting in less wasted food in the cafeterias.
- Unconsumed food is composted to produce soil amendments, which are used in growing more food to close the circular loop.



Priority Recommendation #6

Commit to Sustainable Materials Management and Procurement

A part of PGCPS's materials management strategy incorporates source reduction and recycling at all schools and administrative offices to divert materials from the landfill. Educating students, teachers and staff on recycling helps us achieve this goal.



Promote Recycling and Waste Reduction

- From July 2025 to June 2026, 4,081,910 lbs of materials were diverted from the landfill via composting and recycling.
  - Food scraps and compostable materials from school meals: 453,469 lbs.
  - Recycling: 2,487,881 lbs.
  - Yard debris (grass, branches, etc.): 1,140,560 lbs.
- Highlights of zero-waste features and practices at PGCPS events are included in the Student Environmental Alliance Summit Waste Diversion Report (overall two-day event waste diversion rate of 94.4%) and the Sustainability and Climate Leadership Summit Waste Diversion Report (waste diversion rate of 80.7%).
- In support of student environmental education, the Maryland Green School Program, the Maryland Climate Teach-In, and the PGCPS Climate Change Action Plan, the Department of Sustainability and Resilience partnered with the EcoHero Show to create a high-energy, interactive virtual event to engage students in activities about recycling, composting, and reducing solid waste sent to the landfill. Approximately 12,285 students participated.
- Multiple professional development sessions were held throughout the year focusing on recycling, composting, and waste reduction for educators and building supervisors.

Develop Sustainable Purchasing Policy

- This policy was completed in 2025, and will be highlighted in the Sustainability Employee Training.

Priority Recommendation #7

Commit to Climate-Resilient Land Management



PGCPS's climate-resilient land management considers how school grounds are managed and how this process can be redirected to achieve climate goals, with community engagement and stewardship-based environmental curriculum key to the process. Building the right partnerships and policies in mitigating stormwater runoff requires planning from project initiation to completion. Design teams will seek to minimize impact on existing sites by specifying native vegetation and minimizing site disturbance to the extent possible within site constraints. Planting trees on school grounds will provide shade, erosion control, and carbon sequestration.

Plant Native Plants & Create Conservation Landscape for Stormwater

- The Office of Alternative Infrastructure Planning and Development (OAIPD) has been conserving 90% of trees on all new Blueprint Schools.
- The State of Maryland kicked off its first Schoolyard Forest Program tree-planting event at Northview Elementary School in Bowie during an Earth Day celebration on April 20, addressing stormwater concerns.

Plant More Trees at Each School and Across the School System

- PGCPS launched a districtwide tree planting program. Currently, PGCPS is partnering with six different tree planting organizations to provide donated trees to our schools. Schools can apply to receive trees to plant on school grounds to enhance the environment and provide educational opportunities. The program is limited to one application per school for each tree planting application season (spring and fall). PGCPS School Tree Planting Application

Database of Landscape Assets

- DSR is working closely with Building Services and Capital Improvement Programs to assess the current, existing assets to determine their Green Infrastructure modernization needs.

Priority Recommendation #7, cont.



Incorporate Stormwater Management Activities into School Curriculum to Enhance Climate Science Literacy and Support a Culture of Environmental Stewardship

- Sustainable Green Spaces for Community Benefits (SGSCB) Initiative.

- The launch of the SGSCB 2025 initiative supports the implementation of Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) Board Policy 0111 - Sustainability and the Climate Change Action Plan. The purpose of this initiative is to establish a standard procedure for external stakeholders interested in developing food forests, community gardens, and outdoor classroom projects in partnership with PGCPS in a manner that ensures safety, meets operational requirements, and protects the property interests of PGCPS. The desired outcomes are to:

    - Effectively prevent or mitigate undesirable environmental and climate impacts.
    - Promote food sovereignty and land stewardship.
    - Minimize waste.
    - Create conservation landscapes.
    - Increase the number of school-based green infrastructure projects.
    - Enhance climate science learning and stormwater management activities.
    - Reflect commitment to sustainability, equity, and excellence.

Priority Recommendation #8

Lead by Example to Support Transformational Change

Leading by example for transformational change requires management support backed by allocation of resources (financial and human capital), establishing a network of partnerships, collaboration, and advocacy at the strategic planning and policy development levels. The Prince George's County Board of Education and PGCPS Executive Leadership, staff, and students alike are committed and leading the way.



Build Implementation Capacity

- The Department of Sustainability and Resilience led stakeholder engagement by convening an ongoing, sustainability-related information series with subject matter experts at Implementation Committee meetings to address the various changes in policy and the financial landscape. National guests were invited throughout the year to share knowledge and expertise. For example, Atlanta Public Schools representatives presented on how they have incorporated electric vehicles into their fleet.

Incorporate Stormwater Management Activities into the School Curriculum

- In collaboration with the Capital Improvement Program, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) green building standards and environmental education programs are being established to highlight stormwater features for building users at schools.

Ensure Equity Permeates Through All Decisions Implementing CCAP

- The Department of Sustainability and Resilience is currently pursuing the development of systemwide mapping tools to improve sustainability management, tracking, and monitoring of green infrastructure to ensure equity in prioritizing facilty projects.

Members of PGCPS Sustaiability Leadership Team



PGCPS

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