

RESOLUTION RECOGNITION OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY IN SCHOOLS

SANTA CLARA COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

RESOLUTION No: 2321-2

WHEREAS, California is a forerunner in effective positive, tangible environmental change and in empowering environmental stewards; and

WHEREAS, climate change and sustainability is a global issue that can and should be addressed locally; and

WHEREAS, damage to the environment is evident at the current average of 0.14° Fahrenheit (0.08° Celsius) per decade since 1880, as the temperature increases, so do the consequences on society; and

WHEREAS, the climate crisis has been argued to be one of our greatest public health crises according to more than 230 medical journals; and

WHEREAS, the Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE) believes that the more we understand our connection to the environment, the more the possibilities to influence how those connections impact our health and our planet. SCCOE understands that collectively, our small, individual actions add up to a big difference; and

WHEREAS, environmental education offers countless opportunities to improve lives, protect the environment, and prepare all Americans to address critical environmental challenges ahead; and

WHEREAS, on a local level, youth-focused organizations such as Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action, SVYCA, a youth-led nonprofit that empowers teens and young adults are taking steps to combat climate change and partner to create impactful education and policy initiatives; and,

WHEREAS, the SCCOE is committed to practicing environmental consciousness and sustainability as well as educating others about climate change, ways to combat it, and how to sustain the initiatives put in place; and

WHEREAS, the SCCOE has expanded support for the development of school gardens and school garden curriculum in schools across Santa Clara County; and

WHEREAS, 93% of the users of the school gardens are students; and

WHEREAS, the California Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) engages students in inquiry-based exploration on stability and change; and

WHEREAS, the state of California has adopted the Education and the Environmental Initiative (EEI) Curriculum as a model to demonstrate how to integrate environmental literacy into instruction. This K-12 curriculum uses the environment as a context to help students learn science and history-social science; and

WHEREAS, the environmental principles and concepts in California’s Education and the Environment Initiative (EEI) curriculum highlight the complex relationship between humans and the Earth and are the foundation of the environmental content taught in the model curriculum. The five principles include 1) People Depend on Natural Systems, 2) People Influence Natural Systems, 3) Natural Systems Change in Ways that People Benefit From and Can Influence, 4) There are no Permanent or Impermeable Boundaries that Prevent Matter from Flowing Between Systems, and 5) Decisions Affecting Resources and Natural Systems are Complex and Involve Many Factors; and,

WHEREAS, research has shown that green spaces on or around a school campus are positively associated with reductions in chronic absenteeism (MacNaughton et al., 2017), increased academic achievement (Wu et al., 2014) restored attention capacity, decreased stress levels (Li and Sullivan, 2016), and reduced mental fatigue and aggression (Schulman and Peters, 2008); and

WHEREAS, rising temperatures caused by climate change have necessitated responsive greening policies to urgently address conditions such as extreme heat and ensure that students across the county have access to shaded outdoor areas that provide cooler and greener spaces for students to learn, engage, and play every day; and

WHEREAS, the SCCOE and the County of Santa Clara Office of Sustainability partnered with Our City Forest to plant 1,000 trees on school campuses across Santa Clara County to create urban forestry and bring shade and beauty. This effort began in April of 2022 and as of 2023 has surpassed the goal of 1,000 trees planted on school campuses; and

WHEREAS, to create a resource for community members to learn about events and resources around climate action and to assist schools, the SCCOE created an [Environmental Literacy website](#). The website contains information about curriculum, community and culture and events around environmental literacy and sustainability; and

WHEREAS, as the United States Department of Education has established the Green Ribbon Schools award program that honors schools, school districts, and Institutes of Higher Education for excellence in resource efficiency, health and wellness, and environmental and sustainability education; and

WHEREAS, the recognition award is part of a larger U.S. Department of Education effort to identify and communicate practices that result in improved student engagement, academic achievement, graduation rates, workforce preparedness, and reinforces federal efforts to increase energy independence and economic security; and

WHEREAS, K-12 public and private schools, early learning centers, and school districts are eligible to apply for a Green Ribbon nomination through the California Department of Education (CDE). Applicants must demonstrate progress towards reaching the goals of each of the three pillars outlined by the U.S. Department of Education; and

WHEREAS, the three pillars are 1) reduce environmental impact and costs, 2) improve the health and wellness of schools, students, and staff, and 3) provide effective environmental education, which teaches many disciplines, and is especially good at effectively incorporating STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), civic skills, and green career pathways; and

WHEREAS, within Santa Clara County there were two 2022-23 Green Ribbon awardees: Fremont Union High School District and Bellarmine College Preparatory; and

WHEREAS, the Environmental Literacy and Facilities teams at the SCCOE will support Santa Clara County schools in local prioritization of environmental literacy and integrating environmental sustainability and climate-resilient practices across a school's campus, curriculum, community, and culture. The teams are also committed to offering technical assistance to the schools and districts within the county that are interested in applying for the Green Ribbon recognition program; and

WHEREAS, the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Mary Ann Dewan, was a contributing author on the [The Climate Resilient California Schools- Call to Action Report](#). The call to action report brings leading California experts in health care and education together for a cost-effective, ten year \$150 billion investment to ensure K-12 public schools can remain open and provide safe and healthy places for California's children to learn and grow. It urges state policy makers to prioritize schools in California's climate action plan, and proposes a path to ensuring every school in the state helps to mitigate both the impacts and the causes of the climate crisis; and

WHEREAS, the clean energy sector presents economic opportunity for students and the local economy; and

WHEREAS, implementation of sustainable practices on school campuses, capital investments to improve energy efficiency, renewable energies and other environmentally mindful purchasing decisions can yield cost savings for schools; and

WHEREAS, climate change adaptations of school infrastructure and practices can mitigate the risk and impact of increased natural disasters; and

WHEREAS, environmental initiatives can yield benefits for communities such as safe and healthy transportation to and from school, improved air and water quality, workforce development; and

WHEREAS, the SCCOE will support interested school districts and individual campuses in their pursuit of becoming more sustainable, with the development of and implementation of sustainability and climate action plans in alignment with the County of Santa Clara's Sustainability Master Plan and Climate Roadmap 2030; and

WHEREAS, the SCCOE is a partner with the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors and Santa Clara County Office of Sustainability to support expanded environmental literacy and education and participate as an active member of the Sustainability Commission; and

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED, that the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools and the Santa Clara County Board of Education support the exploration, development, and continuation of initiatives to address environmental challenges and create a healthier, more sustainable environment for Santa Clara County students, families and communities and pursuing funding in support thereof; and

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools and the Santa Clara County Board of Education acknowledge that climate change and the creation of sustainability is a priority to be addressed within the SCCOE and Santa Clara County; and

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools and the Santa Clara County Board of Education support the call to action as outlined in *The Climate Resilient California Schools- Call to Action Report* and acknowledge that the teams within the SCCOE can be an impactful support in meeting the needs outlined in the call to action; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools and the Santa Clara County Board of Education do hereby acknowledge the climate crisis as a global public health crises and hereby renew its commitment to creating and supporting environmentally sustainable educational campuses.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the County Board of Education at a meeting held on June 21, 2023, by the following vote:

AYES: President Chon, Vice President Sreekrishnan, and Trustees Berta, Di Salvo, Lari, Mah, and Rocha

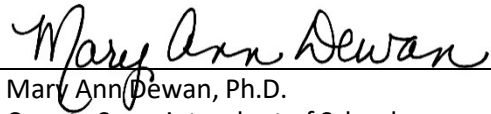
NOES: none

ABSTAIN: none

ABSENT: none



Victoria Chon, President
Santa Clara County Board of Education



Mary Ann Dewan, Ph.D.
County Superintendent of Schools