
New Haven Climate Movement & Climate Health Education Project

608 Whitney Ave.
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Climate Justice Schools Initiative

Created: Summer 2020



OVERVIEW

The 2019 City of New Haven's Climate Emergency Resolution recognizes the urgent need to address the climate change threat to New Haven, and commits the City to take strong action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The New Haven Board of Education has an opportunity to play an important role in further educating and mobilizing students, teachers and families to take action by initiating the Climate Justice Schools program.

The Climate Justice Schools program supports schools' efforts to incorporate climate change and climate justice education, climate solutions focused community service hours, project-based learning, a Climate Week in April, and possibly school operations changes to reduce GHG emissions (solar installation, improved transportation, low carbon food choices, etc).

The benefits of Climate Justice Schools (CJS) reach far beyond the classroom and out into the greater community, and include:

- Climate education that reduces greenhouse gas emissions, and has local benefits such as improved public health through improvements in transportation, food, and energy use.
- In-school climate solutions projects that empower students through giving them leadership opportunities to improve their community, work with teachers to engage in difficult problems, and formulate solutions.
- Classroom activities that explore climate justice and equity issues at a time when many communities are confronting racial injustice.
- Prepare students for a changing future in which there will be a massive shift to clean energy technologies, and significant investment in climate resiliency.



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- Opportunities for students to tap into and become educated on an issue they are passionate about, which will open doors for future career choices.
 - New Haven Public Schools will be among the few districts in the nation to officially implement climate education.

Adoption of the Climate Justice Schools proposal would make New Haven one of the nation's leaders in climate education, and thus set an example for other communities that must respond to the climate crisis. There have been a number of polls that show that there is strong public support for schools to offer climate education - [4 in 5 Americans support it](#). On a local level, [78% of adults in New Haven County](#) agree that global warming should be taught about in schools.

GOALS

1. Schools will educate students across grade levels about climate science, climate change, climate health, and climate justice, as well as the imminent threat climate change poses to people and landscapes. This will better prepare students to play positive, proactive roles in the growing climate crisis and related economic and energy transitions.
2. Schools will set a positive example for students by educating them on the realities of climate change as well as getting them involved in taking measures to combat climate change and promoting public health. Schools will involve students in creating solutions through project-based learning and local community service surrounding the environment.
3. CJS will invite students and teachers to take on leadership roles surrounding climate change and climate justice in their schools/communities.
4. Climate education will educate students about options to take action on climate change in their own homes, communities and in their daily life
5. Schools will prioritize projects that have co-benefits to the environment, public health and surrounding communities, especially low income communities.

SPECIFICATIONS

All middle and high schools in New Haven commit to becoming Climate Justice Schools in order to respond to the declared Climate Emergency. Climate Justice Schools prepare students for their future by educating them about the climate crisis, climate change, climate health, and



climate justice. The CJS program will start with five interested high schools in **Fall 2021**, and will later expand to include all high schools and middle schools in New Haven.

In order for New Haven schools to become Climate Justice Schools, the New Haven Board of Education will encourage all participating schools to do all of the following:

- Implement at least **30 hours of climate change education per grade level per year** in all middle and high schools. This can be achieved across multiple subjects in each grade level (such as Science, English, Math, Social Studies, Unified Arts, Technology, and others) in order for students to have a well-rounded climate education. Additionally, seven of these hours may be fulfilled through school-wide activities such as School-Wide Project days and Climate Week activities.
- Implement **project-based learning surrounding solutions** to climate change with the help of student interns. For example, year one's project could focus on reducing greenhouse gases in school transportation through increasing walking, biking, and carpooling to school. Students may count their hours involved in project-based learning as community service.
- Encourage students to fulfill 10% or more of their required community service through **climate change/sustainability-related community service opportunities**. For schools that do not require community service, they should now require 10 hours of climate change/sustainability-related community service per student. Our [CHEP website](#) has climate change community service suggestions.
- Host a **Climate Week every April** in celebration of Earth Day. This week can include assemblies, activities, field trips, and assignments to get students excited about climate change and activism. This week will involve families in some way, such as: having students take home energy audits, family trivia night, hosting a Climate Fair, and/or having students interview their families about their knowledge of climate change.
- Recruit **one teacher coordinator and two student interns** (students from the school) in each CJS school to lead the climate change education and project based learning efforts in each school.

The Board of Education will also:

- Provide each participating school \$3,000 for CJS expenses which will include one teacher stipend (\$1000), two student intern stipends (\$80/month x 9 months - \$720), and \$560 for printing and event expenses.



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- Require school administrations to support student and faculty led climate initiatives.
 - Our schools must play a leadership role in modeling for students climate- and environmentally friendly practices, such as:
 - Introducing “Meatless Mondays” in NHPS cafeterias using the [Meatless Monday K-12 Foodservice Program Guide](#).
 - Reducing greenhouse gas production in transportation.
 - Making school buildings more energy efficient.
 - Phasing out single-use plastics in cafeterias.

Climate Education Resources:

- [Climate Health Education Project](#) (CHEP) is a free resource providing teachers of numerous subjects with climate curriculum, activities, and lesson plans which may be used to implement this program.

MILESTONES

1. The Board of Education commits to the process of making all New Haven Public Middle and High Schools Climate Justice Schools.
2. As soon as the Board of Education passes the CJS initiative, the Board of Education will implement a CJS pilot program in which the Board of Education chooses five interested New Haven high schools to begin implementing the Climate Justice School program at the start of the fall of 2021.
3. By the fall of 2021, all five pilot New Haven schools will fully meet all specifications for Climate Justice Schools.
4. Making necessary CJS program adjustments based on the experience of the five pilot schools, all New Haven public middle and high schools will then be strongly encouraged to declare themselves Climate Justice Schools and meet the Climate Justice School specifications by the fall of 2023.