

Project Menu

In order to succeed as an environmental club you need to do projects. Use this climate solutions menu to pick projects for your club small and large.

Reusable Trays:

Work to implement reusable trays in your school lunchroom using the [Student Climate Coalition Project toolkit](#). Scroll down on the page until you see Reusable Trays and utilize the amazing document put together by the Student Climate coalition.

Art Challenge:

Invite the avid and recreational artists alike to create art centered around an environmental topic of your choice. Whether that's challenging them to use objects found in nature, trash to create their piece, or just providing a prompt to inspire their work (ie. What will a sustainable Monroe County look like in the future?)

Solar charging station:

Create a solar powered charging station in a large building using the [Student Climate Coalition Project toolkit](#). Scroll down on the page until you see Solar Charging Station and click on the link to the toolkit document.

Gardening and composting:

Starting a school garden and a school compost pile can be a great way to make your school sustainable but can be harder to implement. You can do this using the [Student Climate Coalition Project toolkit](#). Scroll down on the page until you see Gardening and Composting and click on the link to the toolkit document.

Go styrofoam free:

Styrofoam is very damaging to the planet so eliminating it from your school can be great for the planet. You can do this using the [Student Climate Coalition Project toolkit](#). Scroll down on the page until you see Styrofoam and click on the link to the toolkit document.

Letter writing campaign:

Choose a cause and write some letters to your town supervisor or mayor, or state legislators. Letters are super impactful to people since it takes time to write out a letter and stamp it and mail it to someone.

- You can take this to the next level and use letters to advance a campaign that you are already working on, such as EV School busses.
- You can also write to Governor Hochul expressing your concern about the climate crisis and how critical climate action is.

Meatless Mondays:

Animal products have a distinct carbon consequence. Providing more **meat free options in the cafeterias** will significantly decrease the school's carbon footprint. Exploring the possibility of more diverse plant based options in the hot lunch lines, or "Meatless Mondays", will reduce emissions and provide more meal options for students that follow a vegetarian or vegan diet. Meat based foods generate 7x more carbon emissions than meat-free alternatives, and changing a school lunch menu is one of the most important things a school district can do to become more sustainable. In addition, providing more meat-free lunches will instill sustainable eating habits among students at a young age, so when they grow up, they know they have meat-free options they can enjoy. Districts that have launched "Meatless Monday" programs have also seen decreases in lunch costs, often cutting costs by 1% per meal.

1. Begin by reaching out to the cafeteria director or director of food services in your district. You may use this template email if you wish:
 - a. Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./Mx. [Fill in the name of the director here],

My name is [insert your name here] I am reaching out on behalf of [insert name of your club]. We are concerned about the impact that meat based food has on the environment and we are interested in discussing the meatless options offered in the cafeteria with you. Are you available to meet with our club sometime soon to discuss with us more? We normally meet on [insert what day you meet] but we can arrange to meet on a different day if that is more convenient.

Thank you,
[Insert your name]

2. Prior to meeting with the director, brainstorm some questions you want to ask them and make sure you know exactly what you would like to ask them to do. Beyond just learning about how the cafeteria system works in your district, its important to ensure you make your ask clear. You may also want to access the [Lobby Meeting Plan](#) and [Lobby Meeting Template](#) to prepare for this meeting, depending on your comfort level.

- a. Some questions you may want to consider asking: What is the process for the district to order and get their food?, How does the district to decide what to serve?, How conscious is the district of providing meatless options in the cafeteria?
 - b. Some examples of an ask for this meeting might be: Can the cafeteria offer more meatless options for students? Can the cafeteria offer only meatless hot lunch options one day a week? Would it be possible to have a meatless monday as a part of our school's green week this year?
3. Rock your meeting! Even if the food services director is hesitant to take action, make sure you are clear about what you want and why it is important that they take action.
4. Follow up. A key piece of any meeting is following up after the meeting with an email. Thank them for their time and continue the conversation about your ask. If they were hesitant to take any action yet, share again why reducing the consumption of meat based products is important to your group. If they agreed, ask what the next steps are to make the change happen and offer to help with anything.

Create a instagram page:

Networking is huge in climate work. Creating an instagram page is really effective in spreading your message through your school and connecting with other groups in the area. (We do not recommend that middle school or elementary school clubs have social media for safety purposes.)

Climate (or Sustainability) Action Plan:

A Climate Action Plan (CAP) is a or Sustainability Plan is a detailed plan for a city, town, business, or school to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and practices that contribute to climate change. A CAP is a great way to create a framework for your district to follow in becoming more climate conscious. Keep in mind that no two CAPs will look the same. Some will be more comprehensive while others will just lay the groundwork for fighting climate change in a school district setting. A climate action plan should not be written by the students of a club. The students should provide their input on what they would like to see the plan look like. Here are some resources to help you when starting to think about a climate action plan:

- [A Guide for School District Sustainability Plans](#)
- [Schools for Climate Action](#)

- [Penfield High School's Environmental Club's Recommendations for a CAP](#) (This is a very in depth example of student recommendations.)

Petition Station:

Creating a table in a lunchroom or in a hallway as students enter school is a great way to engage students who might not have time to participate in your club or students who may not have known that your club existed. The best way to have students sign petitions or sign up to be a part of your club is to have a computer or two at your table or have a QR code that students can scan with their phones. ([Here](#) is a website that generates QR codes.)

Your table can include:

- Petitions- Big and small!
 - Divestment is selling a stock that you had been invested in in the stock market. In this case divestment means no longer investing in the fossil fuel industry.
 - Divest NY Teachers petition: To learn more about the campaign to divest the NYS teachers' pension fund click [here](#) and to access the petition click [here](#).
 - The Danskammer plant is a fossil fuel plant that is proposed to be built along the Hudson River in Newburgh, NY. Its construction would be detrimental to the environment around the Hudson River and it would obstruct New York State from reaching our goal of carbon-neutrality by 2050.
 - Stop the Danskammer plant: More information on this [here](#) and access the petition [here](#).
- Sign-ups for your club
 - This table is a great way for students to learn about your club and for them to get involved. Make sure to let students know when you meet and what types of things you do.
 - If your club has an email list or a opportunity to help with a specific project (ie. recycling pickup or sorting, compost help) then students can sign up to help with this here.
- If you have a specific topic you want to educate the students on then this is a good place to do it. Including a poster with information and then possibly linking it to an action item like a petition. (For example, this could teach students how to compost or just teach them about the facts of climate change.)

- Voter registration- youth can pre-register to vote in New York State starting at age 16. To learn more about the importance of getting people who care about the environment click [here](#). To access the voter registration form click [here](#).

One way to reduce the touching for all of this to make it more COVID friendly is use QR Codes and have people do petitions and signups on their phones. [Here](#) is a website that generates QR codes.

Green week:

Another project your club can take on is planning a green week for your school. Your club will pick a week during the school year and work with administration to plan events and ways that students can get excited about taking action against climate change.

Some things your green week can include:

- Dress up days
 - Have students dress up according to themes on different days
 - For example, green day (everyone wears green) or
- Speakers
 - Your club can find people to come into your school to talk about climate change and climate action.
 - Contact the [Rochester Pachamama Alliance](#) to come in and do a presentation either on [Environmental Justice](#) or [Drawdown](#).
 - Email Sue Staropoli at suestar1@rochester.rr.com to arrange a presentation about environmental justice.
 - You can use the Contacts and Connections spreadsheet to find other people to present at your green week.
 - This can be done virtually over zoom
- Social Media Challenges
 - If your club has a social media page you can challenge the followers of your page to complete art challenges (ie. make art featuring trees or make art featuring waste.)

Recycling:

Recycling is really important for reducing what goes into the landfills. A lot of schools have at least a paper recycling system already in place in their school. Keep in mind when taking on recycling as a project for your club that it can be time consuming and isn't always as effective as you might think. In reality when you recycle something it rarely is reused and made into a new product like we hope. (A more in depth [article](#) by

Sierra Club describes how the US recycling system works.) However bottle and can recycling can be a great source of revenue for your club. Here are the steps to take when implementing a recycling program in your school district:

- First figure out what recycling system is already in place in your school
 - Consider meeting with the head custodian to talk about the current recycling system if any and how you might implement a recycling system.
 - [This toolkit](#) issued by the DEC has information about reducing waste all around your school. It has great information on recycling in schools in New York.
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School Districts in the Color Your School Green network are pursuing other projects as of Fall 2022. These include:

- **Transportation (Electric School Buses and Biking/Walking to School)**
- **Fast Fashion**
- **Solar**
- **Composting**
- **Clean Heating and Cooling**
- **Healthy Landscaping/Planting Trees**
- **Re-Deploying School Supplies**
- **Climate Curriculum**
- **Climate Anxiety**
- **DIY Climate Events**
- **University Collaborations**
- **Energy Benchmarking**
- **Divestment**

If interested in learning more about any of these projects, fill out [this interest form](#) or [email the CYSG coordinator](#) and get connected to the CYSG network!

If you have any feedback, suggestions, or questions for the toolkit, please send us an email at coloryourschoolgreen@gmail.com.