

BUSD Climate Literacy Resolution  
Educational Response to the Climate Emergency

(Revision Date: October 12, 2021)

WHEREAS, “The warming trend observed over the past century can only be explained by the effects that human activities, especially emissions of greenhouse gases, have had on the climate;”<sup>1</sup>

WHEREAS, damage to the environment is evident at the current 1°C (1.8°F) worldwide average increase above pre-industrial levels, portending much worse effects as temperatures rise further, including cascading changes if tipping points are breached;

WHEREAS, CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases (GHGs) remain in the atmosphere for decades and centuries, thus committing humankind to future warming from prior emissions and adverse economic, societal, and health impacts which today’s children as adults will have to address;

WHEREAS, environmental education has long been encouraged in California schools and under state law enacted in 2018 includes the topic of climate change;<sup>2</sup>

WHEREAS, GHG emissions, including particulates and single-use plastic pollution, exacerbate existing inequities, especially for those Californians living near port and warehousing sites, transportation corridors, fossil fuel extraction sites and refining facilities, industrial sites, and agriculturally intensive regions;

WHEREAS, Berkeley Unified School District seeks to educate and empower BUSD students to be current and future leaders within the United States and abroad;

WHEREAS, Berkeley Unified School District seeks to educate and empower BUSD students to be current and future caretakers of the planet;

WHEREAS, time is of the essence and the actions taken from now to 2030 will have profound repercussions for today’s children as adults and future generations;

WHEREAS, the October 2018 report entitled “Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 °C” by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the November 2018 Fourth National Climate Assessment report found that—

- (1) human activity is the dominant cause of observed climate change over the past century;
- (2) a changing climate is causing sea levels to rise and an increase in wildfires, severe storms, droughts, and other extreme weather events that threaten human life, healthy communities, and critical infrastructure;

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<sup>1</sup> Fourth National Climate Assessment, Volume II (2018), <https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/chapter/1/>

<sup>2</sup> Public Resources Code, Section 71301, [http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=PRC&sectionNum=71301.&highlight=true&keyword=environmental%20principles%20and%20concepts](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=PRC&sectionNum=71301.&highlight=true&keyword=environmental%20principles%20and%20concepts)

(3) global warming at or above 2 degrees Celsius beyond pre-industrialized levels will cause—

- (A) mass migration from the regions most affected by climate change;
- (B) more than \$500,000,000,000 in lost annual economic output in the United States by the year 2100;
- (C) wildfires that, by 2050, will annually burn at least twice as much forest area in the western United States than was typically burned by wildfires in the years preceding 2019;
- (D) a loss of more than 99 percent of all coral reefs on Earth;
- (E) more than 350,000,000 more people to be exposed globally to deadly heat stress by 2050; and
- (F) a risk of damage to \$1,000,000,000,000 of public infrastructure and coastal real estate in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the City of Berkeley is deeply committed to sustainability and addressing climate change; and voters overwhelmingly approved Measure G in 2006, and the Berkeley Climate Action Plan was adopted in 2009 - setting the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 33% of 2000 levels by 2020, and 80% by 2050; and

WHEREAS, the award-winning Berkeley Resilience Strategy was developed in 2016, building upon one of the Climate Action Plan goals to ensure Berkeley is “resilient and prepared for the impacts of global warming”; and

WHEREAS, in declaring a Climate Emergency the City of Berkeley resolved to call on the United States of America to initiate a just national emergency mobilization effort to reverse global warming, which ends national greenhouse gas emissions as quickly as possible and immediately initiates an effort to safely draw down carbon from the atmosphere; and

WHEREAS, climate change, pollution, and environmental destruction have exacerbated systemic racial, regional, social, environmental, and economic injustices by disproportionately affecting indigenous peoples, communities of color, migrant communities, deindustrialized communities, depopulated rural communities, the poor, low-income workers, women, the elderly, the unhoused, people with disabilities, and youth; and

WHEREAS, life expectancy is declining while basic needs, such as clean air, clean water, healthy food, and adequate health care, housing, transportation, are inaccessible to a significant portion of the United States population; and

WHEREAS, BUSD issued a 2018 plan on sustainability “A Deeper Shade of Green”, and resolved to create “more equity with environmental literacy by providing more students with opportunities for hands-on experiences, field trips and other enriching activities;”<sup>3</sup> and

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.berkeleyschools.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/BUSD-Sustainability-Plan.pdf>

WHEREAS, informed BUSD students are already showing leadership in climate literacy and justice work, through programs including school environmental clubs, elementary school presentations, Green Teams, The Edible Schoolyard Project, BHS Zero Waste, Rethink Disposables partnerships, BUSD Heirs to Our Oceans Chapter, Oxford Elementary's Zero Waste Classroom and other independent projects;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Berkeley Unified School District

1. Agrees it is time to define what it means to educate students for a future with human-induced climate change and integrate such programs;
2. Commits to graduating students who are well versed in climate change science, issues, and solutions, (i.e. Climate Literate) defined by the Sierra Club of California as understanding:
  - a. the causes of climate change
  - b. its potential for harm
  - c. what is required to avoid significant climate destabilization
  - d. actions needed to ensure a livable future
  - e. the key people and institutions involved in implementing those actions
3. Commits to graduating students who are well versed in environmental and climate justice as a civil rights issue; students should:
  - a. understand that the impact of the main drivers of climate change do not impact all people equally. For example, race — even more than class — is the number one indicator for the placement of toxic facilities in this country
  - b. understand which local, national, and global policies need to be rectified and/or created to advance a society that fosters a sustainable, cooperative, and regenerative community
  - c. learn how to advance a society that fosters sustainable, cooperative, regenerative communities that uphold all rights for all people in harmony with the earth.
4. Commits to implementing the vision for Environmental Literacy articulated in the 2018 BUSD Sustainability Plan adopted in 2018 by taking the following steps:
  - a. Environmental Literacy Working Group: The Superintendent will establish a BUSD Environmental Literacy Working Group comprised of teachers, administrators, parents or community members, and students, that will meet to:
    - i. Develop a comprehensive Eco-literacy curriculum plan that outlines goals for student learning by grade level bands in targeted areas such as science, history, and literacy. The Environmental Literacy working group

will further define those targeted subject areas and identify or create curricular resources to achieve these learning goals. Generally, these eco-literacy resources will look like week-long units that supplement topics in the existing curriculum. The group will identify creative, engaging ways to involve students in this learning, such as a district-wide eco-literacy event, festival, or showcase.

- ii. By June 15th, 2023), create a professional development plan for the implementation of this curriculum.

- b. Oversight: Ensure adequate support and oversight from the Associate Superintendent of Ed Services for the efforts of the Working Group. This support and oversight will include the development of the milestones for the creation of the curriculum and professional development plan, monitoring those milestones, and ensuring adequate fiscal resources are identified and recommended to the Board of Education.
- c. Updates to the Board of Education: Working group representatives will provide updates twice per year to the Board of Education during the period of developing and implementing the curriculum, and ongoing as requested by the Board of Education.
- d. Integration with the BUSD Sustainability Plan: The working group will review any existing or planned environmental education initiatives, sustainability programs including water conservation, reusable foodware for all meal and snack services, climate action plans, service learning/volunteering hours, sustainable transportation or other activities within the district or community to create lessons about these initiatives to coordinate with the climate change literacy program;

4. Recognizes that climate change disproportionately affects marginalized communities and seeks to engage, center and elevate voices and existing work of the most vulnerable communities to climate change - Black, Brown, Indigenous and low income communities;

5. Recognizes the district is joining a group of California educators who pledge to share ideas, resources, successes and challenges in order to promote climate change literacy; and

6. Commits to assisting to mobilize the education community to address the climate emergency by sending copies of this signed resolution to the following: California State Superintendent of Public Instruction, California School Boards Association, California County Boards of Education, and the National School Boards Association.