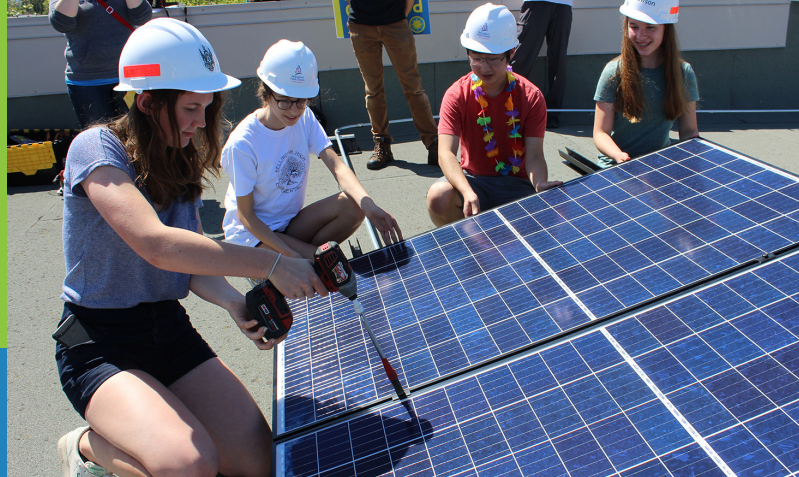


The **Efficient and Healthy Schools Program** aims to motivate and empower K-12 schools to reduce energy costs and improve energy efficiency, health, and resilience. The Program connects schools with practical solutions and provides technical assistance and resources to significantly improve school facilities. It is led by the U.S. Department of Energy Building Technologies Office with technical support from Berkeley Lab and New Buildings Institute.



CASE STUDY:

Solutions Strategist Bellingham Public Schools

Project Details

- Location:** Bellingham, WA
- Number of Students:** 11,000
- Number of Schools in District:** 22
- Locale:** Small city
- Percent Free and Reduced Price Meal:** 35%
- Percent Title 1 Schools:** 40%
- Plan Dates:** 2023–2028

Key Resources/Influences:

- Washington State Outdoor School Study
- Center for Green Schools Whole School Sustainability Framework
- Green Schools National Network GreenPrint™
- Boulder Valley School District Action Plan
- United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
- Bellingham Climate Action Plan

Key Plan Areas:

- Energy, water, and greenhouse gas emissions benchmarking
- Environmental, sustainability, and climate change education (ESCE) curriculum
- Waste system improvements
- Stakeholder engagement

Project Scope & Approach

In April 2023, Bellingham Public Schools (BPS) released a draft of the district’s first five-year Climate Action Plan. BPS has been taking steps to reduce the environmental impact of their buildings and operations since the early 2000s. The first capital projects bond to include energy efficiency upgrades was passed by the community in November 2013, and since then, BPS has steadily adopted other practices such as Washington Sustainable Schools Protocol standards and programmable LED lighting. BPS is also enrolled in the Energy Conservation Services Management Program with their local utility, which assigns an engineer to the district that helps to identify additional energy conservation opportunities. In fall 2022, a Sustainability Task Force composed of students, staff, community members, and experts presented a sustainability framework that led to the formation of a 30-member BPS Sustainability Advisory Committee. This facilitator-led group developed the 2023–2028 Climate Action Plan.

Project Outcomes & Lessons Learned

The PBS Plan separates the work into three areas of focus: facilities and operations, teaching and learning, and habits and culture. Each area contains an overarching goal, three tactical goals, and a set of indicators, measures, and strategies to reach the goals.

Participants in the planning process suggested the following best practices for other districts: prioritize a community-based approach, such as engaging student voices (preferably one from each high school); utilize expertise within the community to achieve impactful results; provide ample time to develop the Plan (at least one year); and conduct ongoing implementation meetings once the Plan is approved.

Learn more about the BPS Sustainability Advisory Committee here:

<https://bellingshamschools.org/about/committees-advisory-groups/sustainability-advisory-committee/>

STUDENT SUPPORT:

“Learning about the natural environment gives people hope and direction to take home.”

Linnea Boriss, Whatcom Middle School student

“Environmental justice is just as important as math and science.”

Grace Pahl, Whatcom Middle School student

“Climate education is empowering. We need to take action now.”

Amelia Wermus, Bellingham High School student