

Santa Cruz City Schools Green Schools Committee
Thirteenth Annual Report
April 13, 2023

The Green Schools Committee met three times during the 2022-23 school year: 10/20/2022; 1/26/2023; 3/16/2023. Our last meeting is scheduled 4/13/2023.

Committee Members in Attendance:

Chris Soriano, Museum of Natural History
Pauline Seales, Climate Action
Leslie O'Malley, City of Santa Cruz Waste Reduction
Janice Kelly, City of Santa Cruz Waste Reduction
Tiffany Wise West, City of Santa Cruz Climate Action Program
Maryna Sedoryk, City of Santa Cruz Water Department
Mary Ann LoBalbo, County of Santa Cruz
Zav Hershfield, Member of the Community (Owner of Compost Service)

District Staff:

Jim Monreal, SCCS Assistant Superintendent
Kinsey Dickson, SCCS Executive Assistant
Amy Hendrick-Farr, SCCS Director of Food Service
Trevor Miller, SCCS Director of Maintenance, Operations & Transportation
Thien Hua, Elementary Principal Representative
Derek Kendall, Secondary Principal Representative
Veronica Zaleha, Santa Cruz High School Librarian
Keresha Durham, ARK Independent Studies Teacher
Stu Branoff, Bay View Elementary
Melissa Schilling, Harbor High School Teacher

SCCS School Board:

Kyle Kelley, SCCS Trustee
John Owen, SCCS Trustee

SUMMARY

The committee met according to schedule this year. The highlights included the following updates from committee members, district staff, and community members:

Trevor Miller, Director of Maintenance, Operations and Transportation (MOT):

Throughout the school year, Trevor Miller shared several improvements made around school sites to help the campuses run more efficiently. Trevor and his team have been working hard on making necessary, long-term updates to existing structures, as well as securing an electric school bus manufacturer that will help the district in acquiring four new electric buses to replace older buses. Trevor continued to update the committee on the Solar Panel installation happening at several school sites.

Amy Hedrick-Farr, Director of Food Services:

The focus of Food Services continued on schools using less plastic and increasing use of locally sourced food products. Pre-pandemic, SCCS had moved to all compostable products, and has progressed to re-establish compostable products this school year and to increase use next school year. Amy has been in conversation with community partners about improvements that can be made to lower waste in the kitchen. The district's Farm to Table Grant entered the second year of grant funding for the nutrition program. The Food Service Department continued to develop the nutrition program by securing grant funding for future programs and continuing to build relationships with local farmers and food suppliers. The district recently hired a baker/chef to start creating meals from scratch, which will cut down on packaging waste and increase nutritional value.

Thien Hua, Elementary Principal:

Thien Hua is the District's Elementary representative and shared that DeLaveaga Elementary has an active green team on campus that goes around every Friday to make sure all recycling is disposed of properly. Biodegradable forks and spoons have cut down on litter at the school site. In partnership with the MOT project, LED lights have been installed in classrooms and common areas, tremendously improving the school site. The site is also working toward more thoughtful water conservation and will be having an assembly to inform students. Initiatives are in place to promote more walking and biking to school. Bike Smart and Walk Smart are two programs on campus promoting bike safety and walking safety for all grade levels at DeLaveaga Elementary. The school received grant funding with the help of UCSC and Big Creek Lumber to update the school's garden space and lifelab boxes.

Derek Kendall, Middle School Principal:

Derek Kendall is the District's Secondary Schools representative and shared there has been an increase in students and school staff riding bikes to school and work. Mission Hill's Environmental Club has been active this year, with activities that include an open discussion on how to cut down waste at the school site and investigating a tree machine program that plants a tree for donated clothing. The storms taking place from January to March were a great opportunity to teach the students about ocean erosion and the impact storms have on the community and in nature. Science classes are engaged in waste reduction projects and continue to collect data about reducing waste. LED lighting will be updated on campus during the week of Spring Break to replace all old lighting at Mission Hill Middle School, improving energy use at the school site.

Melissa Schilling, Harbor High School Teacher

During the 2022-23 school year students at Harbor High School started a podcast, formed a new club on campus, and coordinated several field trips to increase student learning and engagement. This year students focused on building connections with environmental advocates in the community, land-stewards, and park rangers, to start a Call-to-Action campaign centered around saving the native Marbled Murrelet bird species. The Climate Justice Club met during the spring to design materials for the project which included scientific illustrations, stickers, tote bags and handmade recycling kits to build awareness in the community. The kits contain clean-up supplies to manage excess food waste and prevent non-native bird species from taking over native bird species' natural habitats. The Climate Justice Club participated in seven hands-on learning field trips this school year and plan to explore ten local state parks next school year.

Keresha Durham, ARK Independent Studies Teacher

Keresha shared several carbon neutral improvements that can be made across school sites, including but not limited to requiring a Climate Science unit for grades K-12 with information on how to live environmentally or sustainably (for units contact: PaulineSeales120@gmail.com), active transportation incentives, get students moving more, replacing windows with double-pane, sealing doors and windows, managing heating and cooling systems more appropriately, installing solar for heating water, putting solar panels on structures and over pavement, fixing dripping faucets, low-water water faucets and toilets, and stopping the use of fossil-fuel gas leaf blowers. Keresha used the recent storms to inform her students about the Climate Emergency and discuss extreme water cycles, fires, and floods.

Chris Soriano, Museum of Natural History:

During this school year 15 to 20 students met once a week to continue to remove invasive plants and plant 200 native plants around the museum and city's outdoor spaces. By the end of the school year, students have successfully cleaned-up and improved over 300 feet of trails. The museum has been working with Santa Cruz City Parks, Santa Cruz County Parks, Santa Cruz Mountain Trail Stewards, San Lorenzo Valley Water District, UCSC Natural Reserve, The Coastal Watershed Council, The Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, and The Watsonville Wetlands Watch for several ongoing projects. Students are taking photos of the work happening to showcase progress at the Museum and what is happening in the community. The museum recently started a middle school program for students called "Nature Club." The Nature Club has had 6 programs that successfully connected students to nature. Chris shares the stewardship learning service programs for high school students continues to grow and the museum has been partnering with local organizations to develop the program further.

Leslie O'Malley, City of Santa Cruz Waste Reduction:

Leslie O'Malley shares that in-person tours have resumed at the City of Santa Cruz Waste Reduction Facilities. Several classes from the district participated in tours, and transportation was provided by the city. Leslie is pleased to share that DeLaveaga Elementary has three zero waste kits currently at their school. SB1383, the program keeping organics out of the landfill, has occupied a lot of energy. City representatives remain an intermediary between the state and city guidelines.

Maryna Sedoryk, Santa Cruz Water Department

During the 2022-23 school year the City of Santa Cruz Water Department hosted a poster contest paired with watershed education field trips for elementary school students in the district. The water department hopes to partner with the district more next school year.

Mary Ann LoBalbo, Santa Cruz County

Tours have resumed at the landfill. Mary Ann was excited to share that classes are returning to participate in tours. Santa Cruz County would like to remind schools that Green School Certification in 2023-24 is possible. Many schools around the county have implemented organic collection, waste reduction activities, and district led lighting retrofits and solar installation. The certification process that includes collaborations not just within the school but also with districts, parents and community based organizations is happening throughout the County.

Tiffany Wise West, City of Santa Cruz

Tiffany shares that the City adopted a climate action plan for 2030 in September 2022.

Implementation of the climate action plan was kicked-off at the beginning of 2023. The central coast launched one uniform platform and each city has a landing page. Current focus is to grow

the city's resiliency program. There are hopes to start a new program geared towards families that would be unique to Santa Cruz City Schools and the city is open to discussion. More community driven opportunities include landscaping electrification transition incentives, looking into building electrification in commercial and residential building projects, and the county and city teaming up to educate students about the importance of ocean conservation by touring the new murals around town, connecting art, climate, and ocean protection.

Janice Kelly, City of Santa Cruz Waste Reduction:

Janice shared information about the City of Santa Cruz newsletter, which is a great way to stay informed about what is happening around the city. The city kicked off a pilot program collecting food scraps at Mission Hill Middle School and is looking for other schools interested in participating. Schools visited the recycling facilities this year, and school sites continue to educate students about the importance of food scrap collection. There are hopes to offer in-class presentations and activities to inform students and families about how to prevent litter, inspire more recycling, and gain greater understanding about why it is important to properly dispose of food waste. The city hosted a poster contest and Earth Day Environmental Class Project to increase student engagement.

Pauline Seales, Climate Action:

Pauline Seales mentors the Local Youth Group called Youth for Climate Justice. At each meeting Pauline reports on recent and current Climate related events for students and community members. Pauline continues to stay relevant with students by sharing educational tools and materials.

Zav, Community Member from Hardcore Compost:

One of the owners of Hardcore Compost, Zav, wanted to introduce themselves and hopes to start collaborating with various school sites to inspire more composting in the community. The organization has successfully collected more than 250 household's compost, mostly kitchen waste, and uses a compost site located near the Homeless Garden Project on the West Side.

The Green Schools Committee endorses the report above, and wishes to reaffirm the mission statement of the Green Schools Committee: "to develop and recommend to the Board policies that meet State standards, lighten the District's environmental footprint and integrate environmental education and student participation in environmental initiatives using partnerships with environmental education and public and non-profit agencies."

Photographs from Fieldtrips for the 2022-23 School Year:





Respectfully Submitted,

Jim Monreal
Assistant Superintendent
Business Services
SCCS

Kinsey Dickson
Executive Assistant
Business Services
SCCS