

4:71 Sustainability, Climate, and Environmental Justice - DRAFT

We are living in the midst of a climate crisis. We have already experienced historically unprecedented levels of warming globally and in Illinois and this will continue over the lifetime of our students. Flooding, heat waves, droughts and other extreme weather events have and will become more frequent and intense with significant global, national, and local consequences. Communities of color and other marginalized groups, already disproportionately burdened by environmental harms, will face the worst consequences of climate change as a result of greater exposure and lesser access to resources to mitigate and adapt to climate impacts.

Addressing and adapting to this crisis will require fundamental changes to our local, national, and global societies. While we are past the point of avoiding the harms of climate change, there are critical warming thresholds that we are on track to surpass in the next several years and decades that will intensify impacts and lead to irreversible changes. Avoiding these thresholds requires an all-in approach at the international, national, state, and local levels.

Young people are rightfully concerned by climate change. A 2022 survey of 10,000 youth and young adults found that 59% are very or extremely worried about climate change and 45% said that their daily life and functioning were negatively affected by their feelings about climate change.¹ At the same time, young people are playing an increasingly vital role in advocating for and developing approaches for addressing and adapting to climate change.

District 97 has a critical role to play in efforts to address climate change, advance sustainability and environmental justice, and prepare our students to engage effectively and meaningfully in our changing world. Fulfilling this role will require the District to identify and pursue opportunities to reduce its carbon footprint and adhere to sustainable practices. It will also require the District to ensure that, through developmentally appropriate learning opportunities, graduates of District 97 are grounded in the causes and immediate and long-term effects of climate change. Our students, staff, and community should also have an understanding of small- and large-scale actions needed to address this crisis and a sense of agency around their ability to do so. This should include a sense of how to effectuate change and knowledge of potential career paths in the green economy and in professions that address climate change.

It is clear that climate, sustainability, and equity are inextricable. The impacts of climate change are and will be disproportionately borne by people of color and communities' ability to adapt to the changing world will vary significantly by race, economic status, disability status, and other intersecting characteristics. District 97 shall implement this policy in a manner that is consistent with and furthers Policy 7:12 Ensuring Racial and Educational Equity. Like Policy 7:12, this policy is system-wide in scope - addressing all functions, activities and operations that impact this policy's goals, including those of District 97 and its outside providers, to the extent that providers' work is in or on behalf of the District.

¹ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196\(21\)00278-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196(21)00278-3/fulltext)

Sustainability Task Force and Sustainability Planning

Within three months of passage of this policy, the Superintendent shall convene a Sustainability Task Force whose purpose is to help District 97 develop a Sustainability Plan. The Superintendent shall also designate a staff member to lead and coordinate the Task Force and its activities related to this policy. The Plan shall be informed by and buttress sustainability activities that currently exist in the District. The process for developing this plan, and future updates to it, shall be consistent with the Stakeholder and Community Engagement provisions of Policy 7:12, and can be integrated with other community engagement processes where beneficial.

Task Force membership shall be consistent with the goals of this Policy and the Stakeholder and Community Engagement provisions of Policy 7:12 and include, but not be limited to:

- Current and former District 97 students
- Two members of the District 97 Board of Education
- District 97 faculty and staff, taking advantage of their experience and expertise
- District 97 parents, including members of District 97 PTO Green Teams
- Community members with a commitment to the goals of this policy
- Individuals and organizations within and outside Oak Park with relevant expertise who may serve as members of the Task Force or be engaged in an ad hoc manner.

Within 12 months of the Task Force's formation, the Superintendent shall recommend to the Board for approval a Five Year District 97 Sustainability Plan. The process for developing this Plan shall:

- Provide opportunities for all members of the District 97 and greater Oak Park community to offer recommendations and feedback to the Task Force.
- Actively seek collaboration with and guidance from other Oak Park institutions and other school districts, within and outside Oak Park.
- Collaborate with Board committees as appropriate, including the Facilities Advisory Committee and the Finance Oversight and Review Committee
- Consistent with District 97's Equity Policy, apply a Racial Equity Impact Analysis to the Plan's development and activities and recommendations considered for the Plan.

The Plan shall identify actions to be undertaken for the District to achieve the following:

- Consistent with the Village of Oak Park's Climate Ready Oak Park Plan, and the International Panel on Climate Change's targets for avoiding the 1.5C warming threshold, achieve a 45 percent reduction in District greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from 2010 levels by 2030, and a 100 percent reduction from 2010 levels by 2050. These goals should be reconsidered as new targets are set by the International Panel on Climate Change or other reputable science-based sources.

- Develop interim goals to ensure appropriate progress toward overall goals.
- Decrease the environmental footprint of District 97 and each of its schools to the greatest extent possible and feasible in the following areas, recognizing that some prioritization and sequencing of actions will be necessary:
 - Energy
 - Waste - including setting ambitious and achievable percentage goals for the amount of District waste diverted from landfills and incinerators by 2030, and for reduction in the amount of waste generated by the District. To inform this effort, the Task Force shall recommend and the District shall undertake a waste characterization study and/or waste audits to assess our current status and inform goal-setting.
 - Water usage/conservation - including ambitious and achievable goals for reductions in water use by the District.
 - Land (e.g. gardens, stormwater management/flood mitigation, pest management)
 - Transportation/air quality, including through the use of electric vehicles and other zero-emissions technologies.
 - Procurement/purchasing, including healthy, sustainably sourced food.
 - Facilities, including through the infusion of sustainability considerations and priorities in the District's master facilities plan.
 - Green infrastructure
 - Such other areas as the Superintendent and Task Force may deem appropriate.
- Provide learning opportunities and adapt/design curriculum and instructional materials as needed to ensure that student experiences reflect the vision and goals of this Policy.
- Realize cost savings through increased sustainability where possible, including through the identification and pursuit of external sources of funding.
- Recommend tools and matrices for ensuring that the goals of this policy consistently inform District decision-making in the areas identified above.

The District shall strive for continuous improvement and its development and implementation of the Plan shall:

- Provide opportunities for students to:
 - Engage in Plan development, implementation, and assessment.
 - Learn about the environment, sustainability, climate change, and environmental justice, and the effects of our individual and collective choices thereupon.
 - Connect the District's practices and sustainability efforts to local, national, and global issues.
- Identify opportunities to collaborate with other institutions and government bodies to share expertise, identify potential economies of scale, identify learning opportunities outside of the District, and otherwise advance the District's effectiveness in achieving the goals of this policy
- Ensure that sustainability efforts are durable over time, avoiding overreliance on volunteers, and consistent throughout the District.

- Assess budgetary and resource implications of potential Plan activities and make budgetary recommendations to the Board as appropriate.
- Develop a framework for assessing progress made under this policy that is credible, clear, and publicly available. Consistent with this, the Superintendent and Task Force shall explore development of a public-facing dashboard that provides timely updates on implementation.

During the planning period, the Superintendent shall also:

- Measure the District's GHG emissions in order to establish a baseline for assessing progress, and identify areas that offer the greatest opportunities for achieving Plan goals.
- Take advantage of opportunities that may exist or arise to advance the Policy' goals (e.g. funding opportunities, facilities-related decisions) where feasible.

On an annual basis following adoption of the District 97 Sustainability Plan, the Superintendent shall provide to the Board and District 97 community a report, developed in partnership with the Sustainability Task Force, that:

- Describes progress made toward implementation of the sustainability plan and this policy, including the status of implementation, reductions achieved in environmental impacts, and cost impacts.
- Recommends modifications to the Plan, as appropriate to ensure effectiveness and feasibility.
- Identifies additional opportunities, where available, to advance the goals of this Policy.
- Considers whether long-term District goals remain consistent with science-based targets for mitigating climate change and remain ambitious in light of new opportunities and means for advancing this policy.

Every five years following adoption of the initial Plan, the Superintendent shall produce a new Sustainability Plan that's process for development and contents are consistent with the above.

The District shall create a Sustainability section on its website that links to the Sustainability Policy, past and current Sustainability Plans, and each annual progress report. If feasible, this section shall also include a dashboard that provides data and other information on the performance of the District and each of its schools with respect to its sustainability goals. The Superintendent shall also consider ways to incentivize and celebrate sustainability efforts at the school, department, and District levels.