

Case Study: Bullis Charter School, Los Altos California, USA

Climate Action Education For All.

CLIMATE ACTION EDUCATION

Bullis Charter School is committed to fostering climate action education by integrating sustainability initiatives into its curriculum and engaging students in hands-on environmental projects. The school's climate action education vision focuses on enhancing student-led climate initiatives, expanding partnerships, and integrating environmental education across all grade levels.

Since opening our doors 20 years ago, tuition-free Bullis Charter School (BCS) has been dedicated to providing students in TK through 8th grade with an innovative, empowering, and rigorous learning environment. As a model of educational innovation, BCS inspires children, faculty, and staff to reach beyond themselves to achieve full potential. Using a global perspective to teach about the interconnectedness of communities and their environments, the BCS program nurtures mutual respect, civic responsibility and a lifelong love of learning.

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

The Climate Action Schools Program is a paid, year-long initiative that empowers schools, districts, and networks with students ages 5-18 to collaborate locally and globally on environmental topics. Now in its third year of the program, Bullis Charter School (BCS) has grown from a single Climate Champion to a dedicated team of champions and an established Eco Club, deepening its commitment to sustainability. Throughout the project, BCS classrooms explore the causes and effects of climate change, develop innovative solutions, and take meaningful action as a unified school community.

PORTRAIT OF A CHAMPION

Kayla Cremer is in her ninth year in the classroom and has had the privilege of teaching preschool, first, and second grade. She serves as the school's Climate Lead as well as the TK-2nd Grade Team Lead. Passionate about protecting the planet and wildlife, she strives to inspire the same in her students.

Through Take Action Global and the Climate Action Schools Network, Kayla has engaged TK-8th graders across two school sites in environmental stewardship. Last year, she launched Eco-Champions, where students formed committees to educate the school about recycling, energy conservation, and composting, fostering a culture of action and awareness.

AT A GLANCE

Climate Action Schools

- Goals
- Solutions
- Results
- Lessons Learned

Call To Action

- Lessons Learned
- Conclusion
- Recommendations

School Facts

- **School type:** tuition-free public charter school
- **Grade level of students:** from Transitional Kindergarten (TK) through 8th grade.
- **Students:** Around 1,058 students
- **Faculty members:** around 70 staff members
- **Academic year:** September to June

Mission.

The Bullis Charter School mission is to offer a collaborative, experiential learning environment that emphasizes individual student growth.

Vision.

BCS strives to encourage joyful learning, cultivate curiosity and inspire confidence. Their work emphasizes developing a global perspective, promoting kindness and fosters collaboration.



GOALS

Bullis Charter School (BCS) has established a strong foundation in environmental education through its Eco-Champions Co-Curricular Program, project-based learning, sustainability lessons, and art and gardening initiatives. In the 2024-2025 academic year, BCS aims to deepen its impact with a focus on community clean-up projects, including creek restoration, a recycling partnership program, tree planting, and further integration of climate and environmental education across grades TK-8. Other goals include inviting guest speakers, empowering student leadership in sustainability, fundraising for a compost bin, and creating sustainability signage. BCS will track progress through the formation of service project committees, increased participation, and showcasing student-led efforts through assemblies, website updates, and school-wide celebrations.

As the school enters its third year in the Climate Action Schools Program, BCS is expanding its outreach to educators, parents, and local organizations. Plans include professional development for climate educators, gathering stakeholder input through surveys and collaborative events, and building partnerships with local sustainability leaders and alumni. BCS will share its climate action journey through internal updates, newsletters, social media, and a climate action showcase. With a growing team of champions and a strong network of community partners, BCS is shaping a more sustainable future, empowering students to take meaningful action for the environment.

SOLUTIONS

Based on the teacher's school-wide audit, several solutions were proposed to enhance sustainability at the school. One key initiative is the implementation of a reusable and refillable utensils dispenser, which aims to significantly reduce plastic waste. Compost bins will also be introduced in the staff room and by lunch tables to encourage composting habits among students and staff. To address transportation-related sustainability, the school plans to incentivize carpooling for both staff and families while discouraging unnecessary idling of vehicles. Additionally, students will be encouraged to maximize paper use by utilizing both sides before recycling old sheets.

Interdisciplinary projects will be designed to explore global environmental issues, helping students connect classroom learning with real-world sustainability challenges. The school garden, which has great potential for hands-on learning, will be further integrated into science experiments and sustainability projects. Recycling education will be expanded, particularly focusing on plastics and cardboard, to ensure proper waste sorting. To foster a culture of environmental responsibility, monthly trash pick-up initiatives will be established, and the use of technology will be promoted as a means of minimizing paper consumption. Finally, an investigation into how the school's recycling is processed will be conducted to ensure that all efforts align with sustainability best practices.

RESULTS

The audit revealed several important findings about the school's current sustainability efforts. While most classrooms have recycling bins, their proper usage varies, indicating a need for better recycling education and reinforcement. A positive trend was observed in the widespread use of reusable water bottles and lunch containers among students and staff. Some teachers are already integrating sustainability topics into their lessons, with activities ranging from conservation projects to argumentative essays on environmental issues.

However, significant food waste at lunch remains a pressing issue, largely due to short eating times and a lack of food redistribution options. The absence of a composting system was also noted, though it emerged as a widely supported priority among both students and staff. The school garden, while underutilized, holds promise for hands-on sustainability learning opportunities. Encouragingly, many teachers already practice energy conservation by turning off lights and limiting unnecessary electronic use. Though carpooling and sustainable commuting options are currently limited, some staff and students have adopted these practices, presenting an opportunity for growth.

LESSONS LEARNED

From the findings, several lessons emerged that will help guide the school's next steps toward sustainability. It became clear that recycling education needs reinforcement; while students generally recognize what should be recycled, they do not always follow through in practice. Establishing composting infrastructure and providing proper education around its benefits will be crucial in reducing food waste and fostering sustainability habits.

Lunch practices also require improvement, with potential solutions including food redistribution strategies and increased composting efforts. Cross-grade level projects and environmental challenges can serve as engaging ways to encourage student participation and deepen their awareness of sustainability issues. Additionally, providing visual reminders and prompts in classrooms will help reinforce green habits, such as proper recycling and composting practices.

Ultimately, staff buy-in and leadership support will be critical in implementing systemic changes. By fostering a culture of sustainability and ensuring that both students and educators are equipped with the necessary knowledge and resources, the school can take meaningful steps toward becoming a more environmentally conscious institution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Bullis Charter School has been recognized as the first Climate Action School in California, reflecting its dedication to environmental stewardship and climate education. To emulate Bullis Charter School's success as a Climate Action School, consider the following strategies:

- **Integrate Climate Education:** Embed environmental topics across subjects to promote comprehensive understanding.
- **Foster Student Leadership:** Encourage student-led sustainability initiatives, such as the Eco-Champions program at Bullis.
- **Engage the Community:** Involve local stakeholders in environmental projects, similar to Bullis's participation in community service programs.
- **Provide Professional Development:** Offer training for educators on climate education to effectively incorporate these topics into their teaching.
- **Implement Sustainable Practices:** Adopt eco-friendly measures within the school environment, including energy conservation and waste reduction.

