



Involving K-12 students in Local Climate Action and Policy

Session Organizers: Carrie McDougall, NOAA; Sarah Schoedinger, NOAA

1:50 pm - 2:40 pm

Session Padlet: <https://ncboestc.padlet.org/estcworkshops2/hlimbat8kpgbhmm8>

Over the past five years communities throughout the country have continued to work toward the goals outlined in the Paris Agreement ([America Is All In](#)). State and local governments are taking actions and implementing policies to address climate change causes and impacts (e.g., [Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative](#), Climate Action Plans, Energy Efficiency Initiatives). K-12 students can play leadership roles in implementing local climate action. School-based programs afford students the opportunity to learn the fundamentals of environmental literacy as it relates to local climate action. With teachers as their mentors, students can pursue place-based solutions to address specific climate vulnerabilities facing their communities. This session will introduce several successful school-based models and discuss the specific opportunities and barriers to implementing school-based climate change curricula and climate actions.

Discussion Questions

- How have students been able to engage with policy makers and stimulate local governments to address climate change?
- What are the barriers in the K-12 system that have impeded student-led climate action?
- How have new partnerships provided students with climate action and policy opportunities and enabled identification of new funding sources and other ways of sustaining programs?
- How do we ensure that this is done equitably both within districts and across the state?

Three Things You Must Know:

- K-12 students, their teachers and school administrators can serve as key allies and leaders in implementing climate change adaptation and resilience measures in their communities.
- Efforts to engage more students and teachers in climate action is hindered by the absence of climate change in the curriculum.
- Schools and school systems present bureaucratic barriers to implementing student-led climate action.

Background & Key Resources

- NOAA's education programs support educating and inspiring people to use Earth system science to improve ecosystem stewardship and increase resilience to environmental hazards. NOAA's mission is directed toward a vision of the future where communities and their ecosystems are healthy and resilient in the face of sudden or prolonged environmental change. To achieve this vision, NOAA strives to understand current conditions, project future changes, and help people make informed decisions that reduce their vulnerability and increase their ability to cope with environmental hazards. The B-WET and Environmental Literacy Program provide grants that support youth, students, and teachers in getting involved in creating resilience in their communities.
- The Environmental Literacy Program (ELP) recently developed a theory of change for how education and collective environmental literacy leads to community resilience. [NOAA Community Resilience Education Theory of Change](#)
- Several ELP-supported projects have developed new models for how K-12 students can become involved in local climate action and policy and will describe these models, what they've learned, and barriers they've encountered.
- The [RiSC Program](#), organized by the National Wildlife Federation and Brooklyn College, educates youth in New York City schools about climate change science and climate impacts, as well as natural and built solutions that increase climate resiliency. RiSC engages students with a curriculum in knowledge-sharing through a variety of communication campaigns and provides access to hands-on projects - like tree planting and dune restoration -

that mitigate the impacts of extreme weather. The program also creates opportunities for meaningful interactions with community members, resilience practitioners and decision makers in NYC.

- [ReCharge the Rain](#) is a joint project of Watershed Management Group and Arizona Project WET which moves participants in Tucson, AZ from awareness to knowledge gain to conceptual understanding to action, inspiring teachers, students, and community members to adopt an ethic of environmental stewardship. Participants understand the relationships between local watershed health, the hydrologic cycle as well as the urban heat effect, and the repercussions of extreme weather events. They have invested in rainwater harvesting initiatives and employed their skills to mitigate environmental hazards for community resilience to increased temperatures, extreme storm events, and persistent drought.
- The Wild Center has innovated a successful model for engaging youth in climate change and resilience. Their [Youth Climate Program](#) works to convene, engage, connect and empower young people around the world to take action on climate change. After more than 10 years of working with youth to become engaged in climate change, they have several excellent resources available for others and will share their findings during the panel.

Session Speakers

- Brett Branco, Director, [Science and Resilience Institute at Jamaica Bay](#), Brooklyn College
- Emily Fano, Senior Education Manager, [National Wildlife Federation](#) in New York City
- Jen Kretser, Director of Climate Initiatives, [The Wild Center](#)
- Carrie McDougall, Senior Education Program Manager, [NOAA Office of Education](#)
- Joaquin Murrieta-Saldivar, Cultural Ecologist, [Watershed Management Group](#)
- Sarah Schoedinger, Senior Education Program Manager, [NOAA Office of Education](#)

June 15, 2021 Breakout Session Notes

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