

February 7, 2020

Newton School Committee
100 Walnut Street
Newton, MA 02460

Dear School Committee Members, Superintendent Fleishman, Mayor Fuller,

School Connections is a Green Newton group of parents, educators, students and community members. We advocate for environmentally sustainable practices in Newton Public Schools (NPS) as well as climate literacy for students. We are heartened by the district's commitment to sustainability within facilities management and are starting to see substantive progress on that front. Thank you for setting it as one of our system-wide goals! We hope the district's next steps will be to deepen K-12 students' and teachers' knowledge about climate change and bolster their ability to take action on this front. Green Newton School Connections hopes to collaborate with NPS to bring these goals to life.

Including climate change education in system-wide goals

As part of your mandate to "establish educational goals and policies for the schools in the district," we are asking for climate education for all grade levels to be included as a system-wide goal for the 2020-21 school year. Climate education should be a priority educational goal as the public school system is the best place to reach a broad spectrum of students and families with the SCIENCE, the IMPACT, and the SOLUTIONS of climate change. All students - regardless of their academic path or future career goals - need to have the knowledge and tools to deal with climate change given its catastrophic impact on modern life.

Fund professional development and curriculum resources related to climate change

In order to meet the district goals of academic excellence and positive social-emotional development, we believe the district should take into consideration the major transformations happening right now in our living environment and adapt the curriculum accordingly. Students of all ages frequently express anxiety about the very real threat climate change poses for their future, as you heard from those who were motivated to participate in the School Committee meeting on January 13th. The best thing we as adults can do to alleviate those anxieties is to provide students with accurate knowledge on climate science and a means to empower them so they feel they have agency to do something about this crisis. Addressing climate change within the K-12 curriculum provides another opportunity for NPS to foster positive social-emotional development for students and to elevate students' capacity to manage their emotions and find a positive outlet for their anxieties.

Many educators will likely need to extend their own knowledge on climate change in order to effectively integrate this topic across subject areas. This will require NPS to allocate funding for both professional development and curriculum writing, and to provide time for teachers to develop lessons with their peers related to climate change during curriculum planning time.



How we can help

Green Newton School Connections can support this endeavor in a variety of ways. We are available to collaborate on grant writing to fund curriculum development and teacher training, and we can even help run that training if that fits within the scope of the school department's plan. Through our broad network we can share information with families about this initiative and the ways caregivers can dovetail in-school experiences with home-based action. Finally, we can serve as a clearinghouse and provide you with the many existing climate change curriculum resources that we have already gathered.

We look forward to having individual meetings with School Committee members and school district personnel. Please contact us with further questions at schoolconnections@greennewton.org.

Sincerely,

Christina Perez, Joana Canedo and the
Climate Education in Schools Committee
Green Newton School Connections
www.greennewton.org