

Climate Youth Town Hall

Breakout Facilitator Notes

Breakout Room 1:

What are you doing at your school related to climate awareness and climate action?

- POWER - energy resources in libraries
- Internship at Bethesda Green: learning about climate issues and methods in Bethesda
- MOCO for change - pharm solar initiative
- Conservation CORP
- Participate in environmental clubs at school

What challenges are you facing related to climate action?

- Climate isn't a priority right now because of COVID
- Getting schools to educate about climate change (specifically private schools: Holton Arms and JDS)
- The student body doesn't really care about climate change → it is really hard to spread the awareness and passion

Looking forward, what is something that you want to do/ you are doing / wish you could do related to climate action?

- Personal goal: live more sustainably in day to day
- Plastic pollution and plastic recycling → cut down on single use plastic
- Work with a team to reduce cafeteria plastic (biodegradable utensils and trays, compost the food)
- Help get pharm solar initiative on the floor for the county
- Personal goal: compost
- Learn more about climate policies and local policies
- Participate in advocacy day → putting pressure on elected officials and getting more involved in local politics

Notes

Climate Action and Awareness

- Green Teams and Environmental Awareness Clubs are important vehicles for educating students and developing initiatives (e.g., assemblies on waste, social justice-climate change, curriculum changes incorporating climate change, environmental field trips, etc.)
- Beneficial to work with DEP/Larissa on peer outreach program at Public Libraries; good internship opportunity at Bethesda Green where one student is helping to establish a pollinator garden; Poolesville Ecology Program very active and have launched "waste free Wednesdays"

- Latin American Youth Center works with 17-24 year olds providing site-based learning opportunities including invasive removals, tree planting, composting, and solar installation.

Something Students Really Want to Do

- Really want to learn how to live more sustainably; want to reduce single use plastics in cafeteria (trays and utensils); compost food; community/school gardens
- Want to get involved in local advocacy like "Advocacy Day;" really wanted the Solar Zoning Text Amendment to get passed.
- Discussion about having students be a part of the Maryland coalition of local jurisdictions to influence State climate policy (Action P-11) or perhaps stand up a Climate Youth Advocacy body which can amplify their voices locally and perhaps can ultimately form a State youth coalition.

Challenges

- Private school constraints; hard to get students involved unless it's part of a club climate change needs to be part of the curriculum.
- Covid and online engagement makes it hard to stay engaged
- CAP is "unactionable" and should be re-written so that it's more like an implementation plan; it offers few specifics and needs a more substantive executive summary.

Breakout Room 2:

Breakout Room 3:

Round 1:

What are you doing at your school related to climate awareness and climate action?

- School has eco club, does recycling, club went to climate march, participated in climate strike, cleanups of Rock Creek Park
- Led Fridays for Future strikes starting in elementary school as a fifth grader and continuing for 6th, 7th grade (now) - courtyard strikes every Friday for ten minutes - most students didn't know anything about climate when she started the strikes
- Sunrise movement - policy change to stop climate crisis
- Went to climate march/strike in DC, do things to inform other students, most students are very ignorant of climate change and how bad it's getting, recycling/plastic bag drive, trying to get more students involved - club is only a year old
- Started a climate club at her school a few years ago - looked at school's electrical grid and got school to use solar power, lots of Friday for Future, got science dept. to talk more about climate change, elementary school started a bee garden

What challenges are you facing related to climate action?

- Could work on using less stuff personally
- Is renting an apartment with roommate and struggled finding an apartment with energy efficient appliances, calculated her carbon footprint and it was a high score in the apartment because the appliances are not energy efficient- a big issue if you are renting
- When she started Fridays for Future at middle school, it was hard to get the principal to let her do it

Looking forward, what is something that you want to do/wish you could do related to climate action?

- Would like to practice using less resources

Round 2: 7:50-8:02

What are you doing at your school related to climate awareness and climate action?

- Sunrise Rockville - local sustainability goals, recently they joined a Maryland coalition to tackle statewide issues - she and her club operate outside of school
- Harder during COVID, her school doing hybrid learning, trying to convince school to buy reusable containers and everyone use own silverware instead of using plastic utensils they give them

What challenges are you facing related to climate action?

- Because of COVID, hard to do a lot of stuff (denim drive for example)
- Need more teachers to support their green committee

Looking forward, what is something that you want to do/wish you could do related to climate action?

- Wants to major in electrical engineering to help more to renewable energy sources

Round 3: 8:03-8:15

What do you think of the education actions in the CAP? Is there anything missing that you would add?

- Glad to see there is an education aspect to CAP
- Hope it is implemented in way that makes sense and doesn't feel tacked on to classes
- Already have homeroom for certain things - climate could be mentioned there

- Would love to see a class on environmental law and policy being offered - not just science

How do you think the CAP will impact your community?

- Hopes it will help us make progress toward a sustainable community as a county
- Help combat the climate crisis
- Alleviate anxiety around climate crisis, help us feel better about our situation
- Interested to see how the racial equality piece is implemented and how much it will actually change things - excited to see that happen
- Hopefully it will encourage older generations to be more mindful - activism has been led by young people, young people seem to be at the forefront, would like to see people of all generations supporting this plan.

Do you have any other feedback/general thoughts on the CAP?

- Students at small, private schools that are mostly white feel that fellow students are not getting the full picture of how climate change is affecting people who aren't white, and that many students feel that there is nothing they can do about climate change
- People are educated at cursory level, question of who is being affected is not being answered as much
- People understand climate crisis at some level, but then their own personal decisions are so far away from the initial goal of wanting to fix the problem
- Reduce, reuse, recycle was extent of awareness in elementary school, as they got older they didn't learn much about what climate change is, lots of self-education, putting in the time outside of school, "we do it outside of school on our own time because it is something we care about"
- I know what to do in my personal life but am not sure how to get involved in activism to advocate for changes on bigger scale

Breakout Room 4:

Breakout Session 1 Summary

- Attendees: 4 MS, 1 HS, 2 college, 1 teacher/other
- Examples of activities related to climate change included recycling programs and facilities, classes learning about climate change and horticulture, participation in clubs and groups focused on climate change and environmental issues.
- Students mentioned remote learning as a barrier to greater connection with fellow students.

Introductions

- Montgomery College student – She is learning about efforts at Montgomery College to get involved with their recycling efforts.
- Takoma Park 7th grader – has just taken a course on horticulture and sustainability available to 6th and 7th graders and she’s interested in joining a club on climate change.
- High school student – is interested in climate change and recycling.
- Blair high school student – involved with student groups addressing climate change through tackling local problems as well as attending larger rallies.
- 8th grader – is interested in climate change
- MC student – is vice president of Climate Action Now chapter

Stan asked are your friends thinking about climate change? If not, do you have suggestions for increasing student engagement?

- Yes, her friends are engaged, but the majority of students are not.
- He is glad his school has installed new cameras so there’s better security.
- MC students are preparing a number of EarthWeek events via CAN.

Stan asked what would make students more interested in this topic?

- Knowing the facts
- Explain how climate change affects everyone
- Let people face the heat and maybe they’ll understand. She says students were very involved at the elementary level but there isn’t as much emphasis in school as students get older.

Breakout Session 2 Summary

- Attendees: 1 MS, 3 HS, 1 college, 4 teacher/other
- Examples of activities related to climate change included participation in student government activities that related to climate change and supporting a school greenhouse.
- One participant noted that some people are “terrified” of the potential consequences of climate change and emphasizing that there is hope and that progress that can be made should be a part of any messaging.
- Another student noted that as part of their student government’s focus on climate change, they distribute bi-weekly infographics to try to increase interest in climate related topics among students.

Introductions

- 6th grader – is involved in SGA and growing a garden at his school.

- Green team environmental club at school, goal is to share information. School assembly every Friday. Make informative videos, focus on current events. Do Kahoot or small game to get everyone involved. Other things include cleanups or went to capital when there was a march. Big recycling system at the school. Collected grocery bags and took to the grocery store for redistribution
- Resident, with Amazon, was wondering what was happening with all the online ordering plastic waste.
- Student started a branch of Montgomery County Students for Change and working on Climate action. Not able to do much due to COVID, ready to do more. Is in chief of staff office for Montgomery county regional student government association and have been sponsored resolutions for climate justice bills. One example was the solar bill by Hans Reamer which unfortunately failed by one vote. Doing endorsements now for the MoCo Students for Change, our goal is to find legislation that needs student advocacy and student testimony. 16 submitted testimony recently
- I'm mind blown! From the practical to legislative level! Everyone doing something. Don't be discouraged, it's awesome you did your best. Growing up in this area, you know how politics is influenced and understand more. Keep it up don't lose hope.
- Part of environmental club at school. Have participated in climate strikes. Working to raise awareness. Trash pickups and cleanups in neighborhoods. Not doing much now for the climate online, hard to stay engaged in that work. Still trying to do some cleanups.
- One Montgomery Green looking for HS interns if anyone is looking for other opportunities. Everything u do on individual level matters, even taking your time on a zoom call, like you are doing tonight.

SESSION 2

Please introduce yourself and where you go to school.

- Whitman HS
- Charles E Smith Jewish Day School
- Sophomore at Saint Mary's College of Maryland
- Montgomery College graduate last year, working in Silver Spring
- 10th grader Poolesville HS
- conflict resolution center in Montgomery County- offer mediation services and large group discussions
- Resident who got the county to declare county emergency, next protest on Wed March 13
- MLK middle school student
- Graduate of Boston university in neuroscience with some work in linguistics.

What are you doing at your school related to climate awareness and climate action?

- Walt Whitman HS, my actions have been limited. I'm on the school newspaper, have tried to write articles. I've pitched them but they don't go thru, working on project for Bethesda Green project on single use plastics.
- Great that you are taking on role where school is not addressing a need – great! Hope your school and everyone supports you more.
- Off campus internship for CKC farming urban conservatory. Corner farm backyard - sustainable farming 33 acres, to spread all over in small communities. Off campus

internship for graduation requirements. My major is sustainable agriculture. This is not all science based, environmental law, humanities, other sides. I want to do the science and work in the field. Different types of science you can do with environmental studies

- For HS students here, it's good you have programs that give you a multilevel approach
- Technically I am in graduate school, very specific program. Mine is very different from green initiatives. They are working on getting composting in the facility and taking a little step towards that.
- When I had an apartment, I didn't compost but then got a bill and thought it was crazy that we got charged for it. I think a priority for climate change is to make sure we have the infrastructure and consider how can we make it equitable for everyone
- I finished Montgomery college last year. Realized MC has an environmental club, like many of the high schools and colleges across the nation

SESSION 3

Breakout prompts for Feedback on the Draft CAP:

- How can we make people more aware and care? What can we do better to have people do more?
- Like student who presented the education aspect. Did a really good job. Good support of community gardens. A little critical of "education" only schools. All we have in this county is Montgomery College and University of Maryland at Shady Grove – this should not just be K-12 should be expanded across state and at college level.
- yes, idea is if there is enough support here, hopefully it will expand
- Make sure CAP take advantage and working with programs coming out of the schools. MD and DC are some of the leading education programs in the country, and programs are set up so some schools can help other schools. I work with Lowell? School in DC. They have their own channel and twitter account....energy audits...resources to share with all. Collaboration is important.
- Agree with what's been said about it be expanded across MD
- Looking at county places that are most at risk, minority areas, how racism affects our lives. Like the County Executive Said, historically places with higher property value have more protections. Climate change affects all of us, and they may not feel impact of flooding. Example: if you take the bus and the street floods how do you get there? If you have an essential job you have to go to work, your boss probably doesn't care.
- Need to expand and study across the state so we are setting the example.
- Junior Wooton HS – education is more important - We should start earlier I'm working with the climate education Girl Scout Go to Work Project, and we are drafting curriculum to implement into 8th grade earth science =10 units to supplement so they are interested in AP environmental sciences in HS
- Action and initiative we need to see. Need people to receive this.
- Like plans, I've downloaded them. Looks fine and plan looks fine. Like you want to start early with little kids taking their environmental input. Should expand past Montgomery County once we get everything onboard. Suggestions are to have presentations for kids digitalized, power points, announcements, show/share statistics, raffles/chance to win, as that progresses it will move to the higher levels. At MC recycling bottles and papers, the more we can do, will need help. Love these ideas you have more than I can think of.
- Yes there are ideas here I've never thought of before
- CESJDS – because of COVID using plastic bags, used form sent to people and brought to supermarkets

Note from facilitator Risa Hagigal: I just wanted to emphasize that a lot of students seemed interested in making these implementations and studies applicable to a state-wide level. They were glad we studied our County, however seemed very motivated to ensure other counties would participate in these potential changes. I am grateful to have been asked to moderate in this event.

Breakout Room 7:

Combined attendees:

- TAME Coalition, Blair High School, Eastern Middle School, Matsunaga ES, Georgetown Day School, Montgomery College, Whitman High School, Silver Spring Friends School, Poolesville High School, Northwood High School, Pyle Middle School

Questions 1 & 2

- Student shared about the Nature Conservation Club that she is a part of.
- Student was not aware of any environmental clubs at Blair, not sure if students and staff are doing any specific projects/initiatives. *(MCPS staff will reach out to Luke and school-based Green Team)*
- Students shared about the college's Environmental Club but voiced concern that not much has been done recently due to COVID.
- Student part of the environmental club and would like help to do more. *(MCPS staff will reach out and school-based Green Team to provide assistance)*
- Student shared about the new solar PV at Sandy Spring Friends School and the Geothermal system at their new addition. She also wanted to know if there are resources or County support staff available to help private schools. I informed that DEP has support staff for private schools and suggested contacting them via website. Someone DEP may want to reach out to SS Friends.
- Student is concerned about all the waste that is being created due to COVID, ie. disposal masks, gloves, and other PPE

Feedback on Draft CAP:

- In general, there was positive feedback on the Draft CAP.
- Several were happy to see the efforts by the County to be in the forefront of Climate Change and for the opportunity to learn and provide feedback.
- Student from Pyle MS and member of the Sunrise Movement had several concerns:
 - o Voiced that the draft CAP is missing specific details on implementation
 - o Feels that the draft CAP does not elevate the sense of urgency for the need to take drastic actions for Climate Change.
 - o Feels that the current actions listed in the draft CAP, it will be difficult to reach zero.
 - o I suggested that she provide detailed feedback via the County's Draft CAP website prior to February 28.

Breakout Room 8:

Climate Ed Ideas:

- Getting administrators and teachers to sponsor conservation & sustainability actions so they last longer at schools
- Create a learning environment that produces many environmentally conscious students year after year
- Collaborations with outside organizations will help maintain programs longer than inter-school initiatives
- Interdisciplinary climate curriculum between Social studies, science, etc.
- Climate education clubs starting in middle school “Fridays for Future”
- Sandy Springs: Geothermal building, solar panels, local farms, decreasing paper waste, composting programs go directly to local farms

Problems with Climate Ed:

- Some students don't care about or acknowledge climate change → low engagement
- Students sometimes have to advocate for climate action against administration

Questions/Ideas about CAP:

- What does curriculum look like in Elementary education?
- Intersectionality of racial inequity and environmental justice should be incorporated into the environmental education plan

Breakout Room 9:

Breakout prompts for Connecting with Each Other: (Rounds 1 and 2)

At MC: working on a composting program and community garden - found that reaching out to many people will help you get your projects done.

Sandy Spring Friends School - on Climate Action committee. School owns 2 farms and source produce, new building is fully geothermal, students compost all food waste and meatless Mondays - food from their own farms, cutting down on paper waste

Round 1

What do you think of the education actions in the CAP? Is there anything missing that you would add?

- Policy package

- Rewritten by earth day including all details + who is responsible, funding?

How can the education component be coordinated and executed?

- If schools: roof vegetation, solar panel.
- Bringing biodegradable item: bags, composting, material
- Suggestion
 - o Rewriting would get to the point
 - o Public policy is making it better

Conversation: the newer generation should work with the older generation into making it.

- Ask mark Erlich to help others rewrite the CAP

How do you think the CAP will impact your community?

- Student serves as a class president and climate action committee: talked about his school
 - o (Sandy Spring Friends School)
- 2 farms, local produce farms
- Fully geothermal
- For students what they can do: composting on all your food days
- Meatless Mondays
- Cut down on papers
- Renewable energy in the next school.
- Interest in elevating the environmental justice component - how can this be made a focus in the educational aspects to raise understanding and awareness in school?

Do you have any other feedback/general thoughts on the CAP?

- Sunrise movement in Rockville - read all pages of the CAP, was underwhelmed - vague and few specifics. Priorities are difficult to interpret and lacks a usable executive summary, feels the vagueness will prevent action. Wants to see a rewrite by earth day
- SMOB candidate - wants to see more solar in the schools, biodegradable substitutions for one use plastics

What do you think of the education actions in the CAP? Is there anything missing that you would add?

Round 2:

Staff at MCPS

- Shout out at MCPS that are cool
 - o Few years back (environ justic?)
 - Title 1 schools - field trips to get more environments around the school
 - Environmental film festival with high school students with private school

*title 1 school- low -income and more reduced lunch

- Non profit funds theatres

- Dealing with **environmental justice**
 - o To look at buildings that are utilizing non-eff energy and affecting them economic
 - o Educational space- and relate to environmental justice
 - o She worked with more schools in New York k-12
 - Ambassadors- teachers and reach out to private schools and work in a club
- Student
 - o What would be the process?
 - o At montgomery college: should be a plan
 - o Are they going to do anything beyond this? More conversations? More town halls?
- Holten Arms (bethesda)
 - o How does this CAP or MoCo and tell them that they should do to At montgomery college: **private schools? How to connect with them**
 - o More collaboration? With public and private schools
- Conversation between 2 students
 - o Think it's up for the corporations and large
 - o Cars, Buildings, everything efficient
- Hearing what **all schools are doing**
- Comments and outreach to stakeholders; youth town halls→ get more stakeholders

Round 3:

- **What do you think of the education actions in the CAP? Is there anything missing that you would add?**
 - o Biodegradable? - creating waste, reusable
 - o MoCo - currently recycles most plastic -- do try to track as much plastic as possible
 - o All schools: separate bins
 - o Private and public schools: might
- **How do you think the CAP will impact your community?**
 - o Ideas are good
- **Do you have any other feedback/general thoughts on the CAP**
 - o Question: want to expand highways? A little contradiction?
 - o The county executive

- Google: 270 corridor expansion
 - Different utilization of lanes
 - Elrich said: Looking at different utilization of the highways so that you don't have the
 - what is the best way expand to 270
 - Governor wants to have high occupancy controlling
 - Closure of the land on the highway
- Montgomery County GED sustainability, Montgomery County program

Breakout Room 10:

Breakout Room 11:

Round 1

- High school Senior - Richard Montgomery HS. Founder of Montgomery County Students on Climate.
 - They drafted six policy recommendations re climate they presented to the Board of Education last fall. One was re school bus electrification so he feels that had some impact now they have a plan to do that.

Challenges:

- Competing priorities students and school personnel have
- Student: Active in her school climate club (?)
 - Challenges: Keeping students interested – especially because of virtual learning situation. Trying to do online meeting
- Silver Creek School student– She has not been involved in climate issues at her school but just learned there is a Green Club there so is planning to join.
 - Challenges: Thinks one of the things they will be doing is picking up trash at the school & on the surrounding streets.
- Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School student– She is a member of their Environmental Club.
 - Challenges: Feels it is harder now to get people engaged b/c everything is virtual.
- Trying to spread the word is also harder – to get people's attention.
- People have many other pressing matters/competing priorities.
- Communicating with some students in California for help in setting up food composting program for her school.
- Georgetown Day student - He is member of his school's Environmental Club. Agrees re virtual makes it much harder to get students engaged or to take action. They have pretty much given up on action and are just inviting people in to speak about various topics at online meetings.
 - Challenges: Keeping students interested – esp b/c of virtual learning situation
- Not much going on at student's school. They are doing things like picking up trash.

- Want to get a program started to compost cafeteria waste. She sees so many people not finishing their food.
- Challenges: Getting the food composting program going. Hard to know how or where to start
- Recycling Manager for MCPS. Noted they recycle many products, not just the typical things like paper or cans, but all types of materials including construction materials. When they tore down Seneca High School they were able to recycle 97% of the materials
 - Challenges: Keeping people interested. There are so many issues out there. Recycling is so simple – yet it’s still hard to keep people doing it.
 - Turnover in contact people - He works with Green Clubs at schools and things will be going ok then that teacher leaves, or the students involved move on and need to start over.

Round 2

- Co-founded Montgomery County Students for Climate. They have about 50 members.
 - Last year submitted policy recommendations to Board of Education. Met with the Chief Operating Officer of MCPS and one of the Board Members.
 - Challenges/Looking forward: Getting more students involved. But he will be leaving for college.
 - He said he would put a link to their organization in Slack which is where they communicate.

[SLB note: *That’s one reason I was thinking it would be useful to have a place on the Climate website for this type of info.*]

- Maryvale Elementary School – She doesn’t have anything re climate at her school, but has been involved in these issues thru Cub Scouts and Girl Scouts. They did trash pickup.
 - Challenges/Looking forward: People keep littering – makes the job of picking up trash harder!
- Silver Creek Middle School student. She just learned about the school’s Green Club and plans to join.
 - Challenges/Looking forward: She did trash pick-up at her other school. Found not enough people participated.
- Richard Montgomery HS – sophomore.
 - Works with MCR [not sure if that is the Rec Dept?].
 - She helped start an organization called “Climate Ed” or “Edu” [?? not sure of exact name].
 - Challenges/Looking forward: They created a climate education course they are trying to get incorporated into the MCPS curriculum.
- Matsunaga Elementary School student. She is on a committee there working to get their school certified as a “Green School.”
 - Challenges/Looking forward: They have lots of good ideas but don’t know how to put them into action – trying to figure out how to do these things is challenging.

- She hopes in the future to find ways to participate in programs that others create
- She also looks forward to actually getting something done!
- Co-Founder of Montgomery County Students for Change
 - Also is with MCR [Rec?] - Met with Chief of Staff and they co-sponsored a resolution in County Council to do Farm Solar. He worked with Hans Riemer on that bill.
 - They hosted a Youth Town Hall on the Farm Solar bill. They had 16 or 17 testify for the bill.
 - It failed by one vote.
 - Challenges/Looking forward: Getting more students involved. Other groups are prioritized over their group. Many students (& others) don't know much about the climate issues.
 - Also they don't realize how it's really easy to get involved with these issues in the County and to have an impact – e.g. based on their organization's experience with the Farm Solar bill that it's easy to provide testimony on this type of legislation.
 - Need to get the word out – let students know about these opportunities. He thinks some students are afraid to get involved
- Resident of Takoma Park. Served on the Adaptation & Sequestration Workgroup.
 - Hosts a weekly “Climate Action Coffee” on Wednesday mornings – all are welcome.

Round 3

- Student likes the CAP – and esp likes the action re students doing gardens. She thinks a lot of students are hands-on learners. They get a lot of presentations and information provided that way which is fine, but actually doing something is a very effective way to learn.
 - Her school composts food from lunches. They use it for a farm (I assume she means they send it to the farm). She would like to find a way to make that program broader, bring it to more schools.
- Student has not yet read the CAP. From what he heard earlier understands every action in the CAP has a racial equity component – he thinks that's very cool.
 - He suggests as an improvement the CAP education actions re curriculum should include recommendations to teachers to incorporate components re the role of industry and government in climate change.
- Student in middle school at Eastern MS – but he has not yet been to his school. It has all been virtual. So he feels he cannot say what impact this would have at his school because he doesn't really know anyone there. He doesn't think they have a garden club – he doesn't think they have many things going on now.
- Student from Gaithersburg MS -- He thinks the CAP is OK. Virtual activities work ok. He would like to see more intermural activities. [I think he meant activities between schools.]
- Student from JDS – She thinks CAP has good ideas re adding climate-related topics to the science curriculum. She thinks there are lots of other opportunities to include

climate in the curriculum. She thought the CAP said something about starting this in the 6th grade. She thinks would be good to start in 5th grade or even earlier in elementary school – feels kids learn better when they are presented info earlier.

- Representative of the Conflict Resolution Center – just listening.
 - If anyone here is feeling stress or has issues they'd like to discuss, they do counseling and mediation.
 - She will put her contact info into ... (I think she was going to put into the Chat but was not able to do so)

At the end when we had just a few seconds left I asked them is it easy or hard to talk to family and friends about why climate change is important and some of these actions. All who chimed in seemed to feel that was something that was easy for them to do – e.g. dinner table conversations.