



Statement on Governor Newsom’s Budget Proposal:
 Missed opportunities to safeguard student health and learning,
 save schools money, and advance California’s climate goals

January 10, 2023

California Gov. Gavin Newsom today announced a state budget that clearly aims to make hard choices as the state faces its first deficit in years. But the governor’s proposal leaves out two wise investments that could unlock billions of federal dollars for the state’s public schools and help keep the state on track to meet its climate goals: a \$10 million Master Plan for Climate-Resilient and Sustainable Schools and \$10 million for technical assistance to help schools leverage state and federal funds. Even in a time of fiscal austerity, these investments are no-brainers.

Many California schools today are, quite literally, underwater. The [historic rainfall](#) the state has experienced over the past week demonstrates that increasingly frequent and intense climate hazards — such as flooding, extreme heat, and wildfire smoke — continue to threaten the health and safety of students in California’s K-12 schools. The harshest consequences of climate

impacts fall most heavily on students of color, students from low-income families, and students in rural communities, reinforcing existing inequities and deepening learning loss.

Children spend more waking hours at school than anywhere else. High-leverage incentives in the federal Inflation Reduction Act mark 2023 as a year of transformational opportunity. Inaction by the Governor and Legislature means California will leave billions in federal grant dollars on the table that could be used to safeguard our children's health and development.

Schools are simply too important to ignore when it comes to meeting our climate goals. The state legislature and municipalities together spend \$15 billion per year to build, maintain, and operate California's nearly 11,000 public elementary and secondary schools.

Right now, high natural [gas prices](#) are diverting vital education dollars out of classrooms to pay for inefficient and unhealthy, fossil fuel-powered heaters and stoves. Strategic investments in sustainable, climate-resilient schools could ease pressure on the power grid and prevent future shutdowns that disrupt instruction, inflict trauma on California's young people, and produce long-term learning loss. Combined with federal incentives, even relatively modest State investments that respect the constraints imposed by declining revenues could enable high-needs schools across California to ensure healthy indoor air quality with modern HVAC equipment, prevent disruptions with onsite solar power and battery storage, and reduce school-based emissions with renewably-powered electric building systems.

California needs a plan. School districts need guidance and support. And disadvantaged communities need – and deserve – urgent attention. If the State does nothing, local schools will continue to spend billions of dollars in ways that contradict California's own climate goals. Therefore, we urge Governor Newsom and legislative leaders to include these prudent, high-leverage investments in a revised Budget Proposal:

- \$10 million in a state-wide Master Plan for Sustainable and Climate-Resilient Schools to ensure ongoing school infrastructure spending is cost-effective and aligned with the state's decarbonization targets;
- \$10 million for technical assistance to help individual school districts leverage state and federal funding and incentives for decarbonization and resilience; and
- \$100 million to convert 50 high-risk schools in disadvantaged communities to electric heat pump HVAC systems to safeguard indoor air quality and temperature.

We stand ready to support these timely, mission-critical dimensions of California's world-leading climate strategy.

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About the Climate-Ready Schools Coalition

We are a coalition of education, climate, health, youth, labor, civil rights, and business leaders. Our mission is to ensure school buildings and grounds are sustainable and resilient to equitably support student health, safety, learning, and well-being in a time of rapidly increasing extreme weather.

California will neither achieve nor sustain carbon neutrality unless our public schools are transformed into sites of climate mitigation and energy efficiency. No matter how successful we are at reducing future emissions, climate change is, and will continue to be, a crisis of health and opportunity for California's children. Schools must prepare students to live and lead in a world that is being fundamentally re-shaped by climate change.

Details on our proposals for the FY24 state budget are included in our [letter to Governor Newsom](#) from December 2022.

This statement is attributable to the Climate-Ready Schools Coalition. For more information, contact Jonathan Klein at jonathan@undauntedk12.org or 510-593-4555.