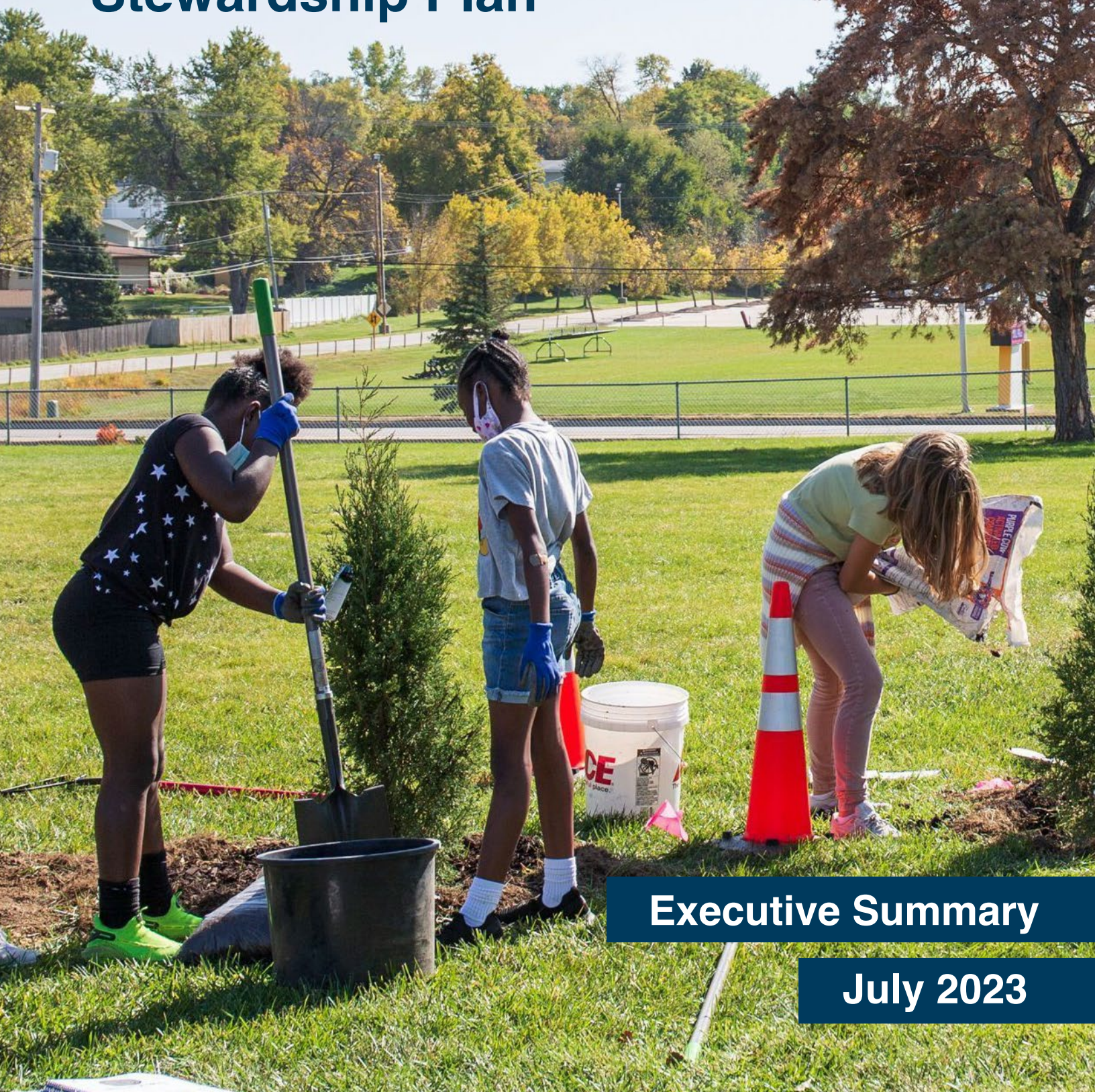




# Environmental Stewardship Plan



**Executive Summary**

**July 2023**



# Introduction

Environmental stewardship and K12 education are inextricably intertwined. Extreme weather, air pollution, and other aspects of the changing climate are already impacting students and their learning. Young people are especially vulnerable to the physical and mental health effects of these impacts, and they are also the ones leading the environmental advocacy movement. We recognize the connection between the environmental challenges our students will face and our mission to prepare all students for success. It is our responsibility as a District to do our part in mitigating these challenges, and to teach our community to do the same. Environmental stewardship has been a priority for the District dating back over two decades.

Continuing this effort, in accordance with the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan of Action, this Environmental Stewardship Plan (ESP) lays out a path forward for the District to reduce its environmental impact, implement innovative strategies that improve student health, and engage our community in becoming better stewards of our natural environment. A wide range of stakeholders from across the District and in the Omaha community were engaged in the planning process, and the District thanks all who participated in this effort. The collaborative nature of this process will help ensure its success in the years to come.

## Plan Structure

Several terms are used to refer to various components and outcomes from the planning process. Definitions for each component are included below to help provide clarity for readers.

- **Vision:** The future we hope to achieve as a result of this plan. The icons on page 12 are used to refer to the vision statements throughout this document
- **Focus Areas:** Seven (7) topic areas determined based on the vision; Focus Teams made up of subject matter experts were formed to brainstorm strategies around these areas
- **Metrics:** Five (5) key indicators for which quantitative goals were set during the second Task Force workshop
- **Goals:** Quantitative goals set to be achieved by 2030/2040 for the five (5) quantitative metrics
- **Targets:** High-level, qualitative goals based on strategy categories that will help motivate and organize the District's efforts. These are not intended to be rigid goals for the District to adhere to, but rather guiding objectives
- **Strategies:** Actions that will help the District achieve the targets, goals, and vision; compiled from brainstorming session(s) with Focus Teams



# Vision

An Environmental Stewardship Task Force, made up of key individuals from the District and Omaha community, participated in several workshops to shape the creation of this plan. The first workshop asked the Task Force to answer the question: *What do you hope the District will achieve through the Environmental Stewardship Plan?* The results of this visioning activity were refined into the following vision statements.

**At Omaha Public Schools, we recognize the connection between our mission to prepare students to succeed and the challenges they will face due to the climate crisis. We believe it is critical to their success and ours as a District to take innovative action to become better stewards of our natural resources, equip our students to overcome environmental challenges, and ultimately become an organization that gives back to our planet and community.**



**Elevate student voices and empower students as leaders.** We seek to create a culture that elevates student voices and supports student-led environmental initiatives. We will partner with community members to connect students with career and educational opportunities related to environmental stewardship.



**Cultivate a healthy learning environment through high-performance buildings and thoughtful grounds management.** We will use modern building management systems, real-time analytics, and other advanced technologies to increase energy and water efficiency in buildings and on grounds. We will improve indoor and outdoor air quality and conserve resources through the implementation of integrated pest management and landscaping plans.



**Foster a culture of regeneration.** We will work to improve staff and student participation in environmental stewardship initiatives. We will provide accessible education to encourage personal and collective practices that support our sustainability goals at school, at home, and beyond. We will integrate environmental stewardship into daily practices in each department and promote interdepartmental communication and collaboration.



**Reduce greenhouse gas emissions.** We will significantly decrease our greenhouse gas emissions by reducing energy usage, procuring energy from clean sources, and producing our own clean energy. We will seek opportunities to reinvest energy cost savings into our buildings and students.



**Implement transportation systems that support our emissions goals.** We will increase the number of clean fuel vehicles in our fleet. We seek to reduce the use of cars by all members of the Omaha Public Schools community by promoting alternative modes of transportation, such as walking, biking, and carpooling.



**Eliminate waste, from purchasing to disposal.** We will reduce our purchasing and use of materials and reuse or donate items when possible. We will ensure all buildings have proper recycling and composting equipment and education.



**Make socially responsible procurement decisions.** We will let District values guide our purchases, which means supporting the local community and purchasing from businesses that share those values.



**Implement sustainable food practices that support student nutrition.** We will source local and sustainable food in the cafeterias when possible, and we will promote 'ready access' to healthy food outside of mealtimes.

# Goals

The following quantitative, data-driven metrics and goals were established to provide a way for the District to measure progress toward improved environmental stewardship. These goals are intended to complement and support the vision, targets, and strategies in driving the District's action over the next two decades.

Key Indicator	Metric	Baseline (2021)	Goal
Greenhouse gas emissions	<b>Total Scope 1, Scope 2, and selected Scope 3 emissions</b> as calculated in GHG inventory	109,738 MtCO <sub>2</sub> e	50% reduction by 2040
Building energy consumption	<b>District average Energy Star rating:</b> benchmark score based primarily on energy consumption (electricity, natural gas, etc.)	63	70 by 2030
Waste reduction	<b>District average diversion rate:</b> percent of materials that are diverted from the landfill through recycling, composting, reuse, or source reduction	23%	50% by 2030
Water use	<b>District average water consumption</b> per square foot (in gallons)	11.1 gal/sq ft	9.5 gal/sq ft by 2030
Engagement	<b>Engagement survey score:</b> calculated from five survey questions about student*/staff awareness, knowledge, and behavior around environmental stewardship; on a 1-100 scale	46*	70 by 2030

*\*Students were not surveyed but will likely be included in future surveys, so this baseline and goal is subject to change. Full survey results can be found in the Appendix.*

# Targets

Targets were developed to drive momentum toward the goals and to help organize strategies into broad categories of action. These targets are intended to be guiding objectives rather than formal commitments made by the District.

## Waste



### 1 Reduce landfill waste volume

- a. All schools are tray stacking in the cafeteria to reduce waste volume by May 2024
- b. Measures are implemented to maintain security and ensure dumpsters are used only for District waste by May 2025

### 2 Improve recycling systems and education

- a. 80% of buildings have adequate recycling containers and signage by May 2024
- b. 80% of buildings have identified a responsible party for collecting and disposing of recyclable materials by May 2024
- c. All buildings are fully participating in recycling of plastic, metal, paper, and cardboard by December 2024
- d. Students and staff know what is recyclable, and contamination (landfill waste in recycling containers) is reduced by May 2025

### 3 Improve waste data tracking and reporting

- a. Dumpster fullness assessments are conducted at least once at each school by December 2023
- b. Data is effectively used to inform changes to service levels that increase building diversion rates by May 2024

### 4 Increase participation in composting

- a. The District has a contract that schools can opt into with a composting vendor that provides benefits that are returned to participating schools by August 2025

## Purchasing



### 5 Evaluate current ordering and data tracking processes

- a. Annual order process is evaluated and improved to increase efficiency and bulk ordering by December 2023
- b. Procurement data and reporting is improved by May 2024, which will allow the District to better evaluate what is being purchased and identify opportunities to reduce waste and emissions in procurement

### 6 Communicate with appropriate parties about purchasing practices

- a. The District's environmental stewardship goals have been communicated to its current and potential vendors by May 2024

### 7 Incorporate environmental stewardship criteria into District purchasing policy

- a. The District has explored options for incorporating preferences for local vendors and sustainable products, as well as consideration of long-term impact, into purchasing criteria where appropriate by May 2025

## Food



### 8 Build partnerships that support sustainable nutrition

- Partnerships with community organizations to support development of recipes focused on local, sustainable food are established by August 2024
- Additional opportunities for sourcing local and sustainable food options are identified and pursued through partnerships with Nebraska Farm to School program, farmers, and producers by May 2025

## Emissions



### 9 Increase student and staff use of active modes of transportation, supported by benefits and education provided by Omaha Public Schools

- All schools provide infrastructure to support active modes of transportation (i.e. bike racks, walking access, etc.) by December 2025
- Schools provide appropriate recognition for using active modes of transportation by December 2025

### 10 Increase proportion of alternative fuels in vehicles used by the District

- 50% of fleet vehicles utilize alternative fuels (such as electric vehicles) by December 2035
- 50% of District-owned buses are using alternative fuel sources by December 2035
- 80% of leased buses/vehicles are using alternative fuels by December 2035

### 11 Produce clean energy onsite

- Ten (10) schools have onsite clean energy production (i.e., solar, wind, etc.) by December 2030

### 12 Increase efficiency in routing to reduce emissions from distribution

- Develop quantitative target for decreasing fuel use for distribution by vehicle by December 2023

## Buildings & Grounds



### 13 Create sustainable landscaping at each site

- Sustainable tree and landscaping plans have been developed at the District level and for all buildings by May 2025. Plans follow guidelines that reduce the need for irrigation and maintenance, including the use of drought-tolerant and native plants. Plans seek to improve outdoor air quality, contribute to carbon sequestration, and provide shade and other environmental benefits to students.
- Sustainable landscaping plans and practices are piloted at 10 schools by May 2026
- Ongoing maintenance practices, including proper training and communication, have been implemented to align with sustainable landscaping, by August 2026

### 14 Reduce energy and water consumption in buildings and on grounds

- Energy and water consumption have been reduced by 5% due to a culture shift toward resource conservation through focused management, District guidelines, and education by December 2025
- All locations are using real-time energy monitoring and leveraging advanced building control systems, which have improved energy and water efficiency in buildings and on grounds by December 2028
- Building energy efficiency has improved due to facilities upgrades as identified by Facilities Assessment by December 2030



## **15 Improve environmental quality to promote the health, wellbeing, and success of building occupants**

- a. Indoor air quality, as measured by CO<sub>2</sub> (primary metric), CO, and humidity levels, has improved in at least 90% of buildings due to changes identified through Facilities Assessment by December 2025
- b. The District purchases and uses environmentally-friendly cleaning products that do not negatively impact indoor air quality in all instances where there is an effective product available by December 2025
- c. The District has fully implemented Integrated Pest Management practices that prioritize the health of building occupants and ecosystems by December 2030

## **Engagement & Curriculum**



## **16 Increase communication about environmental stewardship internally and externally**

- a. Regular communication about environmental stewardship is incorporated into internal and external channels by December 2023

## **17 Expand educational opportunities for career and professional development related to environmental stewardship, for both students and staff**

- a. All students have access to education about environmental career opportunities through guest speakers, career fairs, coursework, etc. by May 2024
- b. Staff are aware of professional development opportunities related to environmental stewardship by December 2024

## **18 Improve participation, leadership, and accountability for school-level environmental stewardship efforts**

- a. Most schools have a Green Team by May 2025
- b. At least 50% of schools are participating in an incentive or recognition program (i.e., Green Schools Challenge) by May 2026
- c. At least 50% of buildings have school-specific environmental stewardship goals incorporated into their School Improvement Plan by August 2026

## **19 Expand development of environmental stewardship components in curriculum**

- a. The District has explored additional opportunities to incorporate environmental issues into courses and curriculum by August 2025
- b. At least 50% of high school courses incorporate connections to environmental issues in some way by August 2027

## **20 Use outdoor classrooms to connect students with the natural environment**

- a. Existing outdoor classrooms have curriculum connections and plans for ongoing use by December 2024
- b. The District has explored opportunities to create outdoor classrooms at appropriate locations by December 2024