

Scorecard Department of Education



Department of Education

400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202
[\(800\) 872-5327](tel:(800)872-5327)
[ed.gov](https://www.ed.gov)

About the Department of Education (ED)

The mission of the Department of Education (ED) is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access. ED Infrastructure and Sustainability promotes equitable access to healthy, safe, sustainable, 21st century school facilities, and environmental sustainability education. Its vision is that all schools achieve excellence and equity in school environments through healthy, safe, sustainable facilities and grounds and hands-on, real-world environmental sustainability learning.

This page provides information on how **the Department of Education (ED)** is working to advance environmental justice for communities across America. It is part of Phase One of the Biden-Harris Administration's Environmental Justice Scorecard.

Environmental and Civil Rights Protection

ED's Highlights

ED Infrastructure and Sustainability is committed to promoting equitable access to healthy, safe, sustainable, 21st century learning environments

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environmental sustainability learning. Some goals in these areas include: Recognizing and highlighting the success of schools, districts, postsecondary institutions, and early learning centers through the U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools (ED-GRS) award; Disseminating school infrastructure and sustainability resources, funds, and practices, particularly as they advance educational and health outcomes, and equity; Serving as a liaison between school stakeholders, federal offices, states, and school districts to share resources, best practices, and develop partnerships for healthy, safe, sustainable, 21st century school facilities and environmental sustainability education; Increasing the national awareness of the impacts that school infrastructure and sustainability can have on student health, learning outcomes, teacher retention, and district finances.

Federal agencies are advancing environmental justice by carrying out their responsibilities under the law to identify and address disproportionate and adverse public health and environmental, climate-related, and cumulative impacts on communities with environmental justice concerns. Agencies are working to ensure that all communities experience the protection of our country's bedrock environmental laws. The following information reflects some of the environmental and civil rights work **the Department of Education (ED)** has done from January 2021 to September 2022.

For more information, please visit [ED's Environmental and Sustainability Reporting](#) .

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Environmental Justice

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires that no person be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance on account of race, color, or national origin. Title VI requires federal agencies to ensure that programs or activities receiving federal funding, including those that affect human health or the environment, do not use discriminatory criteria, methods, or practices. The following information includes updates from January 2021 to September 2022 from **the Department of Education (ED)** on Title VI that are related to environmental justice.

Phase One Scorecard metrics and highlights include:

- ED had one Title VI case relating to EJ issues within the reporting timeframe. In May 2021, ED closed a case that involved allegations of disparate treatment of Black students in the adequacy of school facilities, including the maintenance of heating/air conditioning. The district agreed to resolve the case before the ED Office for Civil Rights finished investigating or reached any findings. The district fulfilled all the terms of the resolution agreement and ED concluded monitoring in May 2021. ED did not open any other relevant Title VI matters in this timeframe.
- **1** internal training(s) on Title VI civil rights and environmental justice

Centering Environmental Justice in Decision-Making

Federal agencies work to ensure that the voices, perspectives, and lived experiences of communities are heard and reflected in the priorities, policies, and decision-making of the federal government. Agencies also take steps to respect Tribal sovereignty and ensure government-to-government consultation on federal policies. The following information highlights work **the Department of Education (ED)** has done from January 2021 to September 2022 to center environmental justice in its decision-making.

Community Input and Engagement

Phase One Scorecard metrics and highlights include:

- ED is committed to promoting equitable access to healthy, safe, sustainable, 21st century learning environments and environmental sustainability learning. ED promotes school infrastructure and sustainability through multiple communications and outreach tools designed to share best practices and connect schools with partnerships and resources. This includes seeking input from stakeholder groups across the country.
- **ED has conducted** public process(es) related to environmental justice, e.g., requests for information or listening sessions
 - For example, on Feb. 9, 2023, ED held a listening session to inform the development of its new school infrastructure and sustainability state capacity building grant and technical assistance center.
 - ED Infrastructure and Sustainability regularly engages stakeholders in bilateral calls to identify synergies and work more collaboratively.

Institutionalizing Environmental Justice

Since the start of the Biden-Harris Administration, federal agencies have been working to embed environmental justice into all aspects of their work, including by implementing [Executive Order 12898](#) and [Executive Order 14008](#) . The following information shares some of the work **the Department of Education (ED)** has done from January 2021 to September 2022 to institutionalize environmental justice.

Phase One Scorecard metrics and highlights include:

- **1** staff that work on environmental justice, either in a full- or part-time capacity
- **1** new or strengthened internal working group(s), steering committee(s), council(s) on environmental justice
- ED has developed a cross-agency Infrastructure and Sustainability Committee, with representation from all offices. ED expanded its messaging on infrastructure and sustainability in its newsletter and social media. ED has also developed an internal webpage for employees with climate education-related resources.

ED's Highlights

ED plays an important role in helping states and school districts locate the federal resources they need for school infrastructure and sustainability. Specifically, ED has begun development of a Fiscal Year 2023 school infrastructure state capacity building grant and technical assistance center, which will help address equity and guide districts toward federal resources for schools. Additionally, ED promotes resources for school infrastructure from federal agencies, including the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Agency, spotlighting new investments from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) for schools.

The Department's primary work on school facilities and environmental justice has been through its U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools (ED-GRS), a recognition award which connects the built and natural environment, health, and learning. For more than 12 years, this award has supported a comprehensive approach to sustainable schools that are safe, healthy, fiscally responsible, educationally appropriate facilities, where students learn through hands-on activities.

In addition, in February 2023, ED invited non- and for-profit stakeholders to engage in commitments around a School Infrastructure and Sustainability Challenge. Environmental justice was a priority area for these commitments.

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Contact

Council on Environmental Quality
730 Jackson Pl NW
Washington, D.C. 20506
(202) 395-5750

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