

THIS IS PLANET ED

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YEAR IN REVIEW



THIS IS ⚡ PLANET ED

aspen institute

Unlocking the power of education as a force for climate action.

This Is Planet Ed, an initiative of the Aspen Institute, aims to unlock the power of education as a force for climate action and solutions. We believe young people will drive the necessary and sustained action we need to address climate change, and we must partner with them to advance a more sustainable, resilient, and equitable society.

Our systems that support young people—early childhood, children’s media, K-12 education, and higher education—can engage, prepare, and empower young people to succeed in a changing climate. This Is Planet Ed seeks to mobilize collaborative action across these systems to secure a livable and hopeful future for the next generation.

From school closures due to heat, to worsening asthma because of wildfire smoke, to uncertainty about their future, to coping with the loss of loved ones, our changing climate is not a distant concept but a present reality for young people across the country. Many young people are worried.

But the 74 million youth under 18 and nearly 19 million students enrolled in higher education institutions—together, about 25% of the total US population—can drive tremendous change. The education sector has a responsibility to enable young people to thrive in a changing climate and empower them for success.

Mobilizing educational leaders in the fight against climate change can help us reduce carbon pollution now and build lasting change for a sustainable, resilient, and equitable future.

OUR STRATEGY

This Is Planet Ed provides a backbone, framework, and narrative for broader collective action across education. We:

- Focus the sector around key goals and roadmaps for action.
- Foster advocates and champions for climate action across early childhood, children's media, K-12 schools, and higher education.
- Catalyze action, track progress, share best practices, and build the narrative for action through media and communications.

PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

This year, we teamed up with **The Nature Conservancy** as a scientific partner to develop four essential climate principles:

- 1 *Earth is our home.*
- 2 *It's getting hotter because of us.*
- 3 *It's changing now and it's impacting us.*
- 4 *But, together, we can make the changes we need for a brighter future.*

OUR TEAM



LAURA SCHIFTER
Senior Fellow



MICHELLE FAGGERT
Senior Program Associate



SOPHIA POWLESS
Program Coordinator

THIS IS PLANET ED CO CHAIRS



Gov. Christine Todd Whitman
President, Whitman Strategy Group



Sec. John B. King Jr.
Chancellor, State University
of New York (SUNY)



Millie García
Chancellor of the California
State University System



Kim Hunter Reed
Commissioner of
Higher Education, Louisiana

HIGHER+ED

EARLY⚡ YEARS



Antwanye E. Ford
President and CEO of Enlightened, Chair of the
District of Columbia Workforce Investment Council



Diana Mendley Rauner
President of Start Early,
Former First Lady of Illinois



Katharine Hayhoe
Chief Scientist at The Nature Conservancy

PLANET⚡ MEDIA



Gary Knell
Senior Advisor for Media and Social Impact at the
Boston Consulting Group (BCG) and Executive
Chairman of Common Sense Networks

A LOOK BACK...

WINTER

Dec 2024 - Feb 2025

This Is Planet Ed kicked off 2024 with exciting new developments.

Planet Media Call for Pitches: The Call for Pitches requested pitches for short-form content designed to support children ages 8-12 in understanding four Essential Climate Principles.

We received hundreds of pitches from across the country, all of which incorporated the key principles through a variety of creative approaches, including animation, live action, music, and more.

COMMS SPOTLIGHT

Planet Media Call for Pitches was featured in an article by Kidscreen, a leading international trade publication serving the informational needs and interests of kids entertainment professionals.

Higher Ed Retreat:

This Is Planet Ed convened the Higher Ed Climate Action Retreat to create a roadmap for higher education to advance climate solutions. Members of the Higher Ed Climate Action Task Force joined leaders from Second Nature in a roundtable discussion on collaboration across the sector.

Second Nature Summit:

Co-chairs John King and Millie García, as well as Lande AJose and Laura Schifter, joined Second Nature's Annual Convening to discuss how higher ed institutions can lead on climate change & access funding in the Inflation Reduction Act.

KEY EVENTS

Harvard Askwith Education Forum:

Early Years Climate Action task force member Leah Austin joined the A Healthy Childhood in a Changing Climate panel moderated by Chelsea Clinton.



Photo: Jill Anderson



SPRING

March-April-May

Spring 2024 was a dynamic and impactful season for This Is Planet Ed, marked by powerful conversations, collaborations, and events that focused on empowering the next generation.

KEY EVENTS



Early Years Climate Action Task Force Member Elizabeth Bechard joined Laura Schifter at the [Center for American Progress Summit on Education: Reset. Reframe. Reform.](#)

Their panel, *Adapting for a Changing Climate*, outlined the impact of climate change on the education sector and highlighted the importance of preparing students of all ages for the future.



Laura Schifter spoke at the [Clinton Global Initiative, Too Small To Fail: Media That Motivates](#) convening to discuss Planet Media and how to integrate climate into media narratives.

PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

This Is Planet Ed teamed up with Encantos to support the creation of a new climate education series for pre-teens titled: ["This is Cooler."](#)

This is Cooler is a video featuring Gloria Estefan and local Miami students learning about local climate impacts and taking climate action. So far the episode has received over 5 million views.



Accompanying the video, we released the [Educator & Families Conversation Guide](#) to help facilitate conversations about the four essential climate principles.



[Higher Ed Climate Action Listening Session Recap Video](#) was released featuring Listening Session speakers such as Former Minority Leader in the Georgia House of Representatives Stacey Abrams and Dr. Robert D. Bullard.

THIS IS PLANET ED AT ASPEN IDEAS: CLIMATE -SPRING 2024



The Aspen Institute partnered with the City of Miami Beach to hold Aspen Ideas: Climate. The event brings together diverse leaders from across the globe to talk about how we can work to advance climate solutions across all sectors of society. At Aspen Ideas: Climate, This Is Planet Ed highlighted the importance of empowering children and youth through education to lead a sustainable future.



A School of Thought: Education for Intergenerational Climate Justice

This panel highlighted the essential role of school systems in advancing generational justice and enabling future generations to thrive in a changing climate with speakers including:

- **Michelle Kang**, CEO, National Association for the Education of Young Children
- **Madeline Pumariega**, President, Miami Dade College
- **Shiva Rajbhandari**, Former School Board Member Boise, Idaho
- **Luisa Santos**, Member, Miami-Dade County Public Schools Board

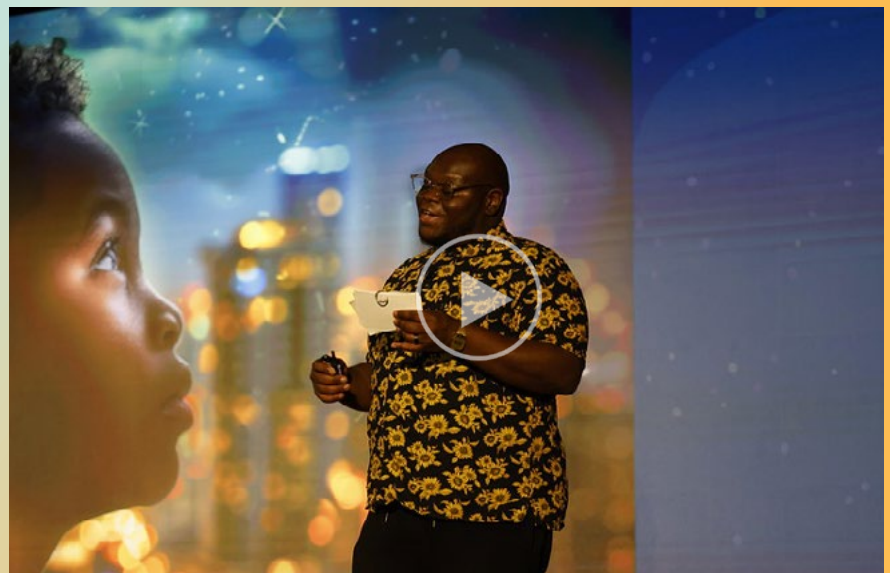




Planet Media Pitch Fest

Seven creative teams from the Planet Media Call for Pitches presented their ideas leveraging hope, humor, and solutions before a panel of judges including:

- **Bill Nye**, Science Educator
- **Nile Rodgers**, Musician/Producer & Founder of the We Are Family Foundation
- **Co-chair: Gary Knell**, BCG, formerly CEO Nat Geo, NPR, & Sesame
- **Co-chair: Katharine Hayhoe**, Chief Scientist, The Nature Conservancy



SUMMER

June-July-August

Summer 2024 was a season of new resources from This Is Planet Ed to help mobilize the higher education sector and empower K-12 students in taking action.



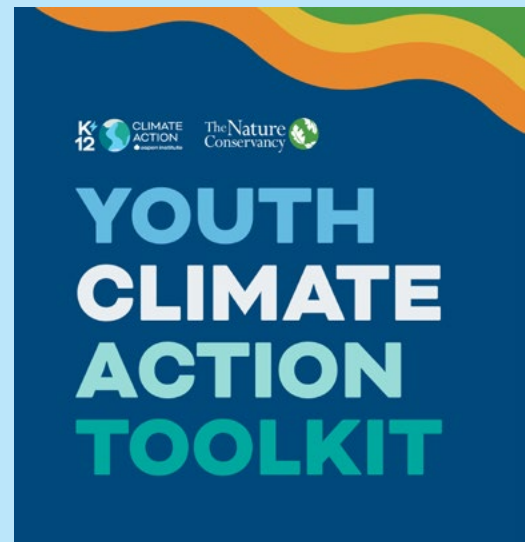
KEY EVENTS

Over the summer, Senior Program Associate Michelle Faggert spoke at several national convenings to amplify the solutions that K-12 schools can take to mitigate, adapt, educate, and advance climate equity, including how to access opportunities in the Inflation Reduction Act:

- [Mid-Atlantic Climate Change Education Conference on Climate Policy Development and Implementation Panel](#)
- [Harvard Climate Week: Public Schools as Climate Leaders](#)
- [Department of Education's Green Ribbon Schools Convening](#)

PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

In partnership with **The Nature Conservancy**, we released the [Youth Climate Action Toolkit](#), which provides talking points, advocacy strategies, and bright spots of students taking action around the country.



MEET THE TEAM



FALL

September-October-November

In Fall 2024, we amplified our resources and action plans through new partnerships and media appearances.

PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

Planet Media Sizzle Reel

- Planet Media and **National CineMedia** partnered to show this sizzle reel that was shown in movie theaters across the country.



COMMS SPOTLIGHT



CNN interviewed Laura Schifter to discuss recent disasters impacting K-12 schools nationwide and the ways education systems can support children and families.

KEY EVENTS



Grantmakers for Education Annual Conference

- Co-Chair Kim Hunter Reed was joined by Laura Schifter and CNAY Partner Cheyenne Brady to discuss the critical importance of funding at the intersection of education and climate.
- This Is Planet Ed coordinated a webinar—**HBCUs: Transitioning Campuses to Clean Energy**—with Second Nature and the League of Conservation Voters to amplify how HBCUS can access opportunities in the Inflation Reduction Act.
- Michelle Faggert spoke at the **Foundation for Community Colleges's Climate Convening**, highlighting the crucial role that community colleges play in preparing the climate workforce of the future.
- Michelle Faggert also led a workshop on **Classrooms and Climate Action** with the **Leadership for Educational Equity network**.

HIGHER ED CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

On August 1st, the Higher Ed Climate Action Task Force released the [Higher Ed Climate Action Plan](#), which identifies the pivotal opportunity for higher education to lead climate solutions, adapt to our changing climate, and prepare students for success in a sustainable, resilient, and just society.

Specifically, the action plan describes the needs to:

EDUCATE AND SUPPORT STUDENTS:

- The higher education sector can ensure that all students have a foundational level of climate literacy, an opportunity for deeper learning about climate across disciplines and through workforce development, and access to services and support in the face of climate disruptions.

ENGAGE AND SUPPORT COMMUNITIES:

- Institutions can leverage community connections—engaging students, families, and community members in their language and space—to support broader action on climate change.

MODEL, RESEARCH, & DEVELOP SOLUTIONS:

- The higher education sector can model, research, and develop climate mitigation and adaptation solutions that reduce carbon pollution, build resilience to potential risks, and foster innovation.

ADVANCE EQUITY:

- Higher education can ensure equal opportunity for all students, institutions, and communities to benefit from a more sustainable, resilient, and equitable society



Photo by John T. Consoli/University of Maryland



Higher Ed Climate Action Task Force and partners celebrated the launch of the Higher Ed Climate Action Plan at the University of Maryland, College Park and at the Reservoir Center in Washington, DC.

Task Force members were joined by key local and national stakeholders working at the intersection of climate and higher education. The roundtables provided an opportunity to elevate the role of higher education in advancing climate solutions and how the higher education sector can further help build knowledge, foster innovation, enhance communities, and model climate solutions.



COMMS SPOTLIGHT

Since its launch, the plan has been featured in Inside Higher Ed, Yale Climate Connections, and on the frontpage of the Association of Governing Board's Trusteeship Magazine.



Photos by John T. Consoli/University of Maryland

IN THE NEWS

Media Coverage:

1/13/24 The Hill: Schools intensify their climate change efforts as temperatures rise.

2/05/24 Edweek: This Leader Partners With Students to Build a More Sustainable Future for Her District

3/15/24 Kidscreen: Sony Future Filmmaker Awards makes room for animation

3/20/24 School Library Journal: Eco-Action: Turning Students' Climate Anxiety into Agency

3/28/24 Hechinger Report: Changing education could change the climate

5/22/24 CNN en Español: Escucha la versión de “Conga”, de Gloria Estefan, que busca combatir el cambio climático

6/4/24 Pittsburgh Post Gazette: Passing of a new climate change resolution by the Pittsburgh Public School Board

8/5/24 Higher Education Today: Higher Education's Role in Securing a Climate-Resilient Future

8/6/24 Inside Higher Ed: What higher ed can do about climate change

8/8/24 University Business: A new climate action plan emerges in the higher ed arena

8/17/24 Inside Climate News: The Aspen Institute Is Calling for a Systemic Approach to Climate Education at the University Level

10/7/24 Nautilus: Looking ahead to combat climate change.

10/15/24 CNN: The Impact of Climate Change on Children's Education

11/15/24 Happy Eco News: Beyond Awareness: How stories and science are empowering young environmental changemakers

Op-Ed/Articles

10/24/24 Inside Philanthropy: To Advance Our Social Missions, Philanthropy Needs to Address Climate Change.

By: Jamie Merisotis, Eloy Oakley and Lande Ajose

9/19/24 AGB: The Role of Governing Boards in Advancing Climate Action

By: Carrie Besnette Hauser, José Luis Cruz Rivera, and Jay Perman

BLOGS:

4/15/24 Aspen Institute: Meet the Creators Bringing Climate Solutions to Children's Media

4/17/24 Ed Trust: A Time for Climate Action: Schools and the Inflation Reduction Act

4/18/24 The Cooldown: How to talk to your kids about climate change —and the tools and tips to make a difference

9/24/24 Yale Climate Connections: 12 climate books for teachers and educators

11/14/24 Luminary Labs: Transforming education to drive climate solutions

HECHINGER REPORT COLUMNS BY THIS IS PLANET ED SENIOR ADVISOR ANYA KAMENETZ:



- 1/11/24 [Colleges must give communities a seat at the table alongside scientists if we want real environmental justice](#)
 - 2/14/24 [The climate change lesson plans teachers need and don't have](#)
 - 3/14/24 [Should schools teach climate activism?](#)
 - 4/22/24 [Climate change lessons arrive in kids' entertainment.](#)
 - 6/11/24 [Biden wants to save the climate by deploying young people. He's not there yet](#)
 - 8/28/24 [We want every major to be a climate major](#)
 - 10/1/24 [Education that convinces kids the world isn't doomed](#)
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Thank You

First, a big thank you to our amazing co-chairs and task force members across all of our areas of work. We could not do our work without their incredible insights, commitment, support, and energy.

Thank you: Alberto Carvalho, Alicia Mousseau, Amara Ifeji, Amy Friedman, Andrew Garner, Angie Garling, Anna Robertson, Antwanye Ford, Barry Ford, Becky Pringle, Bill Ritter, Brad Roth, Bridget Terry Long, Carla Thompson Payton, Carla Walker-Miller, Carlos Curbelo, Carrie Besnette Hauser, Charitie Ropati, Christine Todd Whitman, Claudia Benitez-Nelson, Cristin Dorgelo, Dan Lashof, Daniel Wildcat, Derek Walker, Diana Rauner, Elizabeth Bechard, Eloy Oakley, Felicia DeHaney, Gary Knell, J.J. Johnson, Jack Markell, Jada Walden, Jamie Merisotis, Janet Murguia, Jay Perman, Jennifer McClellan, Joanie Mahoney, John B. King, José Luis Cruz Rivera, Kahlil Kettering, Katharine Hayhoe, Katharine Wilkinson, Kiera O'Brien, Kim Hunter Reed, Lande Ajose, Leah Austin, Linda Darling-Hammond, Lisa Hoyos, Louis Finney, Jr., Lynette Fraga, Marc Morial, Mark Chambers, Megan Bang, Melissa Rooker, Michael Levine, Michelle Kang, Millie García, Miriam Calderon, Naina Agrawal-Hardin, Nathalie Saladrigas, Nikki Pitre, Patricia Sullivan-Steward, Paul Cherukuri, Pedro Martinez, Pedro Rivera, Randi Weingarten, Richard Knoeppel, Ron Rochon, Shantel Meek, Steven Wolfe Pereira, Susie Jaramillo, Toddi Steelman, Valerie Rockefeller, Vic Barrett, Walter Gilliam, and Walter Kimbrough.

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We are grateful to have partnered and collaborated with many amazing organizations this year, including ACE; California State University, Long Beach; Known; LAUSD; National CineMedia; The Nature Conservancy; PILOT; Second Nature; UndauntedK12; University of Maryland, College Park.

Thank you to Adam Casey, Ajoy Vase, Anya Kamenetz, Rory O'Sullivan, Sarah Robbins, Lauren Simmons, Jake Welchart, and Clarke Williams for their invaluable contribution to and amplification of This Is Planet Ed's work this year.

Finally, thank you to the students, educators, parents, schools, communities, and organizations who are leading this work on the ground across the country. We look forward to the work ahead of us in 2025 to build a sustainable, resilient, and equitable future for all young people.