MESSAGING GUIDE

Communicating about climate change can be difficult. We recommend the following methods to support productive and collaborative conversations in your community.

Research: How you approach a conversation will depend on the "climate" of your community. It is important to come with research in hand, not only on the topic but on the person you are connecting with.

Lead with Values: Know someone's priorities and values before engaging in conversations. Understanding the concerns of people in your school and community and leading with shared values can help build support. For instance, are you a community that cares about a particular natural landscape, food, tradition, or value? Talking about common interests and how climate change impacts those can help to bring people together. The Yale Program on Climate Change Communication's Climate Opinion Maps can help you understand the climate stances in your area.

Focus on Solutions: Focusing on positive, optimistic, and solutions-based messaging can engage wider audiences. Consider starting with the climate solutions talking points in the mitigation, adaptation, education, equity, and federal funding sections above.

Stakeholder Engagement Checklist

Consider engaging with the following education stakeholders to strengthen your initiative:

☐ Students
☐ Teachers
☐ Parents/Caregivers
☐ Administrators

☐ Community Members
☐ Elected Officials
☐ Small Businesses
☐ Other: _____

Leveraging Social Media

To captivate the attention of your audience, utilize visual storytelling to create a conversation. Develop infographics and share videos and images that can convey complex concepts in a digestible and engaging manner. There are a multitude of free design tools available such as Canva, Figma, Unsplash and Shutterstock that can help with pulling together compelling graphics. There are also several sites like Pinterest, Coolors.co, and Toools.design that can spark inspiration. Remember that to amplify climate-related messages, it is important to be authentic and find ways to connect with the community. Hashtags may also help elevate your message to multiple audiences.

SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS TO FOLLOW

Our students recommend checking out the following, powerful social media accounts:

- Earth Rise Studio
- Earthly Education
- Environment by Impact
- Black Girl Environmentalist
- Green Girl Leah

Addressing Pushback & Inaccurate Information

While advocating for climate action in schools, you may receive pushback from other students, school board members, education leaders, or community members that is based on inaccurate information. There are several strategies you can use to build support through advocacy and conversations with people in your schools and communities.

WHAT YOU MIGHT HEAR	HOW YOU CAN RESPOND
Climate change isn't real. Look at places where it's colder!	Climate change is different from daily weather. Weather can change each day and some days will still be cold, but climate change is a trend over time. These trends are also resulting in more extreme weather including many of the floods, droughts, hurricanes, and wildfires that we have seen across the country. These changes will increasingly occur and impact our lives.
Climate change isn't caused by people or human behavior.	While there have been changes in global temperatures throughout history, global temperatures have increased much more rapidly since the Industrial Revolution made burning fossil fuels a widespread practice. The evidence showing that human behavior causes climate change is so strong that 97% of scientists agree that human activity is the driving force behind climate change. We've also seen that advancing climate solutions, like transitioning to electric school buses, can help us all breathe clean air and improve our health.
Climate change doesn't impact schools and doesn't belong in schools.	Climate change is already impacting schools and communities around the country. Research shows that school days over 80 degrees Fahrenheit are increasing in frequency, impacting student health and academic achievement. Additionally, climate change is impacting the mental health and well-being of our students: 37 percent of teenagers feel anxious when they think about climate change, and more than a third feel afraid. An estimated 75 percent of adults across the country believe that schools should teach about the causes, consequences, and potential solutions to global warming. (County-level data available here.) Teaching about climate change in schools, with a solutions-oriented focus, across all subjects and grades, can help students feel prepared to act in their communities and become leaders for a more sustainable future.
Addressing climate change in schools is too expensive. We have other funding priorities.	Funding climate action plans in schools is more affordable and accessible than ever with opportunities in the Inflation Reduction Act and the Infrastructure and Jobs Act. Many of the updates to school buildings and transportation systems also result in long-term cost savings for school districts, allowing them to invest in other priorities. For example, Batesville School District in Arkansas implemented facility upgrades and installed solar energy projects on their campuses. The district used the resulting energy cost savings to increase teacher salaries by up to $15,000, becoming one of the best-paying districts in the county.