

Resolution 1920R-016

“Our House is on Fire,” Climate Justice

By Director Peterson

WHEREAS the unprecedented, youth-led global movement for climate justice is demanding immediate action, pushing governments and businesses to redefine their economies and practices and to end the fossil fuel era; and

WHEREAS the overwhelming consensus in the scientific community is that the climate crisis is created by human beings releasing unprecedented amounts of greenhouse gases by burning fossil fuels (coal, oil, and natural gas); through deforestation; and environmentally damaging agricultural practices; and

WHEREAS climate change is having an enormous negative impact around the world making it imperative that school districts recognize that climate literacy is essential so that K4 through 12th grade students, in developmentally appropriate ways, probe the causes and inequitable consequences of the climate crisis—as well as possible solutions— through learning about the diversity of people around the world who are fighting the root causes of climate change; and

WHEREAS MPS’ commitment to equity requires attention to environmental racism and climate justice both of which recognize the unequal effects of climate change and environmental damage on the basis of race, poverty, gender, and geography; and

WHEREAS all Milwaukee Public Schools students should develop confidence and passion when it comes to making a positive difference in society, and come to see themselves as activists and leaders for social and climate justice and against environmental racism around the world and in Milwaukee; and

WHEREAS Milwaukee Public Schools acknowledge that our schools should demonstrate leadership in modeling to students climate- and environmentally friendly practices including, but not limited to building design, renewable energy (including the use of solar panels) LED lighting and HVAC controls/metering, land use, waste disposal, composting, recycling reduction in the use of plastic; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that Milwaukee Public Schools will integrate climate justice curriculum and sustainability practices into all aspects of its work and functions; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Milwaukee Public Schools will establish, build-on and expand projects with other community organizations and institutions including the Milwaukee Area Technical College, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District, Reflo, Green and Healthy Schools-Wisconsin, City of Milwaukee Environmental Collaboration Office, the Department of Natural Resources, and gardening and agricultural organizations; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that MPS establish a Climate Justice Curriculum Advisory Committee to lead the development/identification and implementation of a K4 - 12 grade climate justice curriculum that is woven into all grade levels and subject matters and includes projects-based teaching and investigations that students conduct at school and in their communities to address climate change and that said Advisory Committee consist of teachers, students, curriculum specialists from all content areas, administrators, and climate justice activists and to report back to the board on a quarterly basis starting in September 2020; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Milwaukee Public Schools encourage MPS educators who are already teaching about nature, the environment, sustainability and climate change to take a leading role in developing and implementing a K-12 climate justice curriculum and play a role in the Climate Justice Curriculum Advisory Committee, and that this curricular work begin this summer by including a cohort of 20-25 teachers from all grade bands and subjects into MPS's summer professional development/curriculum writing so that said teachers work for a week to start the process of K4- 12 curriculum development and present such work to other educators in conjunction with the Green Schools Consortium of Milwaukee; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Milwaukee Public Schools commit itself to providing teachers, administrators, and other school personnel with professional development, curricular materials, and outdoor and field opportunities that explore the breadth of causes and consequences of the climate crisis as well as potential solutions that address the root causes of the crisis, and do so in ways that are participatory, imaginative, and respectful of students' and teachers' creativity and eagerness to be part of addressing global problems, and that build a sense of personal efficacy and empowerment; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the development and implementation of the District-wide curriculum should include a review of current textbooks for accuracy around the reality of the climate crisis and the impact of human activities and that addendums/supplemental resources be provided to augment out-of-date material; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that in implementing MPS's commitment to prepare students for college, careers, and citizenship MPS recognize that as our society moves rapidly and definitively away from fossil fuels, we will need to prepare our students for robust job opportunities in green technologies, construction, forestry, sustainable agricultural practices, environmental science, conservation, STEM and restoration efforts; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that in implementing MPS's commitment to developing well-rounded citizens the district should support students to become organizers and leaders for climate justice and against environmental racism in our community and around the world; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that a District Sustainability Team, consisting of representatives from the Department of Facilities and Maintenance services, School Nutrition, Office of Academics, Office of School Administration, Office of Communications and district partners, be established to develop a Sustainability Action Plan that includes a baseline study of the District's ecological footprint, with an emphasis on local environment and climate impact, (including all areas of operation and organization, such as buildings, grounds, food service, cleaning and maintenance, water and energy, waste, recycling, transportation, and all contracting and procurement services) and an inventory of current environmental sustainability plans under way, (including school-based efforts on recycling, composting, reduction of food waste and energy consumption), and the setting of targets to ensure operations, organization and outreach of the District addresses climate change and its effects on the community and the world; with its first update to the board provided in September 2020; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that board directs the MPS administration and encourages the MPS Foundation to seek outside funding through private individuals and philanthropic organizations to put towards the development and implementation of a K-12 climate justice curriculum and sustainability projects and that MPS lobby state and federal governments for support of such initiatives; and

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the District encourage schools to develop school-based Green Teams with the involvement of educators, students, parents and community to expand school-based and District-wide curricular and sustainability projects and that the District develop a Green Revolving Fund, seeded in part by cost savings from sustainability initiatives to allow the Green Revolving Fund to grow over time to support additional investments and to provide financial incentives for school-based and District-wide "green projects."

February 27, 2020