

'Whatever it takes': students at 50 US high schools launch climate initiative

Level 1: Elementary/Pre-Intermediate

1 Warmer

- a. Discuss with a partner or in small groups. Explain your answers.

climate change: changes in weather around the world caused by pollution from human activities

Is climate change an important topic:

- in your school/university/workplace
- with your family
- with your friends?

2 Key words

- a. Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text. Use the words to complete the example sentences.

battle

demand

disaster

infrastructure

update

1. To _____ is to ask for something in a way that shows you expect to receive it.
We _____ clean drinking water for everyone.
2. A _____ is an event that causes a lot of damage or difficulty.
Our car broke down, and the trip was a _____.
3. A _____ is a fight or argument between two groups or against something that a group wants to change.
There is a _____ between parents who want longer school hours for their children and those who don't.
4. To _____ is to make something more suitable for use by changing its design.
They are going to _____ the building and put solar panels on the roof.
5. _____ is the system of services like transportation and power supplies that an organisation/country uses.
If she becomes president, she will invest money in _____ and build more roads.

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elect

emphasise

campus

fossil fuels

political

6. _____ are substances like oil, gas, or coal that we use for heat or power by burning it.
Electric cars don't use _____ like petrol.
7. _____ means related to politics or the activities of politicians.
He writes _____ opinions on a popular blog. His last article was about the next election.
8. To _____ means to show that something is very important or worth paying attention to.
I want to _____ all the benefits of growing your own vegetable garden.
9. To _____ means to choose a person for a specific job (like president) by voting.
On Friday, we are going to _____ a new class leader.
10. A _____ is the buildings and land of a school or university.
There is a beautiful garden on _____, and all the classrooms are large.

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Maanvi Singh

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- 1 Students at more than 50 high schools in the US are suggesting a Green New Deal for Schools. They demand that their districts teach climate justice, create pathways to green jobs after they graduate and plan for climate disasters.
- 2 The campaign is led by a group of youth called the Sunrise Movement. They are reacting to efforts to ban climate education and activism in schools.
- 3 "We are prepared to do whatever it takes," said Adah Crandall, 17, an organiser for the Sunrise Movement based in Portland, Oregon.
- 4 "The far right has fought this battle against public education, and they put a lot of time and money into trying to do things like ban books and prevent us from learning the truth about the climate crisis," said Crandall.
- 5 The Green New Deal for Schools includes demands to update school buildings, buses and other infrastructure. They are also asking that administrators develop climate disaster plans to keep students safe during extreme weather.
- 6 Students across the US know that many of the weather extremes they have experienced have been made worse by fossil fuels.
- 7 But at school, most teachers have avoided or discouraged the discussion of any topics that could be considered political, including climate justice.
- 8 Under Georgia's "divisive concepts" law, teachers cannot talk about climate justice and the unequal toll of global heating.
- 9 Earlier this year, the Texas state board of said schools should emphasise the "positive" aspects of fossil fuels in science textbooks. Florida's education board approved the sharing of videos that compare climate activists to Nazis. In Idaho, students and teachers are still fighting a long battle to include the climate crisis in Idaho's school content.
- 10 "It's really scary knowing that I'm underage and can't vote to elect the people making these big decisions about our futures," said Aster Chau, a 15-year-old student at Philadelphia's Academy at Palumbo.
- 11 To prepare for the fight ahead, about 150 high schoolers from across the US attended a summer camp in Illinois where they learned more about activism.
- 12 At the end of September, hundreds of students will go to Washington, DC, as the lawmakers reintroduce their Green New Deal for Public Schools Act. The laws will help schools expand and create new content, hire staff and update campuses.

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3 Comprehension check

a. Choose the best way to complete each sentence.

- High school students are demanding that their schools _____ climate justice.
a. ban b. teach
- The Sunrise Movement is _____ the campaign.
a. leading b. sharing
- Some people say that the far right is trying to ban books and prevent students from learning the truth about _____.
a. science textbooks b. the climate crisis
- Under Georgia's "divisive concepts" law, teachers are _____ to talk about climate justice and global warming.
a. free b. unable
- The Texas State Board of Education said schools should pay attention to the "_____ " aspects of fossil fuels in science textbooks.
a. bad b. good
- In _____ , students and teachers are still fighting to include the climate crisis in school content.
a. Florida b. Idaho
- About 150 high schoolers from across the US attended a summer camp in _____ where they learned more about activism.
a. Illinois b. Washington
- New laws will help schools expand and create new content, _____ teachers and update campuses.
a. hire b. train

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4 Key language

- a. Complete the phrases with the prepositions below. There is one preposition that you must use more than once.

about

against

for

into

to

1. react _____ something
2. fight (a battle) _____ someone/something
3. put time and money _____ something
4. learn the truth _____ something
5. talk _____ something
6. prepare _____ something

- b. Complete the questions with prepositions from the previous activity. Ask and answer the questions.

1. How can we fight _____ pollution?
2. How can school prepare students _____ the future?
3. Should we talk more _____ climate change, or should we put more money _____ changing things?
4. How did you react _____ the article?

5 Discussion

- a. Discuss these statements. Do you agree or disagree? Give reasons for your answers.

- Children should learn more about climate justice at school.
- The government should give more money to update school buildings.
- Younger people should be able to vote.
- The Green New Deal for Public Schools Act is a great idea for my country.

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6 In your own words

- a. **Research climate education in your state/country and make notes. Use the questions to guide you if you want. What should be changed?**
- Are students taught about climate change in schools? If so, what?
 - How green are buildings and campuses?
 - Are there pathways to green jobs? What do they look like?
 - Are there climate disaster plans? What are they?
- b. **Choose one change you would like to make in schools. Make notes on the points below. Then, share your ideas with the class.**
- What is the problem? Give background information.
 - Why is it important?
 - How could we solve the problem?
 - What do you want to change? Why? How?