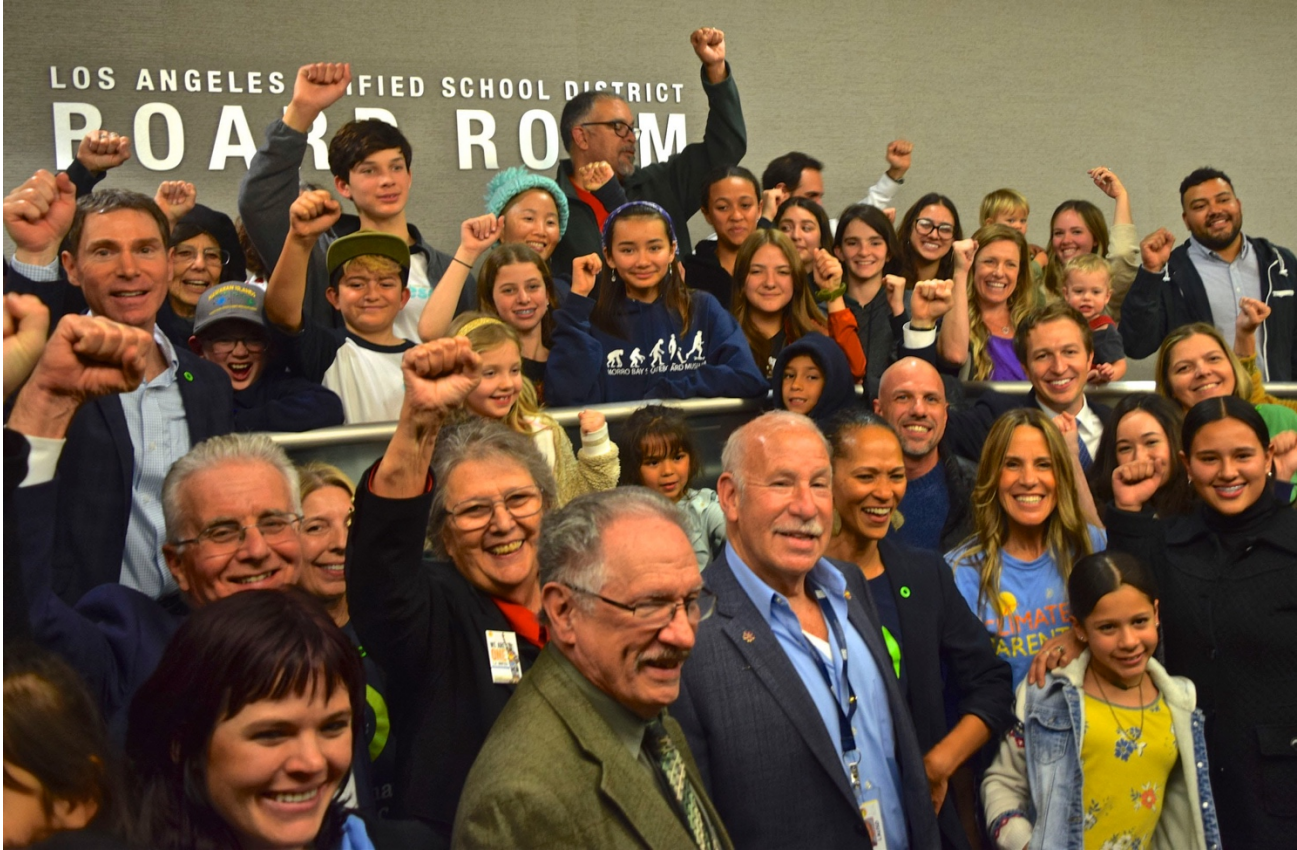




Clean Energy Triple Play for L.A. County Schools

By [Lisa Hoyos](#) and [Sybil Azur](#) December 16, 2019



Los Angeles Unified School District students, parents, and teachers celebrate the school board's passage of a groundbreaking resolution committing the district to getting 100% of its electricity from clean, renewable sources by 2030, and electrify all its building and school buses by 2040. Photo by Mary Lunetta, courtesy of the Sierra Club.

Mary Lunetta

They say good things come in threes. Such was the case with the Los Angeles Unified School District's (LAUSD) recent victory! On December 3, a several months-long campaign by Los Angeles parents, students, teachers, and environmental organizations culminated with the passage of a groundbreaking commitment by the district to 100% clean energy.

The resolution states that LAUSD will be powered entirely by clean, renewable electricity by 2030, and will electrify its buildings *and* school buses by 2040. LAUSD is the second-largest school district in the country, and the largest customer of L.A.'s municipal utility, the Department of Water and Power, so this is

a *huge* win that will help inspire more 100% clean energy commitments by school districts around the country!

Among the organizations behind this inspiring win are the Climate Reality Project, the Sierra Club's Climate Parents program, the Sunrise Movement, and the LA-based environmental justice organizations Pacoima Beautiful and Communities for a Better Environment. There was also strong buy-in from a critical mass of LAUSD school board members from very early on in the campaign. Board members Scott M. Schmerlson, Jackie Goldberg, and Dr. George McKenna III were cosponsors from the get-go; two more, Kelly Gonez and Nick Melvoin, signed on as



cosponsors the night of the vote; and the resolution passed unanimously.

The campaign launched this spring against a backdrop of student activism and reached a crescendo in September when millions of students around the globe held a “strike” and walked out of school, demanding that elected leaders take bold climate action *now*. In Los Angeles, climate change has manifested in the form of punishing heat waves and toxic air pollution from oil refineries, cars, and wildfires -- jeopardizing the health of Southern California families, especially among young people and the elderly. Low-income communities of color are disproportionately affected, including a huge majority of LAUSD students, 91% of whom are students of color and 84% of whom qualify for free or partially subsidized lunch, low-income indicators in the world of public education.

Typical of the testimony given by students, teachers, parents, and school board members the day of the vote was that of Nyzell Guzman, a representative of the Sunrise Movement and a student at John Marshall High School:

“LAUSD getting its energy from 100% clean, renewable sources will be a turning point for many of us and the generations to come. I will know that the place I go every day to study and learn is committed to a better future and will not be contributing to making the climate crisis worse.”

In short, America’s youth -- from the time they’re four or five years old until they graduate from high school -- spend a huge percentage of their time at school. Ensuring that school buildings and transport systems are living laboratories for the kind of the clean energy world we urgently need to create is what climate leadership looks like. LAUSD’s commitment will provide students with hands-on opportunities to learn about clean energy and climate solutions in the classroom. In fact, the resolution references this opportunity and intention.

We had an incredible time helping build a coalition that made the adoption of the resolution possible -- now it’s time for us to turn the words on paper into

the real-life transformation of thousands of school buildings and buses. The success of the implementation process will require the same constituencies who passed the resolution to stay involved. The resolution explicitly calls for an implementation task force that will include students, teachers, parents, and labor union partners along with facilities professionals at LAUSD.

The task force will be figuring out how to attract solar developers to both install and finance the systems that will power the classrooms -- and it should be noted that our goal is to *save* the district money in transitioning to clean energy. It will discuss strategies for the electrification of buildings and buses so that we can get *all* fossil fuels out of schools. This is the moment where we make things real. Climate Parents, the Climate Reality Project, and the rest of our allies will be sharing what we learn with the dozens of 100% clean energy school district campaigns around the country, and we’ll compare notes with districts that adopted resolutions earlier this year.

It is fitting that Greta Thunberg was just named *Time* magazine’s Person of the Year. Her voice, and the voices of millions of young people around the globe, are inspiring us to be bold and step up however we can. The beauty of this campaign is that schools are the heart of our communities. We can all get involved in making change right where we live, hand-in-hand with the young people we hold most dear.

If you would like to get involved with Climate Parents’ 100% Clean Energy School DIstricts Campaign, [sign this petition](#). When you do, we’ll follow up with you about how to get connected. We look forward to working with you!

Lisa Hoyos is the director of the Sierra Club [Climate Parents](#) program.

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Sybil Azur is a volunteer for Climate Reality Los Angeles, co-lead for the LAUSD initiative, and mother to a kindergartener and second grader.

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