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New Report Finds Solar on Pennsylvania K-12 Schools Doubled Since 2020

While Only 2% Have Solar, Schools Showcase Potential for Big Cost-Savings, Other Benefits

Charlottesville, VA—The amount of solar at K-12 schools in Pennsylvania doubled since 2020, according to a new [statewide report](#) on schools' adoption of solar published today by [Generation180](#), a clean energy nonprofit. Despite the pandemic, the solar capacity on K-12 schools rose from 14.5 MW to nearly 29 MW in a two-year period.

With financing structures that allow districts to install solar at no upfront costs, more schools throughout the state are switching to solar. These schools are realizing significant cost savings, the opportunity for students to learn about clean energy jobs and technology, and positive health and environmental benefits.

However, despite this growth, less than 2% of K-12 schools (108 total) generate solar power, which means many more school districts could be enjoying the cost-saving and other benefits solar offers. For example, Mid-West School District in Middleburg is 95% powered by solar and expects to reduce their electricity bill by \$9 million over 40 years. Tamaqua Area School District in Schuylkill County powers 100% of its electricity consumption with a solar array situated on a former coal mine site. They anticipate energy cost savings of \$11 million over the 40-year life expectancy of the solar panels.

The [report](#) also found that:

- At nearly 29 MW, the amount of clean electricity generated by schools each year would offset greenhouse gas emissions equal to taking 5,000 gas-powered vehicles off the road.
- 66% of installed solar projects at Pa. schools were financed through third party ownership with little-to-no upfront costs for schools.
- 5% of K-12 students (nearly 90,000) currently attend a school with solar.
- If all Pennsylvania K-12 schools installed an average-sized solar array, they would eliminate carbon dioxide emissions each year equivalent to closing nearly 4 methane-fired power plants – or preventing

almost 1,500,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide from being released.

Solar is accessible for schools of all budgets

“Solar is a huge win for Pennsylvania schools. Since schools can go solar without having to find the funds in their tight budgets, there is a tremendous opportunity for all schools across the Commonwealth to access the cost-saving, educational, and health benefits,” said Shannon Crooker, Pennsylvania Director, Generation180. “Every school district can do this, regardless of its size or wealth,” she added.

The report finds that the vast majority of schools go solar with minimal to no upfront capital costs. Nearly 75% of the growth in solar capacity installed on Pennsylvania schools over the past two years resulted from third-party ownership through a power purchase agreement (PPA) or similar arrangement. In a PPA, a third-party funds, owns and maintains the solar panels while the school district only pays for the electricity generated by the system, typically at a lower electricity rate than the utility would charge.

The report also found that third-party ownership enabled schools in under-resourced communities to overcome financial barriers and access the benefits of solar technology. Nearly two-thirds (61%) of Pennsylvania schools with solar are eligible for the Title I program, which provides federal financial assistance for schools with students from low-income families. For instance, Tamaqua Area School District and Steelton-Highspire School District are meeting all of their building electricity needs and saving millions in long-term energy costs with solar arrays installed at Title I schools.

Solar brings financial stability, educational benefits

Expanding clean energy means schools can benefit from the stable, low-cost electricity prices that energy independence provides. The report’s findings come as [Pennsylvania utilities](#) plan to raise electricity prices starting on June 1st.

“Going solar was a huge advantage for our district in that it made 95% of our energy costs a known fixed cost that won’t fluctuate based upon the market,” said Joe Stroup, Midd-West School District Superintendent. “The savings, previously budgeted for energy expenses, can be diverted to things directly related to meeting student needs,” he added.

Solar on schools also offers opportunities to enhance learning with hands-on, real-world tools that can prepare students for one of the fastest-growing, good-paying jobs in the country. The School District of Philadelphia has a three-year solar training program at Frankford High School that prepares students for jobs in the solar industry.

“With the rapid adoption of solar in the last few years, schools are paving the way forward for Pennsylvania to become a leader in clean energy. Pennsylvania has so much untapped solar potential, and we are helping schools generate their own cost-saving, locally-sourced clean energy and model the benefits of solar to their communities,” said Tish Tablan, Director of Generation180’s Solar For All Schools program.

Generation180 recently expanded its Solar for All Schools campaign into Pennsylvania, where it will support schools as they switch to solar power, particularly in more under-resourced and disadvantaged communities. Generation180 provides [technical assistance](#) to school district staff and advocacy support to student and community advocates—individuals that play a crucial role in driving solar adoption at the school district-level.

This first-ever report on solar uptake by Pennsylvania schools follows a [national report](#) from Generation180 detailing the growth and trends at U.S. K-12 schools that have embraced solar power.

For a copy of the report, B-roll, and digital assets, please visit [this link](#).



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About Generation180

[Generation180](#) is a national nonprofit working to inspire and equip people to take action on clean energy in their homes, schools, and communities. Instead of the doom and gloom of a warming planet, Generation180 is focused on the unparalleled opportunity and the cleaner, healthier, more equitable energy future before us.

Our [Solar for All Schools](#) (SFAS) campaign is leading a movement nationwide to help K-12 schools reduce energy costs, enhance student learning, and foster healthier communities for all. SFAS is expanding access to solar by providing resources and support to school decision-makers and community advocates, building peer-to-peer networks, and advocating for stronger solar policies.