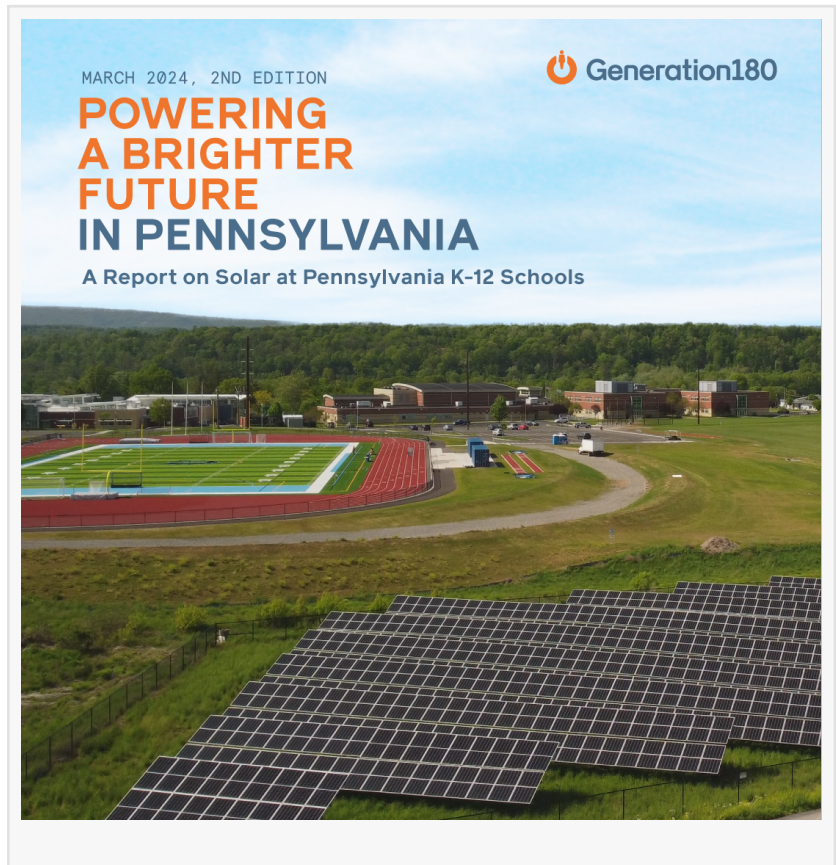


New Report: Solar on Pennsylvania K-12 Schools Nearly Tripled Over the Last Decade

State funding programs played a pivotal role in making solar attainable for PA schools, delivering benefits to students and cost-savings to taxpayers

READING, PENNSYLVANIA, UNITED STATES, March 14, 2024

/EINPresswire.com/ -- In the last 10 years, Pennsylvania K-12 schools have nearly tripled the amount of solar installed, according to a new statewide report on schools' solar uptake published by [Generation180](#), a clean energy nonprofit. The solar capacity installed at statewide schools over the past ten years grew from 14 megawatts (MW) to approximately 39 MW, the equivalent of powering the electricity consumption of over 6,500 homes.



[The new report](#), Powering a Brighter Future in Pennsylvania, Second Edition, examines the state of solar at K-12 schools, including how schools are funding it, and local success stories. While a growing number of schools have seen the benefits of solar adoption, less than 2% of Pennsylvania's 6,000 K-12 schools produce their own solar power, leaving a lot of potential for growth.

"All schools and communities in Pennsylvania — regardless of their size, geography, or wealth — should have access to clean and affordable power," said Shannon Crooker, Generation180's Pennsylvania State Director. "We are helping schools across the state gain the cost-saving and educational benefits from generating their own clean power." Generation180 provides free technical assistance to schools interested in exploring how solar energy would benefit them.

Steelton-Highspire School District (SHSD) saved \$10 million in energy costs and helped balance

the district budget after switching to solar power and making energy efficiency improvements. The district's 1.7 MW solar array powers 100% of the district's electricity needs and is expected to provide \$4 million in energy savings over the next two decades.

"Our primary goal is to get more funding to offset our expenses, which allows for more programming for our students. Through the addition of a 1.7 megawatt solar array and our newest project of six electric school buses, our school district can now claim that our electric expenses are offset 100% by solar energy, and our bussing transportation is 100% electric. Due to these two clean energy initiatives, our school district is able to provide more programming and support directly into the classroom," said SHSD Superintendent Dr. Mick Iskric, Jr.

Major Funding Opportunities Support PA Schools to Solarize

The report found that state funding programs have played an important role in bringing down the cost of solar energy systems and expanding access for Pennsylvania schools. According to Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection data, state funding programs provided grants or low-interest loans for solar projects at 53 schools, which is close to half of the 114 statewide K-12 schools using solar energy.

Although state funding programs have played an important role in supporting new solar projects at schools in the past, there has not been a consistent source of state funding for Pennsylvania schools in recent years. In 2023, Representative Elizabeth Fiedler introduced the Solar for Schools Act (HB1032) to establish the first state program dedicated to providing funding for schools to install solar energy systems. Eligible schools would include public school districts, career and technical schools, and community colleges.

"The Solar for Schools grant program would represent a "win-win-win-win-win" for the state. It would help jumpstart Pennsylvania's clean energy field by creating new solar jobs, slash schools' huge utility bills, generate revenue for much-needed infrastructure upgrades, prevent municipalities from having to raise local property taxes, and facilitate STEM and training educational opportunities for students," said Representative Elizabeth Fiedler. New state funding programs could be combined with federal funding opportunities created by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) that help schools pay for solar energy projects and other energy upgrades.

"There has never been a better time for Pennsylvania's schools to pursue solar energy," said Matt Barron, Program Director for Sustainability at The Heinz Endowments in Pittsburgh. "The federal, state, and local incentives and technical assistance opportunities paired with philanthropic initiatives and support make it possible for most schools to add solar at no cost out of pocket and to begin realizing savings after just a few years. The Heinz Endowments believes that all of our kids deserve safe, clean, resilient places to learn and grow and we are here to help."

While there has been statewide growth in solar energy production by schools, it has not been

even across the state. Northern and western Pennsylvania have lagged in solar adoption, but that is starting to change. The Greater Johnstown Career and Technology Center (GJCTC), a regional workforce training hub serving seven school districts, just became the first school in western Pennsylvania to power 100% of its electricity use with onsite solar energy. Solar and energy conservation measures are expected to generate \$19 million in energy savings over 25 years for the seven districts.

This second-edition Powering a Brighter Future in Pennsylvania report follows a biennial national report from Generation180 detailing the growth and trends at U.S. K-12 schools that have embraced solar power.

Head here for a copy [of the report](#).

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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 for a cleaner, healthier, and more equitable clean energy future.

Our Electrify Our Schools (EOS) campaign empowers schools to create resilient campuses with electrified buildings and transportation powered by 100% clean energy. EOS expands access to clean energy at K-12 schools by providing resources and support to school decision-makers and community advocates, supporting peer-to-peer networks, sharing success stories, and advocating for stronger clean energy policies.

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