

Today, 1 in 7 students in the U.S. attends a K-12 school powered by solar energy

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CHARLOTTESVILLE, MD, UNITED STATES, August 27, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- More than 10,800 K-12 schools representing 7+ million students across the United States now use solar energy, helping schools lower electricity costs, invest more resources in students, and strengthen their communities, according to a new report from clean energy nonprofit Generation180.

The sixth edition of [Brighter Future: The State of Solar & Battery Storage in U.S. K-12 Schools](#) finds that total solar capacity on K-12 schools has more than tripled since 2016. Together, these schools have more than 2.4 gigawatts of solar, enough to power the electricity use of every household in Austin, Texas, or more than 450,000 homes. The new report ranks the top states for K-12 solar and battery storage, tracks national and state-level growth, examines financing and ownership models, highlights school case studies and cost savings, and provides the first national census of battery storage at U.S. schools.

Schools districts on tight budgets are saving millions of dollars in avoided electricity costs with solar power, funds that can be reinvested into the classroom, teacher pay, key programs, and other essentials. For example, by choosing solar, Roanoke City Public Schools will save an estimated \$46.5 million on energy costs over 35 years.

"This report shows that school solar is no longer concentrated in just a few places. Urban, suburban, and rural school districts across the country are using clean energy to reduce costs, improve facilities, and prepare students for the economy of the future," said Tish Tablan, lead report author and Senior Director of Generation180's Electrify Our Schools program.

The report also includes Generation180's first national census of battery energy storage systems (BESS) at K-12 schools. It identifies 155 schools with battery storage systems installed since 2016, including 94 schools that pair batteries with solar and 61 schools with battery storage alone. While the number of school battery storage systems grew sevenfold over the last 10 years, less than 0.1% of the nation's K-12 schools have adopted this technology.

Additional Key Findings

Solar adoption has expanded nationwide: The number of solar-powered K-12 schools has nearly

doubled over the past decade, from 5,450 in 2016 to more than 10,800 today.

California leads with 2,921 solar-powered schools, followed by New Jersey and New York; Illinois and Arizona round out the top five by number of schools.

Recent growth is spreading to more states: Virginia, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York rank among the leaders in new school solar capacity from 2021-2025. Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Virginia, and Massachusetts are also among the states adding the most new solar-powered schools in the last 5 years.

Battery storage can help schools lower peak electricity costs and provide backup power during outages.: About one-third of U.S. public K-12 schools are FEMA-designated emergency shelters, making reliable backup power especially important. Pairing solar with storage can help schools serve as resilient community hubs during emergencies while reducing everyday energy costs. While federal tax credits for solar are sunseting next year, schools have a longer runway to benefit from tax incentives for battery storage. California leads with 109 schools with battery storage, about 70% of identified systems nationwide, followed by Massachusetts (10), Oregon (7), Hawaii (6), and Arkansas (3).

"We have a huge opportunity to turn schools into clean-powered resilience hubs, community spaces that can keep the lights on, provide shelter, and support families when the grid goes down," said Tablan.

"Schools are at the heart of our communities," said Stuart Gardner, Executive Director of Generation180. "Every community has a school and today more than 10,000 schools have already shown what is possible, but the vast majority of America's schools are still missing out. Every school should have the opportunity to benefit from affordable clean energy and greater resilience. We hope this report gives school leaders and their communities the information and inspiration they need to take the next step."

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