

Team Green Gang (Aurora Yuan and Alice Feng)

Username: aurorayuan8

Email address: aurorayuan8@gmail.com

School: Princeton High School

Do a simple assessment of your school's energy usage and power sources. Consider each aspect of campus life: transportation, food, heating, etc.

- What is your school's primary source of energy?
- Is there a power plant on or next to campus?
- Research any clean energy initiatives, policies or energy-saving projects that your campus has adopted or is considering.

Write up your findings in a story that could become a front-page feature in your school newspaper.

Sustainability at Princeton High School -- The Bad, The Ugly, and The Afterthoughts

When my friend and I were asked to research our school's energy usage for a project, we didn't really know what to expect. What have we found? Nothing.

After trying all the keywords: "Princeton High School" + "Sustainability", "Energy Usage", "Power Source", "Heating", "Electricity"... on both Google general search and on the school website, no information pertaining energy usage at Princeton High School was found. But as environmentally conscious students,



we do have some previous background knowledge: We know that our school likely is not considering installing solar panels; we know our school is not considering any systematic renovation pertaining out decades-old heating system any time soon or updating to energy-saving toilets and faucets; We know that albeit various student effort, we will not have electric school buses in the near future. This is disheartening. Under the climate of the 21st

century (no pun intended), PHS seems to be lacking some initiative on this stance. Princeton township just rolled out the Princeton Climate Action plan-- an ambitious plan to reduce community-wide carbon emissions 50% by 2030, 65% by 2040, 80% by 2050 from 2010 levels, while pursuing efforts to reduce emissions 100% by 2050.¹ This would be impossible without any effort or action from Princeton High School, a center-piece of our community life.

Of course, this is definitely not all Princeton High School's responsibility: There is a shortage of funding from the school district and county level. One of the nearby high schools started their solar project in 2012. Though the estimated annual savings in energy costs is \$250,000 for these projects, the initial cost of 11 million is not something we can overlook.² Also we need to put into consideration is the lack of physical space. The school has expanded and renovated several times throughout the years, and is currently with a plan to expand again in two years. In order to accommodate the increasing number of students, the school itself needs to be expanded. The increased indoor space would entail the decreased outdoor space (possibly on the roof?). Similarly, there have been various student-initiated efforts to shift the buses in the district to electric. The reply from the school's end is intermittent, and the effort was not continued upon the student leaders' graduation. But the initial cost of the project covering the whole district would be extremely high, with additional costs of the charging stations and the repair. With the lack of funding, it would be rather unreasonable and irresponsible to demand PHS to pilot such initiative when we need to dismiss teachers to sustain a balanced expense. However, even though Princeton High School cannot take on a huge renewable energy project right now, we could definitely start to create a comprehensive plan for one in the future, when we do have the necessary resources and potential to do so. In the meantime, PHS should focus on smaller scale projects instead of a complete renovation, like implementing some solar panels on the building. We could also encourage students and schools with more capabilities than us to run an energy campaign and move towards renewable energy on their campuses.



When reality hits the ideals, we always tend to lean towards finger pointing and despair. Yet just to take one step back, there are many more things the school,

¹ <https://www.sustainableprinceton.org/climate-action-plan>

² <https://www.mtsd.k12.nj.us/domain/942>

as well as the students, can do-- Turn off the light when you're the last to leave the room; Never forget to turn off a running sink; Report any water leakage immediately; Take the school bus instead of driving... If you have the resource, consider switching to Electric Vehicles and Solar Panels. Be conscious of everything you do. Start small today. When a better time comes, we will make better things happen.