



## RHODEISLANDINNO

[https://www.bizjournals.com/rhodeisland/inno/stories/news/2022/10/26/beyond-cop21-symposium-comes-to-rhode-island.html?utm\\_source=st&utm\\_medium=en&utm\\_campaign=ae&utm\\_content=RI&j=29502213&send\\_date=2022-10-26](https://www.bizjournals.com/rhodeisland/inno/stories/news/2022/10/26/beyond-cop21-symposium-comes-to-rhode-island.html?utm_source=st&utm_medium=en&utm_campaign=ae&utm_content=RI&j=29502213&send_date=2022-10-26)

10.26.22

Unique Monthly Visitors: 106,397



The Gordon School will host the Beyond COP21 Symposium to teach Rhode Island students about combatting climate change.

Courtesy of the Gordon School

By Dana Forsythe - Contributor

October 26, 2022, 11:51am EDT

As the Head of the [Gordon School](#) in East Providence, Noni Thomas López has been busy for three years working to give young people the tools to tackle climate change. this week, on Thursday, Oct. 27, the school will host

Peter Milne for the [Beyond COP21 Symposium](#), the first ever to be held in the United States.

After remarks from United States Senators Sheldon Whitehouse and Jack Reed, and Congressman David Cicilline, students from the Lincoln School, Highlander Charter School, Portsmouth Public Schools, Riverside Middle School, San Miguel School, Silver Spring Elementary, and Woodside Montessori Academy will be educated on work of meeting the [ambitious goals set by the Paris Agreement in 2016](#) and engaged through a day of interactive discussions, workshops, and an exhibition.

López said while the symposium is designed for middle school students, they wanted the entire Gordon community to be actively involved and thus set October 24-28 as Sustainability Week at Gordon School. Students will be participating in lessons and activities designed to build their understanding of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals while parents and caregivers will also be able to attend talks on solar panels, electric cars and biking for their commutes.

The school is also hosting a community event that is open to the public on Wednesday, Oct. 26 at 6:30 p.m. where Milne will be talking about the positive impact of sustainability education and the role that adults can play. López said hosting the symposium has been on her mind since she first encountered Milne, the founder of Target Green and the symposium, on LinkedIn.

"I saw an alignment between the work he has been doing around the world to educate school communities and mobilize young people in response to the global climate crisis and our own commitment at Gordon to cultivate young people who understand their responsibility to be stewards of our natural world," she said.

The symposium was twice canceled due to the pandemic, López said. Planning for this event started last year alongside middle school science teacher Cushman Gillen. Guest speakers include representatives from Groundwork Rhode Island as well as Providence-based activist and artist

Vatic Kuumba. Workshops will feature Eli Nixon of the URI Coastal Institute, The Whale Guitar Project, and the Woonasquatucket River Greenway. Plant City is providing a meatless lunch for the conference participants and presenters, which will connect with conversations that day about sustainable food production and consumption.

Gillen said the Beyond COP21 Symposium has been held over twenty times throughout the world and Gordon was slated to be the first in North America until they postponed the event last year. All companies Gordon partnered with are local, Rhode Island companies that have a direct program goal that relates to furthering the progress of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, he said.

In particular, he said, the planning committee targeted companies and organizations that are focusing on the goals of Zero Hunger, Clean Water and Sanitation, Sustainable Cities and Communities, and Climate Action.

"We contacted dozens of organizations throughout the state and were able to secure close to 20 for this event," he said. "We wanted to showcase how groups right here in Rhode Island are addressing these issues and getting involved in the work on a local scale. It's important for students to see how even though we're the smallest state, organizations right here in RI are thinking and acting globally. We hope that Gordon is the launch pad in the US for other schools to jump on board and begin to create a truly global network of schools dedicated to educating and addressing the Sustainable Development Goals."

Most of all, Gillen said, he wants students to know they're not alone in the fight to save the planet.

"Students are increasingly growing up with climate anxiety and feeling the burden of "saving the planet" is on their shoulders," he said. "This event connects like-minded students, organizations, and institutions in meaningful conversations and actions that can help provide motivation and direction for those who want to further engage in the dialogue and action

around the Sustainable Development Goals with those from around the world."