Reflecting on Target Areas/Goals in the District Sustainability Policy, 2026

1. **Promoting energy management to reduce energy consumption and costs and maximize the use of renewable energy resources. This may include expanding the scope of district energy audits, quarterly energy tracking, energy-efficient lighting and appliances, solar technology, and energy conservation behavior modification.**
    a. Sustainable Princeton tracks district-wide energy usage utilizing EnergySTAR Portfolio Manager and PSEG's My Smart Meter to monitor the district's electricity and natural gas use.
    b. In 2021, all four elementary schools received upgrades to bring in more energy-efficient LED lighting.
    c. From 2022 through 2024, the district completed its goal of making the roofs on nearly all school buildings white to better reflect sunlight and reduce the need for air conditioning. During these roof upgrades, the school's insulation was improved, helping to lower heating and cooling costs.
    d. In 2025, PPS installed state-of-the-art heating and cooling systems, including heat pumps and energy-efficient boilers, throughout the four elementary schools. PSEG's Direct Install Program covered 75% of the cost of these energy-efficient and cost-saving upgrades.
    e. Over the past three years, PPS has hosted friendly competitions to turn off lights and power down projectors to reduce energy consumption, resulting in 5-15% reductions at the winning schools.
    f. The district is currently exploring options to bring solar to each school building.

2. **Implementing strategies that promote sustainability as well as health and wellness, such as initiatives to create toxin-free indoor air quality, low-emission transportation options (7461.1 Safe Routes to Schools), fossil-fuel-free landscaping equipment, and safe management of chemical use and disposal.**
    a. At the start of the 2025-26 school year, PPS began transporting a limited number of students with its two new electric school buses, thanks to a generous grant from NJDEP. These buses use a dual-port DC fast charger, funded in part by a grant from the NJBPU and a Level II charger donated by NJ Clean Cities Coalition.
    b. The district encourages walking and biking to school, supports the PTO-C's Walk & Wheels Wednesdays, the school's Walk & Bike assemblies and events, and has added new bike racks to PHS and PMS this year to accommodate the large number of bikers in the spring and fall.

c. The district is conducting a thorough inventory of all of the chemicals stored at PHS and PMS. Chemicals older than three years, as well as those no longer used in the curriculum, are being properly removed by Strategic Environmental Consulting Inc. Chemical storage containers and cabinets are being updated to reduce the risk of volatile chemicals. The district is establishing new protocols for collecting and disposing of chemical waste from science classrooms.
d. The district uses greener cleaning supplies to help improve indoor air quality. The floor cleaner, glass cleaner, degreaser, hand soap, paper towels, and toilet paper used within PPS are all certified by Green Seal, indicating that they meet the highest standard for protecting the health and the environment.
e. Princeton owns a battery-powered leaf blower and uses it in courtyards and near school windows to reduce fumes and noise. In addition, garden educators utilize electric mowers and leaf blowers to maintain their garden areas.

3. **Pursuing strategies to reduce flooding on our campuses. This may include naturalizing basins and devising Maintenance and Operation Plans for their care or investigating opportunities to filter stormwater and reduce flood volume through rain gardens, rain barrels, stormwater planters, native meadows, or additional trees.**
    a. In 2022, the district added a new stormwater basin to better manage stormwater on the Princeton High School campus and Walnut Lane. This stormwater basin has since been naturalized and renamed a Wet Meadow.
    b. Princeton High School has another naturalized detention basin, the EcoLab. Both of these naturalized basins are currently maintained by community volunteers, PHS staff, and students.
    c. In the Spring of 2026, PPS will plant 90 new trees across the District, thanks to a grant from the NJDEP.

4. **Implementing strategies that improve the conservation of resources by minimizing the waste generated and maximizing the district's recycling efforts. This may include school waste audits, food waste diversion, waste tracking analysis, behavior modification programs, and exploration of innovative methods to recycle non-mandated materials.**
    a. The district supports all six schools in collecting kitchen food scraps for processing. Organic Diversion transfers the collected food waste to local farms for pig food or to Trenton Biogas, which converts it into renewable energy.

b. Elementary schools within the district have shifted towards reusable cutlery in cafeterias and reusable serviceware for class parties and PTO events.
c. Five of the six schools in the district have Share Tables in the cafeteria, designed to recover uneaten, wrapped foods from the cafeteria.
d. At all schools, the District donates excess food from meals to Share My Meals, a local nonprofit that fights food insecurity.
e. Educators at several schools in the district have engaged in Waste Audits to help educate students about waste.

5. **Promoting environmentally sustainable business practices, including EPP (environmentally preferred purchasing) of products and shared services agreements that improve efficiency and reduce cost and waste in all areas of school operations.**
    a. A Green Purchasing Policy is still under consideration by the district.

6. **Deploying teaching strategies through an Integrative Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics (iSTEAM) approach that implements sustainability within the New Jersey Student Learning Standards, including through school garden and food literacy education, and encouraging problem-solving on how to improve conservation, sustainability, and green initiatives.**
    a. High School Chemistry teachers have developed a long-term project where students develop a sustainability solution using the content learned throughout each unit. The students present their solutions in the form of a podcast.
    b. School gardens at each of the schools are utilized as teaching spaces to highlight the start of the food system. Classes such as Kitchen Science (design sustainable gardens, cookbooks, and solutions for food waste) and Biology (focus on exploring the phenomenon of fermentation), and extra-curricular activities such as the Cooks and Gardens Club and the Courtyard Farmers Association utilize these spaces to inspire projects and other learning experiences. Elementary school students visit the garden spaces regularly throughout the fall and spring to supplement their classroom science instruction.
    c. Cross-school collaborations happen to highlight sustainability efforts and create mentorship opportunities. For example, the students from PHS will teach the students of CP how to create paper from papyrus that is currently growing in the high school greenhouse. The Ridgeview Turtles, a high school community service group, has run professional development sessions for elementary teachers and taught lessons to elementary students. These lessons focus on getting to know your environment with a focus on native vs. invasive plants.

d. Garden State on Your Plate is a program run throughout the district to introduce students to local produce items, as well as the role of these items in cultures that are present throughout the district.
e. Students enrolled in Sustainable Environmental Systems at PHS design sustainability projects around the district and community to apply their learning and develop their leadership skills.
f. Teachers at the high school in both the Science and Humanities departments are organizing a Sustainability Summit for the spring. This event will bring in professionals who work at the intersection of policy and science to discuss how they approach sustainability in their jobs.

7. **Prioritizing the recruitment, hiring, and selection of qualified individuals with educational backgrounds and work experience related to sustainability, conservation, and green initiatives.**
    a. The district has hired a garden educator for each of the elementary schools as well as the middle school. Two of these educators are master gardeners who have offered guidance to high school students.
    b. The district has hired a Food Literacy Coordinator with a background in Public Health, as well as knowledge of gardening and food systems.
    c. A new elementary STEAM educator was hired who has immense experience in planning and executing sustainability activities with students.

8. **Providing staff training and development related to behavior modification that will impact all areas of the sustainability policy as necessary and appropriate.**
    a. In 2023, several administrators and educators from Princeton Public Schools attended a one-day conference focused on K-5 Climate Change Education at TCNJ. Curriculum professionals and teacher-leaders learned strategies for integrating climate change instruction across content areas and grade levels.

9. **The Superintendent or designee(s) and other key stakeholders shall report at least annually to the Board at public meetings on the implementation and effectiveness of all district sustainability initiatives.**