

Vista del Lago High School Sustainability Plan



Mission: Develop a plan to maximize sustainability at Vista del Lago High School (VHS) with a focus on waste diversion and energy efficiency.

Background

Sustainability plans generally seek to bring institutions into compliance with, or exceed, state and local regulations, and to set sustainability goals. The VHS Sustainability Plan focuses on recommendations to improve campus waste and energy systems, and provides suggestions for alterations to water, food, and transportation systems.

Energy

VHS is a relatively new school and a recent state grant allowed the school to update its lighting system, so infrastructure upgrades are not needed at this time. Additionally, through a recent energy audit, VHS concluded that on-site solar panels are not feasible. Therefore, recommendations to energy conservation focus on behavior change and educating students and staff on:

1. Turning off lights and electronics when not needed;
2. Making use of “sleep mode” on devices;
3. Closing doors when heating and AC are in use;
4. Consolidating refrigerators and unplugging electronics during school breaks

Baselines and Goals

Baseline data demonstrate monthly and seasonal variability:

1. Peak costs for trash occur quarterly.
2. Peak costs and use for natural gas occur during the winter months.
3. Peak costs and use for water occur during the summer months.

Recommendations for each resource take these baseline trends into consideration. It is also recommended that baseline data be used to help track progress in the future.

Waste

Students at VHS conducted a waste audit to help better understand the current waste situation at the school. Based on this data, data from invoices, and research on other schools’ sustainability strategies, VHS should:

1. Implement a waste system with color-coded and properly labeled trash, recycling, and compost bins;
2. Educate students and staff on proper waste disposal through lesson plans, videos, and student trainers;
3. Ensure waste is transferred from bins to the proper dumpsters.

Lesson Plans

Two thirty minute lesson plans on waste and energy topics have also been created to accompany the sustainability plan. Their purpose is help students understand their role in practicing more sustainable behavior. The main goal of the waste plan is to instruct students on proper waste disposal practices. The energy plan emphasizes energy conservation behaviors. Both plans provide information about VHS's attempts to create a more sustainable campus.

Monitoring

Continued monitoring is important to assess strategy implementation and identify areas for improvement. VHS should:

1. Conduct periodic waste audits;
2. Track monthly waste, energy, and water invoices;
3. Distribute the provided sustainability survey to faculty, staff, and students periodically;
4. Identify a team of faculty, staff, and students to lead sustainability and monitoring efforts on campus

Other Recommendations

Food choices and transportation are additional areas in which sustainability could be improved. In regards to cafeteria food choices, administrators should consider nutrition, environmental sustainability, worker well-being, and animal well-being. While VHS cannot control which transportation methods are used for getting to and from school, it should make every effort to encourage students to use environmentally-friendly transportation methods.

Conclusions

By implementing the strategies recommended in this plan, VHS can ensure that sustainability becomes a larger part of campus culture and concrete improvements will be seen in the waste stream, energy use, water use, food choices, and transportation. It is clear that VHS is not alone in its current situation, and this plan can potentially be adapted for other FCUSD schools.