

## **White House Champions of Change for Climate Education and Literacy Roundtable on Engaging and Educating Students**

The student roundtable was one of three side event sessions held in conjunction with the White House Champions of Change celebration to honor 8 champions working in the area of climate education and literacy. Participants included middle-school, high-school, and college and university students, Federal agency representatives and program managers, and representatives of organizations that work closely with students to enhance climate literacy. The Administration was represented by Dr. John Holdren, Director of the White House Office of Science & Technology Policy, and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy.

The discussion centered on the following topics: What makes students optimistic about the future? How can educators best educate and engage their generation on climate change? What are some effective strategies for student learning around climate change?

Participants emphasized the need to increase opportunities for “real-world” experiences and to connect climate-change impacts to the places where we live and the places we feel connected to. Students emphasized that it is important not only to communicate the science, including current and projected impacts, but also the solutions; otherwise, students feel powerless to do anything. Learning about climate change doesn’t have to be depressing; it can be empowering. Climate change doesn’t fit neatly into any particular subject or class but instead cuts across many, presenting both a challenge and an opportunity. Growing a next-generation workforce will require students with the skills and knowledge to address the climate challenge.

The take-home messages that emerged from the discussion included the following:

- Increase youth engagement in climate-related events. Give them a voice and an opportunity to lead; they are knowledgeable and passionate about this issue.
- Appeal to the vast cultural differences across the United States by identifying and connecting with what people value to engage diverse segments of population.
- Connect students to local issues, impacts, and solutions, i.e. what is happening in their backyards.
- Enhance integration of climate and environmental education into curriculum.
- Focus on cross-cutting, interdisciplinary issues and challenges, such as food and agriculture, as a way to enable students to make the connections between climate change and other environmental issues.
- Leverage technology (e.g. social media, audiovisual entertainment) as a mechanism for engaging students, particularly when paired with high-quality in-person experiences.
- Provide opportunities for students through place-based, experiential learning, including research and training around climate solutions.