



Kim Carr

New green programs at local schools

This month's guest column is by local environmental and educational technical advisor, Kim Carr.

South Tahoe High School students worked for over a year to develop a climate resolution which the Lake Tahoe Unified School District Board of Education adopted last month. The resolution calls for the board to ensure that all high school students graduate literate in climate change.

The resolution also states that the school district should prepare students for growing job and career opportunities in green technologies, construction and restoration efforts, as society moves away from fossil fuels. Board member Bonnie Turnbull said, "Let's create a school culture that integrates climate impacts into every decision."

"School leadership is aligned with the students' priorities," said Carline Sinkler, South Tahoe High School principal. "It's a moral mandate to have our students ready for the green jobs of the future." Progress is being made toward updating the high school curriculum to prepare our

students for the changing economy, especially growing green industries.

The high school has a robust Career and Technical Education (CTE) department that integrates core academics with technical and occupational knowledge to provide students with a pathway to postsecondary education and careers. Students are being prepared for careers in health sciences, arts, media and entertainment, hospitality, tourism and recreation (including culinary arts), transportation, building and construction, and natural resources. The newest industry area is natural resources, beginning with an environmental engineering course to be offered this spring.

Courses formerly taught in separate departments, as either core curriculum science courses or CTE, are now being interwoven. Science, technology, engineering, art and math (STEAM) instruction offers more hands-on experiential learning, making curriculum more available to students with a wide variety of aptitudes. CTE can provide introductory STEAM competencies and offer

opportunities for handling materials and creating prototypes. For example, the STEAM course can teach how power is produced from photovoltaic cells and the CTE construction course can have students learn how to install solar panels on rooftops in a mock work setting.

South Tahoe High is looking to other examples around the country to integrate STEAM and construction to ready students for the growing field of green technologies and sustainable construction. One such example, tiny home design, is powered by solar and built with energy efficient materials. Such solar powered tiny homes are a solution to the shortage of affordable housing in Tahoe and help in reaching the City of South Lake Tahoe's commitment to 100 percent renewable energy by 2032. This is one example where high school graduates can enter the workforce with the job skills and knowledge to fill shortages in this growing field.

The school district recently added electric buses to their fleet, showing progress toward their goal of having half of the fleet converted to electric in the next

few years. The auto shop is exploring ways to expand curriculum for students to learn about electric battery power with hands-on experience using the school district's buses. This is a growing field, boosted by Governor Newsom's recent order for phasing out the sale of all new fossil fuel vehicles by 2035.

Lake Tahoe Community College is stepping up its efforts for climate resiliency by developing a Forestry Education and Wildfire Prevention program. This local workforce development program is central to protecting our communities by reducing the risk and negative impacts of mega wildfires, Tahoe's greatest threat. This year, the community college is offering newly designed associate's degrees in Environmental Studies and Environmental Science.

The high school environmental engineering course is offered as dual enrollment, providing students both high school and college credit. Dual enrollment courses between the high school and the community college have increased from nine to 49 since the 2015/16 school year. Aligning high school and community college programs provides a clear bridge for high school graduates to continue their education, and allows more students to earn college credits for free while enrolled in high school.

Most Tahoe regulatory, land management agencies and non-profit organizations have goals, policies and/or programs addressing the negative impacts of climate change in the Basin. This is a sizable employment base offering livable wage jobs for a variety of education and skill sets, varying from environmental scientists and planners, to natural resource managers, to field crew leaders. The partnership between the high school, community college and employers can help to increase internship and entry-level employment opportunities and provide students course credits for this work experience.

The growth of jobs in green industries is driven by California policy, consumer preferences and purchasing power, and local and global activism placing pressure on leadership to address climate impacts. Continuing to expand programs that educate and prepare all of our students, from elementary level through high school, community college and university, for green industry jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities will in turn help green our business base, and help attract environmentally minded industries to Tahoe. Tahoe is positioned to be a model climate learning lab for youth, residents and visitors.

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