Sunnyside Environmental School By the Numbers

Ours is a school that works

Sunnyside Environmental School ("SES") is one of the few schools in the district with growing enrollment and more applicants than it can take. The data does not support shuttering our program, as explained in more detail below.

A successful neighborhood school offering family choice

507 students	Current enrollment [1] — already meeting the district's target for a "right-sized" K8 school [2]. Under Scenarios A and B, Sunnyside's projected enrollment in 31-32 would be 235, below the District's target of 360 students for a "right-sized" K5 school, making it more vulnerable to future closure [3]
+5.2%	Enrollment growth in the last year [4]; SES is one of only 12 schools in the entire district that is growing, in a cluster where births fell 35% in the last decade and PPS enrollment fell 15% in the last five years (19% in grades K-5) [4, 5]
101 + 110 applications	Number of applications for 25 open kindergarten slots and 15 sixth grade slots, respectively [1]
46% / 54%	Neighborhood and lottery students, respectively [1]
96.8%	Current share of SES students who live within one mile of the school; projected to fall to 65.5% in 2031-32 if scenario A or B is adopted [3]
76%	Neighborhood capture rate, in the top third of the district [6]

Serving students who need the most support

114 students (24%)	Students receiving Special Education services — more than any other PPS elementary or middle school except one; nearly one in four students [9]; SES serves many more students who are neurodiverse but not on IEPs
2×	More than twice the share of students with disabilities that the state funds districts to serve [10]
+5%	Share of students with disabilities above the district average for elementary and middle schools [9]
47.2%	Share of the student body from underserved populations [11]
Above average	OSAS reading and math scores exceed district and state averages [12]

Student, staff, and leadership show up and stay

79%	Regular attenders in grades 6-8, compared with a 69% District average [7]
89%	Staff retention rate [8]
3 principals	Only three principals since SES was established in 1994 [1]

Our program model is the key to our success — and is aligned to district standards and commitments

24,810 hours	Spent by middle schoolers learning in the living classrooms of Portland's rivers, mountains, forests, and oceans as part of our standards-aligned, place-based environmental education curriculum, which involves weekly field studies around the region [1]
54 partners	Community organizations that partner with SES students on field studies and service learning projects [1]
1,285 hours	Service contributed by middle schoolers via projects like restoring local rivers, forests and gardens with SOLVE, Surfrider Foundation, Friends of Mt. Tabor and the Bureau of Environmental Services [1]
7,000+ hours	Spent learning in our school garden across nine grade levels—a cornerstone program that helps many students thrive, including those who struggle in conventional settings [13]
~2,880 hours	Spent by middle schoolers mentoring first-, second- and third-grade "buddies" [1]
2016 / 2022	Years the PPS board passed resolution calling for climate justice education and a climate policy committing PPS to teach the climate crisis — work SES does every day [14]
147 studies	Confirming that nature-based outdoor learning, like SES's, has measurable impact on engagement, wellbeing, social development and academics [15]

If Sunnyside Environmental School is made a K-5 and stripped of its focus programming, PPS will lose all the benefits detailed above.

Sources

1. Sunnyside Environmental School. Internal data, 2026–27 school year.
2. Portland Public Schools. *Rightsizing: Comparing the Three Scenarios.* October 2026. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ueJVC-Jo6MRKw56Jedihc6YbVdBlSB2z/view
3. Portland Public Schools. *A Family Guide to the Proposed School Changes: Sunnyside.* October 2026. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1A9NQhliZOvxn2EYFwrVlj_eVJqfNQgKx/view
4. Portland Public Schools, Data and Reporting. *10-Year Enrollment*, 2025–26. https://www.pps.net/fs/resource-manager/view/aefd9869-b3da-4cf6-b9c6-1bec5149eb03
5. Portland State University Population Research Center. *Portland Public Schools Enrollment Forecasts 2026–27 to 2035–36*, tables 2.2 and 2.3. 2026. https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1785171463/ppsnet/ejdr22voeddvux8qwlob/PPS_Forecast_2026_27.pdf
6. Portland Public Schools. *In-District Capture Rate.* Prepared for the Board of Education; shared October 6, 2026, in board book supplemental materials. https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1l8xcz7lUqfdhgNDA42v0XQKECZhm_JJlxa42o5_gwHs/edit?gid=0#gid=0
7. Oregon Department of Education. *Regular Attenders (Formerly Not Chronically Absent) Report*, 2024–25. https://www.oregon.gov/ode/transparency/Pages/default.aspx#Student
8. Oregon Department of Education. *At-a-Glance School and District Profiles and Accountability Details*, 2024–25 report cards. https://www.ode.state.or.us/data/ReportCard
9. Portland Public Schools. *Enrollment Characteristics.* October 2025. https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1761768730/ppsnet/urzqafgv7wzzprexxjvw/SchoolProfiles-SPEDTAGLEP25-26.pdf
10. Oregon Department of Education. *2025–2027 Special Education Funding Considerations.* https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2023I1/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/287239
11. Portland Public Schools. *Enrollment of Underserved Groups.* October 1, 2025. https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1763144125/ppsnet/dcnj7wsu9chtqzdmoxda/EnrollmentofUnderservedGroups25-26.pdf
12. Portland Public Schools. *Academic Data Portal*, "OSAS All Schools" tab, 2024–25. https://www.pps.net/departments/dataaccountability/data-and-accountability/data-strategy-and-insights/academic-portal
13. Sunnyside Environmental School. Internal data, 2025–26 school year.
14. Portland Public Schools. *Climate Justice, Energy, and Sustainability* (website). https://www.pps.net/departments/climate-justice/climate-justice-and-sustainability-main-page
15. Mann, J., et al. "Getting Out of the Classroom and Into Nature: A Systematic Review of Nature-Specific Outdoor Learning on School Children's Learning and Development." *Frontiers in Public Health* 10 (2022): 877058. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.877058