



ecoRise

Texas Programs

2024-2025

EcoRise mobilizes a new generation of leaders to design healthy, just, and thriving communities for all.



As extreme weather events increasingly impact our communities and economy, youth are growing up in a time of uncertainty about their future. Engaging the next generation in sustainability education helps prepare students to enter the world after high school with confidence, a sustainable mindset, and the skills needed for future green careers. As a K–12 education leader, EcoRise works at the intersection of classrooms, community resilience, and civic engagement by elevating youth voices and advancing student-led solutions to real-world challenges. We offer a range of curricula and programs for students, teachers, school districts, and partners designed to advance environmental literacy, sustainable schools, and access to green career pathways.

WE BELIEVE

- **Education** is the bedrock of social and environmental change.
- **Youth** have the power to design a sustainable world.
- **Teachers** are the key to unlocking student innovation.
- **Partnerships** magnify and accelerate community impact.

OUR WORK

Our train-the-teacher model and online platform provide K–12 curriculum, professional development, and community resources to educators around the world. In communities across the U.S., we work with local organizations to connect high school students to transformative experiences through youth climate councils and paid internships. The EcoRise program develops the next generation of creative problem solvers by offering teachers and students the tools, community, and inspiration needed to design, cultivate, and embrace resilient and sustainable practices.



Standards-Aligned Curricula



Teacher Professional Development



Student Innovation Fund



Green Career Exploration



Community Connections



Civic Engagement

We'd like to thank you for your partnership, which has been key in engaging Texas youth in authentic learning and real-world experiences and achieving our latest three-year strategic plan. Learn more at [EcoRise.org/Vision-2025](https://www.ecorise.org/Vision-2025). Together, we are advancing the green school movement. Together, #WeRise!

What We Offer

We offer standards-aligned curricula designed to advance STEM education, the development of student leadership and 21st-century skills, environmental literacy, access to green careers, and sustainable schools. Learn more about our programs [here](#).



Sustainable Intelligence

Builds sustainability knowledge across seven eco-themes: water, waste, food, energy, air, public spaces and transportation



Intro to Environmental Justice

Creates a foundational understanding of environmental justice history and concepts for elementary, middle, and high school students



Green Building Academy

Preps students to enter the green workforce with an understanding of green building, climate resiliency and a LEED Green Associate credential



Design Studio

Guides students to develop and implement creative solutions to pressing problems using EcoRise's design-thinking process



The Business of Social Good

Introduces social entrepreneurship and sustainable business practices, challenging students to develop their own business ideas



Biomimicry and Science

Challenges chemistry, physics, and biology students to look at "nature as mentor" in order to solve sustainability challenges



Teacher Ambassador Program

Supports teacher leaders in honing leadership and facilitation skills to champion sustainability education in their communities



Project-Based Learning Academy

Trains teachers to transform passive learning into active participation, linking multidisciplinary programs with sustainability education



Climate Education Teacher Courses

Preps educators with the knowledge, confidence, and resources to incorporate climate education into their curricula and classrooms



Gen:Thrive

Provides shared data and technology tools to accelerate sustainability education and advance health, equity and climate resilience in K-12 schools



Youth Climate Councils

Engages students in local climate justice civic action through monthly gatherings and community-based impact projects



Paid Summer Internships

Provides high school students with immersive civic and/or career experiences through paid internships with local organizations



Who We Served in Texas

THIS YEAR

61,544

STUDENTS

1,099

TEACHERS

653

SCHOOLS

SINCE 2015

353,920

STUDENTS

5,530

TEACHERS

2,155

SCHOOLS

"EcoRise curricula is engaging, student-centered, and aligned with real-world challenges, which has made learning more meaningful for our students. Whether it's designing solutions to reduce waste, improve air quality, or conserve water, our students feel like their voices and actions matter. EcoRise not only supports academic growth but also fosters leadership, collaboration, and a deep sense of purpose."

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER,
PHARR, TEXAS

2024–2025 PROGRAM IMPACT

Of the EcoRise teachers surveyed:

- **100%** have a better understanding of the elements of sustainability, including the relationship to the triple bottom line and social justice.
- **96.6%** are more confident in integrating sustainability and environmental issues into their teaching.
- **94.9%** are better able to create authentic learning experiences for their students.
- **91.5%** report that EcoRise resources give them new tools to address their school's academic goals.

Of the EcoRise students surveyed:

- **85.3%** are more aware of the environmental issues in their school or community.
- **84.8%** have a better understanding of why sustainability is important to their community and the world.
- **83.6%** believe young people can persuade others to act on environmental issues.
- **72.2%** learned about the different kinds of jobs and organizations in their community related to sustainability.

Statewide Student Innovation

THIS SCHOOL
YEAR IN TEXAS,
WE AWARDED:

\$40,501
IN MICRO-
GRANTS TO

65
STUDENT-DRIVEN
PROJECTS.

1,205
STUDENT
INNOVATORS

31,610
PEERS
ENGAGAED

\$341,069
ESTIMATED SCHOOL
RESOURCE SAVINGS

COLLECTIVE IMPACT OF STUDENT PROJECTS:



43,894 gal
WATER SAVED



44,516 lb
WASTE DIVERTED



60,845 ft²
GREENSPACE IMPROVED



3,491 kWh
ENERGY SAVED



41,528 ft³
AIR QUALITY IMPROVED



4,473 lb
FOOD PRODUCED

THE TEACHERS BEHIND THE WORK



In Texas classrooms, students are tackling environmental challenges thanks to dedicated educators and hands-on, place-based learning. Through EcoRise's programs, teachers are gaining professional development and using engaging curriculum to prepare their students to find solutions to real-world challenges and build leadership skills. Student-led projects, like harnessing solar energy and growing fresh produce for school cafeterias, are making a difference in communities across Texas. **Watch how EcoRise and All Points North Foundation are ensuring rural Texas educators are included in this movement.**

TEXAS STUDENTS IN ACTION

GROWING A MOVEMENT & A SCHOOL GARDEN

At Navarro Early College High School in Austin, a small but mighty team of students is rallying their peers to bring new life to their school gardens. Supported by EcoRise Ambassador Alicia Kim, the “Green Teens”—Fernando, Mario, McKenzie, and Jaime—used their \$744 Student Innovation Grant to jumpstart a campaign to revitalize 1,500 square feet of native gardens and outdoor classroom space at their school. When they noticed the area had become overgrown and dry, they set a bold goal: recruit 16 new Green Teens to their cause to help revitalize the outdoor learning space. They’ll use their grant to launch an awareness campaign with buttons, stickers, and an Instagram posts, as well as purchase essential tools and snacks to support garden volunteers. They expect to not only boost biodiversity, but also foster teamwork, mental well-being, and a deeper connection to nature.



EXPANDING VERMICOMPOSTING EFFORTS

“We were surprised at how much food our tiny worms could eat!” said Erin Eggers students as they tracked the impact of their school’s composting efforts. They discovered that their worms were eating about six pints of lunch leftovers each week and quickly realized they didn’t have enough worms or bins to compost food from every classroom at the Advanced Learning Academy (ALA) in San Antonio. These students used their \$226 Student Innovation Grant to add a fourth worm bin and expand the project to include PreK classrooms. Once all four bins are in use, students estimate they will divert 130 gallons of food waste from landfills each year while producing nutrient-rich compost for their school gardens. They’re excited to help their campus grow greener, one worm at a time.

“My students were not only able to start their project but see it all the way through. The pride they feel is immense. I’ve seen firsthand how the experience of bringing their idea to life has deepened their understanding of water, pollinators, and the natural world—and how it’s encouraged collaboration and critical thinking. This organization made that possible, and I’m deeply grateful.”

TEACHER
ST. ANTHONY CATHOLIC SCHOOL, AUSTIN, TX

TEXAS STUDENTS IN ACTION

TURNING PLASTIC WASTE INTO COMMUNITY CARE

Students at PSJA North Early College High School in Pharr, Texas are modeling what it means to lead with both heart and impact. The EcoFriends Club, sponsored by Teacher Ambassador Denisse Ochoa, surveyed their peers and discovered that most students purchase 3–5 plastic bottles per week—and over half of those end up in the trash. In response, they are using their \$750 Student Innovation Grant to launch a student-designed campaign to reduce single-use plastics on campus. Through awareness posters and selling affordable reusable water bottles to students and staff, they project they'll keep more than 1,000 pounds of plastic waste out of landfills each year. But the impact doesn't stop there: proceeds from bottle sales will fund donations of hygiene items to Mujeres Unidas, which provides shelter and support services to victims of domestic violence and survivors of sexual assault and their families.



ENHANCING A CAMPUS FOOD SYSTEM

Sixth-graders in Kristin Adams' class at St. Stephen's Episcopal School in Wimberley are transforming their campus food system with a trio of projects. Using \$2,339 in Student Innovation Grants, they designed an off-grid outdoor kitchen to make it easier to wash hands and produce, cook with garden-grown ingredients, and share freshly prepared meals together. They also surveyed peers to select favorite fruits and are excited to plant strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, and three fruit trees—apple, pear, and peach—to reduce food miles and provide shade for the school's chickens. To support animal welfare and boost egg production, students will enhance their chicken coop and purchase tools to safely clean eggs before eating them. Together, these projects promote sustainability, healthy eating, and hands-on learning.

"The most important thing I learned from participating in EcoRise programs and studying environmental sustainability this year is that small, local actions can have a powerful impact. Through hands-on projects and real-world problem-solving, I discovered how issues like waste reduction, energy efficiency, and water conservation are connected to larger environmental challenges like climate change."

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT,
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS



STUDENT INNOVATION SHOWCASES

EcoRise culminates each school year by celebrating **Student Innovation Fund** Grant awardees at regional in-person and virtual Student Innovation Showcases. Student leaders present their grant projects to their community, connect with green professionals, and receive feedback from an authentic audience. This year, 63 student teams shared their learnings and impact with their local communities nationwide. 33 of these teams were Texas students who wowed parents, community members, and EcoRise partners at our Central Texas, San Antonio, and South Texas showcases.



CENTRAL TEXAS

Austin City Hall was filled with energy, ideas, and passion for a more sustainable future at the 9th Annual Student Innovation Showcase on May 15th. Fourteen student teams shared projects focused on pollinator protection, upcycling, the importance of shade equity, and more. Members of the Austin Youth Climate Equity Council introduced community members, including Mayor Kirk Watson, to ways to take climate action by getting involved with the work of local frontline organizations. Learn more about the Council's work on page 9.

SAN ANTONIO

At the 7th Annual San Antonio Showcase on May 8th fourteen student teams presented their work on projects ranging from vermicomposting and chicken coop initiatives to upcycling waste into art. The Mayor's Youth Council for Climate Initiatives shared the community impact projects that were created from their work with the local organizations and City offices, which you can read about on page 10. Special guest, Mayor Ron Nirenberg, praised the innovative projects on display and encouraged students to never stop believing in their important work.



SOUTH TEXAS

Our South Texas Showcase went virtual this year, bringing together five student teams from PSJA ISD and green professionals from across the U.S. We learned about the sustainability work students in the Rio Grande Valley are pioneering, ranging from school gardens that provide food for the community to improving air quality in their classrooms. Graduating seniors offered reflections and advice to younger students, encouraging them to connect with others and not give up!

This year's Student Innovation Showcases reminded us what's possible when young people are equipped with the tools, resources, and support they need to turn their ideas into action. Thanks to our endlessly dedicated teachers, our devoted community partners, and our philanthropic partners for helping make their ideas a reality.

**Read more about
our 2025 Showcase
Season here.**



Austin Youth Climate Equity Council

Today's youth are powerful advocates for a sustainable future. The Austin Youth Climate Equity Council is equipping them to address climate issues, support the City's Climate Equity Plan, and champion resilience in their communities. On a mission to activate young climate leaders the City of Austin Office of Climate Action & Resilience (OCAR) and EcoRise partnered to facilitate the fourth Council cohort this school year. We supported 34 high schoolers to harness their passions and deeply engage in the climate work happening in Central Texas.

Council members began the year eager to take climate action at the city level. By the end of the year, they had learned diverse approaches to climate resilience. By partnering with frontline community organizations, including Festival Beach Food Forest, Safe Streets Austin, Solar Austin, the Trail Conservancy, TreeFolks, Urban Roots, and the Village Place, they led hands-on projects that engaged people of all ages in resilience initiatives. Their efforts culminated at the 9th Annual Central Texas Student Innovation Showcase, where they presented their work, shared lessons learned, and encouraged the community to get involved.

Rising leaders of the group also hosted a roundtable event with OCAR to understand the climate concerns and priorities of Central Texas youth to inform Austin's upcoming Comprehensive Climate Action Plan. They collected notes about reducing emissions, extreme weather preparedness, protecting vulnerable populations, improving public transportation, and much more. [Read more about this event](#) in an article EarthDay.org put together to highlight student leaders from coast to coast who are centering equity, driving climate solutions, and speaking truth to power in their communities. Their work is a powerful reminder that when young people have a seat at the table, everyone benefits.



"EcoRise gave me hope that our impact can start at any age, and we can help create a sustainable future together."

24-25 AUSTIN COUNCIL MEMBER

**Read more about
the Council's
work here.**



San Antonio Mayor's Youth Council for Climate Initiatives

In its fifth year, the Mayor's Youth Engagement Council for Climate Initiatives has driven meaningful progress and serves as a bright example to other cities that prioritizing youth voices creates a healthier future for all. Facilitated by EcoRise and supported by the City of San Antonio and the Wayne Hollomon Price Foundation, the Council's mission is to activate San Antonio's next generation of climate champions by providing them with tools to engage in community issues around climate, environmental policy, and environmental justice.

The 2024–2025 Council cohort explored the intersections of climate change, environmental justice, and community resilience. 32 students engaged with local leaders to deepen their understanding of local sustainability challenges, collaborate, and develop solutions. From touring urban gardens to exploring food justice, sustainable transportation, and advocacy strategies, Council members developed community leadership skills and a profound sense of agency in shaping their future.

A central element of the program was the creation of student-designed community advocacy projects. Working in teams, students identified local environmental challenges tied to their lived experiences and developed creative, community-based micro-initiatives in response. Their projects addressed topics like access to hygiene and health products, food insecurity, urban biodiversity, emergency preparedness, and renewable energy awareness. These efforts culminated in the 7th Annual San Antonio Student Innovation Showcase, where students presented their work to city leaders—including Mayor Ron Nirenberg—community members, and local organizations. The event spotlighted youth-driven climate action and emphasized the importance of elevating young voices in citywide sustainability planning.



"I've learned that your voice holds power. I've learned that you can truly make a difference if you put your heart and mind to it. ... Even though I am only one person, my impact can be just as big."

24–25 SAN ANTONIO COUNCIL MEMBER

Read more about
the Council's
work here.

Green Careers Academy Internships



EcoRise's Green Careers Academy Internship program bridges the gap between classroom learning and real-world experience in green careers and community resilience.

Through partnerships with community-based organizations, we offer high school students immersive, paid internship opportunities that equip them with the skills, confidence, and connections needed to become leaders in building a more sustainable future. Rooted in place and community, these internships integrate environmental action with cultural understanding and the restorative power of nature.

This year, 11 Texas students worked alongside green professionals at six frontline-serving organizations, contributing to real-world projects that aligned with their interests. Interns gained firsthand exposure to the day-to-day realities of these fields and supported their mentors with real-world initiatives and projects. They also took part in a two-day intensive led by EcoRise and industry experts to strengthen workplace skills like communication, problem-solving, and collaboration, explore diverse sustainability sectors, and link their work to the needs of their communities. By summer's end, all interns reported feeling better prepared to enter the workforce, with 100% of interns reporting greater insight into green career pathways, and 82% expressing a stronger interest in pursuing them.



GROWING FOOD, EQUITY, AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE

For Aubrey, Esmeralda, Joy, and Kayla, powerful lessons in climate resilience came from the soil beneath their feet. While interning at the San Antonio Food Bank, they harvested over 50,000 pounds of produce, practiced organic farming, and distributed fresh food to low-income families at the Pica Pica Plaza farmer's market. Through hands-on fieldwork and behind-the-scenes operations, they gained a deeper understanding of how local, climate-resilient food systems can build stronger, more connected, and more equitable communities.

BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH INTERGENERATIONAL CARE

Elijah's internship introduced him to a community he hadn't connected with before—Austin's elders. Working with Cortez Consulting Services, he facilitated focus groups and surveys for the *Quality of Life on Aging Study*, analyzed data to support overlooked populations, and helped lead photovoice and intergenerational events. Hearing elders' stories was, in his words, "grounding, connective, and delightful." He shared, "Helping out with issues that are not directly related to me has been one of the most impactful parts of this experience."



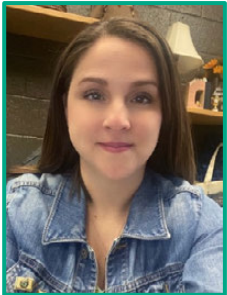
CONNECTING COMMUNITIES TO NATURE & PUBLIC RESOURCES

For siblings Franck and Janet, community connection became the foundation for environmental action. Working with Cities Connecting Children to Nature – Austin and the Austin Public Library, they supported the Nature-Smart Libraries initiative by analyzing nature-play data, helping host an inclusive job fair, and drafting proposals for solar panels, storywalks, and air-quality monitoring. Along the way, they connected with green professionals, advocated for underserved communities, and saw how access to nature, information, and opportunity can shape a more just, sustainable future.

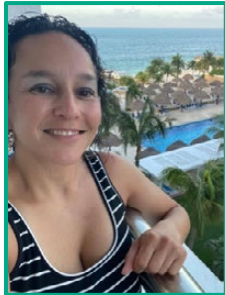
We're grateful to the volunteer mentors who donated time and energy to equip these young leaders with skills in green careers. These inspiring opportunities were supported by our wonderful partners, the Green Workforce Collaborative in Austin and the Wayne Hollomon Price Foundation in San Antonio.

Texas Teacher Ambassadors

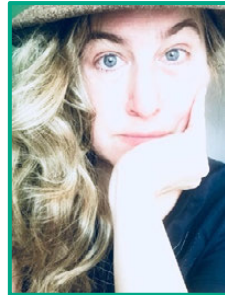
The **EcoRise Teacher Ambassador Program**, now in its ninth year, develops, empowers, and recognizes educators as leaders and champions of engaging sustainability education. Ambassadors help us share EcoRise curricula and train other educators to implement hands-on, hyper-local ways to teach youth about sustainability. This school year, 8 Texas educators represented the Lone Star State in a national cohort of thirty Ambassadors.



Denisse Ochoa
High School Librarian
Pharr, TX



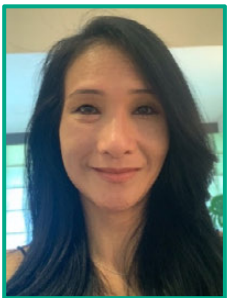
Jennifer Humphrey
Grade 6–8
San Antonio, TX



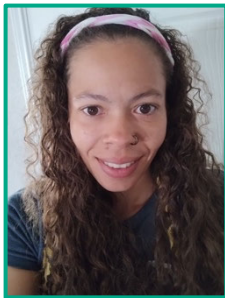
Kelly Knight
Grade 9–12
Katy, TX



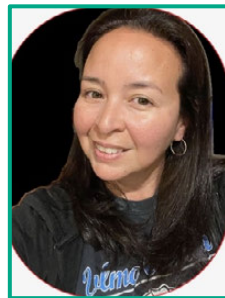
Nelda Reyes
Grade 6
San Juan, TX



Alicia Kim
Grade 9–12
Austin, TX



Brittney Ivanov
Grades K–3
San Antonio, TX



Daniela Willett
Grade 3
Austin, TX



Lisa Richardson
Elementary Librarian
Austin, TX

The passion and expertise of EcoRise Ambassadors drive the organization’s mission. This year, Texas Ambassadors delivered dynamic professional learning, inspired community engagement, and championed student-led sustainability across the state. In San Antonio, Jennifer Humphrey and Brittney Ivanov presented at CAST24 and the Alamo STEM Educators Conference, sharing EcoRise curriculum and encouraging educators to elevate student leadership. Brittney also supported the Mayor’s Youth Engagement Council for Climate Initiatives. In the Rio Grande Valley, Denisse Ochoa and Nelda Reyes led district-wide trainings and infused environmental justice into classrooms. In Houston, Kelly Knight collaborated with regional teachers and showcased EcoRise resources at the Monarch March at Houston Botanical Gardens. In Central Texas, Alicia Kim, Daniela Willett, and Lisa Richardson highlighted student projects and EcoRise resources at Spread the Harvest and other notable events, including the Texas Children in Nature Network Summit and UT’s Girls in STEM Day. Through conferences, campus programs, and public events, this year’s Ambassadors exemplified how to empower the next generation of sustainability leaders in Texas.

“The sense of community among ambassadors is unparalleled. It is such a supportive group of like-minded individuals, who truly do lift each other up. I love being part of such an amazing network. I love being able to tap-in to the wealth of expertise we all collectively share!”

**TEACHER AMBASSADOR KELLY KNIGHT
KATY HIGH SCHOOL, KATY, TX**

Key Partnerships Grow And Thrive

Partnerships are essential to amplifying the EcoRise mission, from providing field experiences and mentorship to collaborating on programs and donating crucial funding and collaboration. We are grateful to work with a coalition of partner organizations committed to improving K–12 education outcomes and preparing youth to be environmentally-minded thinkers, leaders, designers, and more.



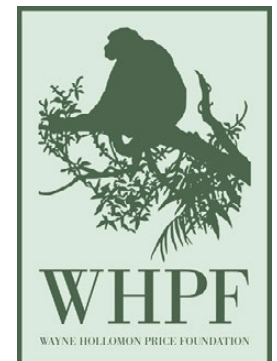
NATIONAL ACADEMIES
Sciences
Engineering
Medicine

GALVESTON COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

In its first year, EcoRise's Growing Galveston initiative brought Galveston ISD (GISD) teachers and students outside for hands-on garden lessons, professional development, and student-led sustainability projects. Austin Elementary served as the flagship campus, where three student groups earned Student Innovation Grants to tackle local environmental challenges, and two GISD educators were named EcoRise Teacher Ambassadors to help expand the program in Year 2. The initiative takes a two-pronged approach to supporting educators: professional development led by EcoRise and in-class, garden-based lessons facilitated by Galveston's Own Farmer's Market (GOFM). We're grateful to our partners GISD and GOFM and a grant from the Gulf Research Program of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, helping us integrate outdoor spaces and school gardens into academics in the Gulf.

CREATING A LEGACY WITH WHPF

Since 2020, the Wayne Holloman Price Foundation (WHPF) has been a cornerstone partner in launching and sustaining the San Antonio Mayor's Youth Engagement Council for Climate Initiatives. Their early and consistent support helped EcoRise adapt the program through the pandemic and evolve into the community-rooted, in-person model it is today. In collaboration with the City of San Antonio and local organizations, the Council provides high school students with opportunities to explore environmental justice, engage in hands-on civic leadership, and connect directly with city leaders and grassroots initiatives. Over five years, more than 150 students have participated, with many continuing into green career-focused internships—building a generation of youth leaders advancing climate resilience.



"The advocacy of the Council members has driven meaningful progress—from advancing renewable energy initiatives to engaging new and diverse communities in climate resilience. I hope our work serves as a bright example to other cities that when we prioritize youth voices, we create a healthier future for all."

SAN ANTONIO MAYOR RON NIRENBERG



Thank You to Our Partners

SPOTLIGHT PARTNERS

All Points North Foundation
BNY Mellon
CD&R Foundation
City of Austin
Cynthia & George Mitchell
Foundation

Docusign
HEB Grocery
MetLife Foundation
National Academies of Science,
Engineering and Medicine (NASEM)
Pisces Foundation

Southwest Airlines
Sprouts Healthy Communities
Foundation
UCLA School of Education &
Information Studies
Wayne Hollomon Price Foundation

SUPPORTING PARTNERS

Austin Community Foundation
Austin Energy
Cadman Cares
City of San Antonio
Frost Bank

Green Workforce Collaborative
Institute of Real Estate
Management (IREM)
JDC Trust
Love Tito's

Myer Family Charitable Foundation
PepsiCo Recycling - Recycle Rally
Pinkerton Foundation
TLC Ingredients
Vanguard Charitable

SCHOOL DISTRICT PARTNERS

Austin Independent School District
District of Columbia Public Schools
Galveston Independent School
District
Legacy Christian Academy

Mesquite Independent School
District
Montgomery County Public Schools
Prelude Prep Public Charter School

Sacramento City Unified School
District
Santa Cruz County Office of
Education

PROGRAM COLLABORATORS

Arizona State University (ASU)
Austin Public Library
The Black Feminist Project
Black Mamas Village
Breakthrough Central Texas
Cities Connecting Children to Nature
Clayton Korte
Climate Generation
Cortez Consulting
U.S. Environmental Protection
Agency Gulf of Mexico Division,
Region 6, and Region 9
ESC Region 01 and Region 13
Festival Beach Food Forest
Frontline Catalysts
Galveston's Own Farmers Market

Games for Change
Gardopia Gardens
GRACE Communications Foundation
Green Schools National Network
Indigenous Cultures Institute
Kansas Association for
Conservation and
Environmental Education
Math for America
McDowell Sonoran Conservancy
NOAA
Nos Quedamos
NYC Department of Education
Pecan Street
Perkins Eastman DC
Safe Streets Austin

San Antonio Food Bank
School Garden Support
Organization (SGSO) Network
Sierra Club
Social and Environmental
Entrepreneurs
Solar Austin
Subject to Climate
Terra Lumina Consulting
The Trail Conservancy
Tree Folks, Inc.
University of Texas at Austin
Urban Roots
VIA Metropolitan Transit



Thanks to your support, EcoRise has grown its programs and prepared thousands of students to thrive in our changing world by connecting them to the tools they need to act on climate change. Together, we are cultivating the next generation of resilient Texas youth who are passionate about creating a more just and sustainable world for all!

To continue championing transformative K–12 sustainability education, you can:

- **Spread** the word about EcoRise,
- **Connect** us to new schools
- **Fuel** our work through program support, or
- **Introduce** us to new community partners.

