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Reading time: 3 mins

Earth Action: Advocate for Climate Education Standards



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Earth911 is honoring the 52 years of Earth Day with 52 [Actions for the Earth](#). Each week through Earth Day 2023, we will share an action you can take to [invest in the Earth](#) and make your own life more sustainable. Climate literacy is a prerequisite for climate action, but many states still don't have education standards for teaching climate science, or even require that it be taught at all. This week, you can take action for the Earth by advocating for climate science education standards.

Action: Advocate for Science Standards

Climate Literacy

Climate change denial is the most visible symptom of the lack of quality science education in general and climate science in particular. But simply acknowledging the climate crisis is not enough; the next generation will need

What Do You Think?

Are you considering moving because of climate change?

I'm researching my options to decide

No

Yes

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knowledge and skills to participate in a green economy – they [need climate literacy](#). EarthDay.org’s climate literacy campaign works for universal compulsory, assessed climate and environmental education with a strong civic engagement component. Dozens of countries are already on board, but the American school system has been slow to [invest in climate literacy](#).

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [defines climate literacy](#) as understanding your influence on climate and climate’s influence on you and your society. Specifically, a climate-literate person:

- Understands the essential principles of Earth’s climate system,
- Knows how to assess scientifically credible information about climate,
- Communicates about climate and climate change in a meaningful way, and
- Can make informed and responsible decisions regarding actions that may affect climate.

Environmental education advocacy group This Is Planet Ed says that to be effective, climate change education should [communicate four points](#) of scientific consensus:

- Recent climate change is a genuine phenomenon.
- Human activity is responsible for the global change in climate.
- Climate change is affecting and will continue to affect nature and society.
- It is possible to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

States of Education

Unlike many other countries, America doesn’t have a national education system. Each state sets its own academic standards that guide the content of statewide testing and assessment, textbooks and other instructional materials, and classroom instruction. Although those standards [vary widely](#), few of them address climate satisfactorily. According to a 2020 study by [This is Planet Ed](#), only 27 of America’s 51 school systems earned a B+ or better for climate education standards. Ten states, including some of the most populous states in the country – such as Texas (F), Florida (D), Pennsylvania (F), and Ohio (D) – received a D or worse. Six states received a failing grade overall – more than the number that earned As. There are some [nonprofits bringing climate education](#) to classrooms, but climate needs to be a universal, assessed element of a basic education.

Advocate for Education

Whether you have kids in school or not, you can encourage your state to adopt better climate standards. Find your state’s [science standards score](#) and share it with your [state legislators](#). Consider writing to the K-12 education committee leaders as well. If you want to keep your letter short and sweet, simply suggest adopting [Next Generation Science Standards](#) – that’s enough to earn a B. (If yours has already adopted NGSS, you could write in support of increased science funding for schools.) If you have the time and inclination, spend a little more time to study the specific ways that your state could improve climate science education and write a more detailed letter.