

NJ Climate Change Education Standards

What are the New Jersey Student Learning Standards on Climate Change?

In 2020 the NJ Board of Education revised the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLs) for the following 7 subjects, K-12.

- Career Readiness, Life Literacies, and Key Skills
- Comprehensive Health and Physical Education
- Computer Science & Design Thinking
- Science
- Social Studies
- Visual and Performing Arts
- World Languages



Revisions included the addition of standards that address climate change. The specific standards can be found on the NJ Department of Education (NJDOE) website on a page called [Climate Change Education by Grade Band](https://www.nj.gov/education/climate/learning/gradeband/) (<https://www.nj.gov/education/climate/learning/gradeband/>).

The biggest change is in the non-science subjects, where several standards have been added for each subject and grade band. One example is shown below. For science, climate is addressed primarily by the life science, earth science and engineering standards previously adopted in 2014, based on the Next Generation Science Standards.

The new standards went into effect for the 2022-23 school year. The 2020 revised standards, in their entirety, can be found on the NJDOE website under [2020 NJSLs](https://www.nj.gov/education/cccs/2020/) (<https://www.nj.gov/education/cccs/2020/>).

One example of Grades 3-5 Career Readiness, Life Literacy and Key Skills climate standards:

<i>Enduring Understandings</i>	<i>Performance Expectations</i>
<i>Digital engagement can improve the planning and delivery of climate change actions.</i>	<i>9.4.5.DC.8: Propose ways local and global communities can engage digitally to participate in and promote climate action.</i>

English Language Arts (ELA) and **Mathematics** standards were revised and adopted in October, 2023. The new standards and revisions do not include any required climate standards. However, a [Climate Change Companion Guide for Math](https://www.nj.gov/education/standards/math/ClimateChangeCompanionGuideforMath.pdf) and a [Climate Change Companion Guide for ELA](https://www.nj.gov/education/standards/ela/ClimateChangeCompanionGuideforELA.pdf) include examples of how climate can voluntarily be incorporated into select standards. The Guides can be downloaded from a link on the main page of [the ELA standards](https://www.nj.gov/education/standards/ela/Index.shtml) (<https://www.nj.gov/education/standards/ela/Index.shtml>) and the main page of [the Math standards](https://www.nj.gov/education/standards/math/Index.shtml) (<https://www.nj.gov/education/standards/math/Index.shtml>).

One example from Grade 5 ELA Climate Change Companion Guide is shown below:

W.AW.5.1. Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

Climate Change Example: Students may use information from texts they have read to state their opinions on the merits of solutions to problems caused when the climate changes and the types of plants and animals in that region change.

What organizations support the standards?

The driving force behind the new standards was Tammy Murphy, wife of New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy. Supportive stakeholders included individual educators; schools; and environmental organizations; including NJ School Board Association, Sustainable Jersey, NJ Audubon, National Wildlife Foundation, Cloud Institute for Environmental Education, and NJ Education Association.

The standards were supported by the following professional groups and their respective New Jersey Chapters: National Science Teachers Association (NSTA), North American Association of Environmental Educators (NAAEE), National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) support the standards.

What are the consequences of non-compliance?

[The New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum \(NJQSAC\)](#) is the Department of Education's monitoring and district self-evaluation system for school districts to identify districts that need additional support. Instruction is one of five components evaluated for performance. Schools that do not perform well on their instruction (for example, do not align instruction with standards) must implement an improvement plan approved by the State.

What incentives exist for schools to comply?

There are many resources (for example, professional development, lesson plans) posted on the state websites and [NJ Climate Education Hub](#) (see Resources, below). The NJDOE has also made competitive grants of around 2.5 million available for around [\\$30,000/district in 2024](#), and previously in [2023](#), to aid schools in creating lessons and projects for teaching climate change. Check here for future [NJDOE grant opportunities](#).

What are some useful local and other resources for teachers?

NJ Climate Education Hub: <https://njclimateeducation.org/>

- The Hub includes a 1 minute intro video, lesson plans, and the NJ Annual Student Climate Challenge.

NJDOE

- <https://www.nj.gov/education/climate/> Multitude of resources on climate science, lessons, and actions for climate.
- Sarah Sterling-Ladlee is the state's Senior Climate Change Education Advisor.

NJ Dept of Environmental Protection (DEP)

- Local data and science for teachers: [Summary Of Climate Change In New Jersey For Teachers September 2023](#) (https://dep.nj.gov/wp-content/uploads/seeds/climatechangesummary_teachers.pdf)
- More climate change resources (<https://dep.nj.gov/climatechange/>)

Report on K-12 Climate Change Education Needs in New Jersey 2022

- Five year plan for implementing the standards statewide (<https://www.njsba.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/climate-change-ed-online-2-2.pdf>)

Sustainable Jersey (<https://www.sustainablejerseyschools.com/resources/resource-library/>)

- [Curriculum Resources](#)
- [Sustainable Jersey Grants and Technical Assistance](#)

Alliance of New Jersey Environmental Educators (ANJEE)

- [Climate Change Lessons Resources](#): <https://anjee.org/climate-education-resources.html>

Subject to Climate

- Teacher guides, Professional Development and more <https://subjecttoclimate.org/>

Rutgers University

- [Rutgers Climate Change Education Resources for K-12 Educators](#)

CLEAN (not local)

- Huge searchable vetted database of K-12 lessons by grade and subject (<https://cleanet.org/index.html>)

The College of New Jersey

- The College of New Jersey is doing research funded by the state to establish a baseline in climate education.