



**Media Contact:**

Name: Stacie Pierpoint

Phone: 202-277-6582

Email: [stacie@naaee.org](mailto:stacie@naaee.org)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

---

## **New Report Reveals Opportunity for States to Drive Climate Action Through Education**

**[Washington, D.C., June 13, 2022]** When it comes to setting policies to tackle the climate crisis, most states in the U.S. are leaving out an essential sector—education. Ninety-two percent of U.S. states and the District of Columbia have a low level of climate change content in education policies, according to a new report by the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) and the Monitoring and Evaluating Climate Communication and Education (MECCE) Project.

***[Mapping the Landscape of K–12 Climate Change Education Policy in the United States](#)*** is a comprehensive report on the state of climate change education policy that underscores the importance of including climate change in education policies in all areas of institutional activity—from governance and operations to curriculum and community partnerships—to advance climate change action. This type of approach is often called a whole institution approach.

“U.S. state departments of education and school boards are well-positioned to support climate change education at scale, but there is a long way to go,” says Dr. Marcia McKenzie, director of the MECCE Project. “There is an opportunity to implement a whole institution approach to climate change education within education policies and to support schools to do the same.”

The report also emphasizes a holistic approach to climate change education in the teaching and learning category, which develops students’ sense of agency and empowerment to take climate action. “Effective climate change education helps build critical skills, knowledge, and dispositions, and the capacity to take meaningful action,” says Judy Braus, executive director of NAAEE. “This holistic approach also includes strategies for how to help students deal with eco-anxiety and see that they have the power to create a more just and sustainable future.”

**Key findings of the report include:**

- All states had policies that mentioned climate change at least once; extent of inclusion was usually very low.

- Climate change content was most commonly included in sustainability-specific operations plans and environmental literacy plans, though many of those plans are outdated.
- States with education standards and curriculum frameworks that used or were influenced by the Next Generation Science Standards were more likely to include climate change content.
- States with climate change plans were more than twice as likely to have climate change content, including in their educational policies.

This report is a vital benchmark on how state departments of education and school boards incorporate climate change education into policy and the recommendations offer guidance on how education can advance climate literacy, which is essential if we are to meaningfully address the climate crisis.

**Recommendations include:**

1. Increase the quality and quantity of climate change content across all education policies.
2. Update statewide environmental literacy plans to include climate change education.
3. Include a stronger focus on climate justice, climate action, and Indigenous knowledge in education policies.
4. Include a focus on both climate change mitigation and adaptation in education policies.
5. Provide policy support, such as funding, professional development, and staffing to help advance enactment of climate change education policy.

**Read the executive summary and the full report:** <https://naaee.org/eepro/resources/mapping-landscape-k-12-climate-change>

**A note about methodology:** Using a whole institution approach and a holistic learning framework, the team conducted a keyword content analysis of more than 800 publicly available education policy documents from across the United States from April to July 2021. More recent advances in state policies for climate change education are not reflected in this report.

**About NAAEE**

For more than five decades, the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) has served as the professional association, champion, and backbone organization for the field of environmental education (EE), working with EE professionals across United States, Canada, and Mexico, as well as globally, to advance environmental literacy and civic engagement to create a more equitable and sustainable future. For more information on NAAEE, visit <https://naaee.org>.

**About MECCE**

The Monitoring and Evaluating Climate Communication and Education (MECCE) Project, an international partnership of over 80 scholars and organizations, is focused on increasing the understanding of climate communication and education (CCE) in policy and practice through an ambitious research agenda focused on strengthening the quality and quantity of CCE to advance global climate literacy and action. For more information, visit <https://mecce.ca/>.