

## **Fostering Hope for the Future - BC Climate Change Curriculum Missing the Mark**

Exposed to an onslaught of negative information about the mounting threat of climate change, youth across the world are experiencing deepening mental distress and are growing [hopeless, pessimistic, and overwhelmed about the future](#). The urgency of climate change requires educated and resilient youth who are committed to taking action. So how is BC's education system preparing students to tackle this critical issue?

From 2016 to 2019, the renewed BC curriculum gradually came into effect across all grades which contained greater focus and support on [sustainable and environmental learning](#). The BC Ministry of Education's goal for students in this new curriculum is to "develop greater awareness and take responsibility for their social, physical, and natural environments by working independently and collaboratively for the benefit of others, communities, and the environment".

While the renewed curriculum is a positive step towards representing the current Anthropocene and important sustainable practices, many climate researchers, educators, and students say that climate change education remains insufficient, with [64% of BC educators](#) believing the school system should be doing more to educate about climate change. The [current climate change curriculum](#) is heavily grounded in physical climate mechanisms, analysis of human-activity as a cause of climate change, and discussion around negative consequences of climate change. However, other topics important for a clear and accurate understanding of climate change, including rising temperatures, facts rooted in scientific consensus, and positive solutions to prevent the worst of climate change are noticeably absent.

Speaking out about these gaps in knowledge, the youth-led activist organization [Climate Education Reform BC](#) is petitioning the BC Ministry of Education to transform the climate change curriculum to "create a just, inclusive, and equitable education system". The organization calls for critical student engagement in politics, emphasis on climate solutions and youth activism, teaching healthy coping skills for eco-anxiety, and reframing learning to build hope and empowerment for a better future.

Mental health impacts faced by students, such as eco-anxiety are not lost on teachers and educators. [Research surveying teachers](#) found that some have observed heightened stress and hopelessness in students during climate change lessons. Teachers shared that the climate change curriculum is too vague, broad, and often lacks support to deliver comprehensive lessons. As such, teachers may struggle to find hopeful messages in a curriculum that often focuses on teaching bleak facts about climate change effects. Hope is a necessary component for effective climate change education. It strengthens student's [agency and empowerment](#) to believe they, and society, have the power to create meaningful change. Fortunately, there are numerous external

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