

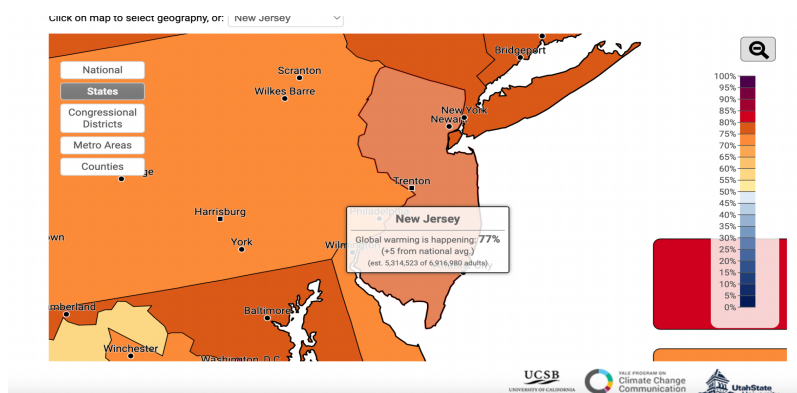
Climate Change Education in Classrooms for K-12 Students

By: Samantha Schepelenko

Incorporating climate change into an everyday curriculum has been a long time coming for teachers in New Jersey. Teachers have been preparing for almost two years for this to get their students educated on the topic of climate change.

New Jersey is one of the first states to mandate climate change being taught in all K-12 classrooms. In an article from [The Washington Post](#) New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy's wife, Tammy said, "There's no way we can expect our children to have the solutions and the innovations to these challenges if we're not giving them the tools and resources needed here and now."

According to the [Yale Program on Climate Change](#) 77% of New Jersey citizens believe climate change is happening.



Percentage of citizens who believe global warming is happening in New Jersey from Yale Climate Opinion Map- 2021

New Jersey took groundbreaking steps as a state to incorporate these laws into classrooms for their students. NJ can serve as a great example for other states to hopefully take the next steps to better the future of their students.

According to Dr. Lauren Madden, a professor in the Elementary and Early Childhood Education Department and the coordinator of the Environmental Sustainability Education Minor at The College of New Jersey says that, “Many teachers are looking for ways to integrate climate change into what they are already learning, and where it fits best with their lesson plans.”

Young students are slowly being introduced to the idea of climate change, which is equally important as older students being taught this topic.

“We see as young as kindergarteners, making sure that we are clear in our conversations about climate change and that it is happening,” said Dr. Madden.

Parents may express concern about climate change education for young students, which Dr. Madden addressed in an interview with [The Washington Post](#).

“It’s not like we’re asking kindergartners to look at the [Keeling Curve](#),” she said.

Besides incorporating climate change education into an already existing curriculum, how else are teachers presenting it in the classrooms? “It is important that teachers use tangible things like photographic evidence rather than numerical information,” according to Dr. Madden.

“A recent example was a third grade classroom I was recently in, where they were learning about the water cycle. They were posing questions to the students such as, if we have more extreme storms how does that affect the water cycle? Or if we have a drought how does that affect the water cycle?” she said. This is one example on how to present information to younger students while still challenging them to think critically about climate change.

In an article from [The Washington Post](#) they cited a [study](#) done by NC State University which found educating middle-schoolers about climate change resulted in their parents expressing greater concern about the problem.

Continuing education on climate change for K-12 students is extremely crucial in hopes to slow the effect of global warming in the future. If future generations are more educated on this topic there can be a hope that they will be able to slow climate change and help save the planet from further damage.