

THE PROBLEM

Despite overwhelming consensus from the scientific community, an alarming percentage of Americans do not believe that climate change is linked to human activities. Nearly a third of Americans do not believe in climate change at all. Teaching students about climate change in elementary, middle, and high school can help close this knowledge gap and equip future generations with the tools to solve complex climate issues in the future.

In 2018, Connecticut passed Public Act 18-181, moving the State Board of Education to encourage schools to include climate change in the Next Gen Science Standards (NGSS) curriculum. Because NGSS is a pedagogical goal, and not a law, we need to write the teaching of climate change into state statute.

A COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION

To address this, the legislature must mandate climate change education. Legislation proposed in 2019 to ensure climate change education be required as part of the school curricula (HB 7083) passed the House on a bipartisan basis, but was never called in the Senate, and therefore died in session.

In its original draft in 2018, the bill resulted in a cost of less than \$5,000 to local and regional school districts associated with making and disseminating materials related to expanding the list of required subjects in school, by including climate change. The cost would vary by the size of the districts, and for smaller school districts the cost will be significantly less.

There are no costs associated with curriculum development, as the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection has the expertise and resources necessary to provide curriculum to local and regional school districts. DEEP has resources in place to supply teachers with what they need to teach about climate change, however, a formal curriculum has not yet been developed. Since climate change touches every field of human inquiry, climate crisis education and climate justice education could be embedded into all content areas at all grade levels.



FAST FACTS:

- ◆ Only **58%** of Americans believe climate change is caused by human activities, according to a study by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication.
- ◆ About **30%** of Americans do not believe in climate change at all, according to the same study.
- ◆ The Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) offer guidance for all public schools in the teaching of science. Currently, climate science is incorporated in the standards from grades 3 through 12, but not mandated.

CONTACT

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