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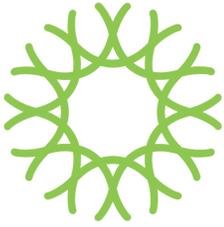


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The Honorable Phil Ting, Chair  
Assembly Budget Committee  
State Capitol, Room 6026  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Kevin McCarty, Chair  
Assembly Budget Sub 2 Education Finance Committee  
State Capitol, Room 2136  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Anthony Rendon  
Speaker of the California State Assembly  
State Capitol Room 219  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Nancy Skinner, Chair  
Senate Budget Chair  
State Capitol, Room 5019  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable John Laird, Chair  
Senate Budget Subcommittee 1 on Education  
State Capitol, Room 5019  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Toni Atkins  
President, Pro Tem of the California Senate  
State Capitol, Room 205  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond  
State Board President  
State Board of Education  
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The Honorable Tony Thurmond  
State Superintendent of Public Instruction  
1430 N Street, Suite 5602  
Sacramento, CA 95814-5901

## **Fund and Implement Climate Literacy for California's K-12 Students**

Dear Budget Leadership:

The Sixth Assessment Report by the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warns that climate change has reached a "code red for humanity." Warming temperatures and increasing extreme weather threaten our health, air, water, food, shelter, and economic security, posing an existential threat to humanity. The disruption from wildfires, drought, floods, and high heat days, which are already increasing in frequency and intensity, makes it clear that California must face the reality of climate change with a wide range of solutions. We call on the State of California to make a \$200MM investment in K-12 climate literacy, commensurate with the \$15B spent yearly on school buildings and maintenance, as a critical aspect of confronting the destabilizing climate.

Climate change is happening now, especially impacting youth from Black, Brown, Asian, Indigenous, and low-income communities. Facing the social and environmental disruptions brought on by climate change, the mental health of our youth is, and will continue to be, profoundly impacted. At the same time, climate change is dramatically influencing their most important life decisions such as where to live, or whether or not to have children. Today's graduating seniors are already unable to follow the path of business-as-usual. They are already confronted with hard decisions and we must do everything we can to support them to make them.

With Assembly Members Luz Rivas, Lisa Calderon, Chris Ward, Tasha Boerner-Horvath, Eduardo Garcia, and Isaac Bryan, as well as Senator Dave Cortese, announcing their commitment to introduce [legislation on climate change education](#) in the 2022 legislative session, now is the opportune time for the State Legislature, State Board of Education, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the California Department of Education to work together to sufficiently fund, accelerate, and improve our state's environmental and climate literacy efforts. Our students deserve equitable, frequent, and comprehensive opportunities to develop a holistic understanding of the environment which prepares them for their future in this century and beyond. These should include project-based learning opportunities; access to an interdisciplinary curriculum that integrates real-world, place-based climate and environmental justice issues; student-centered learning and leadership opportunities; professional learning programs for their educators (pre-service and in-service) and administrators (including credential programs); opportunities to learn in the natural world on school campuses, nearby parks and open space preserves, with community-based partners with relevant expertise, and at residential outdoor schools; and technical assistance for schools to develop Environmental and Climate Action Plans.

We urge members of the State Legislature, State Board of Education, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the California Department of Education to collaborate on a multi-pronged effort to execute a climate literacy implementation strategy focused on solutions and scaled to meet the climate emergency:

**1. Provide \$40MM for leadership at the state level**

- a. Fully fund the strategies recommended by the Environmental Literacy Task Force's *A Blueprint for Environmental Literacy: Educating Every Student In, About, and For the Environment* from 2015 to allow full implementation by the California Environmental Literacy Initiative and allied organizations.
- b. Support and fully staff an office within the California Department of Education responsible for systematically integrating environmental and climate literacy in every subject and at every grade level across California's K-12 system, with a focus on interdisciplinary methods at the high school level. This office would work in partnership with the California Environmental Literacy Initiative and other relevant initiatives, e.g. the National COVID-19 Outdoor Learning Initiative.
- c. Establish environmental and climate literacy specifically as a focus of professional learning (pre-service and in-service), curriculum design, and instruction for all California teachers by building on SB 720 (Allen, 2018) and AB 130 (2021, Sec. 151. (a))
- d. Secure a sustained funding stream for environmental and climate literacy efforts, including for community-based partners.

**2. Provide \$60MM for direction and support at the county level**

- a. Allocate funding for environmental literacy and climate coordinators within the Educational Services Department in all 58 local county offices of education for five years at a cost of \$12MM per year.

**3. Provide \$100MM for District implementation and integration**

- a. Create a grant fund of \$100MM for local school districts committed to delivering environmental and climate literacy instruction, with an emphasis on interdisciplinary curriculum that is student-centered and solution-oriented.
- b. Ensure multiple pathways for districts to qualify for funding. For example:
  - i. Design with the margins first to ensure equity. Prioritize districts with populations most impacted by climate change using CAEnviroScreen and CAL-Adapt data, and California Department of Education data that selects districts with the highest need based on unduplicated pupil counts and other equity-related education data.
  - ii. Acknowledge districts which have already made headway with this work or plan to, e.g., by demonstrating an existing commitment to environmental education or by committing by board resolution to provide a coordinated and comprehensive district-wide program of environmental and climate literacy.

With a \$31B surplus at the state level, and the existential threat of climate change never clearer, this is the year to commit \$200MM to fund the work above. We must act now for our students. There are more than six million students in the California public school system, with more than 400,000 graduating each year. The longer our state waits to implement climate literacy efforts across our schools, the more urgent this crisis will become and the more funding and resources will be required to address it. Our future generations will bear the greatest burdens in this climate emergency. Transformative change and solutions must begin with our students in their

classrooms.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter and we look forward to your response. If you have questions, please contact Sarah Ranney at [CA4climateliteracy@gmail.com](mailto:CA4climateliteracy@gmail.com)

Sincerely,



Sarah Ranney on behalf of:

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