

Preparing Oregon Students for Climate Change Begins with HB 3365

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At the beginning of my sophomore year of high school, the 2020 Labor Day wildfires burned over [hundreds of thousands of acres of Oregon forests](#). The deep red and orange skies looming over my neighborhood instilled a new fear in myself and my peers. Climate change worsened the dry and warm weather conditions, enabling these fires and similar ones across the country to cause widespread destruction. However, there were few conversations in classrooms throughout my public education about climate change and its impacts on my community, including the wildfires. This legislative session, House Bill 3365 would provide Oregon students with the climate education I wish I had.

Climate change is increasing the intensity and frequency of extreme weather events, and youth disproportionately experience the impacts of these occurrences. The American Psychological Association found that extreme weather events resulting from climate change can [increase risks of youth anxiety, depressive disorder, ADHD, and education deficits](#) among other outcomes. Unfortunately, the adverse effects of climate change on youth mental health are not surprising. During high school, myself and my classmates were exposed to news headlines and social-media posts about climate catastrophes—including hurricanes, floods, and droughts—but we did not receive instruction on how to cope with this information.

Beyond threats to mental health, current students will be future leaders implementing sustainable actions in their schools, workplaces, and businesses. Following graduation, students will be entering a “green workforce” that promotes clean energy and sustainable development across sectors. To equip students with the knowledge necessary to protect their environments, youth deserve an education with the basic information needed to understand climate change.

Teaching climate change in schools prepares students with the knowledge and confidence to take action in their communities. Educating students on the causes, effects, and solutions of climate change gives youth the vocabulary and framework to understand how they can protect a changing environment. Climate education can reduce anxiety and empower students to take action in their communities within and after public education, underscoring the importance of teaching climate change within schools.

Despite the importance of climate education, Oregon currently lacks legislation on climate-change education. However, [House Bill 3365](#) would change this. HB 3365 would amend Common Curriculum Goals under ORS 329.045 to include climate-resilience instruction in alignment with the

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's [Climate Literacy Guide](#). This bill would incorporate climate education into current K-12 standards in core subjects, including language arts, sciences, mathematics, social studies, and the arts. The standards would also emphasize solutions to climate change, so students would not only learn the current environmental changes but also how they can address current circumstances. The bill was developed and supported by a [diverse coalition of Oregon educators, legislators, and community leaders](#) to make climate education interdisciplinary and age-specific.

Among its unique benefits, HB 3365 embraces climate resilience across academic subjects. The bill integrates climate-resilience standards in multiple disciplines, allowing students to learn how sustainability extends to historical events, scientific processes, artistic expressions, and financial decisions. Students connect with various subjects, and an interdisciplinary education makes climate change relevant in the subjects in which students are most interested. The interdisciplinary nature of the bill also allows students to understand how their personal decisions and civic engagement impacts numerous biological, social, and economic processes. By emphasizing climate solutions across subjects, HB 3365 will empower students to understand how sustainable actions have impacts across sectors.

HB 3365 also would make Oregon the next state to embrace the importance of climate education and prepare its green workforce. In 2020, [New Jersey became the first state](#) to implement K-12 climate change education into their learning standards. Since 2020, [California, Connecticut, New York, and Illinois](#) have similarly adopted climate-education legislation, setting precedents for the rest of the country. If Oregon wants to be a leader for climate education on a national scale, HB 3365 must pass.

As climate change impacts communities across Oregon, students deserve an education that teaches them how to cope with and address these environmental changes. HB 3365 provides the pathway to implement an interdisciplinary and age-specific education for Oregon students. When the wildfires of 2020 threatened my family and surrounding neighborhoods, I wish I had a basic understanding of climate change to contextualize the events and advocate for sustainable solutions. Now, Oregon students can receive this education through HB 3365.

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