

CA AB 285: Ten Strands Overview and Resources

Last Updated September 2024

Purpose and Overview: This document provides a brief overview of California's Assembly Bill (AB) 285, and resources to explore for more detail. The document also includes references to Ten Strands' involvement and connections to AB 285.

I. What is AB 285, why was it proposed, and what was the journey to passage?

AB 285 is a bill originally introduced by [Luz Rivas](#) (D-District 39), with the aim to prioritize climate change awareness and education by making it a course requirement (starting in 2024-25) for science instruction in grades 1-12.

The bill was originally introduced by Luz Rivas (D-District 39) along with four colleagues in the Assembly and two in the Senate, the bill passed the Assembly on a 59-2 vote on May 8, 2023 (see [AB 285 Committee Analysis from 3/22/23](#)), and then, in amended form, passed the Senate on a 33-0 vote on September 12, 2023. The Assembly then voted 67-4 to concur with the amended bill on September 13, 2023. The bill was approved and signed into law by Governor Newsom on October 08, 2023. *Learn more about the bill and its timeline from introduction to passage in the [LegiScan Bill Tracker](#).*

II. What are the Requirements of the Bill and Related Resources?

- **Course Requirements in the Bill:** This bill, requires the adopted course of study for science grades 1 to 6, and grades 7 to 12, to include an emphasis on the causes and effects of climate change and methods to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The bill requires that appropriate coursework including this material be offered to pupils as soon as possible, commencing no later than the 2024–25 school year. *View the official text from the Oct 8 2023 Approved Bill [here](#) ([pdf version](#)).*
- **Education Code Revisions in the Bill:** This bill called for incorporating additional changes to Section 51210 of the Education Code - see changes in Section III. *Note that the changes were only going to be made if at least one of two other bills (AB 446 and SB 509) were also passed. [AB 446](#) was approved by the Governor (10-13-23), and [SB 509](#) was vetoed (10-13-23); therefore, EdCode revisions did go forward.*
- **Funding Considerations in the Bill:** Because the bill could impose new duties on school districts, the bill was written as “constituting a state-mandated local program”. As stated in the Bill, *“The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state...This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to the statutory provisions, which should have procedures for making that reimbursement.”* Note that at this time there is not an obvious pool of funding for these reimbursements.

III. What direction does AB 285 give regarding how LEAs and their schools and teachers might implement this policy?

The following table outlines the text amendments to Education code as of January 1, 2024 due to the passage (Sep 2023) and signage into law (Oct 2023) of AB 285. These amendments indicate the requirements of this policy.

EdCode	Text
EdCode References for Grades 1-6 Web Version and PDF Copy	Section 1 - 51210 (a)(4) of the Education Code is amended to read: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 51210. (a) The adopted course of study for grades 1 to 6, inclusive, <u>shall</u>* include instruction, beginning in grade 1 and continuing through grade 6, in the following areas of study:• (4) Science, including the biological and physical aspects, with emphasis on the processes of experimental inquiry, on the place of humans in ecological systems, on the causes and effects of climate change, and on the methods to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Appropriate coursework including material on the causes and effects of climate change and methods to mitigate and adapt to climate change shall be offered to pupils as soon as possible, commencing no later than the 2024-25 school year.
EdCode References for Grades 7-12 Web Version and PDF Copy	Section 2 - 51220 (e) of the Education Code is amended to read: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 51220. The adopted course of study for grades 7 to 12, inclusive, <u>shall</u>* offer courses in the following areas of study:• (e) Science, including the physical and biological aspects, with emphasis on basic concepts, theories, and processes of scientific investigation, on the place of humans in ecological systems, on the causes and effects of climate change, on the methods to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and with appropriate applications of the interrelation and interdependence of the sciences. Appropriate coursework including material on the causes and effects of climate change and methods to mitigate and adapt to climate change shall be offered to pupils as soon as possible, commencing no later than the 2024-25 school year.

*To better understand the use of shall in this code, note that "shall" means action which is necessary to achieve compliance, and indicates a requirement. This is different from the use of "should" or "may". To learn more about the difference between these terms explore the following: i) [Case Text on CAL Regulations - Shall, Should, May, Best Practices](#); ii) [Cornell Law: Shall vs May](#); iii) [Arma Magazine: Shall, Should, May](#).

IV. What resources can LEAs and teachers use to get started with understanding the connection between NGSS science and climate change concepts?

The following resources show connections to NGSS Science. Note that CA NGSS already requires climate change instruction in all high school science courses whether or not they are doing the integrated or course model.

- [Climate Change in the Next Generation Science Standards](#)
- [How Learning about Climate Change Progress in Next Generation Science Standards](#)
- [Climate Change Concepts in NGSS - A Draft Analysis by Ten Strands](#)

V. What connections are there between AB 285 and Ten Strands?

The following information details how Ten Strands has been involved in AB 285 during the advocacy journey, and the future connection of Ten Strands initiatives and AB 285:

- **Advocacy Journey from Feb - April 2023:** Ten Strands advocated to expand climate change education in AB 285 to be included in multiple subject areas:
 - [February 2023 Joint Proposal from Ten Strands and Sierra Club](#) ([pdf version](#))
 - [April 2023 Letter of Support with Amendment from Ten Strands](#) ([pdf version](#))
 - [October 2023 - CAELI Newsletter](#) AB 285 Update ([pdf version](#)): *“Ten Strands and members of the CAELI network were supportive of this bill to improve climate change education in science classes, we believe it could have gone further by extending beyond science education. We applaud this initial step and encourage our legislators to support integrating content related to the climate crisis into all areas of study in the future.”*
- **Climate Change and Environmental Justice Project (CCEJP):** In July 2021, Governor Newsom signed into law landmark legislation ([AB 130 - SEC 151](#)) that allocated \$6 million for the creation of free educational resources to help teachers promote students’ understanding of climate change and environmental justice, leading to action in their communities. This [curriculum project](#) is now being run in partnership between Ten Strand and the San Mateo County Office of Education, and the units will be free open education resources, standards-based, and they will integrate California’s [Environmental Principles and Concepts](#).
- **CAELI COE IH AB 285 Support Resources:** During the 2023-24 season of the California Environmental Literacy Initiative (CAELI), the [County Office of Education \(COE\) Innovation Hub](#) has developed an AB 285 resource to support educators in their interpretation and implementation of AB 285. Find this document on the [CAELI resources page under “Toolkits and Advocacy Collaborations”](#).
- **Ten Strands Technical Assistance:** Ten Strands is available to provide technical assistance services to districts and site administrators to provide support to teachers in implementing AB 285 into science instruction, and implementing environmental literacy and climate change education in general to all subject areas and grade levels.